

Algeria's Gender Dialectic:

Tradition, Autocracy, and the
Pursuit of Gender Equality in
Algeria, 1962-2014



A North-African Enigma



Veiled & Unveiled,
in Public, Schools, and Sports

A North-African Enigma



Women have been important agents of change in Algeria since the 1950s.



A North-African Enigma

Yet

Unicef, Freedom House, Gender Index, the UN,
Amnesty Intl., Human Rights Watch, et al...

still rank women's rights in Algeria

behind Most of the World

even behind

Bahrain, Morocco, and Lebanon.

Why?



Yeah... Good Question. Why?

- **Introduction & Frame**
- **Thesis**
- **Background**
 - Algerian War
 - Family Code
 - Civil War
- **References**
 - Political Rights
 - Social Rights
 - Education
- **Clues**
 - Arab Spring
 - Employment
 - Civil Rights
- **Conclusion**

Although Algeria is

- Among the highest ranked in Africa for *female education* and *political participation*
- & women have been essential agents of modernization,

Algerian women still struggle against authoritarian and patriarchal structures of power.

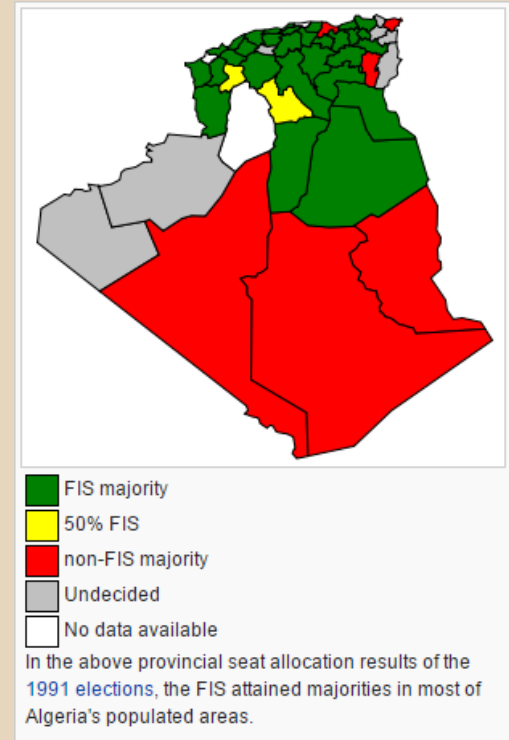
However,

Unlike the prevailing Western Narrative of why,

- my research suggests this has nothing to do with *religious conservatism*
- **but with patriarchal and autocratic nepotism and neoliberalism.**

Background

- Algerian War, 1954-1962
 - FLN
 - Women's Organizations
- Family Code
 - 1984
- Civil War, 1991-2002
 - Atrocities towards Women
 - 200,000 dead



Political Rights

- Right to Vote, 1962
- Women in Parliament
 - 1/3 Total Seats
- Female Judges
 - nearly 50% of Total
- Family Code Changed, 2005
 - Remove Ambiguities
 - “duty of wife to obey husband”



Education

- Elementary
 - More Boys than Girls, but Not by Much
- Secondary
 - More Girls than Boys, Just over 50%
- Tertiary
 - 61% of College Graduates are Women



Social Rights

- Access to Health Services
 - 60% Contraceptive Use
- Sexual Harassment
 - Criminalized
- Freedom of Movement
- Legal age of Marriage, 19
 - But not without Paternal Consent
- No restrictions of Dress



Social Rights Continued

- Sexual Violence -
hatk al-'ardh
“Attack of the Honor”
 - Prison Time
 - but Marriage can Expunge
- Divorce
 - Still Unequal
 - Men may Divorce without Cause



Clues

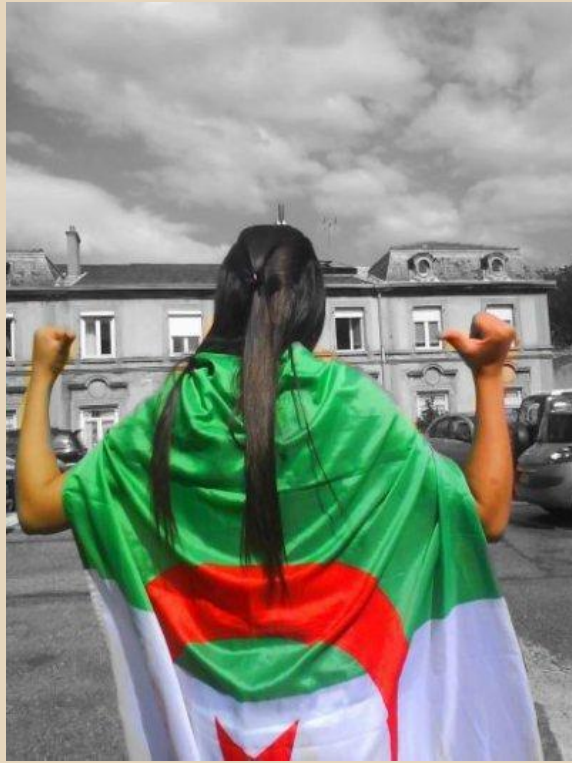
- Very Low Rate of Female Employment, 17%
 - Despite Women's Education
- Arab Spring, except without Algeria
 - What little there was, shut down
- Civil Rights, fading
 - Assembly, Association, and Speech
- More than Half of Eligible Voters Abstained from 2011 Elections!

Resistance to Change

- Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President since 1999
 - Nepotism and Networks of Power
- The Real Power is “*le Pouvoir*”
 - Ruling Elite since 60s
- Elite Circles
 - Plutocracy and \$ from Hydrocarbons
- Resistance to Transparency
 - Allowances Made, Ruse of Progress

Conclusion

- Though women's rights in Algeria appear to have improved,
 - They still remain subjected to Patriarchy
 - & resistance to real civilian agency
- **Civil Rights in General have Suffered**
 - Due to the nepotistic and neoliberal practices of the ruling Elites
- **As Usual, Oil is to Blame...**



Thank You!