

**ISLAMISM, VIOLENCE
AND REFORM IN ALGERIA:
TURNING THE PAGE**

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ISLAMISM, VIOLENCE AND REFORM IN ALGERIA: TURNING THE PAGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the third of a series of briefings and reports on Islamism in North Africa.¹ The first provided general background on the range and diversity of Islamic activism in the region, and subsequent papers examine with respect to particular states, the outlook and strategies of the main Islamist movements² and organisations, their relations with the state and each other and how they have evolved. The analysis focuses on the relationship between Islamic activism and violence, especially but not only terrorism and the problem of political reform in general and democratisation in particular.

Algeria has been a case study in how not to deal with Islamist activism. Its experience dwarfs that of its neighbours in both scale of violence -- over 100,000 deaths since 1991 -- and number of Islamic organisations disputing the religious, political and military fields. This proliferation owes much to the authorities who, in contrast to their regional counterparts, displayed a consistently precipitate and reckless attitude toward major policy decisions in the critical 1989-1992 period and have failed to eliminate all the armed movements that have emerged since. But there is now an opportunity to turn this tragic page. Seizing it requires a skilful blend of political, security, legal and diplomatic measures to eliminate remaining armed groups. But Algeria's political class also must recast debate around a new agenda of practical reform. Europe needs to help more, and the U.S. to be more sophisticated in its handling of an over-played al-Qaeda factor.

The development of Islamic activism in Algeria in the 1980s initially resembled that elsewhere in North Africa and, as in 1970s Egypt, the authorities both actively helped to bring it into existence and sought to use it for their own purposes. But its phenomenal political expansion in the early 1990s had no regional equal and surprised most observers. An important reason why it acquired a mass base was the alienation of many young Algerians from a state which seemed no longer to offer them prospects. But the main political factor was the way in which Algerian Islamism, through an initially legal party, the Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS), mobilised and monopolised Algeria's populist tradition in 1989-1991, in part by posturing as heir to the historic National Liberation Front (*Front de Libération Nationale*, FLN) that fought the independence war. Similarly, the scale of the insurgency that developed after the interruption of the electoral process in 1992 owed much to the tradition of guerrilla war in the revolution, which gave birth to the state. Other crucial factors were the authorities' decisions to ban the FIS and arrest thousands of its activists, thus placing ordinary members of what had been a legal party outside the law and driving them into the arms of jihadi groups that might otherwise have remained marginal.

Since 1992, the regime has sought to curb FIS influence by allowing Islamist organisations to proliferate. Legal parties reflecting more cautious tendencies in Algerian Islamism have drawn some ex-FIS support into constitutional channels, enabling

¹ The first two were ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefings, *Islamism in North Africa I: The Legacies of History* and *Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity*, both 20 April 2004.

² In the usage adopted by ICG, "Islamism" is Islam in political rather than religious mode. "Islamist movements" are those with Islamic ideological references pursuing primarily political objectives, and "Islamist" and "Islamic political" are essentially synonymous. "Islamic" is a more general expression, usually referring to Islam in religious rather than political mode but capable, depending on the context, of embracing both.

the regime to re-establish control over the political sphere. Encouraging proliferation of movements so as to divide and rule has had a far more deleterious side, however. A central feature of army counter-insurgency strategy has been to sow dissension within the rebellion. This has scotched the threat to the state but the resulting fragmentation of the rebellion into a plethora of armed movements has made it very difficult to eradicate militarily and equally difficult to end by political means.

Although violence has been much reduced, continued activity of several armed movements is not only a security problem and a constraint on political life, but also a factor facilitating expansion of al-Qaeda's jihad. This has two distinct but connected aspects. The armed movements offer al-Qaeda points of entry into Algeria and thus the Maghreb and North-West Africa (including Sahel countries), while providing a home-grown reference and model for disaffected elements of the Algerian diaspora attracted to jihadi activism. Meanwhile, the continuing insurgency means Algeria's crisis is not wholly over, as does failure to resolve fundamental constitutional questions -- the armed forces' political role, presidential prerogatives, judicial independence and, more generally, the problem of establishing law-bound government.

While these persistent difficulties may suggest little real change over the last decade, Algerian Islamists have revised their outlook and discourse in important respects. Islamic political activism has abandoned its brief but intense flirtation with revolution and reverted to essentially reformist strategies. The Islamist parties now accept the nation-state and have either tacitly abandoned the ideal of an Islamic state or reconciled it with democratic principles. They no longer advocate fundamentalist positions on Islamic law and have begun to accept equality of the sexes, including women's right to work outside the home and participate in public life. These changes represent a partial recovery of the outlook of the "Islamic modernism" movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. True fundamentalism -- hostile to democracy and the national idea, resistant to innovative thinking, conservative on the status of women -- is today confined to the Salafiyya current from which Islamist parties now explicitly dissociate themselves.

The armed rebellion is now reduced to the Salafiyya's jihadi wing. Its initial scale owed much to the involvement of a variety of ideological currents, including movements derived from or at least partly inspired by Algeria's nationalist and populist traditions.

But today only groups derived from the Salafi current remain active and they have no representation in the party-political sphere. As the armed movements' political and social bases have contracted, their connections with local "mafias" involved in illicit economic activities, notably smuggling, have become more pronounced. Links to al-Qaeda underline the narrowness of their domestic constituency and reliance on external sources of legitimation.

Abandonment of fundamentalism by mainstream Islamist parties means the two oppositions that structured party-politics in the early 1990s, polarising and paralysing debate -- Islamism versus secularism and Islamism versus the nation-state -- have been largely overcome. Inclusive, constructive debate on reform between the main political tendencies -- including Islamists -- should now be possible.

With the improved security situation, the army has begun to acknowledge it should withdraw from its dominant political position and allow the civilian wing of the regime more latitude, a welcome but still tentative development. A danger is that al-Qaeda's reported links to remaining armed movements will be used in the context of support for the "war against terrorism" as a pretext for slowing or reversing this trend. While some military action remains necessary, the government should be urged to use other policy instruments to make an end to armed groups. Besides police measures (including more cooperation with regional and Mediterranean partners), vigorous steps should be taken to re-establish state regulation of commerce so as to reduce smuggling that provides much of the armed movements' life-blood.

The government should not have to rely on U.S. support alone in this; in view of the terrorist threat to Europe, the EU and member states should make assistance a priority. Participation of diaspora Algerians in terrorist networks in Europe has been very noticeable. While circumstances specific to diaspora life may be the main factor, an end to armed movements inside Algeria and normalisation of its political and economic life would have a salutary effect on the outlook of diaspora Algerians and weaken the impulse to jihadi activism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Algerian Government:

1. Give top priority to ending the remaining armed movements, mainly the GSPC and HDS, through

a political, security, legal and diplomatic strategy.
In particular:

- (a) avoid excessive reliance on military means and do not allow these movements' purported links to al-Qaeda to rule out a negotiated end to their campaigns;
 - (b) ensure any negotiations are subject to political accountability by charging the interior ministry (or an ad hoc inter-ministerial committee chaired by the interior minister) with overall responsibility and requiring its decisions to be reported to Parliament; and
 - (c) curb the illicit economic and commercial activity on which the armed movements depend by:
 - i. undertaking a high-profile national campaign against contraband, including by explaining the problem's importance and the approach to be followed in tackling it in order to obtain public support;
 - ii. bolstering the customs service by increasing personnel and improving remuneration, equipment and quality of training; and
 - iii. strengthening the police forces responsible for investigating and preventing illicit commercial activity.
2. Secure the active support of the populations of the Saharan regions for vigorous action against contraband activity and terrorist incursions by launching special development plans that demonstrate state concern for their specific social and economic problems.
 3. Rehabilitate and enhance Algeria's national traditions of tolerant, peaceful and forward-looking Islam by:
 - (a) funding adequately teaching and research in Islamic studies consistent with these traditions in universities and institutes;
 - (b) enhancing the role and activities of the High Islamic Council while respecting and confirming its autonomy vis-à-vis the government; and
 - (c) authorising the activities of independent associations and publications promoting these Islamic perspectives.

To Algeria's Political Parties:

4. Acknowledge the legitimacy of all viewpoints committed to peaceful and constitutional action.
5. Stop treating the Proclamation of 1 November 1954 as holy writ that clearly defines the place of Islam and Islamic prescriptions in the state and acknowledge the right of subsequent generations to determine these matters democratically.
6. Develop such common ground as already exists on promoting the rule of law in Algerian public life.
7. Support and where possible assist government political initiatives aimed at bringing about a definitive end to the Islamic insurgency.

To Algeria's North American and European Partners:

8. Promote maximum use of non-military (political, economic and judicial) approaches to end the Islamic insurgency.
9. Support and where possible assist the government's efforts to curb smuggling, money-laundering and other forms of illicit economic activity linked to terrorism, notably by increased intelligence and police cooperation.
10. Identify, in coordination with the government, features of the commercial and human flows between Algeria and Europe that facilitate the kinds of contraband activity that fuel the jihadi groups and devise policy responses to them.
11. Support the government's efforts to develop effective coordination with its Maghreb and Sahel neighbours to address the relationship between smuggling and al-Qaeda-linked activity in the central Sahara.
12. Explore in concert with Algerian authorities technical and other forms of cooperation to help promote economic development in the Saharan regions.

Cairo/Brussels, 30 July 2004

ISLAMISM, VIOLENCE AND REFORM IN ALGERIA: TURNING THE PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION: ALGERIAN ISLAMISM 1962-1988

The main premises of the conflict between Arab nationalist regimes and Islamist movements in the Middle East, notably in Baathist Iraq and Syria and Nasserist Egypt, were absent from Algeria both before the revolution and for the first two decades of independence after 1962.

Unlike the secular Arab nationalism of the Baath, Algerian nationalism was explicitly Muslim. And, unlike the narrowly elitist Free Officers' movement which seized power in Egypt in 1952, the FLN emanated from a popular nationalist movement and mobilised nearly all tendencies, including the Islamic one, in Algerian anti-colonialism; the conflict between Nasser's regime and the Muslim Brotherhood had no equivalent in Algeria. The Islamic reform movement (*al-Islah*) in late colonial Algeria, although an extension of the Salafiyya movement from which the Muslim Brothers sprang,³ did not evolve into a rival to the FLN. Led from 1931 onwards by Sheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis's *Association des Oulemas Musulmans Algériens* (AOMA),⁴ it developed outside the nationalist

Algerian People's Party (*Parti du Peuple Algérien*, PPA) and did not originally share the latter's objective of separation from France. Subsequently, however, it was influenced by the nationalist trend. The AOMA endorsed the FLN's war aims in January 1956, rallied to it and was represented in its leadership from August 1956 onwards. AOMA members also served in the FLN's National Liberation Army (*Armée de Libération Nationale*, ALN).⁵

The FLN established its monopoly of the representation of Algerian Muslims between 1954 and 1962 by co-opting the main pre-existing movements, and it bequeathed a highly developed capacity for co-optation to the independent state.⁶ Recognising the impact of Ben Badis's movement, the FLN had made the Islamic aspect of its project clear at the outset of the war,⁷ and thereafter made the AOMA's key ideas -- promotion of a reformed, scripturalist and puritanical Islam as well as Arabisation -- its own. The independent state followed suit.

- The 1963 constitution declared Islam the state religion and stipulated that the head of state must be a Muslim, principles reaffirmed in the 1977 constitution.

³ The Salafiyya movement invoked the founding fathers of Islam (the "pious ancestors", *al-Salaf al-Salih*) in a return to the scriptural sources of Islamic orthodoxy. The initial thrust of the movement prior to the First World War opposed the forces of conservatism and decadence in the Muslim world and promoted a selective "Islamic modernism", but from the 1920s onwards it evolved in a conservative, anti-Western, direction, in which Wahhabi influence was significant. For a fuller discussion, see ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa I*, op. cit.

⁴ Ben Badis's movement combined the themes of the Salafiyya movement after the First World War (scripturalism, puritanism and hostility to Sufism and the cult of saints) with some more progressive ideas (notably the embracing of modern science) developed by the first, "Islamic-modernist", phase of the Salafiyya movement in the late nineteenth century

and early twentieth century. See ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa I*, op. cit.

⁵ Mohammed Harbi, *Le FLN, mirage et réalité* (Paris, 1980), p. 410, fn. 17.

⁶ In 1955-1956, the FLN performed the *tour de force* of co-opting not only the AOMA but also Ferhat Abbas's *Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien* (representing the Westernised middle classes) and the Algerian Communist Party. The only element it did not co-opt were the die-hard supporters of Messali Hadj, whose rival Algerian National Movement (*Mouvement National Algérien*) it eliminated physically. Co-optation has been a prominent tactic of the post-colonial state and a central aspect of its response to the Islamist movement since 1989.

⁷ In its Proclamation of 1 November 1954, the FLN defined its objective as "the restoration of the sovereign, democratic and social, Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles".

- The government included a Ministry of Religious Affairs, which supervised the religious field, converting imams to salaried civil servants, establishing Islamic institutes to train religious officials, and taking responsibility for organising the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.
- AOMA veterans staffed the ministry and other associated bodies, notably the High Islamic Council, and also played leading roles in the state's educational apparatuses, the government-controlled media and even the army.⁸
- Salafi ideas informed official campaigns against certain Sufi orders in the early 1970s and a government-led "Campaign against the Degradation of Morals" in 1970, that stigmatised certain Western cultural influences.⁹
- In 1976, the official status of Islam was reaffirmed in the National Charter adopted by referendum, gambling was outlawed and the Muslim weekend was introduced.

Islamic activists functioned throughout this period as a pressure group. The state's Muslim credentials were repeatedly emphasised during the presidency of Houari Boumediène (1965-1978) and were not seriously questioned. Islamists not participating directly in the regime would agitate for policy changes, and their activity could be invoked by the leaders of "official Islam" to secure more concessions in internal government debates.¹⁰

⁸ Hugh Roberts, "North African Islamism in the Blinding Light of 9-11", London School of Economics, Development Research Centre, Working Paper (1st series) No. 34, October 2003, pp. 23-24.

⁹ Bernard Cubertafond, *La République algérienne démocratique et populaire* (Paris, 1979), pp. 88-91.

¹⁰ On only three occasions did leading *'ulama* openly criticise the government. In 1964, Sheikh Bachir al-Ibrahimi, who had led the AOMA from 1940 to 1951, attacked President Ahmed Ben Bella's policies and style of government and called for a return to the Islamic principle of *shura* (consultation); see Arslan Humbaraci, *Algeria: A Revolution that Failed* (London, 1966), p. 237; François Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb* (Paris, 1988), p. 146, and Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria* (Reading, 1996), pp. 39-41. In 1974, another AOMA veteran, Sheikh Abdellatif Soltani, published a diatribe against the regime's socialism (Burgat, op. cit., pp. 147-148). In 1976, a third AOMA veteran, Sheikh Mohammed Kheireddine, was one of four prominent signatories of a declaration contesting President Boumediène's policy on the Western Saharan question.

Recourse to violence by Algerian Islamists was all but non-existent until the 1980s. The first armed revolt of any size to exhibit an Islamic aspect was that of Mustafa Bouyali, who led a small guerrilla movement, the Algerian Islamic Movement (*Mouvement Islamique Algérien*, MIA), in the hinterland of Algiers between 1982 and 1987, when he was killed.¹¹ But Bouyali was a veteran of the ALN and also of the Socialist Forces Front (*Front des Forces Socialistes*, FFS),¹² after which he had rejoined the FLN for a time, and his Islamist credentials were rather vague. He belonged to none of the major currents of Islamist activism which had developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in particular the Salafi current, still less its jihadi wing. As Algerian commentator Hmida Layachi told ICG:

When one analyses his discourse and references, one cannot speak of the *Salafiyya jihadiyya*. The MIA was not motivated by a strong and homogenous ideology; Bouyali's discourse included certain borrowings from the Salafiyya, but it was very simplistic, more populist than anything else.¹³

It would be more accurate to classify Bouyali's MIA as a rebellious offshoot of the FLN-ALN tradition, which expressed itself in Islamist terms in deference to the ideological fashion of the 1980s much as the FFS's earlier rebellion had expressed itself in socialist terms in deference to the fashion of the 1960s.

By the 1980s, the Algerian Islamist movement had grown appreciably. In part, this reflected the influence of broader, regional trends. But the new regime of President Chadli also encouraged the movement, as Sadat had done in Egypt in the 1970s,¹⁴ enlisting the Islamists as auxiliaries in its

¹¹ Burgat, op. cit, pp. 164-68; Séverine Labat, *Les Islamistes algériens entre les urnes et le maquis* (Paris, 1995), pp. 90-94.

¹² Founded by Hocine Aït Ahmed in July-September 1963, the FFS was one of the first movements to splinter from the FLN, of which Aït Ahmed had been a founder-member in 1954. Its rebellion against President Ahmed Ben Bella's government lasted from September 1963 to June 1965. It survived clandestinely until it was legalised in late 1989.

¹³ ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003. Laayachi is the director of the Algiers Arabic-language daily *El-Youm* and author of *Al-Islamiyyûn al-Jaza'iriyyûn baina 'l-Sulta wa 'l-Rassâs* [The Algerian Islamists between power and bullets] (Algiers, 1992).

¹⁴ See ICG Middle East Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II: Egypt's Opportunity*, 20 April 2004.

drive against highly-placed figures loyal to the late President Boumediène's policies and especially in its purge of leftists in the national youth and workers unions. At the same time, the Ministry of Religious Affairs allowed the hundreds -- eventually thousands -- of new mosques (the so-called "free mosques") which began to be built by private initiative to remain outside state control. Their imams, unconstrained by ministerial supervision and reliant on the local faithful, were free to indulge in fiery sermons attacking corruption and had an interest in doing so.¹⁵

The Islamist movement at this time already exhibited several distinct tendencies.¹⁶ There were two variants of the Salafi tradition:

- (d) the leaders of official Islam, veterans of the AOMA and the reformist tradition of Ben Badis, notably Abderrahmane Chibane.¹⁷ While their function was to preserve the state's Islamic legitimacy, they sought to ensure government policy conformed to Salafi teaching and to co-opt the emerging trends of Islamist activism;¹⁸ and
- (e) dissident AOMA veterans, notably Sheikh Abdellatif Soltani (1902-1984) and Sheikh Ahmed Sahnoun (1907-2003), operating outside official Islam, developing a discourse attacking moral decay and corruption in high places, and acting as mentors to a new generation of militant preachers, notably Ali Ben Hadj (1956-) and El-Hachemi Sahnouni (1958-). This current predominated in the "free mosques".¹⁹

There were also two variants of the Muslim Brothers' outlook:²⁰ an "international" tendency affiliated to the

Egyptian Brothers and led by Mahfoud Nahnah (1942-2003) and a "local" tendency led by Abdallah Djaballah (1956-), influenced by the Egyptian movement but independent of it.

Finally, there was a specifically "Algerian" current, inspired in part by the ideas of the Algerian Islamic thinker Malek Bennabi (1905-1973),²¹ which became known as the *Jaz'ara* [Algerianists].²² This grouping was distinguished by the element of modernism in its outlook and its acceptance of the Algerian national idea but also by its intellectual elitism; it was influential only in the universities.²³

None of these presented a serious challenge to the state. While the FIS was largely constituted by elements drawn from the dissident wing of the Salafiyya and the local variant of the Muslim Brothers, this does not explain its subsequent behaviour.

¹⁵ Ahmed Rouadjia, *Les Frères et la mosquée: enquête sur le mouvement islamiste en Algérie* (Paris, 1990), pp. 77-109, 144-45.

¹⁶ ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003.

¹⁷ Abderrahmane Chibane (1918-) was minister of religious affairs from 1980-1986 and has been president of the AOMA (re-established as a legal association in 1991) since 1998.

¹⁸ On Chibane's handling of this co-optation strategy, see Rouadjia, op. cit., p. 144.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ An offshoot, like the Algerian AOMA, of the Salafiyya movement of the 1920s, the Muslim Brothers developed in Egypt into a well-organized social movement with a strong popular base and political ambitions. Repressed by Nasser, they were allowed to revive by Sadat. By the mid-1970s and especially the 1980s, the Muslim Brothers were the main model of multi-faceted social activism (Islamic missionary activity, charities, mutual aid associations, educational and sports associations, etc.) and political (as distinct from violent

jihadi) militancy available to Algerian dissidents. For a fuller account, see ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II*, op. cit.

²¹ Author notably of *Les Conditions de la Renaissance, problème d'une civilisation* (Algiers 1947, reprinted 1948), republished Ouled Fayet (Algeria, 1992) and *Vocation de l'Islam* (Paris, 1954). On Bennabi, see Allan Christelow, "An Islamic Humanist in the 20th Century: Malik Bennabi", *The Maghreb Review* 17, nos. 1-2 (1992), pp. 69-83.

²² The term *Jaz'ara* was originally applied to this current by another Islamist, Mahfoud Nahnah, to stigmatise the group's refusal of a wider orientation to the international Islamist movement. This refusal reflected their distance from the fundamentalism of the Salafiyya tendency and their rejection of Sayyid Qutb's radical doctrines. In December 1990 members of this current established the Islamic Association for Civilisational Edification, a name which reflected the influence of Bennabi's teaching that Islamic civilisation, rather than the Islamic creed, was the real issue. ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003.

²³ Ibid.

II. THE FIS

The Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS) was founded in March 1989 and legalised as a political party the following September. It quickly gained support, especially among the urban poor and urban youth, and on 12 June 1990 it won a sweeping victory in elections for the communal and regional assemblies -- the first pluralist elections in independent Algeria.²⁴ Despite a crackdown in June-July 1991, in which its leaders, Abassi Madani²⁵ and Ali Ben Hadj,²⁶ and many other activists were arrested, the party gained a spectacular lead in the first round of the legislative elections held on 26 December 1991, which placed it on course for a massive majority in the National Assembly if the second round went ahead on 16 January 1992.²⁷ Instead, on 11 January 1992, the army commanders forced President Chadli to resign and cancelled the elections. In the following days, they invented a so-called High State Committee to serve as a collective presidency for the rest of Chadli's term and enforced a previously neglected law banning the use of mosques by political parties, thereby provoking violent clashes with FIS activists across the country. These disorders were then invoked to justify the decisions announced on 9 February 1992 to introduce a state of emergency and ban the FIS, both of which remain in force.

With the dissolution of the party, the initiative passed to the jihadi tendency, which had never believed in an electoral strategy. Several armed movements

developed, to which FIS activists on the run soon gravitated. Those fragments of the FIS leadership still at liberty -- whether underground or in exile²⁸ -- were reduced to trading on a rebellion they had not organised and did not control in an effort to persuade the authorities to revoke the ban in return for the party's assistance in ending the violence. This effort was unsuccessful; by 1997, the FIS retained a connection with only one armed movement, the Islamic Salvation Army (*Armée Islamique du Salut*, AIS). When the AIS negotiated a cease-fire with the commanders of the Algerian army (*Armée Nationale Populaire*, ANP) in September 1997, it became clear that the party's investment in the rebellion had failed. Since the dissolution of the AIS in 2000, the FIS as an organisation has had no connection with the armed movements still active. Its prospects of being re-legalised appear remote and probably depend entirely on the preferences of the Algerian authorities.

A. PLAYING WITH FIRE: THE REGIME AND FIS, 1989-1991

The legalisation of the FIS in September 1989 aroused little controversy at the time. In retrospect, it has been criticised chiefly from two points of view, that of militant secularists opposed to the legalisation of their ideological adversaries and that of conservative governments elsewhere (notably Egypt and Tunisia) opposed to the legalisation of the most substantial opposition movements in their respective societies. Both have argued that parties based on religion should not be allowed. But this aspect of the FIS was not the source of the problem the party came to pose.

The fundamental problem was rather that, from the outset, the FIS tended to subvert the 1989 constitution to which it owed its own legal existence, not only by advocating an Islamic state (*dawla Islamiyya*), but equally by denouncing democracy as "infidel" (*kufir*).²⁹ In so doing, it not only showed

²⁴ The FIS polled 4.2 million votes (54 per cent of the total) and won control of 854 of Algeria's 1,581 communal assemblies and 31 of the 48 *wilaya* (regional) assemblies.

²⁵ Born in 1931, Abassi took part in the FLN's uprising on 1 November 1954; after 1962 he was an FLN militant until the late 1970s and emerged as a leader of the Islamist movement in the early 1980s. In Hmida Laayachi's view, "Abassi Madani was more a product of the FLN than an Islamist". ICG interview, 20 August 2003.

²⁶ Born in Tunisia into a family of war refugees, Ben Hadj emerged during the 1988 riots as the leading Islamist in the Bab El Oued district of Algiers.

²⁷ The FIS polled 3.26 million votes (1 million less than in 1990), only 24.59 per cent of the electorate. On a low turnout this amounted to 47.27 per cent of the total vote and enabled the FIS to win 188 seats outright and its candidates to gain the lead in 143 of the 198 undecided seats. Hocine Aït Ahmed's FFS won 25 seats, mainly in Kabylia, the FLN a mere sixteen nationwide and Independents three. These results pointed to the FIS ultimately gaining around 75 per cent of the seats in the new assembly.

²⁸ In September 1993, Rabah Kebir, who had taken refuge in Germany, announced the creation of the party's *Instance Exécutive à l'Étranger* [Overseas Executive Body]; around the same time, Anouar Haddam, who had been elected on 26 December 1991 and then fled to the U.S., established the FIS's *Délégation Parlementaire à l'Étranger* [Parliamentary Delegation Abroad].

²⁹ Article 40 of the constitution of 23 February 1989 permitted the creation of "associations of a political character", but provided that "This right, nonetheless, cannot be invoked in order to attack fundamental freedoms, national

disrespect for the constitution, but also encouraged its popular audience to adopt the same attitude, while alarming important sections of the middle class and the administrative and military elites and sapping their confidence in and loyalty to the new political order. It can be argued that the FIS's positions would not have mattered had other substantial parties existed and been able to mobilise large shares of the electorate, thereby keeping the FIS within bounds. But there were none. Under these circumstances, the FIS's attitude toward the constitution and democracy were not inconsequential matters.

The FIS was not legalised out of a thoroughgoing commitment to liberal principles; the same government which legalised it refused at least two other parties on grounds that had nothing to do with democracy.³⁰ Nor was it legalised in deference to popular pressure, for the Islamists themselves had been divided on the question of forming a party.³¹ The authorities argued it was better to allow the Islamists to conduct their activities in the light of day than clandestinely outside the law.³² But it was unnecessary to legalise political parties in order to bring the Islamists into the open and within the law: for this purpose it would have been enough to legalise Islamist associations, journals and publishing houses. The true rationale for the decision to legalise remains far from evident.³³ In acting in this way, the

unity, the integrity of the territory, the independence of the country or the sovereignty of the people".

³⁰ An application to refound the old PPA by former supporters of Messali Hadj who had been associated with the MNA (the FLN's rival during the war) was rejected; more surprisingly, an application by an FLN war hero, Abdelhafid Yaha, a former colleague of Hocine Aït Ahmed in the FFS, to found a party regrouping FFS dissidents was also rejected.

³¹ Sheikh Ahmed Sahnoun had already founded the League of the Islamic Call (*Rabitat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya*) to act as an umbrella organisation for the Islamist movement as a whole and opposed the project of a political party, as did the *Jaz'ara* tendency; the leaders of two other important groupings, Mahfoud Nahnah and Abdallah Djaballah, while not against an Islamist party in principle, had both refused to join the FIS.

³² Willis, op. cit., pp. 119-121.

³³ Séverine Labat has argued that Chadli encouraged the formation of Islamist parties because he preferred "to be faced with an Islamist opposition which would be by definition 'illegitimate' in the eyes of his international creditors, and accordingly easy to repress, whereas it would have been an infinitely more delicate matter to allow the development of a democratic opposition enjoying the sympathy of international public opinion" (op. cit., p. 98); see also Mohammed Harbi, "La fausse 'démocratie' de l'après-88" in Reporters Sans Frontières, *Le Drame Algérien: un peuple en otage* (Paris, 1995), pp. 134-136.

authorities authorised a party that not only made an issue of the constitution in an inflammatory way,³⁴ but was effectively unopposed as it proceeded to harness Algeria's revolutionary traditions in support of its own controversial project.

The way the FIS unified much of the previously diffuse Islamist movement was shaped by the primarily Algerian political models it imitated. In its choice of name,³⁵ use of nationalist themes and acceptance of the paramount leadership of Abassi Madani,³⁶ it presented itself as the sole legitimate heir to the historic FLN of 1954-1962.³⁷ In mobilising the Algerian populist tradition, appealing to urban rather than rural society and relying on charismatic leadership, it resembled the PPA of the 1937-1954 period from which the FLN had sprung.³⁸ Because these aspects were not widely understood, the party was widely misconceived as embodying

³⁴ The argument here is distinct from the position that refuses parties based on religion; some parties of this kind (e.g. Christian Democratic parties) have been pillars of democratic constitutions in Europe. The problem with the FIS was that it not only decried the 1989 constitution as un-Islamic (in contrast to the Egyptian Muslim Brothers today, who accept the Islamic credentials of the Egyptian state; see ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II*, op. cit.) but advocated its rival conception of an Islamic state in a highly confrontational manner which tended to pit its supporters in the country against the state and fellow citizens at the same time.

³⁵ The term "front" (*jabha*) belongs to the nationalist, not Islamist, tradition. In Algeria the name FIS sounded like the French for "son" (*fil*), suggesting that the FIS was "the son of the FLN"; see Lahouari Addi, "Le FLN est le père du FIS" in L. Addi, *L'Algérie et la Démocratie* (Paris, 1994), pp. 97-119, and Hugh Roberts, "From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition: The Expansion and Manipulation of Algerian Islamism, 1979-1992", in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: the dynamic character of movements* (Chicago: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1994), pp. 428-289, 454-455.

³⁶ Abassi's status as "a man of 1 November" was a premise of his ascendancy in the FIS. Ben Hadj and several other FIS leaders came from families known for their participation in the wartime FLN.

³⁷ This involved counter-posing the virtuous FLN of the war to the corrupt FLN in power since 1962.

³⁸ See Omar Carlier, *Entre Nation et Djihad: histoire sociale des radicalismes algériens* (Paris, 1995), pp. 364-378, and Hugh Roberts, "Doctrinaire Economics and Political Opportunism in the Strategy of Algerian Islamism", in John Ruedy (ed.), *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa* (New York, 1994), pp. 123-147. Founded by Messali Hadj (1898-1972) and dominated by his charismatic personality, the PPA was the source of all the FLN's founders; Abassi was a PPA militant before joining the FLN in 1954.

absolute opposition to the nationalist tradition and the nation-state.

From the outset, the FIS expressed what sounded like a revolutionary challenge to the state in a discourse denouncing "*les voleurs du FLN*" (the thieves of the FLN) and "*l'état impie*" (the impious state). While the first element recycled the Islamist movement's longstanding denunciation of corruption, the second was a questionable borrowing from Sayyid Qutb's critique of the Egyptian state in the Nasser era.³⁹ But its application of *al-takfir*⁴⁰ (the act of denouncing someone or something as impious) to the Algerian state was never seriously argued and ignored the fact that two of Qutb's arguments about Nasser's Egypt did not clearly apply to Algeria.⁴¹

This radical rhetoric was naturally alarming to Algeria's westernised middle class and was generally taken by the Western media as expressing a genuine revolutionary ambition. In fact, however, the FIS initially concentrated its attacks on the FLN, its main electoral rival, while adopting a very different attitude to the real authorities, President Chadli and the reforming government of Mouloud Hamrouche. Far from engaging in demagogic opposition to the latter's economic reform program, the FIS supported it,⁴² as well as Chadli's position as arbiter of the political game. Its tactic was to mobilise support by galvanising the urban mass with aggressive rhetoric and then to negotiate with the government from a position of strength.⁴³ Moreover, in attacking the

FLN, the FIS was attacking the major source of resistance to the Chadli-Hamrouche tandem. This crucial collusion between FIS leaders and the authorities in 1989-1990 explains why many from the Salafi current, normally reluctant to challenge regimes politically,⁴⁴ joined the FIS and were prominent in its leadership at this time.⁴⁵

This collusion was a major factor in the party's electoral success in June 1990. The main precondition of this success was the fact that the FIS had been allowed to secure a dual monopoly: of the populist tradition (previously the FLN's preserve) and of the Islamist cause.⁴⁶ However, relations with the Chadli regime broke down following enactment on 1 April 1991 of an electoral law giving disproportionate weight to rural constituencies (where the FLN was strongest) and disadvantaging FIS's urban bastions.⁴⁷ In response to this development, which came when controversy over the 1991 Gulf War had already strained relations with the regime,⁴⁸ Abassi Madani called a general strike and then led demonstrations in Algiers demanding changes in the law and early

demonstrations of May-June 1991, with the new government of Sid Ahmed Ghazali in June and September-October 1991 and, following the elections on 26 December 1991, with both the Chadli presidency and the FLN leadership.

⁴⁴ This was initially true of the new generation of Salafis in Algeria, including Ali Ben Hadj, as Abderrazak Makri, vice-president of the moderate Islamist MSP, observed. ICG interview, Algiers, 1 August 2003.

⁴⁵ In addition to founder-members Ali Ben Hadj and El-Hachemi Sahnouni, Salafis prominent in the FIS included Bachir Fkih, Saïd Makhoulfi, Ahmed Merani and Benazzouz Zebda.

⁴⁶ That the authorities connived at the FIS's success was generally obscured at the time but has since been clearly documented. See Aïssa Khelladi, *Les Islamistes Algériens Face au Pouvoir* (Algiers, 1992), pp. 183-186; Hugh Roberts in Marty and Appleby, op. cit.; Ghania Mouffok, "Le FLN entre pouvoir et opposition" in Reporters Sans Frontières, *Le Drame Algérien* (Paris, 1995), pp. 147-149; Willis, op. cit., p. 121; William Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism* (Washington D.C., 1998), pp. 48, 87.

⁴⁷ Having strengthened the reformers' position inside the FLN following its defeat at the FIS's hands in June 1990, Hamrouche was now trying to secure an FLN recovery in the upcoming legislative elections.

⁴⁸ After first condemning Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the FIS identified itself with popular hostility to the U.S.-led coalition's intervention, forfeiting its own links with Saudi Arabia; in subsequently holding demonstrations in Algiers in January 1991 and raising volunteers to fight on the Iraqi side, the FIS alienated the army commanders, who signalled their hostility to the prospect of a FIS government in an editorial in the army's magazine, *El Djeïch*, in April 1991.

³⁹ See M. Al-Ahnaf, B. Botiveau and F. Frégosi, *L'Algérie par ses Islamistes* (Paris, 1991), p. 77 et seq.

⁴⁰ For Qutb's ideas and the concept of *al-takfir*, see ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa I*, op. cit.

⁴¹ The element of Qutb's argument based on Nasser's suppression of the Muslim Brothers and, by extension, of the religious mission (*da'wa*) did not apply to Algeria, where the state had co-opted, not suppressed, the AOMA, and official tolerance of the "free mosques" in the 1980s reflected a permissive, not repressive, attitude to independent preachers. Equally, Qutb's argument regarding the *jahili* (barbarous) nature of the Egyptian state based on the brutality of the regime's repressive practices also did not apply at this time to the Algerian state, which had treated the Islamist opposition very leniently; in contrast to Nasser's Egypt, where a number of Muslim Brothers were hanged in 1954 and 1966, the Algerian state did not execute a single Islamist between 1962 and 1993.

⁴² For a full discussion, see Hugh Roberts, in John Ruedy, op. cit., pp. 123-147.

⁴³ Labat, op. cit., pp. 107, 109. The FIS leaders negotiated with the Chadli-Hamrouche tandem in 1989-1990, with Hamrouche and the army commanders during the

presidential elections. Although the demonstrations were mainly orderly and in accordance with an agreement negotiated with the authorities (including an army representative),⁴⁹ the army commanders intervened. In the early hours of 4 June 1991, riot police brutally assaulted sleeping FIS demonstrators, provoking violence in which at least twenty people were killed.⁵⁰ Hamrouche and his reform government fell, the legislative elections were postponed and Chadli was obliged to declare a state of siege and dissociate himself from the FLN by resigning the party presidency. After fresh disturbances a fortnight later, Abassi and Ben Hadj were arrested on 30 June on charges that carried the death penalty.⁵¹

These events precipitated broader changes in the FIS leadership. The Salafis had generally opposed Abassi's decision to confront the government.⁵² Thereafter, most of them deserted the party, the majority abandoning the opposition altogether, some even accepting office in the regime,⁵³ a minority opting for the jihadi strategy of armed rebellion,

⁴⁹ It was subsequently claimed that the FIS had been attempting an insurrection; see for example Ali Haroun et al., *Algérie: Arrêt du Processus Électoral: enjeux et démocratie* (Algiers, 2002), p. 12. In fact, the demonstrations began as a peaceful protest and then technically became an act of civil disobedience on 1 June 1991, when the campaign for the legislative elections then scheduled for 27 June officially began (the demonstrations infringed the election regulations). While they gave rise to incidental disorders, there is evidence these were caused by extremist non-FIS elements and no evidence they had an insurrectionary purpose. The most subversive intent that can be attributed to them was to force a postponement of the legislative elections, in which, rumour suggested, the FIS would lose ground. All the serious violence and the FIS leaders' angry threats of *jihad* occurred after the intervention on 4 June.

⁵⁰ Quandt says "dozens were killed" (op. cit., p. 57); Labat (op. cit., p. 118) claims that official figures gave 84 dead and over 400 wounded.

⁵¹ Abassi and Ben Hadj were tried in July 1992 and sentenced to twelve years imprisonment. Five other leaders arrested with them -- Abdelkader Boukhamkham, Noureddine Chigara, Ali Djeddi, Kamel Guemazi and Abdelkader Omar -- were given lesser terms and released in 1994.

⁵² Three leading Salafis -- Fkih, Merani and Sahnouni -- opposed Abassi's call for a general strike. Amine Touati, *Algérie, les Islamistes à l'assaut du pouvoir* (Paris, 1995), p. 66, fn. 14. On 25 June 1991 the trio denounced Abassi as "a danger to the Muslims"; Abassi was arrested five days later. Ben Hadj also had originally opposed the strike. ICG interview with Kamel Guemazi, Algiers, 20 July 2003.

⁵³ Merani was appointed adviser to Sid Ahmed Ghazali in February 1992 and later minister of religious affairs (January 1996-June 1997); in December 1997 he was appointed to the Council of the Nation.

which now began to be prepared as veterans of Mustapha Bouyali's MIA reactivated their networks.⁵⁴ From July 1991, the FIS was dominated by elements⁵⁵ which broadly supported the pragmatic and cautious line of its new interim leader, Abdelkader Hachani. Formally, however, it remained committed to establishing an Islamic state and persisted in its rhetorical rejection of the state as actually constituted. This left it vulnerable, after its victory in the first round of the legislative elections on 26 December 1991, to the charge that it was totalitarian in purpose and nature and furnished a pretext for the army's intervention in the name of democracy.

B. JANUARY 1992

The main argument used to justify the interruption of the election was the suggestion that a FIS victory would lead directly to an Islamic dictatorship. This won sympathy in much of the West, secured the support of the FIS's secular-modernist opponents in Algeria and enabled the army commanders to claim that they were defending republican and democratic principles. The controversy over the intervention has raged ever since and cannot be fully reviewed -- let alone arbitrated -- here but two central points should briefly be noted.

First, while the election results undoubtedly faced the army and other actors with painful choices,⁵⁶ it is by

⁵⁴ The first meeting of the leaders of the future armed rebellion was held at Zbarbar in the mountains near Lakhdaria, 75 kilometres south-east of Algiers in July 1991 (Labat, op. cit., pp. 228-229).

⁵⁵ Namely members of the so-called *Jaz'ara* [Algerianist] tendency led by Mohamed Saïd, who had originally opposed the formation of the FIS but had joined the party in late 1990. The other element which now came to the fore were activists from eastern Algeria (Abdelkader Hachani, Rabah Kebir) who had either been members of or influenced by Abdallah Djaballah's Nahda group in the 1980s; less elitist and modernist than the *Jaz'ara*, they shared its orientation to the nationalist tradition and the disposition to negotiate their relations with the Algerian state.

⁵⁶ It should be noted that the problem to which the army's actions responded could have been easily avoided, given that it arose from the extraordinary result of the first round of the legislative election, which promised to give the FIS 75 per cent of the APN seats on the basis of 47.27 per cent of the total vote corresponding to a mere 24.59 per cent of the electorate. This result could have been avoided in a wholly constitutional and democratic way by holding the election on the basis of proportional representation. Since the government introduced a new electoral law in October 1991 specifically for these elections, its failure to introduce

no means obvious that the circumstances justified intervention. The case made for interrupting the electoral process was that it would be more difficult -- even impossible -- to prevent an Islamic dictatorship if this process was allowed to run its course. This might carry conviction if the outcome of the second round would have been a FIS-controlled assembly empowered to change the constitution. In fact, however, contrary to widely circulated claims, the FIS could not have used its majority to change the constitution, since the president held a monopoly of the initiative regarding constitutional reform, and the FIS leaders had expressed their willingness to work with Chadli,⁵⁷ who had announced his willingness to "co-habit" with them.⁵⁸ Moreover, if "co-habitation" failed, Chadli retained the constitutional power to dissolve the assembly and call fresh elections. Had the army commanders allowed the political process to continue, they would have retained the option of intervening in the event of a breakdown, when the claim to act in defence of the constitution would have been stronger.

Second, even if the case for interrupting the electoral process is conceded, this does not explain the army commanders' subsequent decisions to ban the FIS, arrest ordinary party members and intern them in concentration camps in the Sahara, which transformed many thousands of activists into embittered outlaws at a stroke and helped ensure that the armed rebellion then gestating would be massive.⁵⁹

All that said, the FIS was also the author of its own misfortunes, at least in part. While its call for an Islamic state and criticism of democracy as impious were aimed at mobilising the urban poor for essentially electoral purposes, were qualified by willingness to negotiate with the authorities and did not reflect a serious revolutionary intent, it was wholly unrealistic to suppose that they would not be ruthlessly exploited by its adversaries. Its leaders appear not to have taken the measure of the forces they were up against, and the resort to alarming and undemocratic rhetoric in these circumstances was a form of recklessness for which a terrible price was to

proportional representation was an extraordinary omission for which the army must take its share of the responsibility, given its control of the interior ministry as well as the defence ministry at the time.

⁵⁷ Willis, op. cit., pp. 238-239.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 243.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 256-257.

be paid. The subsequent evolution of the FIS suggests that this lesson, at least, was learned.

C. FROM ISLAMIC STATE TO POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

Following the army's coup on 11 January 1992, the FIS leadership fell apart; many, such as Hachani, were quickly arrested, others went underground and eventually joined the emerging armed movements. Yet others fled the country and organised the party's external wing in exile. In its last days of legal activity, the FIS allied itself with the two other parties which had won seats in the first round of the elections, the FLN and Hocine Ait Ahmed's FFS,⁶⁰ in opposition to the army's moves and to demand that the electoral process continue. This alliance remained in force for several years and was a premise of the FIS's conversion, at least formally, to democratic principles.

During its heyday of 1989-1990, the FIS had made clear that its conception of an Islamic state was one in which sovereignty belonged to God and that democracy was un-Islamic.⁶¹ Since its dissolution in 1992, what has survived of the FIS as an organised force, has revised its outlook and accommodated democratic principles. Signs of this were already visible in 1994⁶² and were confirmed in the party's commitment to the Rome Platform in January 1995.⁶³ FIS founder-member Kamel Guemazi told ICG:

"Democracy" means the exercise of power by the people. Almighty God has made laws for

⁶⁰ That the FIS should have allied with the FLN, which it had freely denounced in its election propaganda, underlined the opportunistic character of its discourse and the way it pursued momentary tactics (albeit for a good cause in this case, facing a military coup) rather than expressing a constant political outlook.

⁶¹ See Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau and Frégosi, op. cit., pp. 81, 87-100.

⁶² In September 1994, Abassi addressed from prison two letters to President Zeroual expressing his personal acceptance of *l'alternance*, the principle that a party voted into power should allow itself to be voted out of power; see Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield: Algeria 1988-2002* (London and New York, 2003), p. 170.

⁶³ On 13 January 1995, talks held in Rome under the aegis of the Catholic Sant' Egidio Community involving the FLN, FFS, the Nahda Movement, the Workers' Party, the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights and a representative of the banned FIS (Anouar Haddam) resulted in a "Platform for Peaceful Political Solution of Algeria's Crisis"; it was signed for the FIS by both Haddam and Rabah Kebir and signalled the party's acceptance of democratic principles.

certain aspects of life, but the management of affairs, the choice of office-holders, etc. are matters for popular sovereignty. God has given laws, but sovereignty, political power, belong to the people.⁶⁴

Acceptance of democracy implies a new conception of the "Islamic state". Another leading FIS member, Ali Djeddi, told ICG:

The Islamic state is a state whose reference is to Islam. It is a state of a sovereign people, free in its political as well as economic choices. The Islamic state does not have a unique and definitive form, such as one might easily find in history, whether ancient or recent, and which it would be enough simply to reproduce as such, irrespective of the particularities of the historical context.⁶⁵

Moreover, this conception of the state is close to the FLN's original conception:

We are for a Republic in which power would belong to the Algerian people, in the framework of the values of our nation. Our idea of the Algerian state we derive from the Declaration of 1 November 1954: "A democratic, social, state in the framework of Islamic principles".⁶⁶

This position involves both acceptance of the Algerian nation⁶⁷ and a revised view of Islamic law influenced by the "Islamic modernist" thinking of Mohammed Abduh and Malek Bennabi:

To pretend to legislate on the basis of the *Shari'a* and not take account of the three variable dimensions of time, space and human nature is simply not realistic... The Islamic reference is a reference to authentic texts, the Qur'an and the Sunna. The most perfect application of these texts occurred in the time of the prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and the first four caliphs. It nonetheless remains linked to a very specific temporal, territorial and human context....We can make this our model,

an ideal to approximate, but we shall not be able to reproduce it exactly, fourteen centuries later. What we propose is that all the solutions to the problems of modern life be the object of a debate between the *'ulama* and the specialists and experts.... The conclusions of this debate should be submitted to the approval of a sovereign people, enjoying all its freedoms, including the freedom to organise in opposition to whatever one may propose for its ratification....In this way we will reconcile respect for the *Shari'a* and respect for the popular will.⁶⁸

In accordance with this view of Islamic law, the FIS now distances itself from the contemporary Salafiyya.⁶⁹

In effect, the FIS has abandoned the original critique of the constitution as un-Islamic and now accepts it while complaining that it is not applied properly.⁷⁰ The acceptance of democracy and popular sovereignty has as its corollary acceptance of ideological pluralism, including possibly tolerance of communists and secularists⁷¹ as well as other currents of Islamic thought and religious freedom.⁷² This outlook is far removed from that of the contemporary Salafiyya movement and especially its jihadi wing. Logically, in its international outlook, the FIS today dissociates itself from al-Qaeda and expresses great suspicion of it,⁷³ while simultaneously criticising U.S. policy in the Middle East. It also dissociates itself entirely from the armed movements still active in Algeria.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ This position recalls the current stance of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. See ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II*, op. cit.

⁷¹ "If there still exist people who believe in communism and think that they can propose it as a solution to the Algerians, we will not forbid them to do so...If there are those who are convinced of the necessity of a secular constitution, and consider that such a constitution would benefit Algeria, why forbid them?" ICG interview with Ali Djeddi, 10 July 2003. Guemazi's position as stated to ICG was less clear-cut.

⁷² The FIS is yet to clarify its position on apostasy. Ali Djeddi told ICG that "nobody may arrogate the right, in the name of the nation or of the *Shari'a*, to take punitive measures against a Muslim who has gone so far as to renounce his faith". ICG interview, Kolea, 10 July 2003. But Kamel Guemazi appeared to hold to the traditional, sterner, position when he said: "The punishment for apostasy is well known. You have only to consult the *Shari'a*". ICG interview, Algiers, 20 July 2003.

⁷³ ICG interview with Ali Djeddi, Kolea, 10 July 2003.

⁶⁴ ICG interview with Kamel Guemazi, Algiers, 20 July 2003.

⁶⁵ ICG interview with Ali Djeddi, Kolea, 10 July 2003; Ali Djeddi was a founder-member of the FIS and head of its Political Commission; arrested in June 1991, he was released in February 1994.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "Algeria is a nation in the fullest sense which belongs to the Muslim world, to the Arab world and, also, to the human race. We do not see any contradiction between these." Ibid.

III. THE ARMED MOVEMENTS

The violence that has ravaged Algeria since 1992 has been widely described as a civil war and also as the second Algerian war. There have certainly been parallels with the war of 1954-1962,⁷⁴ and the scale of the insurgency has owed much to the fact that the recourse to armed jihad remobilised -- the revolutionary tradition of guerrilla warfare. Yet, the Islamic insurgency has been very different from its nationalist predecessor in that it has proved unable to expand its popular support and has been divided organisationally and in its objectives as well as over tactics and methods. This incoherence has ensured that the rebellion has never seriously threatened to overthrow the state, but it has also made it extremely difficult to bring to an end.

A. CONFLICTING PURPOSES

Since 1992 the armed rebellion has been conducted by numerous distinct organisations, notably the MIA,⁷⁵ MEI,⁷⁶ GIA,⁷⁷ FIDA,⁷⁸ AIS,⁷⁹ LIDD,⁸⁰ GSPC⁸¹ and

⁷⁴ In addition to the methods used on both sides, a parallel between the two "wars" has been the fact that the insurgency began only after the constitutional path to power had been blocked by the actions of the authorities.

⁷⁵ *Mouvement Islamique Armé* (Armed Islamic Movement) led by Abdelkader Chebouti, which remobilised veterans of Mustapha Bouyali's earlier movement; this disintegrated after Chebouti's death in late 1993.

⁷⁶ *Mouvement pour un État Islamique* (Movement for an Islamic State), led by Saïd Makhloufi, a founder of the FIS who left the party in July 1991; the MEI disappeared after Makhloufi's death in 1997.

⁷⁷ *Groupe Islamique Armé* (Armed Islamic Group), founded in 1992 by Mansour Miliani and Mohammed Allal, but which developed only after these had been superseded by other leaders, notably those drawn from Algerian veterans of the Afghan war; still active in 2004.

⁷⁸ *Front Islamique du Djihad Armé* (Islamic Front of the Armed Jihad), founded by certain former members of the *Jaz'ara* tendency; it rallied to the GIA at one point but later resumed an independent existence before being eliminated in 1996.

⁷⁹ *Armée Islamique du Salut* (Islamic Salvation Army), founded in July 1994 by elements of the MIA following the latter's disintegration; linked to the FIS and led by ex-FIS militants Mezrag Madani and Ahmed Ben Aïcha until its dissolution in 2000.

⁸⁰ *Ligue Islamique pour le Da'wa et le Djihad* (Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad), founded in 1996 by Ali Benhadjar, former GIA commander in Medea district; dissolved itself in 2000;

HDS,⁸² not to mention a plethora of smaller groups operating only at local level and either devoid of wider ambitions or oscillating between the larger movements. Three main visions can be identified.

For the initiators of the rebellion, regrouped initially in Abdelkader Chebouti's reconstituted MIA (1991-1993) and Saïd Makhloufi's MEI (1992-1997), the objective was the revolutionary establishment of an Islamic state. It was taken for granted that the army's actions in January 1992 had demonstrated the futility of an electoral strategy, that the FIS was finished and that only an armed revolution would achieve an Islamic state. The priority was to overthrow the state, and the movements primarily targeted members of the security forces, as well as some civilians regarded as "collaborators". This conception was closest in spirit to the original FLN-ALN prototype of the war of independence.

A quite different outlook envisaged the establishment of an Islamic state following the re-Islamisation of society. This was especially characteristic of the Algerian "Afghans" and came to typify the behaviour of the GIA (1992 to present), of which they formed the core. It gave priority to imposing "correct" Islamic practice (as dictated by the strictest variants of Salafi dogma) on society and involved a coercive attitude to the population that frequently developed into a local reign of terror. For much of the GIA, this preoccupation tended to take precedence over fighting the state. In many cases, it degenerated into highly predatory behaviour that became increasingly indistinguishable from banditry.⁸³

The third vision came to fore in 1994, although it had probably been developing within sections of the rebellion since early 1993. It conceived the armed struggle in more modest terms as a legitimate rebellion given the state's unjust behaviour, and its objective was not to overthrow the state but to induce it to mend its ways, in particular by re-legalising the FIS. This was the AIS's conception; in announcing its existence in July 1994, it presented itself as the

⁸¹ *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat), founded in September 1998 by Hassan Hattab, former GIA commander for Boumerdès and Kabylia region; still active.

⁸² *Houmat Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya* (Guardians of the Salafi Call), founded in 1996 by Kada Ben Chiha, former GIA commander for western Algeria; still active.

⁸³ On the predatory behaviour of the armed groups in the Algiers region, see Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War, 1990-1998* (London, 2000).

armed wing of the FIS, acknowledged the political authority of Abassi, Ben Hadj and the other imprisoned FIS leaders and recognised Rabah Kebir's *Instance Exécutive à l'Étranger* (IEE) as the party's external representative. Its purpose was to apply military pressure on the regime in support of the FIS's efforts to achieve dialogue with the authorities and a negotiated solution, an outlook far removed both from the MIA's original revolutionary aim and the re-Islamisation-through-terror agenda of the GIA.

These differences crystallized only in 1994, after several attempts to unify the rebellion had already been made.⁸⁴ The FIS had every interest in encouraging the rebellion as a whole to adopt the AIS outlook, and it is possible that elements of the GIA were open to persuasion, since relations between some AIS and GIA units on the ground were far from hostile at this time.⁸⁵ Moreover, in May 1994, two key elements of the former FIS leadership rallied to the GIA, namely Mohamed Saïd's *Jaz'ara* faction and Saïd Makhloufi's MEI, thus giving the FIS potential leverage with GIA commanders. That these developments did not lead to a consensus within the armed movements on the need for a negotiated political solution owed much to the Algerian army's efforts to scotch this prospect.

The army's counter-insurgency campaign since 1992 has become the object of enormous controversy, most aspects of which are outside the scope of this report. One cannot understand the evolution of the Islamist rebellion, however, without taking into account the army's manipulation of the GIA. It was arguably this more than any other factor that prevented the rebellion from uniting under a stable leadership and in support of a clear, constant and intelligible objective. While an important premise was the intelligence services' success in infiltrating agents into the GIA and turning certain GIA commanders,⁸⁶ an equally significant factor was the

susceptibility to manipulation of the extremist wing of the rebellion, composed largely of Algerian veterans of the Afghan war.

B. THE AFGHAN CONNECTION AND THE MANIPULATION OF THE GIA

The GIA has distinguished itself since 1993 by its extreme cruelty and savagery and repeated rejection of a negotiated settlement. Unlike the other armed movements, it has attacked civilians indiscriminately, abducting and killing foreigners, planting bombs in public places, slaughtering travellers at false road blocks and committing numerous massacres in villages and townships. The appalling image its actions gave the rebellion led many observers to become extremely suspicious. These suspicions were given some credence when large sections of the GIA split away, claiming the leadership had been infiltrated and manipulated by the army.

Originating from an offshoot of the MIA led by an ex-Bouyalist, Mansouri Miliani, the GIA came into being only after Miliani's arrest in July 1992, with Afghan war veterans prominent in its leadership. Ideologically, the "Afghans" were mostly far removed from the FIS outlook. As Hmida Laayachi told ICG:

The Algerian Afghans, who at the time of the 1990 communal elections were a very small minority, belonged to a new generation of activists. They all considered that party-

⁸⁴ At meetings of the main jihadi leaders, both before the rebellion was launched and subsequently, held in July and August 1991, April 1992 and on 31 August-1 September 1992. Labat, op. cit., pp. 229-223.

⁸⁵ A BBC documentary filmed in October 1994 by Phil Rees, the only Western television reporter to visit units of the rebellion, showed AIS forces in Western Algeria on friendly terms with the local GIA.

⁸⁶ The infiltration of the armed movements by Algerian military intelligence is attested by a former officer of the army's special forces, Habib Souaïdia, *La Sale Guerre* (Paris, 2001) and by two former intelligence officers, Hichem Aboud, *La Mafia des Généraux* (Paris, 2001) and Mohamed

Samraoui, *Chronique des Années de Sang: Algérie: comment les services secrets ont manipulé les groupes islamistes* (Paris, 2003); Samraoui's testimony is especially important, since he was himself involved in the infiltration strategy as a senior officer of the *Direction de la Sécurité Intérieure*. That the intelligence services should have infiltrated the rebellion is not, of course, surprising and has been publicly admitted by former defence minister, retired Major General Khaled Nezzar; see Khaled Nezzar, *Le Procès de Paris: l'armée algérienne face à la désinformation* (Paris, 2003), p. 215. What is at issue is the degree of responsibility of the Algerian army commanders for the armed movements' behaviour (notably the massacres in which some of them engaged), which in turn raises the question of the nature of the mission of intelligence officers engaged in infiltration and the strategic conception of the army commanders orienting this (or these) mission(s). Apart from testimony of former army or intelligence officers, which should be treated with caution, grounds for suspicion have been adduced by other observers; see, for example, Jean-Michel Salgon, *Violences ambiguës: aspects du conflit armé en Algérie* (Paris, 1999). These matters have yet to be fully and properly debated within Algeria.

political activity was a sin in Islam and therefore that the FIS had departed from Islamic law, that there could be no question of negotiating the Islamic Republic. Inside *al-Salafiyya al-jhadiyya*, there were two tendencies: one decreed the regime to be impious, the other went further in considering that the entire society should undergo the punishment reserved for apostates in the event that it did not follow their lead. The latter created an organisation called *Al-Muwahhidun* [the Unitarians or Monotheists], with the aim of unifying political power and homogenising the doctrine and the society exclusively around the path traced by the Qur'an and the Sunna; it was an ultra-dogmatic current.⁸⁷

The *Al-Muwahhidun* grouping⁸⁸ became the decisive element at the core of the GIA. A key figure in this process was Saïd Qari,⁸⁹ an Algerian member of Ayman Al-Zawahiri's *Jihad* group in Peshawar, who had assumed responsibility for its Algerian recruits.⁹⁰ According to Laayachi, Qari contacted Mansour Miliani, presenting himself and his group as Qutbists⁹¹ under the leadership of Ayman Al-Zawahiri, and Miliani accepted their support.⁹² Miliani's grouping as oriented by Qari and his colleagues thus formed the original nucleus of what later became the GIA.

By the end of 1993, the GIA had gained notoriety from its campaign against foreigners in Algeria⁹³ and

had expanded rapidly under the leadership of Abdelhaq Layada and his successors. In 1994, part of the MIA (mainly in central Algeria) rallied to the GIA, as did Saïd Makhloufi and his MEI followers⁹⁴ and the FIS underground network in central Algeria, headed by the former *Jaz'ara* leader Mohamed Saïd and Abderrazak Radjam. The rest of the MIA reformed as the Islamic Salvation Army (*Armée Islamique du Salut*, AIS), which recognised the authority of the FIS leaders, thus enabling the FIS to claim the allegiance of a major element of the rebellion in its attempt to negotiate its own rehabilitation in return for helping to end the violence.

The GIA's enlargement and the involvement of prominent ex-FIS personalities in its leadership gravely complicated the situation from the point of view not only of the FIS but all forces calling for a political settlement. On the one hand, it encouraged the notion that the intransigent GIA was the dominant movement, and the AIS represented little of substance. On the other hand, it encouraged some FIS elements still at liberty to endorse GIA actions.⁹⁵ Since these were often murderous in the extreme, it made it easy for opponents of any negotiation to tar

next day; the following month, five foreigners were killed; in November 1993, three French consular officials were abducted but recovered unhurt, bearing a warning from the GIA to all foreigners to leave the country within the month; in December 1993, nineteen foreigners were killed. The campaign, which notably included the sensational abduction and murder of seven Trappist monks of the monastery of Tibehirine near Medea in 1996, continued until 1997, by when it had claimed over 100 victims. The thesis that a substantial element of this campaign was the fruit of manipulation of the GIA by the Algerian intelligence services, acting with the knowledge of their French intelligence counterparts, has been developed by various authors, notably a group of dissident Algerian army officers in exile called the Algerian Free Officers' Movement (*Mouvement Algérien des Officiers Libres*, MAOL), which has published numerous sensational dossiers on its website (www.anp.org), Samraoui (op. cit.) and by Lounis Aggoun and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, *Françalgérie: crimes et mensonges d'États: histoire secrète de la guerre d'indépendance à la 'troisième guerre' d'Algérie* (Paris, 2004). Aggoun and Rivoire draw heavily on the MAOL and Samraoui, whose testimony is mostly unsupported by documentation.

⁹⁴ Makhloufi withdrew from the GIA before long and reorganised his MEI as an autonomous movement, although it was already a spent force by the time he was killed in 1997.

⁹⁵ Notably Anwar Haddam, a member of the *Jaz'ara* tendency, who had been elected on the first ballot in Tlemcen in December 1991 and then escaped to the U.S., where he led the FIS's Parliamentary Delegation Abroad until incarcerated by the authorities.

⁸⁷ ICG interview, Algiers, 20 August 2003.

⁸⁸ The group has usually been referred to by the Algerian press and academic sources as *Al-Hijra wa'l-Takfir*, but, as Laayachi told ICG, "it never called itself this". Ibid. Its susceptibility to manipulation was noted as early as 1992 by the Algerian journalist Aïssa Khelladi; see his *Les Islamistes Algériens Face au Pouvoir* (Algiers, 1992), p. 121.

⁸⁹ ICG interview with Redha Malek, Algiers, 14 July 2003.

⁹⁰ ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003. For discussion of Al-Zawahiri's role in the reorientation of the Egyptian group al-Jihad to Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda, see ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa II*, op. cit.

⁹¹ That is, disciples of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), whose doctrines have inspired most jihadi groups in Egypt and elsewhere; for discussion of Qutb's thought and its influence on Egyptian radicals, see ICG Briefings, *Islamism in North Africa I* and *Islamism in North Africa II*, both op. cit.

⁹² ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003. Arrested in July 1992, Miliani was tried with others in July 1993 and executed on 31 August 1993.

⁹³ It was this campaign that brought the previously obscure GIA to public notice; it began on 21 September 1993 with the abduction of two Frenchmen whose bodies were found the

the FIS with the GIA's terrorist brush. The most surprising development was undoubtedly the decision of Mohamed Saïd and his associates to rally to the GIA. The outlook of the *Jaz'ara* was diametrically opposed to the mixture of extreme Qutbism and jihadi Salafism at the core of the GIA, and this incompatibility proved fatal.

In autumn 1994, Saïd and his supporters tried to take over or at least moderate the GIA and make it amenable to a political solution.⁹⁶ This failed, and the jihadi Salafi/Qutbist wing reasserted itself, securing the succession of Djamel Zitouni. From November 1995 on, Zitouni instigated a purge in which Saïd and some 500 supporters were executed.⁹⁷ Under Zitouni's predecessors in 1993-1994, the GIA had already begun to expand the concept of *takfir* to embrace elements of society, not merely the "impious state". In the districts it controlled, it imposed a "re-Islamisation" of society and punished with death civilians who defied its injunctions such as women who refused to wear the *hijab*, hairdressers who ignored orders to close their shops and newsagents who continued to sell the national newspapers. This was taken further by Zitouni, who, in the light of the successful presidential election in November 1995,⁹⁸ argued that the whole of Algerian society "had left Islam" and should be considered apostate.⁹⁹ By this time, moreover, the GIA was

explicitly opposed to the AIS and frequently clashed violently with it.

With the reassertion of the more extremist views of *Al-Muwahhidun*, the GIA began to disintegrate. Three local *emirs* refused to recognise Zitouni's leadership and asserted their independence.¹⁰⁰ Some were driven by suspicion that under Zitouni the GIA had fallen prey to systematic manipulation by the army's intelligence services.¹⁰¹ In July 1996, Zitouni was killed by elements of the Medea section of the GIA commanded by Ali Benhadjar¹⁰² and was succeeded by the equally extreme Antar Zouabri. In February 1997, Benhadjar's group split away to form the Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad (*Ligue Islamique pour le Da'wa et le Djihad*, LIDD).

The first massacres date from this period. While much remains unclear, it seems that the initial ones, those in Medea in late 1996, targeted families loyal to the Islamist cause but opposed to the extremism of Zitouni, Zouabri and the *Al-Muwahhidun* grouping. Thereafter the GIA under Zouabri put into practice the extreme conception of *al-takfir* proclaimed by Zitouni against all who refused to support it. Whatever else may have been involved in the much larger massacres of July-September 1997 and December 1997-January 1998,¹⁰³ in which many hundreds of civilians were slaughtered, the extreme vision which now oriented the GIA was an important element. Because this doctrine was not that of Ayman Al-Zawahiri's al-Jihad group -- by then the main

⁹⁶ Ali Djeddi told ICG: "The sheikhs Abderrazak Radjam and Mohamed Saïd, as you know, were both assassinated. Why? Because they were trying to reform things inside the armed groups, because they were trying to protect the population from their tyranny, because they wanted to convince [the GIA] of the necessity of a political solution. Abderrazak Radjam and Mohamed Saïd paid for this attempt with their lives. We appreciate their sacrifice at its true value, although we did not share their choice of method". ICG interview, Kolea, 10 July 2003.

⁹⁷ ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003. According to Laayachi, a certain Farid, a childhood friend of Zitouni, who is believed to have played a key role in instigating these purges, was later executed by Zitouni's rivals after admitting under torture to being an agent of military intelligence.

⁹⁸ Despite widespread expectations that elections would prove impossible to hold, Algerians voted in large numbers -- the official turnout figure of 75 per cent, although perhaps inflated, was not seriously contested -- and the incumbent, President Zeroual was plausibly credited with 61 per cent of the vote.

⁹⁹ ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003. This position is known as *takfir al-mujtama'* (denunciation of the society as infidel), as distinct from the doctrine which holds the state alone to be infidel and a licit target of jihad.

¹⁰⁰ The emirs in question were Mustapha Kertali, who commanded the Larba district south of Algiers, Hassan Hattab (the Boumerdès region and western Kabylia) and Kada Benchiha (western Algeria).

¹⁰¹ ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, 20 August 2003.

¹⁰² A former FIS parliamentary candidate elected in December 1991, Benhadjar was not an "Afghan" and did not support Zitouni's extremist line.

¹⁰³ These massacres prompted intense speculation concerning the possible implication of Algerian army units; while the hypothesis that the army itself committed the massacres has not been substantiated, there is evidence that the military authorities were well aware of the massacres while they were in progress and deliberately failed to intervene for reasons which have never been established; see Abed Charef, *Autopsie d'un massacre* (La Tour d'Aigues, 1998); Youcef Bedjaoui, Abbas Aroua and Meziane Aït Larbi, *An Inquiry into the Algerian Massacres* (Geneva, 1999); and Nesroulah Yous, *Qui a tué à Benthalha? Chronique d'un massacre annoncé* (Paris, 2000).

ideological influence on al-Qaeda -- its adoption cost the GIA its ties with the al-Qaeda network.¹⁰⁴

C. THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE GIA AND THE END OF THE AIS

The massacres of 1997-1998 precipitated the AIS's decision to end its campaign and accelerated the break-up of the GIA. On 21 September 1997, after secret negotiations with the army over many months, AIS commander Madani Mezrag announced a nationwide ceasefire effective from 1 October. The fact that families linked to the FIS/AIS had been among the victims of the massacres probably influenced this decision. The ceasefire was a strategic defeat for the FIS, since it meant that the Algerian army had ended the AIS campaign without conceding it a renewed political role.¹⁰⁵ The GIA fell apart: Mustapha Kertali's group at Larba and Ali Benhadjar's LIDD soon associated themselves with the ceasefire; Kada Benchiha and his followers quit the GIA to found a new group, "The Guardians of the Salafi Call" (HDS);¹⁰⁶ and in September 1998, the GIA commander in the Boumerdès region, Hassan Hattab, broke away to found the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).

Following Abdelaziz Bouteflika's accession to the presidency in April 1999, the government introduced a Law on Civil Concord in July 1999, which offered a qualified amnesty to those still involved in armed rebellion. In January 2000 this was supplemented by a decree offering an "amnesty-pardon" [*grâce amnestiante*] to the AIS, Kertali's group and the LIDD, which all accordingly dissolved themselves. This left Hattab's GSPC, the HDS and Zouabri's diminished GIA still active. Subsequently, another section of the GIA in central Algeria formed an

independent movement, the Sunni Group for Preaching and Transmission [of the Qur'anic message] (*Al-Jama'a al-Sunniyya li 'l-Da'wa wa 'l-Tabligh*), led by Abdelkader Souane. In February 2002, Antar Zouabri was killed and the GIA reduced to about 100 fighters dispersed across the hinterland of Algiers in small units, plus a small group at Sidi Bel Abbes.

For Laayachi:

The two powerful groups that remain are the GSPC and the HDS. The GSPC picked up a lot of men after the break-up of the GIA and is present above all in Kabylia and in the east around Tebessa....In the West, the HDS is based at Had Chekala in the *wilaya* of Relizane, at Aïn Defla, Tissemsilt and all the southern part of the Medea region. It combats the little GIA groups, has about the same number of men as the GSPC and practically the same ideology.¹⁰⁷

Thus the confusion which characterised the armed movements at their outset in 1991-1993 has been largely resolved. With the possible exception of Souane's group, whose outlook remains unclear, all the movements still active belong to the Qutbist variant of the "jihadi Salafi" trend. Everything else has either been destroyed or has given up.

D. BETWEEN AL-QAEDA AND *TRABENDO*: RESIDUAL REBELLION AND POLICY IMPASSE¹⁰⁸

Three issues are central to policy debate over the surviving armed groups: how to end their activity; what links they have, if any, to al-Qaeda; and the implications of their connection to long-distance smuggling and other illicit commercial activity. The first question has become more intractable the more it is linked to the second, which tends to eclipse the third.

Neither GIA, GSPC nor HDS were offered the "amnesty-pardon" of 2000. There is evidence that elements of the GSPC, including its leader, Hassan

¹⁰⁴ A conventional Qutbist, Al-Zawahiri considered that *al-takfir* applied only to the state and refused to declare the whole society apostate; in adopting a more extreme position, Zitouni explicitly broke with Al-Zawahiri's group and its outlook". ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, 20 August 2003.

¹⁰⁵ The senior FIS leader then at liberty, Abdelkader Hachani, had, following his release from prison in July 1997, tried to influence the terms of the agreement between the AIS and the army but, having failed, ended by opposing it, and was assassinated in Algiers on 22 November 1999.

¹⁰⁶ This group was called *Katibat al-Ahwal* [The Company of the Horrors] by the Algerian press. After Benchiha's death in 1999, it was led by another "Afghan", Mohamed Benslim, alias Slim Al-Abbasi Abou Djaafar Al-Afghani, from Sidi Bel Abbes.

¹⁰⁷ ICG interview with Hmida Laayachi, Algiers, 20 August 2003. Laayachi told ICG he estimated the GSPC's strength at that time as 540-600 men and HDS's at nearly the same.

¹⁰⁸ *Trabendo* is Algerian argot for smuggling and illicit trading in general, from the French *contrebande*.

Hattab, were interested in a possible negotiated end to their campaign, but nothing has come of this. In the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, factional disputes within the regime over the issue were complicated by developments in Algeria's relations with the U.S. in the context of the "war on terrorism". As the Algerian daily *Le Matin*, a supporter of the army hard-liners, put it in late 2002:

If the reports that negotiations have been taking place between the authorities and the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat are confirmed, Algeria risks compromising all its chances of benefiting from the international support against terrorism which developed after 11 September.¹⁰⁹

This line prevailed until the April 2004 presidential election. Although President Bouteflika was reported to favour extending the earlier amnesty to all remaining armed groups, he appeared to abandon this idea in 2003.¹¹⁰ It continued to be advocated by the legal Islamist parties and the ex-FIS, notably Abassi Madani, who was released in July 2003 and announced an "initiative" including this proposal in November 2003, reiterating it two months later.¹¹¹ But this proposal was consistently opposed by the army commanders. A central element of the rationale for their opposition has been the al-Qaeda factor.¹¹²

The accusation that the armed movements have had links to al-Qaeda predates 11 September 2001 but has been made, especially by certain Algerian newspapers, with increased frequency since then. Evidence included the discovery of several foreign

fighters in the GSPC¹¹³ and the killing near Batna in south-eastern Algeria on 12 September 2002 of a terrorist of Yemeni origin, Emad Abdelwahid Ahmed Alwan ("Abou Mohamed"), who was reportedly an al-Qaeda emissary.¹¹⁴ In addition, GSPC members and support networks in Europe have been found to have links of some kind to al-Qaeda networks,¹¹⁵ and in late 2002 the GSPC commander in the southern Algerian Sahara, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, was accused of being personally linked to al-Qaeda by both French and U.S. intelligence agencies.¹¹⁶ While the claim of a serious GSPC-al-Qaeda connection was initially met with a mixed response from external observers,¹¹⁷ two subsequent developments were claimed to bear out the thesis. First, the sensational abduction of 32 European tourists in the Algerian Sahara in the spring of 2003 was cited as evidence of a growing al-Qaeda presence in the central Sahara, where the frontiers of Algeria, Libya, Chad, Niger, Mali and Mauritania converge.¹¹⁸ Initially attributed to Belmokhtar, the abductions were subsequently reported to have been organised by another GSPC emir, Amari Saïfi, more widely known as "Abderrazak Le Para", but in either case the GSPC was implicated.¹¹⁹ Secondly, in

¹¹³ *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 6 November 2001.

¹¹⁴ See *El Watan*, 26 November 2002.

¹¹⁵ See Jonathan Schanzer, "Countering Algerian Terror: Increased U.S. Involvement", Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Policywatch* No. 801, 28 October 2003.

¹¹⁶ See the interview with the Director of the French DST in *Le Monde*, 11 September 2002; for the CIA's assessment of Belmokhtar, see *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 13 November 2002. As reported, these accusations were in both cases simple affirmations unsupported by any evidence.

¹¹⁷ The claim is unreservedly endorsed by Schanzer, *op. cit.*; for a sceptical view, see "Algeria and Terrorism: A Complex Web", International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Comments* 9, no. 6 (August 2003). Laayachi told ICG that he considered the HDS to be closer than the GSPC to al-Qaeda: "What differentiates [the HDS] from the GSPC is that the GSPC does not have ambitions at the world level; its jihad is to be fought and its Islamic Republic built here in Algeria. For Benslim's group, on the other hand, it is necessary to strike anywhere, inside Algeria or outside, in France and elsewhere. It seems to me that, in terms of its discourse, objectively, this group is closer than the GSPC to al-Qaeda." ICG interview, Algiers, 20 August 2003.

¹¹⁸ Since January 2004, U.S. military advisers have begun training units of the armies of Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger in counter-terrorist techniques in what is called the Pan-Sahel Initiative. Repeated press reports of an active U.S. military presence on the ground in Algeria have been emphatically denied by the U.S. embassy in Algiers; see *Le Jeune Indépendant*, 14 July 2004.

¹¹⁹ Seventeen of the tourists were freed in May 2003, but the remainder were not released until August 2003, by which

¹⁰⁹ "Le GSPC est un prolongement d'Al-Qaïda: Hassan Hattab et Ben Laden mènent le même combat", *Le Matin*, 13 November 2002.

¹¹⁰ In his speech to the army high command at the Ministry of Defence on 4 July 2003; see *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 9 July 2003.

¹¹¹ *L'Expression*, 13 November 2003; *Le Quotidien d'Oran* 18 November 2003; *El Watan*, 19 January 2004.

¹¹² As *Le Matin* explained, to negotiate with the GSPC would be "an enterprise at odds with the measures taken around the world to put an end to the terrorist groups, including the GSPC which the Americans have put on the blacklist of organisations close to al-Qaeda. The link is established: over and above the doctrinal connection founded on Salafism on the basis of which Osama Ben Laden has wanted to federate all the Islamist organisations, the GSPC and al-Qaeda enjoy organic ties... Thus contracting a 'peace of the brave' with the GSPC means nothing other than making a pact with al-Qaeda." *Le Matin*, 13 November 2002.

September 2003, it was reported that Hassan Hattab had been deposed as national emir of the GSPC and replaced by Nabil Sahraoui ("Abou Ibrahim Mustapha"), a 39 year-old former GIA commander who was subsequently reported to have pledged the GSPC's allegiance to al-Qaeda, which Hattab had apparently refused to do.¹²⁰

This does not dispose of the al-Qaeda question, however. Rather, the available evidence supports the following hypotheses:

First, since the surviving armed movements in Algeria are identified with the Salafiyya and have dissociated themselves from the GIA's extremist theory and practice, notably indiscriminate targeting of civilians,¹²¹ it is clear they share al-Qaeda's general worldview. They are further linked to it by the "Afghan" experience and the personal connections it established. Moreover, lacking representation within the Algerian political sphere, they have relied for legitimation on external jihadi connections. This does not mean these movements have been part of or relays for al-Qaeda in the sense of adopting its agenda. On the contrary, the evidence strongly supports the view that the GSPC at least has been committed to an independent agenda (its own jihad inside Algeria) and uninterested in al-Qaeda's global jihad. While GSPC leaders may profess allegiance to al-Qaeda, their actions rather than words provide reliable evidence of the group's true nature, and at no point has the GSPC engaged in any terrorist activity against U.S., Israeli or European targets, apart from the tourist affair. The latter, far from proving a significant al-Qaeda relationship, suggests rather that the link is essentially a formality without much practical significance: a genuine al-Qaeda operation probably would have killed the tourists or perhaps

time one had died of sunstroke. The entire affair, which was wholly unprecedented, remains shrouded in mystery.

¹²⁰ *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 9 October 2003; *El Watan*, 12 October 2003; *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 23 October 2003. These and more recent reports corroborated the thesis that Hattab had been looking for an AIS-style negotiated end to his campaign, something that Sahraoui's succession seemed to rule out.

¹²¹ The GSPC made clear in splitting from the GIA that it rejected the doctrine of *takfir al-mujtama* and the indiscriminate killing of civilians that it rationalised and was reverting to the conventional *takfiri* position favoured by Ayman Al-Zawahiri's al-Jihad grouping, which denounces the state alone, not society in general, as "impious". This change brought the GSPC back to the doctrinal outlook of al-Qaeda, and it has largely confined its attacks to the Algerian state's security forces.

used them to bargain for political demands, not held them for ransom. It follows that its links to al-Qaeda are not such as to constitute a serious reason for refusing to consider a negotiated end to the GSPC's campaign.

Secondly, however much concern there may be about the presence of jihadi militants with al-Qaeda links in the remoter regions of Algeria's Sahelian neighbours,¹²² there is no good reason to expect a serious problem of this kind in Algeria's Saharan region. The capacity of the Algerian state to maintain an effective presence there is of a qualitatively higher order than that of its Sahelian counterparts; in the mid-1990s the authorities established a security screen and a system of internal passports to protect the Sahara from terrorist incursions from the north, with the result that the region was almost wholly spared terrorist violence until the 2003 hostage affair. Moreover, despite local grievances, mainly on economic issues, the populations of the southern Algerian Sahara were noted throughout the 1990s for loyalty to the FLN and the state and hostility to, or lack of interest in, Islamist movements.¹²³ Finally, both GSPC emirs who have been active in the region are outsiders with no representative political standing.¹²⁴ Thus there is no good reason to expect serious al-Qaeda activism in the Algerian Sahara. Such a development would almost certainly have shallow local roots, if any, and reflect an opportunistic incursion from outside. It follows that

¹²² It is reported that "[s]ince 11 September 2001 and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, a considerable number of Pakistan and Afghan elements have spread into the region, especially northern Mali, in an attempt to 'Talibanise' it". Jeremy Keenan, "Indigenous Rights and a Future Politic amongst Algeria's Tuareg After Forty Years of Independence", *Journal of North African Studies* 8, nos. 3-4 (2003), p. 25, fn. 34.

¹²³ In 1990, the FLN won all nine communal assemblies (APCs) in Tamanrasset, all six APCs in Illizi and 25 of the 27 APCs in Adrar; in 1991, ten of the FLN's sixteen seats won on the first ballot were from Saharan constituencies, especially Adrar, Illizi and Tamanrasset. These districts continued to vote predominantly for the pro-government parties (FLN and RND) in 1997 and 2002, and for the regime-backed candidacies of Liamine Zeroual in 1995 and Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 1999 and 2004.

¹²⁴ Mokhtar Belmokhtar is a Chaambi Beduin from Metlili in the northern Sahara; Abderrazak le Para is a Shawi Berber from the Aures mountains to the northeast of the Sahara. Given local resentment at the presence of northerners (Keenan, op. cit.), it is doubtful that they represent any significant current of local opinion in the southern Saharan regions where they have been operating.

the issue of the GSPC presence in the Sahara should be kept in proportion. The group's centre of gravity is in the north; it is by dealing with it there that the problem of its presence in the south will be resolved, not vice versa.

Thirdly, preoccupation with the al-Qaeda link has tended to distract from the far more substantial and long-established connection between the surviving armed movements, especially the GSPC, and the "black" economy. Indeed, a major trait of these movements has been their symbiotic relationship with local "mafias", groups that take advantage of the state's abdication of its regulatory role in much of the economy to engage in illicit commercial activities, notably smuggling, protection rackets and money-laundering.¹²⁵ A strong tie exists between the GSPC and what is known locally as "*la mafia du sable*" (the sand mafia) in Kabylia,¹²⁶ and both Belmokhtar and Saïfi have been noted far more for smuggling than for jihadi activity. Saïfi has apparently controlled the illicit movement of livestock and containers throughout the Tebessa-Bir El Ater region close to the Tunisian frontier, and Belmokhtar has long monopolised the import of contraband Marlboro cigarettes from West Africa via Mali; he is also reported to have engaged in arms smuggling.¹²⁷ As long as the state is unable to put an end to the "mafia economy" and contraband activities which have flourished since the late 1980s, it is likely that the activities of armed groups notionally inspired by Islamist ideology will continue to have a strong but entirely mundane economic basis.

Fourthly, Algerians who have been drawn to international jihadi activism, in either al-Qaeda or networks which have taken al-Qaeda as their model, have largely come from the diaspora in Europe (including the UK) and North America. They share a jihadi outlook with the Algeria-based insurgents, but there is little or no evidence that they have been members of these movements. While the GSPC (certainly) and the HDS (probably) have established support networks in Europe and elsewhere, these

have been limited to ancillary functions (logistics, fund-raising, propaganda), not acts of terrorism or other violence outside Algeria. That said, the continued presence of armed movements in Algeria may well be a factor encouraging involvement of diaspora Algerians in al-Qaeda (or al-Qaeda-style) terrorism in Europe and elsewhere, for two reasons:

- these movements provide an Algerian reference or model that tacitly validates jihadi activism as a path for frustrated, militant young Algerians with no other outlets; and
- continuing violence and the broader crisis in Algeria inevitably weaken diaspora Algerians' political identification with their homeland and aggravate their impulse to identify with supra-national causes (given that emotional and political identification with non-Muslim host-countries is problematic).

Since the April 2004 presidential election, rumours of secret negotiations to end the GSPC campaign have not been vindicated by substantive developments. On 20 June 2004, however, Sahraoui and three other GSPC leaders were killed by the army near Bejaia in Kabylia, which was widely reported to have "decapitated" the GSPC as a whole. That this had not entirely disarmed the group was suggested by the bombing of a major power station at Hamma in Algiers two days later, but this setback may encourage the already discernible tendency of local units to give up a struggle that has seemed to be going nowhere and surrender. Whether they do so or not, the state should act to end, one way or another, the residual insurgency without further ado. Both the EU and individual European governments should assist President Bouteflika's administration in acting energetically to this end.

¹²⁵ On money-laundering, see *El Watan*, 24 August 2002 and *Le Jeune Indépendant*, 25 August 2002.

¹²⁶ See *Liberté*, 29 August 2002 and especially "Voyage dans les plaines du GSPC", *Algeria-Interface*, 18 December 2002.

¹²⁷ *Le Monde*, 11 September 2002. Relations between the two seem to have been competitive and tense. See *Le Quotidien d'Oran*, 9 July 2002 and 24 November 2002. The sensational abduction of 32 European tourists in the Sahara in 2003 discussed above appears to have been part of an attempt by Saïfi to move into the Saharan region at Belmokhtar's expense.

IV. THE DERIVATIVES OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERS

A. THE THREE ISLAMIST PARTIES

Algeria has three legal Islamist political parties, identified in part by their relationship to the Egyptian Muslim Brothers.

- The Movement of Society for Peace (*Harakat Mujtama'al-Silm*, HMS; *Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix*, MSP), known until 1997 as the Movement for an Islamic Society (*Harakat li Mujtama' Islami*, HAMAS; *Mouvement pour une Société Islamique*, MSI), was founded by Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah in 1990.¹²⁸ After Nahnah's death in 2003, Aboudjerra Soltani became leader. The largest legal Islamist party after the FIS was banned, it was surpassed in 2002 by the Movement for National Reform.
- The Movement for National Reform (*Harakat al-Islah al-Watani*; *Mouvement de la Reforme Nationale*, MRN) was founded by Sheikh Abdallah Djaballah in 1999 as a breakaway from the Nahda Movement he started in 1990 but lost control of in 1998.¹²⁹ In the 2002 legislative elections, the MRN became the largest Islamist party in the National Assembly.
- The Nahda Movement (*Harakat al-Nahda*; *Mouvement de la Nahda*, MN) is led by Lahbib Adami, who successfully challenged Djaballah's leadership in 1998. Having won 34 National Assembly seats in 1997 under Djaballah, it won only one in 2002.

Underlying the emergence and evolution of these parties have been rival traditions dating to the mid-1970s. In 1976, Nahnah founded a clandestine group, *Al-Muwahhidun*.¹³⁰ He was sentenced to

prison for fifteen years and served four after he and his followers sawed down some electricity pylons. Djaballah emerged as a leader of the Islamist movement at the University of Constantine, where he founded the first "Islamic group" (*al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*) in 1974. After enactment of the Law on Associations in 1987, Nahnah formed the Guidance and Reform Association (*Jam'iyyat al-Irshad wa 'l-Islah*) and Djaballah the Islamic Renaissance Association (*Jam'iyyat al-Nahda al-Islamiyya*). Both men stayed out of the FIS in 1989 but called on their followers to support it in the 1990 elections. They subsequently founded their own parties to compete with the FIS in the 1991 legislative elections but fared poorly. After the FIS was banned, both parties greatly expanded their support.

In November 1995, Nahnah was one of three candidates allowed to stand against incumbent Liamine Zeroual in the presidential election, receiving 25.58 per cent of the vote. In 1997 his party (now the MSP) obtained 14.8 per cent and 69 seats to become the second largest in the National Assembly. However, support dropped sharply in subsequent elections. In 1999, Nahnah was barred from the presidential election, and the MSP supported Bouteflika. In May 2002, it won a mere 7.05 per cent and 38 seats.

Djaballah emerged as the other principal Islamist figure. In the 1997 legislative elections, his MN captured 8.72 per cent of the vote and 34 seats. In 1998-1999, he broke away from the party, disagreeing with its decision to support Bouteflika rather than field its own candidate. Running for president, he received only 3.96 per cent of the vote¹³¹ but his independent stance attracted many MN militants, and in May 2002, the MRN routed Adami's MN, taking 10.08 per cent of the votes and 43 seats to the MN's 3.58 per cent¹³² and one seat.

¹²⁸ Following the revision of the constitution, which was ratified by referendum on 28 November 1996, a new law forbade the party-political exploitation of Islam, and Islamist parties were obliged to drop the reference to Islam in their names, HAMAS becoming HMS/MSP and the MNI becoming the MN.

¹²⁹ Until 1997 the Nahda Movement was called the Islamic Nahda Movement.

¹³⁰ Not to be confused with the later extremist grouping of the same name which played a central role in the GIA (see section III above); the name, which means "The Unitarians" or "The Monotheists", is popular among Islamic revivalist

movements, the fundamental tenet of Islam being the monotheistic belief in the "oneness of God" [*tawhid*]. It was the name used by the Wahhabi movement to identify itself.

¹³¹ The official figures meant little since Djaballah, like the five other candidates running against Bouteflika, had announced his withdrawal from the election.

¹³² According to the results announced by interior minister Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni on 31 May 2002; very different figures were announced by the Constitutional Council on 3 June 2002, which among other unexplained decisions reduced the MRN's score to 9.5 per cent and slashed the MN's to a mere 0.65 per cent; see ICG Middle East Briefing,

B. THE EVOLUTION OF DOCTRINE

The key differences between Nahnah's and Djaballah's parties have been political, not doctrinal. While both are constitutional and peaceful, they differ in their attitude to the regime. Nahnah's party supports and participates in government,¹³³ while Djaballah has resisted co-optation and preferred to lead a party of programmatic opposition. This explains why, in 1995, HAMAS did not support the Rome Platform of which Djaballah was a signatory; this was also at issue in the conflict which erupted inside the MN between Djaballah and Adami in late 1998, since the latter and his supporters were keen to participate in government, whereas Djaballah was wholly opposed.¹³⁴

Doctrinally, all three parties locate themselves in the traditions of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers and Ben Badis's Association of the *'ulama*, although Djaballah and his followers have always emphasised their independence from the Egyptian organisation, as does Adami's MN today.¹³⁵ All three also locate themselves in the tradition of the Algerian national movement and the 1954-1962 revolution and dissociate themselves from the contemporary Salafiyya movement.¹³⁶

Like the FIS today, all three parties have revised their idea of an Islamic state. They accept the Algerian nation, instead of opposing the multi-national Islamic *umma* to it and embrace the concept of democracy. In addition, they accept the constitution, instead of rejecting it as un-Islamic, and qualify and nuance their insistence on *Shari'a* in several crucial ways.

Regarding an Islamic state, Saadi Abdelghafour told ICG:

Without defining it as Islamic or un-Islamic, the state we want to construct is that described by the declaration of 1 November 1954....It speaks of the edification of an "Algerian state, republican, democratic, social, sovereign, in the framework of Islamic principles". The framework of Islamic principles must therefore be respected. Within this framework, democracy must be protected and freedoms preserved.¹³⁷

The crucial question is what these parties mean by "respect" for "the framework of Islamic principles". They all agree that *Shari'a* should be the basis of law, but their positions allow room for debate. For the MN, "no law must be incompatible with the spirit of the *Shari'a*".¹³⁸ This reference to the spirit rather than the letter leaves much open. Emphasis on *ijtihad*, the intellectual effort involved in interpretation where scripture is vague or silent, is now central to the positions of these parties.¹³⁹ While the *Shari'a* is of divine origin and immutable, the possible theocratic implications are countered by recognition that a system of law, *fiqh*, is the product of human intellectual effort (*ijtihad*) and deliberation and that interpretation and adaptation are continuous necessities.

These legal principles represent a shift from the dogmatism formerly espoused by Islamists in Algeria and elsewhere and recall Mohamed Abduh's

Diminishing Returns: Algeria's 2002 Legislative Elections, 24 June 2002.

¹³³ Nahnah's party (HAMAS/MSI, then HMS/MSP) has participated in every government since 1994.

¹³⁴ That the MSP and Adami's MN had little to show for their participation in the government was a factor in their poor electoral showing in 2002 and the MRN's striking success.

¹³⁵ ICG interview with Fateh Rebeï, General Secretary of the MN, Algiers, 4 August 2003. Nahnah's movement seems much closer to, if not explicitly affiliated with, the Egyptian movement.

¹³⁶ "There exists several types of Salafiyya. There is the *Salafiyya ilmiyya* [the "scholarly" or "scientific" Salafiyya] and a *Salafiyya jihadiyya*. We have nothing to do with one or the other or with the Salafiyya in general. This current which calls itself "Salafi" is characterised by an excessive rigorism [*tazammut*] in its attachment to certain details of behaviour, and tends to reduce Islam to these details. So we cannot agree with that". ICG interview with Saadi Abdelghafour, MRN Vice-President and Chairman of its Parliament Group, Algiers, 27 July 2003.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ ICG interview with Fateh Rebeï, Algiers, 4 August 2003.

¹³⁹ For the MRN, "The Algerian constitution itself stipulates that Islam is the religion of the state. In other words, it stipulates that the State and its officials are obliged to respect Islamic morality and to apply it.... The legislator can have recourse to *ijtihad*, but he cannot in any circumstances decide to make licit that which is formally illicit from the point of view of religion". ICG interview with Saadi Abdelghafour, Algiers, 27 July 2003. The MSP goes further by not only insisting on *ijtihad* but also distinguishing between *Shari'a* and *fiqh*: "Linguistically, *Shari'a* means "the way"....Many people confuse *Shari'a* with *fiqh*. The *fiqh* is the law. The *Shari'a* is the path which thinking takes in order to arrive at *fiqh*, at the law. The foundations of the *Shari'a* are in the Qur'an, the Sunna and in *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is the link in the chain which permits us to be simultaneously faithful to our origins and to ourselves while living in harmony with our time. If we limited ourselves to the texts of the Book and the Sunna without understanding and without *ijtihad*, it would be impossible for us to apply them today". ICG interview with Abderrazak Makri, Algiers, 1 August 2003.

outlook.¹⁴⁰ They are combined with a conception of pluralism which extends to tolerance of communists and secularists,¹⁴¹ pays at least lip service to equality of the sexes,¹⁴² accepts in part the claim to recognition of the Berber language¹⁴³ and respects freedom of religion while baulking only at apostasy.¹⁴⁴ They are also linked to a critique of the state that is a far cry from Qutb's anathemas.

Both MSP and MRN consider that the Algerian state is not subject to the rule of law [*un état de droit*] but

¹⁴⁰ On Abduh and the "Islamic modernist" movement, see ICG Briefing, *Islamism in North Africa I*, op. cit.

¹⁴¹ ICG interviews with Saadi Abdelghafour, Abderrazak Makri and Fateh Rebeï, Algiers, 27 July, 1 August and 4 August 2003 respectively.

¹⁴² All three parties accept that revision of the 1984 Family Code is called for, notably concerning the need to guarantee the rights of women after divorce, especially mothers with dependent children. They all, nonetheless, insist that a woman must have a legal guardian [*wali*] present at and consenting to her marriage, a disposition which some Algerians consider to violate the constitutional provision recognising the equality of the sexes. In other respects, all three parties claim to be strongly in favour of this equality, notably but not only in terms of the labour market. The MSP has long boasted a strong female membership and also women members of its *Majlis al-Shura*; women have also figured in some numbers on the electoral lists of the MRN, which counts one female member of the APN.

¹⁴³ Despite supporting the promotion of the Arabic language, all three parties accepted the constitutional revision according to Tamazight (Berber) the status of a national language. As to what should happen next, the MSP is opposed to Tamazight gaining official status as a language of administration, the MRN argues that each of its numerous dialects should be taught, while the MRN calls for Tamazight to be written in Arabic not Roman script. ICG interviews with Saadi Abdelghafour, Abderrazak Makri and Fateh Rebeï, in Algiers, on 27 July, 1 August and 4 August respectively.

¹⁴⁴ All three parties invoke the Qur'anic precept: *la ikraha fi 'l-din* [no constraint in religion] and expound the traditional Muslim tolerance of Christianity and Judaism while insisting that non-Muslims in Algeria "are citizens in full"; this tolerance is also extended to the Ibadi (the non-Sunni Muslim community based in the Mzab in the Algerian Sahara); one of the MRN's APN members elected in 2002 is an Ibadi. The problem of apostasy from Islam -- traditionally punishable by death -- is another matter: for the MSP, "it is a matter for *ijtihad*...the opinions are divided; we would not support the execution of apostates"; for the MN, the question of applying the penalties proscribed by the *Shari'a* must await the advent of the Islamic state; for the MRN, "Islam does not authorize apostasy....I am only telling you what the *Shari'a* stipulates. Accept that the *Shari'a* exists and that certain questions are constant and unchangeable". ICG interviews with Saadi Abdelghafour, Abderrazak Makri and Fateh Rebeï, in Algiers, on 27 July, 1 August and 4 August respectively.

this criticism is not presented as doctrinaire and Islamist. The MSP bases its judgement on electoral fraud and lack of transparency, while the MRN invokes the problem of the "disappeared" as well as electoral fraud and other ways in which the regime violates the law. Abderrazak Makri told ICG:

When one reads the Constitution, it speaks of democracy, freedoms and alternation in power but in practice there is no real alternation in power. The problem is, therefore, not a problem of texts but of the practical application of these texts.¹⁴⁵

More specific criticisms were expressed by the MRN's Saadi Abdelghafour:

In our country, the constitutions are drawn up to the specifications of the ruler, the president. The prerogatives of the president of the republic are exorbitant. Those of the elected assemblies, whether of the parliament or the local assemblies, are very limited.¹⁴⁶

These are political (and, if anything, democratic) rather than doctrinaire Islamist criticisms. The question then is whether these parties still qualify as Islamist. The evidence from their discourse, which their behaviour since 1990 does not seriously belie, is that they do not challenge the state's constitutive principles or threaten its stability. Despite this, their legal status remains under attack by secularists. Redha Malek explained:

I am against the legalisation of these parties. If their discourse seems less violent, it is only purely tactical...The Islamists are people who employ double-talk...I am for the application of the constitution, which says that it is forbidden to use religion for political ends. Why is this not applied? Because the state is weak. For me, the existence of these parties constitutes the very expression of the crisis.¹⁴⁷

This attitude derives from a general view of Islamism as hostile to the nation-state and to progress. In particular, Malek vehemently rejects the notion that a synthesis of Islamism and nationalism is possible:

This is the idle chatter of bad "experts", these American and French experts who come along and recount these imbecile notions. It is for us, not them, to decide whether those people [the

¹⁴⁵ ICG interview, Algiers, 1 August 2003.

¹⁴⁶ ICG interview, Algiers, 27 July 2003.

¹⁴⁷ ICG interview with Redha Malek, Algiers, 14 July 2003.

Islamists] are anchored in the Algerian context or not. No, no synthesis is possible between Islamism and nationalism. Algerian nationalism includes Islam already. We are already Muslims, but this does not mean that one must apply the *Shari'a* to the letter, it's ridiculous.¹⁴⁸

Thus the fact that the legal parties (MSP, MN and MRN) do not actually talk of applying the *Shari'a* to the letter is discounted, either because they are submerged in a wider category of Islamism which would also embrace the Salafis (who do talk of the *Shari'a* in these terms) from whom they dissociate themselves or because they are considered to be engaging in double-talk. Malek, like other Algerian modernists, flatly denies these parties' claim that the proclamation of 1 November 1954 anticipated and legitimates their project.¹⁴⁹

C. THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND THE FUTURE OF ISLAMIST PARTIES

Abdallah Djaballah was the sole Islamist candidate in the 2004 presidential election, and the MRN initially appeared optimistic about its leader's prospects. In the run-up to the vote, his campaign manager said: "This election is a very important stage for us. It is the opportunity to realise results which correspond to the weight of our movement. When we decided to take part our aim was clear...Our aim is well and truly to win!"¹⁵⁰ But while talk of victory was no doubt bluster, the results were a bitter disappointment and a setback for constitutional Islamism. With the MSP again backing Bouteflika, Djaballah came, as expected, third in a field of six, but polled only 511,526 votes (5.02 per cent). This was a slight improvement on 1999 (400,080 votes, 3.96 per cent), but he had

undoubtedly expected to do far better.¹⁵¹ Moreover, in 1999 the greater part of the potential Islamist vote had gone to Dr Ahmed Taleb Ibrahim, who was credited with 12.54 per cent. The implication of Djaballah's 2004 tally was that he had taken hardly any of those votes. Djaballah accordingly claimed the official figures had "amplified" Bouteflika's share and "minimised" his own.¹⁵²

The failure to date of the electoral road to power confronts constitutional Islamism with a dilemma. At most, it can hope for a token share of offices in a pro-regime coalition. This has been the strategy followed by the MSP since 1994, albeit with small if not diminishing dividends. The MRN's strategy has been to develop an Islamist variant of constitutional opposition. Its most interesting and innovative aspects have been the way the party has both explored the possibilities for constructive parliamentary action¹⁵³ and called for constitutional reform to strengthen the legislature. A distinctive element of Djaballah's 2004 election platform was the proposal for "a revision of the constitution in the direction of a greater equilibrium between the different powers, so that power will be given to the people and its elected representatives, as against the monopoly of power by the president of the republic".¹⁵⁴

But the implications of this for constitutional Islamism are uncertain as well. Although there is nothing specifically Islamic about the MRN's constitutional proposals, they are unlikely to make headway as long as they are identified with that party alone. The MRN's dilemma is that, to promote its democratic objectives, it will need to be part of a broad alliance that transcends the Islamist/anti-Islamist political divide and in which it would probably be a junior partner, putting its survival at risk. If it avoids such an alliance, it might preserve itself for the time being while guaranteeing that its proposals get nowhere.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. A striking aspect of this attitude is its refusal to recognise the substantial evolution that has occurred. On key questions of doctrine, the Islamist parties now take substantially the same positions as those of the eminently moderate Algerian Mufti of Marseille, Soheib Bencheikh, who shared a platform with Redha Malek at a conference on terrorism in Algiers in October 2002, as ICG was able to observe, and has recently launched a Muslim Movement for Renewal (*Mouvement Musulman pour le Renouveau*, MPR) on explicitly Islamic-modernist lines. The difference perhaps lies in the fact that Bencheikh's MPR has no ambitions in the party-political sphere. ICG interview with Soheib Bencheikh, Algiers, 13 July 2003.

¹⁵⁰ ICG interview with Saadi Abdelghafour, Algiers, 17 March 2004.

¹⁵¹ Djaballah's decision to withdraw from the election in 1999 is likely to have affected his vote; although his name remained on the ballot, it is probable that a significant percentage of his potential supporters did not cast ballots and that this was why he dismissed his official score as meaningless. In 2004 he undoubtedly expected to exceed this very comfortably, but only improved on it slightly.

¹⁵² See *El Khabar* (Arabic-language daily), 24 April 2004.

¹⁵³ It was on the MRN's proposition that the National Assembly amended the election law, making it harder for fraud to occur, in January 2004.

¹⁵⁴ ICG interview with Saadi Abdelghafour, Algiers, 17 March 2004.

V. CONCLUSION

The extraordinary complexity of Algerian politics since 1989 demands great caution in drawing lessons for application elsewhere. It should, however, be clear that responsibility for destabilisation of the state cannot be fixed on any one actor alone. The entirely constitutional behaviour of the three Islamist parties active since 1992 suggests that legalising Islamist parties per se is not necessarily destabilising. Rather, the polarisation of 1989-1991 owed much to the prevalence of radically doctrinaire positions (fundamentalist Islamism, radical secularism) within the political class and to the fateful decision to licence parties that espoused them in the absence of solid counterweights in the form of more pragmatic parties with a substantial social presence. The newly legalised parties' extremist rhetoric fuelled intolerance, precluded constructive debate and put the new pluralist constitution into question. And the authorities were reckless in their approach to crucial decisions -- legalisation of the FIS, the army's intervention in June 1991, the holding of legislative elections in December 1991, the army's second intervention in January 1992 and the dissolution of the FIS the following month. The way the authorities allowed the FIS to monopolise Algeria's populist tradition and the armed movements to mobilise the tradition of the *maquis*, suggests that they had lost their political bearings very badly, for it should have been a constant and fundamental objective of the government to ensure that neither of these things happened.

That the main tendencies in Algerian Islamism have recovered much of their political bearings should be clear. Apart from the surviving armed movements, all tendencies have abandoned the utopian outlook that prevailed fifteen years ago and have come to terms with the nation-state both theoretically and in practical ways. They have thereby contributed substantially to Algerian politics' emergence from the sterile and lethal impasse into which the confrontation of mutually exclusive ideological positions led it in the 1980s and 1990s. This was borne out by the alignments in the 2004 presidential election: two of the three legal Islamist parties, the MSP and the MN, supported President Bouteflika and campaigned for him, while the MRN supported its own leader, Abdallah Djaballah. The ex-FIS split over this issue, with Rabah Kebir and his associates supporting Bouteflika, while others either quietly supported Ali Benflis or were neutral. This means

that all and sundry are beginning to free themselves from dogma, and we may be witnessing the start of a new political epoch.¹⁵⁵

That this remains uncertain is linked to the way in which most if not all political actors continue to invoke claims of historical legitimacy and holy writ for their positions and ambitions, even while moderating these. This practice contributed to the original ideological impasse. Both the Islamists and their secularist adversaries tended to invoke the FLN's proclamation of 1 November 1954, notably its stated objective of "the restoration of the sovereign, democratic and social, Algerian state in the framework of Islamic principles", as scriptural warrant for their mutually exclusive points of view. A striking feature of the debate since 1989 is that the vague and therefore open-ended nature of the FLN's original statement is not generally acknowledged. Yet, that is a precondition for a genuinely democratic debate over the implications of Islam's status as the official religion and how Algeria might become a state bound by law. This is the next step Algeria's political parties need to take.

The confrontation between rival forms of highly ideological politics -- Islamism and secularism -- and between the Islamist movement and the state polarised and blocked the political process. Far from ending this deadlock, the army's decisions in 1992, by precipitating the descent into violence, confirmed and deepened this blockage. As a result, the substantive problems of the polity -- construction of a state bound by law, development of representative government -- and of the economy -- fostering of private enterprise in manufacturing, especially in the non-hydrocarbons sector, above all -- were not properly addressed by Algeria's politicians for over a decade following the end of the one-party system and have been only partly and ineffectually addressed, if at all, by the technocratic elite. The transcending of the ideological divisions of the past fifteen years or more offers the political class an opportunity to turn the page and engage at last with these problems. Whether it collectively possesses the intellectual and political resources to do this remains to be seen.

¹⁵⁵ In a striking illustration of this trend, three candidates opposing Bouteflika, namely Ali Benflis, Saïd Sadi and Abdallah Djaballah, publicly agreed that their supporters should work together on the ground to guard against electoral fraud; the fact that the arch-secularist and bitter adversary of Islamism, Saïd Sadi, should publicly cooperate with Abdallah Djaballah in this way speaks volumes.

It is important that Algeria's principal international partners, notably France, the EU and the U.S., support this prospect. A major consideration should be not to jeopardise the welcome albeit tentative changes now under way in the structure of government, namely the assertion of civilian primacy through the presidency since Bouteflika's re-election on a "national reconciliation" platform in April 2004, and the corresponding withdrawal of the army commanders from their previous dominant role. That Europe has an interest in a definitive end to the violence in Algeria should be clear; how it might best translate this into specific, effective policies, especially in the non-military sphere, is less so. It should, therefore, be a priority for European policymakers, in upcoming discussions with Algiers in both the framework of the Association Agreement and the Barcelona process, as well as in other bilateral and multilateral frameworks such as the "4 + 3" meeting proposed for the last quarter of 2004,¹⁵⁶ to identify those features of the commercial and human flows between Algeria and Europe which facilitate the illicit economic activities that fuel the jihadi groups, and devise policy responses.

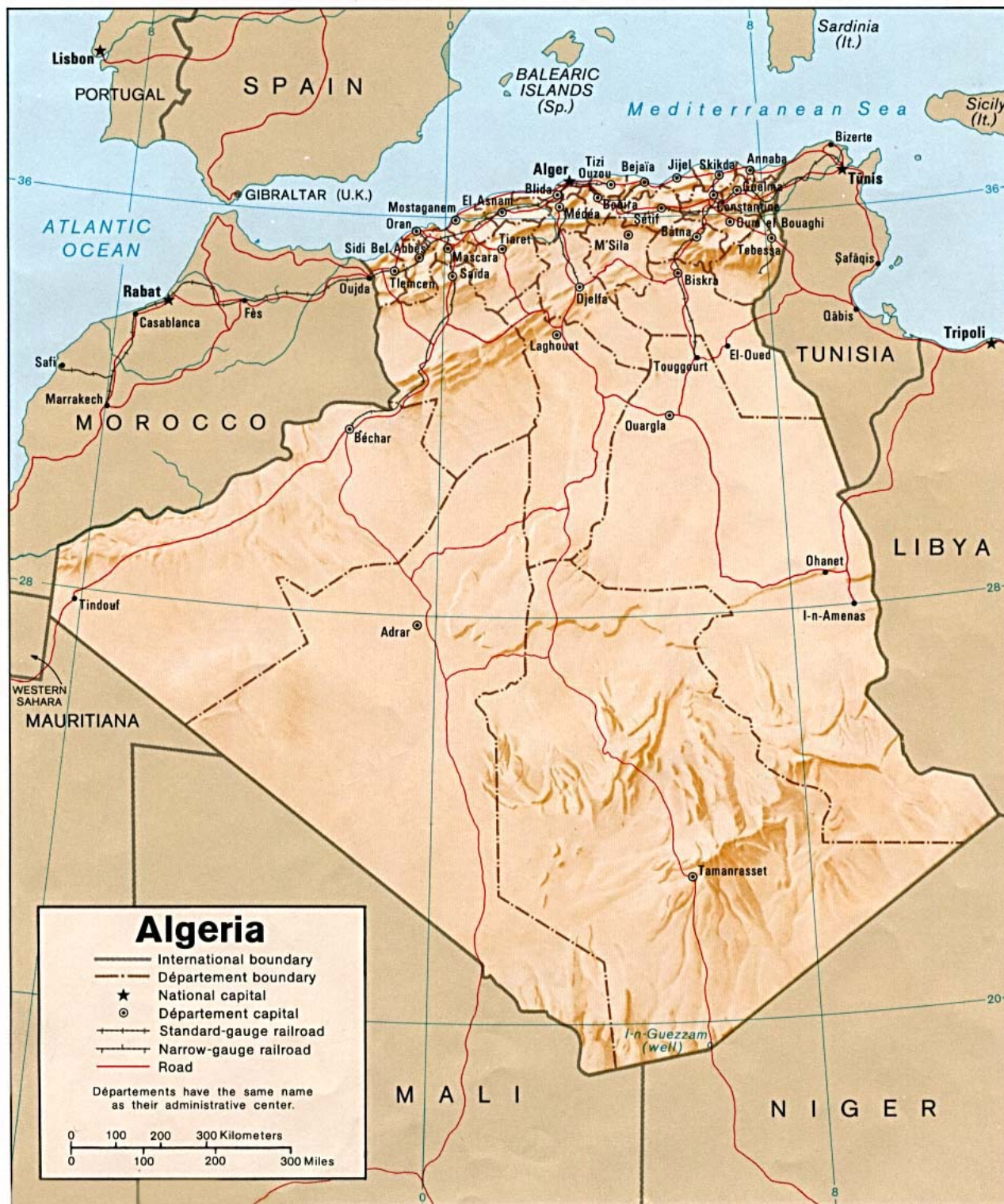
There is no doubt that the development of U.S. relations with Algeria since 2001, and in particular the recognition Washington has accorded President Bouteflika, have contributed to the re-stabilisation of the state and a recovery of confidence in it. That said, there is a danger U.S. military engagement in the region in the context of the "war on terrorism", instead of eliminating an al-Qaeda presence, may actually aggravate it by underlining the strategic weakness, dependent nature and possible legitimacy deficits of the states of the Sahel region and, especially, by providing in the U.S. military presence itself significant motives and targets for jihadi activity that were previously absent. Washington should, therefore, consider how it may assist Algeria's efforts to eliminate the last remaining armed movements through non-military as much as, if not more than, military means, notably by eliminating the large-scale contraband activities which fuel them. Appreciation of the U.S. role would be enhanced should it be able to demonstrate that it no longer conceives of the "war on terrorism" in primarily military terms.

Cairo/Brussels, 30 July 2004

¹⁵⁶ This is a meeting of the Group of 4 -- France, Italy, Portugal and Spain -- and Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia which French defence minister Michelle Alliot-Marie suggested during her recent visit to Algiers could be held in Paris this autumn; see *El Watan*, 18 July 2004.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF ALGERIA



APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

| | |
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| AIS | Armée Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Army) |
| ALN | Armée de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Army) |
| ANP | Armée Nationale Populaire (People's National Army) |
| AOMA | Association des Oulemas Musulmans Algériens (Association of Algerian Muslim <i>'ulama</i>) |
| APC | Assemblée Populaire Communale (Communal People's Assembly) |
| APN | Assemblée Populaire Nationale (National People's Assembly) |
| DST | Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (Department of Territorial Surveillance) (France) |
| EU | European Union |
| FFS | Front des Forces Socialistes (Socialist Forces Front) |
| FIDA | Front Islamique du Djihad Armé (Islamic Front for Armed Jihad) |
| FIS | Front Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Front) |
| FLN | Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front) |
| GIA | Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group) |
| GSPC | Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat) |
| HAMAS | Haraka li-Mujtama' Islami (Movement for an Islamic Society) |
| HDS | Houmat al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya (Guardians of the Salafi Call) |
| HMS | Haraka Mujtama' Al-Silm (Movement of Society for Peace) |
| IEE | Instance Exécutive à l'Étranger (Overseas Executive Body) |
| LIDD | Ligue Islamique du Da'wa et du Djihad (Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad) |
| MEI | Mouvement pour un État Islamique (Movement for an Islamic State) |
| MIA | Mouvement Islamique Algérien (Algerian Islamic Movement, 1982-1987) or Mouvement Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Movement, 1991-1994) |
| MN | Mouvement de la Nahda (Renaissance Movement) |
| MNA | Mouvement National Algérien (Algerian National Movement) |
| MNI | Mouvement de la Nahda Islamique (Islamic Renaissance Movement) |
| MRN | Mouvement de Réforme Nationale (National Reform Movement) |
| MSI | Mouvement pour une Société Islamique (Movement for an Islamic Society; see HAMAS) |
| MSP | Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix (Movement of Society for Peace) |
| PPA | Parti du Peuple Algérien (Algerian People's Party) |
| RND | Rassemblement National Démocratique (Democratic National Rally) |
| UDMA | Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien (Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto) |