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The Resurgence of Algeria's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century

YAHIA H. ZOUBIR

Algeria's Diplomatic Offensive: Ending a Decade of Isolation

In January 1992, the military regime in Algeria interrupted the electoral process when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the main opposition party, seemed poised to win an overwhelming majority in parliament. Many countries disapproved of the military's termination of the country's promising democratic experiment, and Algeria entered a period of international isolation from which it has begun to emerge only recently. Suspicion toward the regime, both domestically and internationally, was widespread. Algeria's notorious lack of international communication generated persistent and sometimes far-fetched speculation about the reality of the country's internal affairs. Not surprisingly, outside powers were ill-informed about Algerian affairs. Given the existence of multiple centres of power within the central government, Algerian diplomats themselves were uncertain about their country's foreign policy.¹

Algeria's rivals in the region, particularly Morocco and Egypt, exploited Algeria's weakened international position to undercut its prominent role in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Morocco, Algeria's traditional rival, launched a diplomatic offensive to isolate the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), Algeria's protégé in the region, and reverse Algeria's diplomatic gains of the 1970s and 1980s. At the 34th summit of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) in Ouagadougou in 1998, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Benin and Morocco's other allies sought exclusion of the SADR from the OAU. In March 1998, the Moroccan government, headed by Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi, declared its intent to reintegrate the OAU, but only on the condition that the SADR be excluded from membership. Though it failed, this manoeuvre was aimed at weakening Algeria's traditional regional position.

When Abdelaziz Bouteflika took office as president in April 1999, he faced two colossal problems: a disastrous socio-economic situation and the legacy of almost a decade of isolation from the rest of the world. In other words, foreign policy mirrored domestic conditions. Soon after assuming the presidency,

Bouteflika indicated that he would tackle these interrelated issues. He launched an aggressive diplomatic offensive aimed at achieving two major objectives: restoring the country's image abroad and attracting foreign investment. The first objective was critical because Algerians in general believed that an unspoken embargo had been imposed on them. The rapidity with which Bouteflika succeeded in opening Algeria to the outside world and improving its reputation was a striking departure from the pattern of poor external communication that characterised his predecessors, with the exception of Mohammed Boudiaf (January–June 1992). Undoubtedly, Bouteflika's long experience as a diplomat and his contacts abroad were considerable assets. Indeed, although he had served under a socialist regime in the 1960s and 1970s, Bouteflika nonetheless was perceived as a liberal in his approach to economics, an important attribute in the eyes of the international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The eloquence of his domestic speeches, particularly those relating to 'Civil Concord', an initiative that he launched immediately upon becoming president, helped him gain some legitimacy and popularity.² This civil peace initiative resulted in relative domestic security and stability, giving Bouteflika greater credibility in his dealings with foreign governments. Bouteflika succeeded in convincing even the most sceptical foreign leaders that Algeria was back on the world stage. The expansion of Algeria's foreign policy began in Africa, Algeria's regional environment.

Renewing with Africa

The 1999 OAU summit, held in Algiers in July 1999, provided Algeria with the international legitimacy that Bouteflika had promised the country – 42 heads of state attended. Hosting the African Summit was a prelude to Algeria's effort to reassert its leading role on the continent, as well as to counter Egyptian, Libyan and Moroccan aspirations. In the 1990s, Morocco had succeeded in persuading many African countries to withdraw support for the SADR, despite the strong relations that it had established on the continent with Algeria's help.

Algeria also was determined to renew its involvement in the resolution of African conflicts. Not only did Algiers succeed in mediating a ceasefire between Ethiopia and Eritrea in June 2000, but the two warring parties eventually accepted Algeria's peace plan.³ UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were among the attendees at the signing ceremony in Algiers on 12 December 2000. This successful mediation earned Algeria recognition from the United States, particularly because earlier attempts to stop the conflict, which had caused over 200,000 deaths, had failed. Other foreign policy successes

further demonstrated Algeria's resolve to re-establish the dynamic role it had once played in Africa. For the first time since its independence in 1962, Algeria has appointed a Minister of African Affairs, Abdelkader Messahel.⁴ A special partnership between Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa also has developed since 1999. With these great African powers, Algeria has sought to facilitate conflict resolution as well as to represent Africa's voice on economic, political and cultural issues in international fora.⁵ This has included participating, for the first time, in the France–Africa Forum, an event that Algeria had always refused to attend. Algeria also was quite influential in eliciting African support in the struggle against international terrorism. Indeed, on 11–14 September 2002, Algeria hosted the African Union's intergovernmental conference on terrorism, which resulted in the adoption of a platform proposing ways to eradicate terrorism and tackle its roots.⁶

More importantly, since 1999 Algeria has played an effective role in the development of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which OAU members endorsed at their summit in Lusaka, Zambia on 11 July 2001. NEPAD figured in the agenda of the G8 Summit held in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada, on 26–27 June 2002. After meeting with the presidents of Algeria, South Africa, Nigeria, and Senegal, G8 members adopted the *Africa Action Plan*, 'a framework for action in support of the NEPAD'. Each of the G8 members also agreed to establish enhanced partnerships with African countries whose performance 'reflects the NEPAD commitments'.⁷

The Maghrib: The Thorny Neighbourhood

While recent Algerian diplomacy in sub-Saharan Africa has been successful, achievements in the immediate neighbourhood have been limited. The process of Maghribi construction stalled in December 1995, when Morocco decided to suspend its participation in the Arab Maghrib Union (UMA), citing Algeria's pro-Sahrawi position. There could be no process of integration without progress in relations between Algeria and Morocco, which were at a low ebb throughout the 1990s.⁸ Bouteflika was genuinely interested in developing better relations with the regional rival, stating in his presidential program that 'the revitalisation of the process of Maghribi integration, through the UMA, should mobilise Algeria's readiness and efforts'.⁹ King Hassan II declared his readiness to strengthen relations with Algeria and bolster ties of co-operation and solidarity between the two nations.

In July 1999, before the UMA summit, a meeting between Bouteflika and Hassan seemed imminent, but the monarch died suddenly on 24 July. Although this was a setback, Bouteflika's conspicuous presence at the funeral confirmed that the move toward rapprochement between the two

governments was genuine. His attendance marked the first time in a decade that an Algerian president had visited Morocco. Tensions surrounding the opening of the border, which had been closed since summer 1994, diminished, becoming nothing more than a matter of resolving some 'technical problems'. Plans for a summit between Bouteflika and Mohammed VI seemed to be in the offing.¹⁰

Optimism about the evolution of Algerian–Moroccan relations ended abruptly in late August 1999. A controversy surrounding the reported involvement of nine members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in a massacre in the south-western city of Béni Ounif and their alleged retreat into Morocco erupted in a mini-crisis. Morocco disputed the *Agence France Presse* report vigorously, insisting that the Algerian–Moroccan border was in fact 'well-guarded and secure'.¹¹ In his speech on 1 September 1999, President Bouteflika insisted that 'double talk' on the part of the Moroccan authorities was incompatible with neighbourly and brotherly relations. Bouteflika accused Morocco in blunt terms of harbouring and financing Algerian terrorists and allowing arms and drug trafficking.¹² He also insisted on conditions on reopening the border and the building of the UMA that would require measures to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit activities, stating that Algeria would not be made the 'milking cow of the Maghrib'. Because of the perceived need for regionalisation, however, Algerians endeavoured, albeit with little success, to renew the process of Maghribi integration.

The mood seemed favourable to reconciliation by February 2000, a month that marked the eleventh anniversary of the establishment of the UMA. The two countries reiterated their pledge to continue the process of integration and planned to attend the Cairo Summit for African–European Co-operation, a name used in place of the 'OAU–EU Summit' to permit the participation of Morocco, which froze its membership in the OAU in protest against the organisation's recognition of the Western Sahara as independent. During the April 2000 summit, the heads of state of Algeria, Libya, Morocco and, apparently, Tunisia held a short meeting under the auspices of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. While Algeria's relations with Libya and Tunisia had improved considerably, tension with Mauritania remained due to Algeria's condemnation of its decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel without consulting its UMA partners. Regardless, many hoped that the Maghribi meeting – the first of its kind since the historic gathering in Marrakesh in February 1989 – was a positive sign. It signified the readiness of regional actors to resuscitate the immobile UMA and portended a Maghribi Summit.¹³ Undoubtedly, the Maghrib countries find it increasingly difficult to face the new economic realities of globalisation by themselves.

The Eizenstat Initiative, named after its promoter Stuart Eizenstat, US Under-Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs

during the Clinton Administration, seeks to encourage the three Maghrib countries to harmonise their customs systems, increase bilateral trade exchange and establish a high-level dialogue with the US in order to attract US investors to the Maghrib. The Initiative remains a constant reminder to Algeria that the US views the three nations as an integrated whole that potentially could expand eastward.¹⁴

Algeria took the lead in reviving the UMA. A tripartite summit between Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania was planned for late June 2000. Bouteflika aimed to mend its relationship with Mauritania and strengthen ties to Tunisia, declaring during his visit to Paris in June 2000 that relations between the countries were excellent. Given that the planned gathering would take place after Mohammed VI's official visit to Tunisia, observers assumed that negotiations were underway for the organisation of a full Maghribi Summit that would include Egypt, which holds an observer status in the UMA.

Hopes for the summit dissipated yet again following the United Nations attempt to suggest an alternative to the referendum on the Western Sahara that had been agreed upon previously by all parties. Adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 31 May 2000, UN Resolution 1301 reiterated UN support for the implementation of a 'free, fair, and impartial referendum for the self-determination of the people of the Western Sahara', but it barely concealed its veiled intent to promote the so-called 'third way' that France and the United States were pushing. Both countries were convinced that Morocco would lose the referendum and thus would never abide by the results should it ever take place. They promoted another approach that would avoid a 'winner-take-all' referendum. Through the UN, France and the United States encouraged the Sahrawis to accept 'autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty'. In Paris and Washington, the perception was and still is that a Sahrawi victory would destabilise the new king, Mohammed VI, who in their view is a moderniser capable of bringing reforms that can pave the way for economic and political liberalisation. Undoubtedly, French and US support bolstered Morocco's unflinching position on the Western Sahara, but neither country could convince Algeria to alter its position and endorse a 'third way'.¹⁵

Despite their genuine willingness to normalise relations, Algeria and Morocco collide unavoidably over the conflict in the Western Sahara. In an environment of general goodwill, this is the only issue on which co-operation has been absent. Neither side has retreated from its position. Algeria supports the UN resolutions calling for a referendum on self-determination. Attempts at mediation notwithstanding, the stalemate over Western Sahara remains the chief impediment to any rapprochement, without which Maghribi integration is unattainable. The promising UMA Summit scheduled to take place in Algiers in June 2002 was cancelled at the last minute. Purportedly halted at

Muammar Qadhafi's request, in reality it was King Mohamed VI's refusal to attend over the Western Sahara issue that led to postponement of the meeting.¹⁶

The postponement constituted a blow to hopes for renewal of the UMA process. Although there was some possibility that a Maghrib summit would be held in 2003, the question of the Western Sahara remained problematic. The January 2003 visit by UN Personal Envoy James A. Baker to the region has led to more pessimism rather than creating conditions for a resolution of the conflict. His 'new' proposal for autonomy for the Sahrawis under Moroccan sovereignty – a reiteration of the 'third way' – not only violates international legality and the agreements sanctioned by the United Nations, but also has had the potential for further destabilisation.¹⁷

However, even while tension persists, both Morocco and Algeria are reluctant to engage in direct military confrontation. In fact, Mohamed Lamari, Algeria's military strongman, declared during a May 2000 visit to Moscow that his negotiation of a significant arms deal with the Russians to modernise and acquire armament was not aimed at upsetting the regional balance of power but only at defending Algeria's territorial integrity.¹⁸ In recent years, Morocco has also engaged in modernisation of its armed forces to ensure mutual deterrence. Whatever reassurance each side gives the other, it is not likely to result in any improvement in relations as long as the conflict over Western Sahara persists. In fact, despite Algeria and Polisario's acceptance of the Baker Plan II, tension remained due mostly to Morocco's rejection of the plan.

France

Algeria's relationship with France has always been complex. However, perceptions have evolved in both countries, instituting a higher degree of normality and stability between them. Despite French disappointment regarding the conditions under which Bouteflika was elected in April 1999, Bouteflika's policy of national reconciliation and the support it obtained domestically created better prospects for French–Algerian relations. In late 1999 and early 2000, high-level French and Algerian officials exchanged visits, signalling the end of a decade of perceptible hostility, especially under President Liamine Zérroual's presidency. At the same time, however, France was apprehensive about positive developments in Algeria's relationships with other Mediterranean countries, such as Italy and Spain, particularly in the economic domain.¹⁹

Still, this remarkable rapprochement led to Bouteflika's state visit to France (14–17 June 2000), the first since Chadli Bendjedid's visit in 1983. Bouteflika astutely highlighted the exceptional state of Algerian–French relations, insisting that '*l'Algérie veut entretenir des relations extraordinaires, non banales, pas normales, exemplaires, exceptionnelles avec la France*'.²⁰

Bouteflika also highlighted France's pivotal role in the Mediterranean and its assistance in mediating between Algeria and the European Union (EU). Throughout his visit, Bouteflika urged French businesspeople to invest in Algeria. Promising sweeping reforms that would make foreign business operations in Algeria less cumbersome, Bouteflika pleaded with France to alleviate Algeria's debt burden, about 50 per cent of which is owed to France. Bouteflika obtained the conversion of a modest \$60 million in debt into investments. However, overall, and despite promises, Bouteflika did not obtain much from his visit, even if the prospects looked rather positive.

On 1 December 2001, Jacques Chirac made a one-day stop in Algiers, where he walked around the flood-ravaged neighbourhood of Bab el Oued. Chirac's visit was the first by a French president since François Mitterrand's in 1989. The warm welcome Chirac received was indicative of progress. The visit came just two months after the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September. Chirac praised Bouteflika's 'determination' to contribute to the fight against global terrorism and revealed that France and Algeria were in the process of intensifying intelligence collaboration to confront the new challenge.

In sum, relations between Algiers and Paris improved considerably. Algerians are aware that good relations with France are a *sine qua non* for support within the EU. Although economic relations with the United States have increased considerably, France remains Algeria's main supplier of imports, with 25 per cent of market share compared to 11.22 per cent from the United States, 10.52 per cent from Italy and 5.28 per cent from Spain. Beyond political issues, such as the opening of French consulates in major Algerian cities, the most noticeable change concerns economic issues. Indeed, commercial exchanges grew from €4 billion in 1999 to €6.4 billion in 2001, which represents a growth of 60 per cent in just two years, making Algeria France's second-largest commercial partner outside the OECD countries after China.²¹ The trend is likely to continue, solidified by the visit of French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin to Algeria in December 2002.²² President Chirac's visit to Algeria in March 2003 further reinforced the relationship. Indeed, Chirac declared that '*la France entend développer avec l'Algérie un partenariat d'exception*' and that the country will remain '*l'avocat le plus ardent des responsables algériens auprès des institutions financières internationales et auprès de l'Union européenne*'. The French president did not set any conditions beyond reiterating the need for reforms already required by the Accord of Association between the EU and Algeria, which are discussed in more detail in the chapter by Kada Akacem. '*De mettre en oeuvre un modèle de société et de développement fondé sur les valeurs de la démocratie, des droits de l'homme et sur une économie ouverte*'.²³ Only the future will tell how this 'exceptional partnership' between the two countries will unfold.

The European Union and Beyond

The alteration of France's attitude toward Algeria resulted in concurrent progress in Algeria-EU relations. In 1994, the EU recalled its permanent delegation in Algiers. Negotiations between the EU and Algeria resumed in 1997, but were interrupted the same year with new accusations that government security forces were involved in some of the horrific massacres that occurred in the country,²⁴ an allegation that has since been re-evaluated, as Clement Henry points out in chapter 5 of this volume. Talks did not start again until April 2000, leading to 18 rounds of negotiation that ended in November 2001 when Bouteflika signed the agreement in Brussels on 19 December. Beyond economic considerations, Algerians found satisfaction in the fact that the EU finally endorsed Algeria's thesis on terrorism. Until then, the EU had rebuffed Algeria's request to include terrorism in the negotiations. Algerians had argued consistently that terrorism was a global phenomenon and that Europe should provide assistance in the fight against it. The events of 11 September resulted in the insertion of a separate chapter on terrorism in the EU-Algeria Association Agreement securing the EU's support in the anti-terrorism struggle, especially in the eradication of groups that support Algerian Islamists from Europe.²⁵ Before 11 September, European governments had been reluctant to extradite Algerian Islamists who found refuge in their respective territories. For Europeans, human rights issues were paramount. Undoubtedly, Algeria's immediate co-operation in the global war on terrorism facilitated the EU's decision to include the chapter.

While the Association Agreement did much to break Algeria's decade-long isolation from Europe, the most fascinating event was Algeria's participation in the dialogue with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), from which Algeria had been excluded until 2000. When he visited Brussels to sign the Association Agreement, Bouteflika met with NATO's Secretary General Lord Robertson to discuss Mediterranean security in general and to work out the details for a security agreement between Algeria and NATO in particular. For most of the 1990s, Algeria was barred from the dialogue that NATO entertained with other Mediterranean countries. The immediate objective of the agreement was to provide a framework for military co-operation and intelligence sharing. The accord would also allow Algeria to obtain military equipment to combat terrorism.

Undeniably, Algeria's new foreign policy has had far-reaching results with the EU, NATO, France, the United States, Africa, China, Russia, the Arab world and other regions. Even countries that withdrew from the Algerian market, such as Germany, are exploring a possible return. Germany reached an understanding with Algeria on co-operation in the war against terrorism. In addition, while it has moved much closer to the West, Algeria has

maintained or renewed long friendships with countries in the now defunct Eastern Bloc. As in the past, Algeria's objective is to diversify its economic and political partners. In April 2001, for example, Bouteflika and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement. Described by the Russian Ambassador to Algeria as 'a document without precedent in Russia's relations in the Arab World and Africa',²⁶ the agreement is aimed at strengthening political, economic and military relations. Owing to Algeria's past military co-operation with the former Soviet Union, the main share of the accord involves the supply of military equipment and expertise, which amounts to \$3 billion.²⁷

This accelerated phase in the revitalisation of Algerian diplomacy inaugurates the reintegration of Algeria in world affairs as a state that can play an important role in regional conflicts, such as that between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and even the Arab–Israeli peace process. The United States seems to have recognised Algeria's new role. If the new Algerian regime succeeds in instituting the necessary reforms outlined elsewhere in this volume, the perception of Algeria as a pivotal state will be reinforced.

The United States and Algerian Foreign Policy since 11 September 2001

While relations with France thawed, US–Algerian relations witnessed an even greater expansion in many areas.²⁸ The best illustration of such progress was President Bouteflika's two-day visit to the United States in July 2001, the first since the visit of Chadli Bendjedid in April 1985. The visit came at a time when Bouteflika's policy of Civil Concord was being criticised harshly at home but enjoyed great support in the United States. Prior to the visit, despite the good impression Bouteflika had made since taking power, the US was reluctant to arrange a presidential meeting. The only interaction between the two countries' heads of state had been a brief encounter between Bouteflika and Bill Clinton at King Hassan's funeral in July 1999. Bouteflika had high expectations for the July 2001 meeting. Not only did he hope to obtain support for his domestic policies, he also hoped to secure co-operation agreements that could offset Algeria's heavy dependence on France and compensate for his failure to obtain substantial assistance during the previous year's visit to France.

Algerian officials hoped that Bouteflika's visit would inaugurate a new era in US–Algerian relations. They assumed that the Republican Administration would be less critical on human rights issues than the previous administration. In particular, they expected Vice-President Dick Cheney, with his ties to US oil companies operating in Algeria, to be sympathetic to Algiers. Despite some

reservations about the nature of the Algerian regime, American officials also were clearly aware that Algeria's recovery from the decade-long crisis could open new political and economic opportunities. In US eyes, Bouteflika's regime had restored some of the credibility that Algeria enjoyed before the crisis. With respect to the Maghrib, the US understands that the Western Sahara conflict is critical to North African stability and cannot be resolved without Algerian involvement. Indeed, the so-called 'third way', or any other alternative to the referendum, cannot succeed without Algerian acquiescence. Even in the Middle East, Algeria's influence is not insignificant. Washington has nudged Algeria to establish lines of communications with Israel. Last, but not least, the US sees the necessity of co-operating with Algeria on matters of global terrorism. In fact, in March 2001, FBI Director Louis Freeh made a short visit to Algiers to seek assistance from Algerian authorities in destroying Osama bin Laden's network.

While Bouteflika's visit was important, it did not produce the anticipated results. Although the US and Algeria signed a trade and investment framework agreement, the US expressed concern that economic reforms in Algeria are too limited, particularly in the banking and financial services sectors, a criticism echoed by Kada Akacem in chapter 9 of this volume. The accord puts in place a consultative procedure on trade and investment that will result in a bilateral investment treaty, mutual trade benefits and a double taxation arrangement. The accord opens Algeria's profitable oil and gas resources more broadly to multinational corporations, but US officials believe that in order to attract US businesses outside the hydrocarbons sector, bureaucratic hurdles must be lifted. Currently, the US is the largest investor in Algeria, with \$4 billion primarily in hydrocarbons. Without far-reaching upgrades to telecommunications systems, however, additional US businesses are reluctant to venture into the Algerian market. Only with these improvements can the level of US investment be increased to \$9 billion by 2005.

Echoing political criticism of the regime both within Algeria and throughout Europe, the US also reiterated its call for respect for human rights and civil liberties, especially in the wake of the tragic events in the Kabylia region, where gendarmes used live ammunition against protesters. Although the US government acknowledged Algeria's progress in expanding press freedom, for example, American officials expressed disappointment in efforts to curb political participation, including the regime's refusal to recognise two new parties founded by two former ministers. In sum, US willingness to expand relations with Algeria is conditioned on economic reforms, such as privatisation and liberalisation programmes, and an accelerated democratisation process.

Just days before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, reports indicated that the US would deliver sophisticated

anti-guerrilla equipment to Algeria, especially for the detection of troop movements, on the condition that it not use such equipment against its neighbours. This decision seemed to indicate that the US had finally decided to help Algeria eradicate terrorism. Clearly, the attacks of 11 September could not but bring the two countries closer, at least in the area of security co-operation. Algeria condemned the attacks unequivocally and agreed to join the international coalition led by the US, but argued that any military coalition should be under the United Nations umbrella and not be directed against 'a country, a religion, a people, a culture or a civilisation'.²⁹

From Algeria's perspective, the 11 September events vindicated the government's decade-long position on the global nature of terrorism and its capacity to threaten states. Algerian officials argued that they had been at the forefront of the struggle against terrorism in their own effort to deal with the loss of more than 100,000 lives and associated destruction. Algeria argued that it had fought terrorism on its own for years, without the world coming to the rescue. The regime took the opportunity to criticise Europe, the United States and Canada for having sheltered Islamist groups on their territories, ignoring the responsibility of those groups in events that led to the near collapse of the Algerian state. Algerian officials asserted that bin Laden had funded extremist groups like the GIA and the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), both of which are on Washington's list of terrorist organisations. The events of 11 September created an opportunity for Algeria to place itself with the 'right camp' and in a position to elicit assistance in eradicating its domestic terrorists. The authorities handed Washington a list of some 300 suspected Algerian militants on the run in Europe and the US and offered their co-operation in security and intelligence matters. Algeria also hoped that the US and Europe would reciprocate by extraditing Algerian extremists residing in their territories.

While the US-led 'global war on terrorism' enabled Algeria to improve its relations with America, it created a dilemma for Algeria at the same time. Between 1991 and 1998, the Algerian war on terrorism had been the focus of its diplomacy, but by 1999, Bouteflika's 'Civil Concord' and 'National Reconciliation' had emerged as priorities that were at odds with Washington's war on terror. Although the Algerian regime asserted for a decade that it was a victim of what it described as transnational terrorism on which the world had turned its back, Bouteflika's shift toward a policy of civil concord ended up absolving many terrorists of their crimes. The contradiction in Algerian policy is that the government (and most political parties) wholeheartedly, and very quickly, adhered to the conditions of the global war on terrorism as stipulated by Washington while simultaneously seeking to negotiate the surrender of terrorists in the name of national reconciliation. This has created tension between Bouteflika, who believes that pardon is the best

policy to end terrorism, and the so-called 'eradicators' in the Algerian military, who wish forcefully to eliminate terrorism and the religious parties and religiously based educational programmes that they perceive as its causes.

In order to consolidate his international coalition by involving as many Arab and Islamic countries as possible, US President George W. Bush invited Bouteflika to come to Washington again on 5 November 2001. Though focused on the issue of international terrorism, the visit to Washington was another opportunity for the Algerian regime to improve its image and seek business investment. Bouteflika's visit, ahead of Jacques Chirac's, could not but bolster Algerians' self-esteem. They felt vindicated when, less than a week before the visit, Bush called on Africans to ratify the Algiers Convention on Terrorism, which they had failed to endorse in summer 1999. Bouteflika's objectives in meeting with President Bush were to convince the latter that US–Algerian relations should be strengthened and, more importantly, to persuade him that the fight against terrorism would be in vain without dealing with its underlying causes, such as poverty and inequality, which are further exacerbated by globalisation. Thus, the meeting underscored a desire to have the US help Algeria economically, perhaps transforming its debt into investments to restore stability and mitigate one of the sources of political extremism. The Western Sahara issue was again high on the agenda because, from Algeria's perspective, regional stability requires an end to the conflict.

US–Algerian relations have continued to improve following the meeting. During his trip to Algeria in December 2002, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William Burns announced that the United States would provide Algeria with certain types of weapons to combat terrorism in reward for Algeria's co-operation with the United States in the war on terrorism.³⁰ In its April 2003 'Patterns of Global Terrorism' 2002 report, the US State Department recognised Algeria openly as one of the countries that 'actively supported the global campaign against terrorism'.³¹

Conclusion

Algeria's relations with the outside world have witnessed considerable change. This change has been more noticeable since the election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 1999. The military backed Bouteflika – '*le moins mauvais de tous les candidats*' – in part because of the perception that he would be capable of improving Algeria's image abroad, which had been tarnished due to suspicions of military involvement in at least some of the massacres attributed to armed Islamist groups. The aggressive foreign policy that Algeria has pursued in recent years helped dissipate those suspicions and effectively ended Algeria's isolation.

While Algeria has been reintegrated into the international community with great fanfare, the domestic results fall short of expectations. The substantial foreign direct investment that Algeria sought to attract outside the hydrocarbons sector has yet to materialise. The security situation no longer can be blamed for the Algerian market's lack of attractiveness. In fact, the security situation has improved considerably, even if terrorism has not been eradicated completely. Notwithstanding good macroeconomic indicators, slow implementation of economic reforms combined with various bureaucratic hurdles and corruption, not foreign actors, are largely to blame for the domestic *status quo*. Furthermore, the cyclical crisis at the highest levels of power, especially between the military and the presidency, has dissuaded at least some potential investors from venturing into the Algerian market. The military, though ostensibly eager to leave the realm of politics, remains suspicious of the president and thus continues to play a considerable role in Algeria's political life. It is not clear at the moment how disagreements between the military and the presidency will be resolved. While the leadership of the armed forces has stated unequivocally that the institution is undergoing a process of professionalisation and withdrawal from politics, the president's ambiguous intentions *vis-à-vis* the military have delayed it. There is no doubt that the military used 11 September as an opportunity not only to wage an all-out war against armed Islamist groups, but also to demand that the 'sources of religious terrorism', such as religious schools and politicised mosques, be eradicated as well. One may infer that the military, as the most anti-Islamist segment of the elite, is bitterly opposed to any solution to the decade-long crisis that would reintegrate the banned Islamic Salvation Front into the political system.

In a rather unexpected way, domestic contradictions between the military and the presidency have spilled over into the realm of foreign policy, where the president continues to seek support for 'National Reconciliation' – which seems to imply a restoration of the FIS – while the military wishes to obtain unambiguous support for the eradication of terrorism and its potential roots. The tragedy in Algeria is that the leadership, be it the military or civilian politicians, continues to treat Algerians as immature citizens. As Clement Henry argues in chapter 5, obstacles to the rise of a truly independent civil society are a serious impediment to progress, both domestically and internationally. There are hopeful signs that Algeria's rulers have recognised that unless they create genuine conditions for democracy, their survival in office will remain precarious.

NOTES

1. For an extensive and up to date treatment of Algeria's foreign policy, see Yahia H. Zoubir, 'The Dialectics of Algeria's Foreign Relations from 1990 to the Present', in Ahmed Aghrout and Rédha Bougherira (eds.), *Algeria in Transition: Reforms and Development Prospects* (London: Routledge 2004) pp.151–82.

2. For more information on the Civil Concord Law, see International Crisis Group, 'The Civil Concord: A Peace Initiative Wasted', 9 July 2001, accessed 13 July 2003, available at: (<http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=436>).
3. *El Moudjahid* (Algiers), 13 Dec. 2000.
4. *El Watan*, 14 March 2001.
5. Chérif Ouazani, 'L'année Bouteflika: Ce qu'il a fait de sa présidence de l'organisation continentale', *Jeune Afrique, L'Intelligent* 2060, 4–11 July 2000.
6. For details, see *Le Matin*, 15 Sept. 2002. The Action Plan can be found on the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs webpage, available at: (<http://www.mae.dz/index.asp?rub=2&ntitre=251>).
7. 'The Kananaskis Summit Chair's Summary', available at: (<http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/g7/summit/2002kananaskis/summary.html>); see also US Department of State copy of the plan, available at: (<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/11515.htm>).
8. For details, see Yahia H. Zoubir, 'Algerian–Moroccan Relations and their Impact on Maghrebi Integration', *Journal of North African Studies* 5/3 (Autumn 2000) pp.43–74.
9. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, 'Election présidentielle du 15 avril 1999: Programme' (no place of publication, Feb. 1999) p.89, '*la relance du processus de l'intégration maghrébine, à travers l'UMA, devra continuer à mobiliser la volonté et les efforts de l'Algérie*'.
10. Bouteflika told the Algerian daily *Al-Khabar* that enough time had been wasted and that 'if we do not hasten to achieve our aspirations, history will condemn us for negligence'. Reported in *Arabicnews*, 4 Aug. 1999.
11. *Arabicnews*, 27 Aug. 1999.
12. This brief summary is based on the author's live viewing of Bouteflika's speeches in the cities of Béchar and Tiaret during a visit to Algeria (Aug.–Sept. 1999). For extensive coverage, see *La Tribune*, 2 Sept. 1999; *El Watan*, 2 Sept. 1999; see also, *Arabicnews*, 2 Sept. 1999. Note that *Arabicnews* translated the text from *El Watan* without, however, acknowledging that source.
13. For the details of the meeting, see *La Tribune* (Algiers), 4 April 2000.
14. Interviews with US officials at Department of State and Department of Commerce, May 2000.
15. For details on the so called 'third way' in Western Sahara, see Yahia H. Zoubir, 'Sàhara Occidental la tercera vía: "Realpolitik" frente a legalidad internacional', [The Third Way in Western Sahara: 'Realpolitik' vs. International Legality], *Nación Arabe* (Madrid, Spain) 15/45 (Oct. 2000) pp.73–85.
16. For reports and commentaries, see Atmane Tazaghar, 'Libyan "Ideas" to Solve Western Sahara Problem Stall Maghreb Summit', *Daily Star*; 'Report du Sommet de l'UMA', *Le Matin*, 26 June 2002; *Le Jeune Indépendant*, 26 June 2002; B. Abdou, 'Le Maghreb est en berne', and Abed Charef, 'Le gâchis maghrébin', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 21 June 2002; Abdelkrim Ghezali, 'L'UMA ôtage de l'autisme des se dirigeants', *La Tribune*, 19 June 2002.
17. See, Mohamed Abdoun, 'Problème du Sahara Occidental: Baker risque de mettre le feu aux poudres', *L'Expression* (Algiers), 22 Jan. 2003; M. Saâdoune, 'Baker a défendu un remake de l'accord-cadre pour l'autonomie', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 21 Jan. 2003; see, also, 'Baker to have presented pro-Moroccan solution to Sahara conflict', *Afrol News*, 18 Jan. 2003.
18. *Algeria Interface*, 28 May 2002. '*Les moyens que nous acquerrons auprès de la Russie n'entraîneront aucun déséquilibre stratégique dans la région...; les moyens que nous avons et que nous moderniserons, et (ceux) que nous acquerrons sont destinés à la défense de l'intégrité de notre territoire...'*
19. See *Agence France Presse* (AFP, Paris), 23 Jan. 2000.
20. *Le Monde*, 17 June 2000. In other words, Algeria seeks to have exceptional, not simply normal or trivial, relations with France.
21. *Algeria Interface*, 26 July 2002.
22. Zine Cherfaoui, 'Alger vise un partenariat politique stratégique avec Paris', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 21 Dec. 2002.
23. Ghania Ouakazi, 'L'Algérie à fond', *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 4 March 2003.

24. This was the official reason the EU presented. However, in reality the EU suspended negotiations because unlike their neighbours, the Moroccans and Tunisians, the Algerians insisted not only on Algeria's economic specificity, but also on the free movement of people. See *La Tribune*, 19 Dec. 2001.
25. See the report in *El Moudjahid*, 18 Dec. 2001.
26. *El Moudjahid*, 6 April 2001.
27. *Le Jeune Indépendant*, 7 April 2001.
28. For a detailed analysis, see Yahia H. Zoubir, 'Algeria and U.S. Interests: Containing Radical Islamism and Promoting Democracy', *Middle East Policy* 9/1 (March 2002) pp.64–8.
29. See, *El Moudjahid*, 22 Sept. 2001. Both Bouteflika and the Algerian armed forces made it clear that Algeria would not participate in any military coalition that did not fall under UN control See the interview of Maj.Gen. Mohamed Touati, Presidential Advisor, in *El Watan*, 27 Sept. 2001.
30. Richard Boucher, Spokesman, US Department of State, *Daily Press Briefing*, Washington, DC, 11 Dec. 2002; see also Steven R. Weisman, 'U.S. to Sell Military Gear to Algeria to Help It Fight Militants', *New York Times*, 10 Dec. 2002.
31. United States Department of State, 'Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002', available at: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/>.