

Reading of a Trinity: The Relationship Between Power, Media, and Public Opinion in the Algerian Context in the period extending from 1962 to 2020

Dr. Hannouche Hafidha²

(Lecturer B)

Abstract

This research paper tracks the ambiguous relationship between power, media, and public opinion in the Algerian context over the course of several decades. We have picked from this "tree" how the stem and trunk of the state grew, attempting to track the growth stages (sources) of that tree, expressed as (State-Power). The "branches" represent "state institutions," including media and communication companies, while the "leaves" are metaphorically used in this study, denoting "public opinion". Circumstances, in turn, constitute the "environment" in which this massive, sprawling tree lives within the book of history. This book, written by the ego and the other with two different rulers, continues to shape the memory of the Algerian nation (Algerian public opinion). It attempts to compete with the writing ego in the digital age using pens equipped with a schema that knows its goals and directions before even a single drop is spilled or a single signal is emitted. This is because "the matter is more than just lies; it is undoubtedly multiple and divergent truths worthy of discussion," as Sébastien Denis put it. Our approach does not depict power as an authoritarian entity, the media as a victim, or public opinion as a passive recipient. Rather, it views them as bridging forces that influence each other in varying and continuous doses. Sometimes they lean towards negotiation and appeasement, and at other times they shift towards conflict to construct meaning and direct public policies with a cognitive competence that is not devoid of the explicit contradiction arising from the conflict between public and private interests. These operate within two public spheres that are fundamentally complementary but conflicting intermittently for various necessities.

Keywords: Public opinion, power, media, Algeria, Algerian society.

A General Critical Introduction to Public Opinion Studies

Surveys and polls are now used throughout the modern world as effective and low-cost methods for collecting data on public opinion, as well as for gathering various types of information necessary for the normal operations of government and industry. In the field of survey research, the scientific study of social attitudes and public opinion has emerged as a specialized field of study, encompassing research conducted by sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and market researchers. Their data is derived from interviews conducted with large numbers of survey participants in many countries around the world. These interviews are carried out in person, by phone, by mail using printed questionnaires, or via the internet using online questionnaires. In

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² University of Algiers 3, Faculty of media and Communication Sciences, Department of Communication Sciences, Hafidha.hannouche@gmail.com

addition to surveys and polls, researchers studying public opinion also utilize observations and data collected from controlled laboratory experiments, focus groups, observational studies, and media content analysis, such as press articles and radio and television broadcasts. These researchers examine the factors that influence public opinion, as well as the processes of social change driven by shifts in public opinion.

Although most nations live in a state of peace most of the time, war is one of the enduring institutions in all free societies, just as parliament is one of our permanent institutions, even if its sessions are not constant. [1] Furthermore, neither the state nor the church (or mosque) — and the many institutions subject to them — conduct education in a spirit of respect. [2]

For example, when a state is extremist in its secularism, as is the case in France, state schools become extremist in their intolerance, much like the schools managed by the church (I have been told that the word "God" must not be mentioned in any primary school in France). The result in both cases is the same: the suppression of free inquiry; and regarding one of the most important issues in the world, the child encounters either a rigid dogma or a stony silence. [3]

It is the very same dogma that drifts the West toward adopting a single opinion, despite the passage of time. However, the media "denunciation" documented regarding public opinion movements that are heterogeneous with their governments concerning the war that has been unfolding for 15 months between the Zionist entity and the Palestinians rings in the ears of humanity since October 7th. It revealing a clear flaw in the system of values directed toward manufacturing a public opinion that treats it as if it were blind, especially when the French Minister of Justice, Éric Dupond-Moretti, signs a decree stating: "Those who express solidarity with Palestine are subject to imprisonment for up to 7 years." Meanwhile, the French Minister of Interior, Gérald Darmanin, banned pro-Palestine demonstrations, justifying his decision on the grounds that they might cause disturbances to public order; he also announced that 102 people had been arrested on charges of anti-Semitism or glorifying terrorism, since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation on October 7th of this current month. [4] The West, with its political, military, and media elites and intelligence agencies, believed the same belief that once accompanied one of the first large-scale systematic efforts to study public opinion in the United States, led by Philip Converse (1964), a political scientist at the University of Michigan. Converse analyzed national survey data collected from election studies in the years 1956, 1958, and 1960. One important feature of Converse's research was that while each sample was nationally representative, each also included sample members who were interviewed at all three points in time using the same set of survey questions. This innovative design feature enabled Converse to measure changes in aggregate opinion over the 4-year study period, as well as changes within individual opinions over the same period. At the time of the study, most sociologists, like Converse, assumed that people generally build their opinions on a core set of fundamental values or social attitudes in a logically coherent manner. They also assumed that most individuals maintain relatively stable opinions and attitudes over time. However, for the most part, both assumptions turned out to be false. [5]

Writings on public opinion multiplied in the 19th century, and estimates associated with the status of public opinion in the political process branched out. Indeed, some concepts that emerged during this period overlapped with the concept of public opinion, such as social solidarity in Durkheim, social consciousness in Marx, etc. In the early 20th century, a fundamental book entitled ***Public Opinion and Popular Government*** appeared, which re-introduced the problem of public opinion and the questions it carries. Lowell, the author of the book, demonstrated that public opinion did not emerge merely because the public expressed its opinion on public matters, but "true" public opinion must be the opinion of the human group (community). The opinion of the majority is not considered sufficient; the minority may not share the majority's opinion, but it must feel that it is committed, out of conviction and not by force, to accepting this opinion. [6]

Through this academic paper, we attempt to be away from lengthy definitions and concepts on a topic in which we believe that local and world university libraries have reached a point of "satiation."

Sources of Public Opinion Formation in Algeria and the Media Game

It is not the facts themselves that influence the popular imagination, but the manner in which they occur and are reported, which must inevitably produce a striking image that fills and astonishes the soul, so to speak. Knowing the art of influencing the imagination of the masses is to simultaneously know the art of controlling them. [7]

The Almighty teaches us, in Surat Yusuf, the methods of forming public opinion, starting from the formation of its sources and networks, to the stages of its development, formation, dissemination, and influence, then the methods of judging it (socio-political treatment), and finally ending with judicial treatment (fair judgment). These perceptions, furthermore, are carried by verse 30, where the Almighty says: **"And women in the city said, 'The wife of Al-Aziz seeks to seduce her young man; he has impassioned her with love. Indeed, we see her in clear error. [8]**

The totality of these relationships, entanglements, and potential conflicts inherent in practices related to information (the event - the seduction), its owner (Yusuf), the primary victim (the Aziz of Egypt), its source (the speaker?), the (witness), the necessity of its (secrecy), the possibilities of its (dissemination), the methods of its processing, who benefits from (secrecy) and who benefits from (dissemination), how the recipient (public opinion) will respond, how long information can be concealed (the time of information), how it is processed, and before whom? (The trial + the public + publicity = the truth).

The First Lesson: Let the truth flow... for it is the only ship of salvation.

When an event is mentioned with the intent of revealing its impact on society and its effect on people, the matter differs for those involved in the event in terms of their social status and standing in society. An event grows or shrinks, and its circle widens or narrows, depending on who it concerns. A common man may be killed without people noticing the event or paying attention to it, whereas if a ruler or a notable leader is scratched or wounded, it becomes the talk of people in clubs and forums for a day, a few days, or perhaps for months or years. [9]

It transcends—through revelation—to what is beyond time, as in our case of being informed today, before it, and for the centuries that follow until the book of time is folded, as a foundation for information science through complex stories (the complex news story) or (fragmented reporting), similar to (simple news) in our days, which we later assemble during periods... close and distant in time, within spatial and technical conditions and patterns, to give us meaning of what we ought to be, or a model for a meaningful true life, so that future generations are not shocked by rigid visions or a stony silence dictated by the contents of media, communication, educational, cultural, economic, social, political (ideological), and religious interpretative matrices.

The Problematic

From the title above, "Let the truth flow to public opinion, for it is the only ship of salvation," we descend, as seekers of truth, into the streets of the "New" and virtual Algeria, **attempting to track and contemplate the maps of how Algerian public opinion is formed through media and its providers (feeders) of information, as well as the feedback through various media and communication means, and the chemical reactions occurring in the two public spheres over at least the last two decades.**

The issue of the right to secure access to information has long troubled successive regimes and their opponents, both from within and abroad. In Algeria, the uses of this right among the four

traditional powers—starting from the legislative, judicial, and executive, to the fourth power, and then the fifth power—have caused severe damage to the psyche of Algerian public opinion. Indeed, it has left it wandering between two conflicting egoisms outside the ethical frameworks of politics, economy, and culture as competing and conflicting systems at one time, and harmonious and allied at another time. The media, on the other hand—or rather, another front—was not spared from these ideological descriptions and classifications mixed with institutional pragmatism. Rather, the "diseases of information" from the source to the journalists, and from there to the national public opinion, have exacerbated. Before addressing it the nature of the means used by deviant media employed for negative purposes, we can borrow this story that reveals to us the possibility of flipping and falsifying facts. [10]

An example of this is the testimony of a journalist of *El Khabar El Usboui* (M.B.) in an article entitled "Political Battles by Proxy." The article discusses the convergence of various Algerian and foreign sources and investigations regarding the medical file of the late President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and its relationship to the administration of the country's affairs. A part of the article reveals the harsh conditions imposed by information sources on the journalist, highlighting an unethical face in information management in Algeria. Its text reads: "We can discern through the two articles a new kind of political struggle that has begun to impose itself on the press. The latter finds itself in the middle of a battle that is the specialty of politicians, not journalists. The reason for this is the terrible silence hovering over political life in Algeria, the withdrawal of parties from debate, and the great fear that occupies the issue of the right to a sequence access to information has left the uses of this right among the four political class from speaking in its name openly. Thus, it resorts to the methods of sources that do not want to reveal their names, or "sources close to," and "informed sources." This method, among our politicians, is on the verge of becoming a unique way of practicing politics through backrooms—including press backrooms—sending anonymous messages, and other such means unknown by true democracies where free discussion and transparency prevail.

Given that the journalists' world has a weak reaction to social diversity, it rarely takes the initiative to multiply the number of its informants, place the traded issues in their proper context, or reveal their dimensions. This is because this world relies on known and repeated sources, saturated with stereotypes, and prioritizes sources that benefit from the power of the press, which operates by forgetting and excluding unacceptable informants. [11]

Based on these fleeting chronological flashes, we attempt to reconstruct and understand the historical-media-ethical evolution from the perspectives of coexistence and conflict over the span of two decades. Each decade did not resemble its successor or its counterpart in terms of "phase structure" on all levels—security, political, economic, social, cultural, or even at the level of "legislative structure" such as (laws, decrees, instructions, etc.) related to this "variable" relationship. This is an inevitability on one hand due to the nature and specificity of each stage and its tensions, thereby announcing communicative and media inputs and outputs that are sometimes harmonious and often conflicting. Some media institutions in Algeria—which are mostly rentier-based—along with official media outlets, turned inward by narrating the "official narrative," especially in the period between 2005 and 2010, the second phase of the first decade post-National Reconciliation. This intensity increased with the compulsory opening against the backdrop of the "Arab Spring revolutions" in the first phase (2011–2015) to contain the rising social anger, both on the ground and online. During this time, a "media minority"—such as press and television institutions that benefited from the "semi-opening" following the outcomes of the Organic Law on Information 2012 in particular, and some electronic websites in Algeria—waged a battle of opposition (if the description is accurate) in a balanced manner. They rejected the prevailing economic, political, and social situation as a form of "bickering" with the ruling regime and its successive governments, which fell into the temptation of the constitutionally opened mandate (without a constitutional basis). Conversely, they raised the idea of the "priority of security" amidst the whirlwind of the

"Arab Spring revolutions," a sentiment expressed by many academic and media elites. And political, partisan, associative, and even governmental and non-governmental organizations as societal and human networks representing symbolic power in their formation, often operating with "a great deal of spontaneity," and sometimes sparking their anger, expressing disgust at the actions of some rulers, which would quickly turn into a very important "source of information" for Algerian journalists and media professionals. Especially at the beginning of the second decade of comprehensive pluralism in Algeria, where internet-connected movements grew rapidly with it [12], and these forces transformed into a "source of appeal" for journalists, especially those whose emotions are connected with the content and form of the message [13].

In the Beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the need increased for a press and media whose primary professional and ethical duties are: "providing independent explanations of official information" to the Algerian public opinion. The Algerian recipient (reader, listener, viewer, and web surfer) no longer knows where to turn... They are, according to Alain Deneault in his book *La Mediocratie* (System of Mediocrity), **(...no longer even knowing now whether there is such a thing as a "government" that makes decisions)** [14].

The failure of employment policy and its mechanisms has become clearly shown through the succession of several ministries over it, renewing seasonally while unemployment strikes deep roots in all seasons. Youth employment is a populist operation rather than an economic and operational one... Pre-employment contracts, through which the government inflates the number of positions, are in reality contempt, insult, and mockery of people and values, where doctors, engineers, and university graduates in general are employed for shameful wages ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 DZD per month [15].

And while it is natural for job positions to open up from time to time here and there in the public service... employment therein takes place through acquaintances, family relations, and friendships, at a rate of about 47% according to the report of the National Office of Statistics [16].

Despite all that has been mentioned and the funds spent to absorb unemployment, the World Bank confirmed in its reports dated September 2 that the unemployment rate in Algeria reached about 20%, and that Algeria—meaning it—ranks behind its neighbors, particularly Tunisia and Morocco... ... with the exception of parallel activity that is unquantifiable and unassessable, leaving the official figure in July 2019 at 12.5% [17]. In other words, the Algerian journalist Larbi Mahmoudi attempted in his book *Rivak Al-Asrar* (The Corridor of Secrets) to answer this question, which was beginning to take shape within the collective mind of the Algerian public opinion in a strange dormancy by using the editorial, the column, and commentary as artistic journalistic genres, and even caricature. We can perceive this in headlines such as "Free Gasoline" and a caricature by the cartoonist Abdelbaki Boukhalfa explaining and conveying the collective culture of Algerians, with a modification in the word (fly instead of run), resulting in a satirical idea entitled "Grease the machinery so it flies" [18].

Or a headline that seems very gentle, such as "An Administrative Decision," the details of which revolve around the professionalization of national team player Adel Boulbina. Even its introduction was built logically and rationally until an explosion occurs within the body of the article when the journalist exposes the course of events by saying: "...Behind the scenes and what is hidden from public opinion, trusted people say that the decision is administrative and not technical, quoting an official in the Algerian Football Federation speaking to people close to him in a closed session: "To grant him the status of an international player... we will not give his team the opportunity to raise his price."" [19]

Algerian Public Opinion, the Media, and the Sedimentation of the 1990s

As is known from the contemporary history of the newborn/modern Algerian state (1962), a full generation in the political sense has passed since its inception. This is a foundational period

according to a strategic choice for the state and the nation, resulting in what resulted and passing through trials ranging from easy to difficult, whether on the local, regional, or international level. This is not our subject, as much as it is a prelude to what the coming years will hold of arduous experiences from the beginning of the nineties of the last century—or what has been termed the "Black Decade"—to the beginning of the new millennium. This is a field that has long been researched by many cognitive fields, sometimes daringly so, in serious academic literature, studies, and research, resulting in hundreds of theses that spare us from returning to it in this context for anyone who wants to straighten their vision in understanding how journalistic and media institutions dealt with it, including and through it, the political and ruling elites, decision-makers, and even the opposition with the Algerian public opinion regarding various national and international issues and their complexities.

Each official and unofficial political party attempts to occupy the informational space by controlling the information flowing to the Algerian public opinion, whether through the manufacturing of information, images, and data, or even through controlling legislation and ethical and professional charters as a space for disagreement, contention, debate, criticism, and counter-criticism, especially by the opposition, which is long **supported by non-governmental organizations... through its forces scattered—intentionally—everywhere** [20].

The Complex Effects of Radio, Television, and Press on Algerian Public Opinion and the Destruction of Rules

To track the intentional and unintentional effects left by the media on public opinion, researchers have been able to identify at least four different methods. These methods are: "enabling people to comprehend what is happening in the world (the learning approach), identifying important political issues and events or current problems (the agenda-setting approach), playing an influential role in determining **which politicians should be blamed or rewarded regarding the topics and events reported by the news (determination of responsibility)**, and finally, the approach of influencing people's political choices and inclinations (persuasion)" [21].

By tracking such practices within the apparatus of the Algerian government by various national media outlets across their different agendas, directions, and ideologies as "sanctuaries" for social, political, economic, cultural, and informational grievances—which the Algerian public opinion has long complained about visually, audibly, textually, and hypertextually—these broadcast, published, and reshared complaints on the network of networks grew like a rolling snowball from above day after day as social, economic, political, cultural, and human rights demands. Thousands of news stories infiltrated television and radio newsrooms, the pages of national newspapers, and ultimately reached the Algerian public opinion, which no longer accepted the old methods of governance hiding behind official communiqués that contradict social truth. This is from the standpoint that this research paper is a conclusion to ten years of experiences, observations, extrapolation of dialogues, and monitoring of developments from the outside as an examiner of national newspapers or an observer of social media contents as an Algerian academic and follower of the public affair Algerian. My academic and social experience and my overall culture have taught me: "that the Algerian is a slave to his freedom whenever he feels that the ruler has turned into a slave to his position." This dialectic inherent in the Algerian psyche is what the colonial cultural apparatus—and after it the Western cultural apparatus—has been unable to fathom, despite its physical hegemony with all its packages, and its geographical and topographical hegemony with all its wires and pathways.

As a manifestation of the conflict between this trinity in both the classical and virtual public spaces, the National Syndicate of Journalists did not find this law, on May 28, 2001, to be anything less than: "a programmed assassination of freedoms." The press responded to it with a "National Day Without Press." [22]

However, on June 16th, 2001, both chambers of Parliament rushed to ratify an amendment to Article 144 bis 1, newly added by the Penal Code 2001–09. This prompted the former Minister of Justice of that day to pledge that he would come out in solidarity with journalists in protest marches, if necessary, in the event of its application to any of them! (m. salhi,2011) This turbulent will and administration of the government is described by Professor Ali Kessaissia as follows: "...In many countries that lack well-established democratic institutions, every criticism of any person in the administration is interpreted as defamation." [23] Let us call it explicitly: the media system during this period could be described as "closed, retreating, introverted, and suffering from '**media phobia**'—if that is an accurate term." It reveals cultural sedimentations inherited from the 'Black Decade,' the effects of which should have been overcome by opening up to new topics through new draft laws that expand media freedoms and distance themselves as much as possible from any glorifying rhetoric, rather than maintaining the boundaries of old restrictions and practices. Ultimately, its duty is to enable the Algerian public opinion to access public information, data, and facts with ease, and even to obtain explanations—if not official interpretations—as an informational daring built on disclosure and transparency between the ruler and the ruled, of course, within the limits of the classifications of information secrecy guaranteed by the organic laws of information and data legislation. ... and reservation laws, the State of Emergency law, and all presidential instructions regulating the relationship between the citizen and information on the one hand, and the decision-maker and security information in particular on the other hand. All these data transformed the Algerian media at the time—along with the emerging information society, whose source, recipient, and fuel is the Algerian public opinion—into an international issue (the international dimension), and the Algerian media became a file in the pathways of internationalization. To correct the media vision locally and internationally, and to provide an approximate picture of the social deterioration resulting from a distorted rentier economic reality—as previously indicated—we will briefly discuss unemployment, patchwork employment operations, the opinion of specialists in national and international organizations, and the worsening phenomenon of collective frustration following the promises and vows made by the President toward the subjects and those with limited income, who have become the majority after the shrinking, or rather the extinction, of the middle class in society, which has joined the category of the "oppressed and the destitute," and other forms and manifestations of deterioration that are unfortunately met with governmental reassurance and optimism. [24]

This [optimism] hides behind media laws, media, political, and security codes of ethics that bind all parties involved in the communication and interaction process to "silence." One of its manifestations is the "Repeated Penal Code," which provides an opportunity to turn a blind eye to circles of corruption manufacturing and intimidates media institutions. It turns into a methodology that protects the idea of corruption, markets it, and encourages its perpetrators to continue and challenge society. Corruption did not stop at the limits of covering up corruption, but went beyond that to justifying corruption and protecting the procedures and laws that form an environment for the proliferation of corruption. Among this is what comes under the pretext of "the possibility of understanding between the exploiters and the exploited" to postpone the factors of explosion in social conflict based on deprivation and injustice. Most dangerously of all is the fall of media outlets under the pressure of the alliance between the requirements of political tactics and financial interests [25]. The first impact of this monopolistic behavior will be the exclusion of small media outlets that represent non-commercial values from the arena of competition [26].

Thus, the entire media landscape has transformed into a market for political and value-based speculation at the expense of principled or national roles, and at the expense of the standards of credibility, neutrality, and the capacity to practice criticism, monitor flaws, and rectify them.[27] This manipulation of Algerian public opinion is exemplified by what the former President's government boasted of, and what its followers echoed: that the unemployment rate reached 13%—and sometimes 11% or 12%—according to official estimates that contradict themselves in the

absence of specialized, neutral, and credible bodies to provide true estimates and figures to the Algerian public opinion .[28]"

Second chapter :Developing Reputation Abroad and the Tension between the Media and Algerian Public Opinion

The late and former Algerian President, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, worked during the first term of his election—much like all governance systems—on developing the country's reputation abroad and absorbing the tension between the media and Algerian public opinion. Indeed, he went further than that, as he was described at the time as being extremist in using the power of the press and media. National media outlets and academic references immortalized his famous saying: "Television, radio, and the Algeria Press Service are state property... and they are not open except to state officials." He restricted the opposition's right to access these media platforms by saying: "The opposition can use those means when it reaches power" [29].

Indeed, he had stated something even greater before that when he affirmed: "I am the editor-in-chief of the Algeria Press Service" at the end of 1999 [30].

From this gratuitous reminder, it becomes clear to the Algerian public opinion—leader and led—that perhaps one of the most dangerous consequences of subjecting the media to an individual, undemocratic political authority, or to an influential financial center, is the lack of neutrality of those means, and consequently their extremism in negative mobilization, hatred, and sharpening public opinion to take a stand on other than its true foundations. Thus, the corruption of the medium turns into the corruption of society. Perhaps the worst thing facing public opinion is the absolute control over media sources, which abolishes public opinion (Sabah Yassin, 2006, p. 81) [31]. This is represented by the suspension of five national newspapers on August 18, 2003 (*Al-Rai, Le Soir d'Algérie, Le Matin, Liberté, L'Expression*), after which they demanded the payment of their debts. *El Khabar* and *El Watan* newspapers were also concerned as they were unable to be distributed in the east and west of the country, given that the printing presses are governmental (Fatiha Zemamouche, 2003, p. 24) [32]. The suspension of these major newspapers, whose readers number in the millions among Arabized and Francophone elites... is considered a harsh blow to the face of the political regime at the time and its validity in the first analysis, especially in its conflict with local non-governmental organizations (as opposition) and international ones (as an interest). Conversely, it will create a persuasive gap in the body of Algerian public opinion, because in the second-level analysis, any absence of the elite and intellectuals [33]—both politically and academically productive elites—who are that group capable of understanding the realities of things and explaining them to the people [34].

Whenever periods of political, economic, or social tension invite public opinion to broadcast in its history for models to solve the crisis threatening it, or at least for frameworks of thought promising solutions [35]. To put it more clearly, they are sources of "information," "ideas," "opinions," and "knowledge" by which public opinion is enlightened, including writers, philosophers, experts, seasoned directors, politicians scattered in both the public and private sectors, university and secondary school teachers, journalists, filmmakers, parliamentarians, party figures, storytellers, novelists, doctors, former officers, and even immigrants, etc. This is because the republic needs scientists just as it needs painters, poets, and musicians. Intellectual consideration must be given to culture in itself and for itself as a necessary force to stand against the state when the state surrenders to total temptation (*tentation totalitaire*). Under this condition, every individual will have a field of creativity and individuality, and a source of confidence in the future [36].

This is what **Murray Wass** monitored in her emphasis that "the ability of a politician or politics to govern is increasingly and closely tied to his or her public image. And the president's ability to control news information in general, and the flow of television news in particular, is of utmost importance, deciding his fate in office. By attempting to make television networks focus on events and issues considered 'successes,' he hopes to maintain a certain level of popularity, and vice versa"

[37]. Among the firmly rooted examples in the memory of two generations of Algerian public opinion is when the late Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika dispelled rumors about his death by appearing on Wednesday in one of the official government television broadcasts, receiving Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal and the Chief of Staff of the Algerian Army, the late General Ahmed Gaïd Salah, at his residence in the "Les Invalides" hospital in the French capital, Paris. Despite his first appearance since the announcement of his stroke on April 27, 2013, his images on screen—with tiredness clearly showing on him—sparked wide discussions in newsrooms and social media platforms regarding the extent of his full recovery [38]. This occurred amidst questions about the reason for his visit by Sellal and General Salah instead of the President of the Council of the Nation (the second man in the state) or the President of the Constitutional Council.

Television footage showed President Bouteflika wearing a black coat and surrounded by his two guests in a sitting room, where he appeared listening to them sometimes and joking with them at other times. Although television did not broadcast what was discussed between the officials but it showed Bouteflika sipping a cup of coffee and chewing traditional sweets placed on a small table between the three of them. This appearance of Bouteflika is considered as the first of its kind after a wave of criticism that targeted him and his government for 47 days regarding the credibility of statements concerning his health. That situation inflamed the political and media arena after parties and journalists demanded the government produce a medical report proving the president's non-incapacity or showing him in voice and image. Tiredness was evident on the president in the images, as his right-hand movements were sluggish, while the images did not show the president using his left hand. This observation sparked wide discussions on the social network Facebook, while a number of party leaders apologized for making statements about the video until meeting with their party leaderships [39]. Each time, the president would disprove news of his death by appearing on the television screen a day or two after the rumors. However, this time the period was prolonged, causing foreign and national media to talk about his clinical death or his suffering from paralysis at the very least.

What heightened the controversy is the French authorities' announcement of the president's transfer from the "**Val-de-Grâce**" hospital to the "**Les Invalides**" hospital, which is a center concerned with functional rehabilitation for disabled members. As much as these images proved President Bouteflika's survival, they sparked discussions about the nature of his guests: rather than the President of the Council of the Nation (who is the second man) in the state, Abdelkader Bensalah, the Minister Delegate to the Minister of Defense, Abdelmalek Guenaïzia, or the President of the Constitutional Council, Tayeb Beliz.... and tension returned through opposition media, political opposition, and many national elites regarding the necessity of resorting to the text of the first paragraph of Article 88 of the Constitution, which states: "If it is impossible for the President of the Republic to exercise his duties due to a serious and chronic illness, the Constitutional Council must meet, and after verifying the reality of this impediment by all appropriate means, it proposes unanimously to Parliament to declare the existence of the impediment."

The second paragraph of the same article stated that "Parliament, meeting in both its chambers assembled together, declares the existence of the impediment of the President of the Republic by a two-thirds majority of its members, and charges the President of the Council of the Nation to assume the interim presidency of the State for a maximum period of 45 days..."

The Journalist Abdelnour Boukhemkhem commented on the late Abdelaziz Bouteflika's reception of Sellal and Bensalah by saying that "the President and his group do not want to acknowledge in the first place the constitutional discussion that imposes itself on the subject of the President's health." Adding his commentary on the images broadcast by television, he stated that "the first impression that can be taken from these scenes is that the health crisis he went through left severe effects in him, I believe it is difficult to overcome them within the time horizon talked about by the official narrative" [40].

Finally... Social Networks Dominate Power, Media, and Algerian Public Opinion

Journalists no longer have to ask: Is the news story important enough to make them pledge to conceal the source? And can this pledge be maintained even if it leads to a prison sentence, a financial fine, and accumulation on his newspaper? It is possible to resort to suspending the case before the court. Public opinion can also be mobilized, and compromises can be bargained (John L. Hulteng, 1981, pp. 102–103).and The examples in this context are many.

Ever since the late Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced that the state of emergency imposed in the country for 19 years would be lifted "as soon as possible," as an official source reported. The Algeria Press Service quoted Abdelaziz Bouteflika as saying: "I charge the government to immediately embark on drafting appropriate texts that will allow the state to continue fighting terrorism to the end with the same effectiveness and within the framework of the law." The late Bouteflika announced that: **"Lifting the law banning marches throughout the national territory, with the exception of the capital,"** provided that applications are submitted and the conditions required by law are met." Bouteflika justified the exclusion of Algiers from this decision on the grounds that the capital **"is linked to public order and not as a principle to suppress freedom of expression within it."** [41] The late former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika had drawn for the security forces the boundaries of dealing with popular protests, which reached up to 1200 protests annually. Committed to the constitutional tasks entrusted to them, the national security forces worked to protect the protesters and record their demands audio-visually for the benefit of the Presidency of the Republic, to avoid conflicts between the field reports of various institutions or even media field reports and investigations. However, there was no government body at that time capable of looking at public issues from a holistic perspective; therefore, improvement could only occur partially. [42]

Thus came the 2011 Algeria protests as a series of protests that continued from December 28TH, 2010, to January 10TH, 2012. The protests were inspired by similar protests throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The reasons cited by the protesters included unemployment, housing shortages, rising food prices, corruption, restrictions on freedom of expression, and poor living conditions. Despite the prevalence of local protests in previous years, an unprecedented wave of simultaneous protests and riots erupted across the country in January 2011, ignited by sudden hikes in basic food prices. The government was able to control these protests through governmental measures to reduce food prices. [43]

Not a single day passed after the issuance of the decisions of the late Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in the Official Gazette, by which he lifted the state of emergency and approved the granting of massive loans in investment, housing, and employment, before thousands of young people responded by announcing the establishment of a bloc on the internet, confirming that those decisions were insufficient and that change had become necessary. Furthermore, a number of non-accredited parties joined another bloc in which they threatened a "reformist revolution." Bouteflika had hoped that his decisions would be met with applause greatly by the youth segment, whom he singled out with ambitious projects. However, the youths' response was different, as about 485,000 young Algerians succeeded in delivering a strong message to Bouteflika via the social networking sites **"Facebook"** and **"Twitter"** through their national observatory, in which they called upon young Algerians inside and outside the country to join this observatory in order to change conditions in Algeria peacefully. They explained that their observatory is non-political and open to everyone without exception, and their sole goal is **"to change conditions in Algeria in a manner that aligns with the aspirations of the youth."**

This youth who has represented and represents the striking and crushing force of Algerian public opinion, which has long been perplexed by the lack of reliable data available to the government and experts... or intervention, visual clarification, and so on [44]. By the Algerian authorities representing the entire ruling regime, a situation and general environment reached the limits of

suffocation, and political and popular choking as a public opinion appeared, crossing the official and legal borders of the traditional media and journalistic institutions of the Algerian state through the dominance of electronic media sources as an independent supplier of information to Algerian public opinion, escaping the legal loopholes left by legislative shortcomings and delays resulting from the fear of granting free spaces for freedom of opinion, expression, and thought. This, in turn, created an information environment in Algeria that can be described as **"polluted"** in terms of the quality of information that the Algerian citizen hoped to receive and which was unbalanced.

Algerian journalists were not able to prove the opposite of what the communication cell offices and summary offices in the ministries stated. As for news, reports, investigations, and features contrary to the governmental agenda, they inevitably fell into the dock of accusation—such as the news of the "yellow air" in the series *Al-Masloub**—as soon as the spread of the yellow air epidemic was announced, the villagers would evacuate their matchless village for occupation by the newcomer without war to settle in it. Thus, the effect occurs among the tribesmen (public opinion) in our modern concept in the Algerian case, leaving behind them, as the Algerian proverb says: **"When the bandir [frame drum] tears, the circle of the maddahin [praisers] disperses"** [45].

This is what the residents of social networks operating under the banner of "democracy" and the denizens of the virtual public sphere bet on back then, which is the paradox the strange paradox that the "2019 Popular Hirak" confirmed when the separation occurred between the media, public opinion, and political authority, and journalists turned into those accused of collusion with the ruling authority under the temptations of public money (public advertising). A schism and fragmentation occurred within the psychology of Algerian media professionals at that time regarding the issue of rights and ethical duties toward practicing the profession, between two major currents that agreed on "national unity" and differed in everything else. But the anger soon subsided, and the talk became not about duties, but about the (rights) that are to be taken [46]. For history, according to Malak Bennabi, does not begin from the stage of rights, but from the stage of modest duties in the simplest sense of the word, the duties specific to every day, every hour, every minute; not in their complex sense, as those who obstruct daily construction efforts with hollow words and false slogans complicate it—on purpose—obstructing history under the pretext that they are waiting for "dangerous hours" [47]. But what Malak Bennabi wanted to say is that sometimes the context may differ, but the trumpets remain similar.

For further clarification—according to what Professor Nasreddine Layadi argued in his study "An Essay to Study Communication in Algerian Society: Some Epistemological Concerns in the Digital Environment"—it can be said that the visible *ego* on the screen of social networking sites is considered a composite component of three *egos* according to the researcher Fanny Georges: declarative identity (*l'identité déclarative* - representing the self), acting identity (*l'identité agissante*), and calculated identity (*l'identité calculée*).

We argue that communication through social networking sites in the Algerian environment blends between the declarative and calculated identities, about which the Moroccan philosopher Abdeslam Benabdelali says that what we display today for the sight and hearing of others is not our lives, but artificial and fabricated images, and a production that changes according to circumstantial needs. This widens the gap between what we are and what we place under the gaze of others [48].

Up to here, Nasreddine Layadi raises his right hand, placing his middle finger into the palm of his left hand facing upwards, announcing a "point of order." He invites us to take a moment with the self, with the essence, and with the environment, saying: "We pause at this point so that we do not go where to what Hichemcharabi went in his memoirs when he asked: "How can an individual in our society know his true self when, from childhood, he is surrounded by individuals who do not know their own selves, living in a world based on lies and deception? Everyone I have known from the sons of my society wishes, in one way or another, to be another person, pretending to be

someone other than who they are." [49] One of the underlying sources behind this deep disturbance in personal identity construction is the conflict of narratives, information, and news divisions within the same national media system—or at least sources of the same nationality, the same gender, and the same affiliation—regarding subjects that, at the very least, shape a single destiny and a unified future. A quick reading of that specific period, leading up to the beginning of the—later blessed—Hirak in 2018, reveals a division in Algerian public opinion that traditional media outlets have worked to deepen the polarization. Newspapers published in French worked to shape an elite with a French culture, while the Arabic press worked to shape an elite with an Arab cultural frame of reference. Although this cultural diversity is useful in theory, it became harmful and costly in practice because it did not seek to build bridges of cooperation and interaction to form a single cultural elite in its diversity, and it failed to establish the required dialogue as a result of the frequent accusations of being a foreign agent. [50].

Even if a part of it was later proven to be true in the Algerian case to a certain extent, in order not to seize the remaining areas of freedom in the country as guaranteed by successive Algerian constitutions and legislation related to national media.

That antagonistic and sometimes competitive relationship manifests itself, and at other times wears the coat of unjustified narcissism. It carries many irrational and ill-defined positions and visions that are not based on the legitimacy of any project, even a preliminary one. From afar, and without prior permission, a dangerous accusatory mind controls, attempting to find in the social and psychological wounds of Algerians—as public opinion fluctuating between the harsh recent past of the revolution (1954–1962) and the Black Decade ending in 1999—a space to monopolize the dream of power or to win a little "rent" in exchange for "silence" regarding the "corruption" of that same period, and to frighten the other from participating in (voting) as an independent act according to my observations. However, the Algerian democratic experience revealed during this critical period of the history of the Algerian state and nation that thousands of activists who were proponents of a boycott on social networks were the same ones who later filled the lists of candidates for parliamentary elections after the presidential elections of December 12, 2019, as a political tactic to empty the ballot boxes in Algeria of the symbolism of high participation rates for the ruling authority and thus achieving smooth infiltration into the legislative and executive power circles later with a comfortable, dominant minority. Hence, a specific political faction achieves two political gains with one networked media propaganda strike, especially since political parties in Algeria were deeply eroded by the worm of "political wandering" (floor-crossing), which was a subject of mockery by Algerian public opinion and a manifestation of corruption. Indeed, the mantra of the opposition, in general, was to repeat the American wisdom that **"the fish rots from the head"** to market an alternative that was also not credible, lacked mechanisms for political work and a real electoral base, and failed to absolve itself in the sanctuary of Algerian public opinion, which had placed everyone in the basket of mistrust.

As a product of this renewed conflict between the three forces: the authority, the opposition, and the Algerian network society—locally and in the diaspora—and as a natural consequence of the results of the 2019 presidential elections, the 2020 constitutional referendum, and the legislative elections; and the fading voice of national public and private media accused of bias toward the ruling authority from the first day of the first Friday of the blessed Hirak. Conversely, there was a non-innocent amplification of certain electronic websites such as (TSA) and (Patriote), supported by hundreds of thousands of politicized social media pages. Algerian journalists have long wondered where these two media outlets obtained this enormous amount of sources, and how they could precede the public sector in broadcasting even the most sacred official news, bypassing official media sources or the authoritarian hierarchy in such cases. Critics of the website within Algeria sometimes also see its coverage of crises and official policies as characterized by excessive focus on negative aspects and opposition rhetoric, and reliance on sensationalist headlines ("chasing sensationalism") or broadcasting unverified leaks at times, compared to the strict

standards of investigative journalism. Closely answering part of this question, **Bernard Cathelat**, in his famous work *Publicité et Société* [Advertising and Society], argues that it inevitably happens: "in order to bring about a change in the quantitative pattern of social relations, and they also contribute to changing the nature of culture." [51]

Bernard Cathelat continues to decode such crises or emergency situations and the interactions between public opinion—with its psychological and cognitive data and its demographic power—and the authority with its three tools (information, economy, and power), as if he were simulating the Algerian case in its local and international systems when he writes these descriptive paragraphs as follows: "When communication exceeds the framework of exchange between individuals, its form changes and its functions change as well. Similarly, the nature and function of news transition from the oral to the written, and after that, they move to the audiovisual and then to the electronic... Mass communication is characterized by its industrial tariff..." ... and, of course, the unknown to both the sender and the receiver alike. It is currently also characterized by its universality: synchronous relationships... which is what characterizes open cultural systems [52]. Which forewarns us of the existence of: "...intersections between real societies and virtual societies... and these gatherings allow a freedom that may not be available in lived reality as it is in the symbolic space." [53]

As an example of the destitution between the two spaces in the Algerian case, regarding the impact of censorship on freedom of publishing, 64.6% of respondents believe that they avoid expressing their opinions, especially sensitive ones regarding orientations toward certain issues, while 35.4% of them state that it does not affect their answers, which means that at least 7.4% of respondents do not care about censorship despite their belief in its existence. The researcher concluded that approximately two-thirds of the respondents practice self-censorship when they publish or comment on content posted on Facebook. The researcher attributed this to several factors, headed by judicial prosecution that could reach them as a result of publishing content that touches upon individuals or state apparatuses. This is a result of the arrest campaigns that affected many activists on social networking sites in the period that accompanied and followed the 2014 presidential elections, not to mention the fear of the "other," as many respondents do not trust their counterparts among users despite their interaction with them, because the type of relationship existing between them does not reach the level of trust and self-disclosure [54].

In addition to that, many choose the members of their social networks from their real surroundings (their acquaintances), and by doing so, they prove their lack of trust in the virtual space, or at least they do not see in it an opportunity as a new and wider field for building reliable relationships; this applies to active users. On the other hand, we find passive users who do not perform any publishing or sharing of content, but rather suffice with reading and passing by without interaction for fear of revealing their identities. As for the group that sees that.

[54]Amel Ghazal, [The Role of Social Networks in Shaping Public Opinion Toward Political Issues Among Algerian Users: An Analytical Survey Study of a Sample of Facebook Users (2014 Presidential Elections) as a Model], PhD Thesis (3rd cycle) in Media and Communication Sciences, unpublished (Print Journalism specialty), Department of Media Sciences, Faculty of Information and Communication Sciences, University of Algiers 3, 2018–2019,p 128.

Censorship does not affect the freedom of publishing, thus is the group that is found in the heart of the network and react a lot with what is published. Many of them believe that there is no censorship. There for, they do not care about what they publish and they often fall in unpredictable errors.[55]

Study findings

1. The relationship between this trinity (Power, Media, and Public Opinion) in the Algerian case is a structural, complex, and difficult-to-understand relationship, as it often strongly

and violently invokes the past (history), with the Black Decade representing an undesirable model for society and institutions today and in the future.

2. The concepts of "independence" and "freedom" have not yet matured among the parties of this trinity to achieve a general agenda that can serve as a foundation for building a deeper and more mature legislative, economic, and ideological media reference.
3. The Algerian public opinion has become almost "mute" and sometimes more "cautious" as a result of the criminalization of publishing on social networks and the prevailing fear of communication. After being one of the huge sources of unofficial information of both media and power, it is gradually in the post period of Hirak being aware of the accumulation of experiences, to the shift of the conflict from the media control to information and agenda control.
4. The Algerian public opinion learned from successive local and international crises to rely on its own analysis to produce protective knowledge, primarily using the comparative method as a dominant style on communication outcomes in both public and virtual spaces.
5. The Algerian public opinion transformed from a recipient to a producer of supervisory information, succeeding hundreds of times in imposing its topics and news agenda through the mobilization of electronic sources and digital mass recruitment. Declaring freedom from foreign nomophobia as well as some national media messages.

Conclusion

The trinity relationship between power, media, and public opinion in the Algerian context cannot be read from a binary or even tertiary perspective in terms of power formation, types of public opinion, or the topics raised also, the concept and method of social style in the present social psychology even if it was the brand of an accelerated work for exchanging information within a cosmic order imposing on all societies to open up to foreign missions. So, the contents of these missions and the power of technology that have melted geographical and demographic boundaries on this planet except that the biggest rock of which these foreign missions did not find a hole which leads it to build a pathway inside it, the ultimate core remains the beautiful, multi-length adherence (Algerian public opinion).

One of its seven layers, the Algerian citizen adheres to his ancient, modern and contemporary history. A history infused with an openness to the other—especially after passing the test of the Black Decade—represents the wings of this nation towards transcendence urging with a linguistic diversity which becomes a sole merciful voice coming from common and various layers in which its echo is seen, heard and read in one media ending with orders of customs as a secret and legislative source that flow in the spirituality of its substance in only read by the one who heard and he is a witness of the latent cultural mobility like the historical mobility and static like it for 15 centuries despite the hurricanes that shook the fortress was studied with the news of history for the one who wishes to gain deeper understanding of the Algerian public opinion... a public opinion in my view, since the colonial era still extends its sight to the sky (horizon).

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