STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ISLAMISM AND TERRORISM IN ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

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Algeria has faced Islamist terrorism since 1992 and its people have greatly suffered as a group of Islamist extremists have tried to overthrow the ruling regime and establish an Islamic state. The dramatic events Algeria has endured for almost ten years are barely known to Americans. Many in the West, including some governments, have considered what is going on in Algeria as a legitimate armed opposition to an oppressive military regime. Those with this view believe the cancellation by the High Security Council of the legislative elections of December 26, 1991, when the Islamic Salvation Front (F.I.S) was about to win,have triggered the insurrection. However, the tragic events of September 11, 2001 may change the perception in the West of the ongoing struggle in Algeria. The world has now discovered the hideous face of terrorism, the same terrorism which has afflicted Algeria, and has caused more than 100,000 dead in this country. This research project provides insight into Islamist terrorism using the example of Algeria. It will review the origin of the Islamist threat, account for Islamist growth and presence, and discuss the consequences of Islamist terrorism in Algeria and at the international level. The Algerian Government's response to the terrorists by using all of its elements of national power, while Algeria is leading a struggle for democracy, will also be emphasized. Algeria has paid and continues to pay a very high price for its quest for democracy. It is evident to most Algerians now that democracy with stability is the only viable option for the Algerian society, with positive implications to the country, the region, and the international community.

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ISLAMISM* AND TERRORISM IN ALGERIA

Algeria has faced Islamist terrorism since 1992 and its people have greatly suffered as a group of Islamist extremists have aimed to overthrow the ruling regime and establish an Islamic state over the country. The dramatic events Algeria that has endured for almost ten years are barely known to Americans. The West, including some governments, has considered what is going on in Algeria as a legitimate armed opposition to an oppressive regime. This determination is the result of the cancellation by the Algerian authorities of the legislative elections of December 26, 1991, when the Islamic Salvation Front (F.I.S) was about to win.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, following terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, may change this perception. The world has discovered the hideous face of terrorism, the same terrorism which afflicted Algeria and has caused more than 100,000 dead and more than $20 billion of economic damage.

My intent in this Research Project is to bring a personal and documented insight on the Islamist terrorism in Algeria. I will review the origin of this terrorism, its growth and presence, its internal and external links and support, and the consequences of its activities in Algeria and at the international level. I will also explain the Algerian Government's response to the terrorists by using all its elements of national power, while Algeria is leading a struggle for democracy. Algeria has paid and continues to pay a high price to preserve the republican state. Extremism cannot be allowed whatever its ideology and motivation are; and democracy is the only viable political system for the Algerian society, with positive implications to the country itself, the region and the international community.

ORIGINS OF ISLAMISM IN ALGERIA AND ITS EVOLUTION

Islamism has deep roots in Algeria. The founding of the Association of Algerian Ulama in May 1931, under the French colonial rule, aimed to fight social scourges and to provide a moral education for the population, without any political purpose. Indeed, in the course of over a century of colonial rule, France banned all Islamic institutions that could serve to develop the Arabic language as a vehicle of the Muslim identity. Thus,

> "the Algerian was left without all supporting structures, unprotected and despised by a European minority, an alien in his own land."[1]

In 1936, the Association shifted overtly to political activities by joining other political movements that demanded political and economic equality with the European colonial

---

* Islamism: A complex ensemble of ideological extensions of Islam into political action, with sometimes the use of extremist and violent methods to create an Islamic state.

population of Algeria. However, the outbreak of the Second World War, the death of Cheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis, the leader of the Association of Algerian Ulama in 1940, and the French repression of the unrest of May 1945 created divisions among the members of the Association.

After the start of the Algerian War of Independence on 1 November 1954, the members of the Association split between supporters and opposers to the armed struggle. Its program has been co-opted by the National Liberation front (FLN). The Association itself ceased to exist after 1957.

Furthermore, the adoption of socialism after the independence of Algeria led to the rise again of Islamic opposition and criticism. A new Islamic association called "Al Qiyam" (Values) emerged in 1964. Using public meetings and its own journals, Al Qiyam promoted, as did the Association of Algerian Ulama, Arabic and respect of Islamic values. All non-Islamic influences were anathematized by the Association. In 1965, they declared:

> "all political parties, all regimes and all leaders which do not base themselves on Islam are decreed illegal and dangerous."[2]

During President Houari Boumediene' s rule (1965-1978) a new strategy towards Islamist movements was implemented. The new government pursued a strategy combining the suppression of the Association Al Qiyam with the selective incorporation of its program. However, the recognition of Islam as the religion of state in 1976, and the influence of Arabic teachers brought in from outside Algeria to compensate the lack of suitably qualified native teachers (who brought with them radical Islamist ideas), gave the opportunity for Islamism to grow again in Algeria. Islamists appealed openly for their agenda of application of the Sharia (Islamic Law/legal code) and invested in the universities, the schools and the mosques through which they started to spread their influence. As a result of the radicalization of the Islamist movement, Islamists went so far to declare hostility to the Algerian state itself.

In the decade following Boumediene's death in 1978, the Islamist movement began to grow in strength and influence. The development and the rise of Islamism abroad since the late 1970s had an impact upon the movement in Algeria. The main influence came from the Iranian Revolution that took place in 1979. Also, Afghanistan had a great influence on Algeria's Islamists during the 1980s. The Algerian "Afghans" who later played an important role in the formation of the terrorist armed groups, joined the struggle in Afghanistan in the early 1980s to fight the Soviet communist invader in that country .

The American Central Agency (CIA) and Saudi Arabia provided enormous financial and military assistance to the Afghan anti-communist guerrillas, the Mujahideen, at their main base in Peshawar in northern Pakistan. About 2,800 Algerians joined the Mujahideen in Peshawar

along with other Muslims from Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, Iraq and Iran to fight alongside the Afghan guerrillas.[3] On their return to Algeria the "Afghans" drifted towards the extreme wing of the Islamist movement, and later formed the nucleus of the fiercest of the Algerian terrorist groups.

By 1982, the influence of Islamist students on university campuses had become considerable. At the same time, an Islamist organization called the Algerian Islamic Armed Movement (MAIA) began to contemplate the use of force to establish an Islamic state. Its members started to collect and stockpile weapons. A network of clandestine cells was established across the country. In August 1985, members of the MAIA organized an attack against a police barracks, in which arms and ammunition were taken and a policeman was killed.[4] In 1987, the leader of the MAIA was killed by the security forces and the members of the group who had not been killed were prosecuted and put in prison.

The trend towards violence was also encouraged by the social and economic tensions following the collapse of oil prices that occurred in 1985-86. Due the dependence of the Algerian economy on oil, this added to the discontent of the population which led many people to fall back on their religious faith. Such people were welcomed with open arms by Islamists. The protests, demonstrations and severe rioting that swept across Algeria's major cities in October 1988, which initially constituted the expression of frustration of a predominantly youthful population against the regime, had been turned by the Islamists to their advantage, and soon they became the leading force behind it.

To counter this opposition, the new reforms introduced by the Algerian government included the drafting of a new constitution in February 1989 which accorded Algerians the right to form political parties. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was formally endorsed and recognized by the authorities on 16 September 1989. The FIS lost little time in organizing itself and recruiting new supporters and members in preparation forthcoming elections. The local elections held in June 1990 gave a large majority to the FIS.

However, the FIS was not able to present a consistent agenda. There was an absence of any really political and economic program. Also, the FIS gave very few indications of the sort of political institutions it intended to create when and if it achieved political power. In the mean time, some of the leaders and senior figures of the FIS started to launch attacks against democracy and to refer to the establishment of an Islamic state.

Ali Benhadj, the lieutenant of the FIS, the most radical of all, was more specific by rejecting the idea of democracy:

" Democracy is a stranger in the house of God...There is no democracy in Islam...we are not a nation that thinks in terms of majority-minority. The majority does not express the truth"[5]

On other occasion, Ali Benhadj said that

"Multipartism is not tolerated unless it agrees with the single framework of Islam...if people vote against the law of God...this is nothing than blasphemy. The Ulama (scholars) will order the death of the offenders who have substituted their authority for that of God."[6]

Furthermore, Islamist militants directed attacks against members of secular political parties. There was also a rise in attacks on unmarried couples, women and establishments selling alcohol. Popular music events were cancelled. Despite the rising threat by the FIS, the government let the democratic process go on and organized national elections on December 26, 1991.

Once again, the FIS got a high score during the first round of these elections. Its members were threatening to bring radical change to the constitution. Moreover, the incoming activities of the FIS and its militants confirmed the fear of the secularists who openly called for the suspension of the electoral process and to cancel the second round of voting.

Indeed, it was reported that plans were elaborated to establish popular tribunals and try the "Party's enemies" and to ban the secular parties and the secular press.[7] During the Friday sermons that followed the results of the first round of voting, speeches and declarations were made by senior figures of the FIS relating to the change of Algerians' custom regarding clothing and food, and also to require the public repentance of the other parties and those who voted for them. On the other hand, the FIS' victory on the first ballot had produced great alarm amongst significant sections of Algeria's population, and there were many indications that many opponents to the FIS were already preparing for armed conflict with a future Islamist government.

When it became clear that the FIS in power would constitute a danger to the republican state, a coordinated action has was taken to stop the electoral process. The President Chadli Bendjedid dissolved the existing National Assembly and announced his resignation to the nation on 11 January 1992. The following day, the existing High Security Council assumed power and announced:

"The impossibility of continuing the electoral process until necessary conditions were achieved for the normal functioning of institutions."[8]

On January 16, 1992, a High Council of State (HCE) of five members was constituted to pursue the presidential mandate which was scheduled to formally expire in December 1993. In

the face of the escalation of violence by Islamists, the authorities announced a state of emergency on 9 February 1992. The FIS was formally dissolved on 4 March 1992.

The elements of the banned FIS who were not arrested went under ground. Some of them fled the country and established themselves abroad; especially in France, England, Germany, and the United States. They announced the formation of an "Executive Authority Of the FIS Abroad" and attempted to establish a unified military command for a number of armed terrorist groups. This was the starting point for a strategy of terror that shaped the environment within and outside Algeria for the next decade.

TERRORISM IN ALGERIA

In his introduction to his book, The Agony of Algeria, Martin Stone explains the devastating effects of terrorist atrocities that took place in Algeria between 1992 and 1997. He says that:

> "Algeria in the mid-1990 was in a desperate condition. Between 1992 and 1997 some 120,000 people were killed in a terrorist insurgency characterized by staggering cruelty ... Fanatical Islamists insurgents pursued a dirty war to topple the state, fighting fearlessly against their numerically superior foe and literally terrorizing the population. In the mountains and the countryside, an informal guerrilla army laid ambushes for a security apparatus ... in the cities and towns, killers, some in their teens, assassinated thousands of "liberals" who were considered supporters of the state: schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, academics, civil servants and former fighters in the war of independence against France. More than 100 foreigners were killed..."[9]

It is within this big picture that I will explain the constitution and the evolution of the main terrorist armed groups, their actions, and the main methods they progressively used to achieve their stated objective.

First, according to the "Lexique des Termes Politiques," subversion, which is most of the time linked with terrorism, is an action aiming at the destruction of the institutions and the foundations of the state, either by illegal means, or by extra-legal and peaceful means, used in the psychological action, influencing individuals or communal behaviors to establish another society.[10] Currently, there is no definition to terrorism in international law. Those definitions which have been drawn up are either too general, partial, vague, or specific. The French dictionary "Le Petit Robert" defines terrorism as a "Set of acts of violence that a political organization executes to impress the population and to create an insecure atmosphere." The United States Department of State defines terrorism as "Premeditated motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine state agents, usually intended to influence an audience. International terrorism is terrorism involving the

citizens or territory of more than country."[11] The Arab Convention of Struggle against Terrorism, signed by the members countries of the Arab League, in Cairo, Egypt, in 22 April 1998, defines terrorism as "any act of violence or threat of violence whatever are its motivations and objectives, executed in order to reach an individual or collective goal; and aiming at terrorizing populations by threatening their lives, their freedom, or their security; or to cause damages to the environment or to the infrastructures, public and private goods..."[12]

Terrorism in Algeria is the result of the violent expression of Islamism, a political-religious movement which manipulates and mobilizes symbolic resources such as Islam and other multiple means of action to establish an Islamic State in the country. A decree issued by President Liamine Zeroual on 25 February 1995, stipulates that it "Is considered a terrorist or subversive act any act aiming at the security of the state, the territorial integrity, the stability and the normal functioning of the institutions by any action with the objective to spread terror within the population and create an atmosphere of insecurity by morally and physically affecting individuals or endangering their lives, their freedom or security, or by affecting their goods..."[13]

The terrorist armed groups attempted to give their movement some unity of organization. Operational sectors comprised of armed cells were designated at the national level. They agreed that the leadership of a new unified organization would include a variety of posts which would be shared out between the various groups. The post of "National Emir" was offered to the most prominent and powerful figure of the former Algerian Islamic Armed Movement. The senior posts are shared by elements of the former Algerian Islamic Armed Movement, the Afghans, and the FIS. However, the increasing effectiveness of security forces operations against the terrorist groups, the lack of coordination between the latter, and the reluctance of many of the groups to submit themselves to central authority inhibited their unity. By 1993 there had emerged a tendency represented by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the most radical terrorist group in Algeria, to reject the idea that an Islamic state could be installed by constitutional and legal means. The GIA believes, instead, that force of arms is both normally and practically the right way to achieve this aim. Most of its members had never been members of the FIS and most of them totally rejected any dialogue or compromise with the state and favored spectacular terrorist attacks. While the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the armed wing of the FIS created in 1994, was a traditional guerrilla group, the GIA was primarily an urban organization.

The terrorist's actions during the first years following the interruption of the electoral process and the ban of the FIS were characterized predominantly by guerrilla warfare and the individual assassinations of members of security services and by sabotage and bomb attacks

against state-run and related institutions. The GIA demonstrated that it was willing to expand criminal activities in a much more extreme and sinister direction.

March 1993 witnessed a series of assassinations of junior government ministers and members of the National Consultative Council (CCN), a body established by the High Council of State (HCE). Assassinations had become an established instrument of the terrorist groups by 1993, but they had been used exclusively against members of the security forces and those government members directly involved in the anti-terrorist struggle. Now, assassinations were expanded to include anybody who was more generally a part of, or representing the regime. Writers, journalists and those involved with the media now became the targets of assassination attempts. Increasingly, figures who were neither involved with nor supportive of the regime, but who were seen as opposed to Islamism, became subject to attack.

A further expansion of the terrorist action came with the targeting by the GIA of foreign nationals living in Algeria. At the end of October 1993, three kidnapped French nationals were released by the Algerian security forces. The note given by the kidnappers to one of the freed captives and addressed to the country's foreigners, explained the new strategy of the terrorists:

> "Leave the country. We are giving you one month. Anyone who exceeds that period will be responsible for his own sudden death..."[14]

This assault on the expatiate community living in Algeria, as with that against prominent Algerians, had both ideological and strategic motivations. The GIA aimed to rid Algeria of "corrupting" non-Islamic influences. More importantly, they also sought to weaken the regime by frightening off the foreign companies and foreign investment that the government was relying on to improve economic and social conditions.

It was under the leadership of Antar Zouabri, the most bloodthirsty terrorist leader, that the GIA committed the mass assassinations that occurred during the years 1996-1998. The most important mass murder occurred on January 3, 1998, when 412 civilians were killed around the town of Relizane, 180 miles west of Algiers.[15] After the firm condemnation of these atrocities by the national public opinion and by the international community, the GIA lost many of its members who either surrendered themselves to the authorities, joined the AIS and other terrorist organizations, or established new terrorist organizations such as the "Salafist Group for Predication and Combat" (GSPC). According to the declaration of one terrorist of the GIA, arrested by the security forces in November 2001, the GIA is decimated, and its overall strength is about 50 terrorists.[16] Antar Zouabri himself was killed by the security forces on 8 February 2002.

Today, the Salafist Group for Predication and Combat (GSPC) is the leading terrorist organization in Algeria. Led by Hattab Hacene, a former lieutenant of Antar Zouabri and dissident of the GIA, the GSPC perpetrates its terrorist actions in the center, east and south of Algeria. The GSPC is tied to the terrorist organization of AL Qaeda of Usama bin Ladin. In a letter addressed to terrorist group leaders, Hattab Hacene asked each of them to select two members to be sent for in Afghanistan to help the Mollah Omar and the Al Qaeda groups.[17] Except for the mass assassinations, the GSPC is carrying out other kinds of terrorist activities such as attacks against the security forces, the killing of junior civil servants, the murder of military conscripts while they are in leave or after they had finished their military service, and the commitment of acts of sabotage.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT TO SUBVERSION AND TERRORISM IN ALGERIA

The external support to Islamist subversion and terrorism in Algeria comes from a set of networks supported and financed by the International Islamist and some states known for their open support to radical islamist movements existing throughout the world. The support of the International Islamist goes back to the end of the Gulf War, when Hassan Al Tourabi, leader of the Sudanese National Islamic Front (FNI), gathered Islamic delegations of countries from Africa, Asia and Europe with the purpose to organize and coordinate all actions aiming at the creation of a world Islamic State. The first "Arab and Islamic Popular Congress," gathering representatives from Arab countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Phlippines, Malaysia, Algeria and Albania from 25 to 28 April 1991, was held in Khartoum, Sudan.[18] The two leaders of the Algerian FIS, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, were among the 15 members of the general secretariat in charge of the implementation of the objectives defined by the Congress.[19]

The International Islamist co-operates with other transnational organizations such as the World Organization of the Islamic Relief (OMSI), based in Peshawar, Pakistan, and the Islamic Liberation Party (PLI), in Birmingham, London, which both provide support to Islamist subversion and terrorism in Algeria. Besides the role of a transnational organization, the support to subversion and terrorism in Algeria comes from well known states and range from ideological to logistical and military support.

Since 1979, the Iranian Revolution has symbolized Islamist radicalism. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Gulf War, Iran took over different Islamist movements and supported them with training, financing and recruitment. With the collaboration of Sudan, Iran sends weapons to Algerian terrorist movements and trains Algerian terrorists in camps situated near Khartoum. Also, an investigation conducted by French security services during years 1995-1996 revealed that about one hundred individuals of Maghreb origin, notably

Algerians, participated in military training in Iranian camps in Lebanon. There, they learned the use of assault weapons and explosives.[20] The Iranian strategy was the establishment of subservient regimes in Algeria and Egypt, which would have allowed the Iranian regime to threaten Europe and other Arab countries.

However, the Iranian reformer Khatami seeks to give a new look to Iran by working towards "civil society" and more openness with the external world. Diplomatic relations were resumed between Algeria and Iran during 2000. Today, Iran seems to staying away from its support to Algerian terrorism.

Financial contributions from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states was of great support to Islamist organizations. Saudi sponsors have financed Algerian Islamists from the FIS.[21] Powerful charitable organizations in the Gulf States feed Islamist networks in Algeria and elsewhere, under the cover of humanitarian actions.[22]

Sudan was a key element of Iranian strategy of political expansion in North Africa. Iranian military experts and revolutionary guards were in charge of training of terrorists in camps near Khartoum. The Sudanese support to terrorism in Algeria embraces political, military and informational support. Arms have been conveyed from Sudan to terrorist groups in Algeria through territories of Libya and Niger. However, the Sudanese authorities claimed their dissociation from supporting terrorism in Algeria since mid-1999. The President of Sudan, Mr. Omar Hassan El Bachir, declared at the margin of the African Organization Unity (OUA) Summit meeting in Algiers, 12-14 July 1999, that his country will no more host Islamist training and support terrorism in the future.[23]

Some Western European countries played an important role in supporting terrorism by harboring different Islamist movements linked to terrorist activities in Algeria. Countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland have been very complacent with terrorist networks acting from within their respective territories.

Since 1991, the United Kingdom started to host militants from the FIS. Under the cover of the Algerian Community in Great Britain (ACB), Algerian Islamists infiltrated the Islamic Mission of the United Kingdom (UK Islamic Mission), recognized by British authorities as a charity organization; which allows it to collect funds, create schools, publish newspapers, and spread propaganda at the exit of worship places. Also, the international "Salafist Jihadist," led by Abou Mous'ab and the Palestinian Abou Koutada, two former "Afghans", have given doctrinal justifications to the terrorist actions of the GIA through the news bulletin Al Ansar "The Follower," edited in London since 1993.[24] It is in London where Islamists sell video cassettes showing terrorist ambushes on Algerian security forces and citizens on the national highways

and roads during terrorist false checkpoints, accused of being either belonging to the military or to the police, or collaborating with the government, or merely because they do not support them. These individuals are then humiliated and assassinated before the camera. The money collected through these sales is reinjected in these organizations for further subversive and terrorist activities.

Germany has also become an important base support to terrorist activities in Algeria. Besides harboring Islamist militants who fled Algeria, such as Rabah Kebir, the spokesman of the FIS abroad, and the sons of Abassi Madani, the leader of the FIS, German territory constituted a transit base for arms smuggling into Algeria. The terrorist network existing in Germany has introduced into this country arms from East European countries and then has sent them to Algeria via France and Switzerland or Belgium.

This European complacency may be explained by the preservation by some countries of their own interests in the case that Islamists would have come to power in Algeria. Indeed, many studies developed during the early 1990s predicted, and even suggested, the establishment of an Islamic rule in Algeria. After the interruption of the electoral process in Algeria, Graham Fuller, a senior analyst at the Rand Corporation explained in the Washington Post of January 1992 that Islamism is an inevitable phenomenon that should be accepted by the West. He added that it was important that Islamist movements were being legalized, because it is only after the third election that public opinion can judge an integrist government. Graham Fuller stated further that Islamists in power will represent the main step towards a larger democratization of local societies.[25]

However, the development of terrorism worldwide went far to attack Western countries' interests such as France and the United States. During years 1994-95, French soil was subject to attacks from the Algerian terrorist group the GIA. Bombs exploded in Paris, killed 8 people and wounded many others. In December 1994, an Air France Air Bus was hijacked by four terrorists of the GIA from Algiers Airport with the purpose to be blown up above Paris. The French security services succeeded in diverting it to Marseille; their assault led to the killing of the four hijackers. This led the French authorities to take severe measures. They started to pursue and dismantle the existing terrorist networks in France. Many Islamist militants have been arrested, prosecuted and condemned.

The United States seemed not have taken seriously the warning of the successive terrorist attacks of the World trade Center in 1993, the FBI building in Oklahoma City in 1995, and the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar Essalam, Tanzania in 1998. Even though core documents such as the "National Security Strategy for a Global Age 2000" and the

subsequent "National Military Strategy" stressed the asymmetric threat, especiallyfrom terrorism. It was only following the terrorist attacks on September 11th that the United States shifted its strategy to declare war on international terrorism. Ironically, it was from German territory, a strong ally to the United States, that the key actor of the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center, Mohamed Atta, who was in the FBI files, had his main contacts with other members of Al Qaeda network and prepared, at least part, his plan of attack.

THE ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE AND THE ANTI-TERRORIST STRUGGLE

The Algerian government combined the use of all its elements of national power to combat terrorism and preserve the republican State. This effort has been successful in bringing the Islamist threat under control.

The military element of national power was the most determinant in the anti-terrorist struggle. During the first months of year 1992, only the paramilitary forces (police and gendarmerie), were engaged in the fight against the terrorist groups. When it became obvious that these forces could not handle alone the growing terrorist activities, the government created an anti-terrorist organization in September 1992, the Center of Coordination and Conduct of the Anti-Subversive Actions (CCC/ALAS). This unit coordinated the actions of special force units, other selected military units, and the paramilitary forces. The intelligence sharing included the participation of the existing main military and civilian intelligence agencies of the government.

The anti-terrorist struggle met initially with success in the central part of the country, where terrorist activities were concentrated. However, the success in retaining control of the urban areas resulted in the flight to the countryside of the terrorist groups. The retreat to the rural areas cut off the terrorist groups from each other and isolated them from their urban bases of support. The break-up of larger groups led to the formation of smaller, more numerous and independent groups. As terrorism spread to other parts of the country, the authorities took new steps to adapt to the new situation.

To give more flexibility and more initiative to the anti-terrorist struggle, the Algerian government created during Spring 1993, the regional Centers of Anti-Subversive Struggle (COLAS). There was one center for each of the existing six Military Regional Commands in Algeria. Each regional Center coordinates the anti-terrorist actions of the engaged military units and the paramilitary forces in its area of responsibility.

Furthermore, the decentralization went down to include Operational Sectors and Sub-Operational Sectors. Each Center of Anti-Subversive Struggle includes two to fifteen Operational Sectors, according to the Area of responsibility of each Military Regional Command. The territorial area of a Military Regional Command is composed of Wilaya (provinces). A

Wilaya, or province, is a civilian administrative territorial organization of Algeria. There are 48 Wilaya within the country. The Operational Sector Commander, while acting under the authority of the Regional Military Command, advises and assists the Wali (the civilian governor of the province) in security matters. He also coordinates anti-terrorist activities within its area of responsibility. Sub-Operational Sectors generally comprise the area of responsibility of a battalion sized-unit.

All forces engaged in the anti-terrorist struggle had to undergo a specific military preparation in specialized anti-guerrilla warfare training centers. The tailored programs in these centers are based on Algeria's own experience during the war of independence against the French, and on methods used in other countries such in Italy, during the fight against the Red brigades.

There are basically four main methods of action used by Algerian security forces to fight terrorist groups. First, when fighting an important grouping of terrorists in mountainous area, the overall operation is generally conducted by the Military Region Commander. It is a joint operation involving ground and air forces. Besides the assets under his operational command, the Military Region Commander can ask for additional forces. In this case, the additional forces may come from the neighboring regional commands or from the higher authority. These forces act under the operational control of the supported military regional command. If it happens that such operation takes place within the border of two or three military regional commands the highest ranking general officer (senior regional commander) takes command of the operation. Second, if the terrorist grouping is less important operations are conducted at the Operational or the Sub-operational Sector level. The commander in charge of the operation informs his immediate higher command and then acts on its own initiative. Third, the most commonly used method is "Search and Destroy." Hunting Commando Detachments, usually up to platoon-size, are sent for several days to a zone suspected of terrorist presence. If the Hunting Commando Detachment meets with terrorist opposition stronger than expected, ready intervention units are immediately sent by air to the combat zone to achieve the destruction of the enemy. Finally, police and other special security forces are engaged against terrorist cells hiding in urban areas, those with the purpose to commit further terrorist actions, such as bomb posting or individual assassinations. Generally, when these terrorist cells are discovered, they are easily destroyed.

In parallel to the military actions, the Algerian government took further steps in the struggle against terrorism. New measures were announced which gave the authorities the power to close down the various private companies, labor organizations and cultural and

charitable organizations which the government saw as providing a network of support for the FIS.

Furthermore, when the terrorist groups stepped up their criminal actions towards the isolated population in the countryside, it became obvious that the existing security forces could not protect every single village and the numerous other small grouping of houses spread throughout the countryside. Moreover, an effort to do so would have scattered and diminished the efforts of the security forces which are mainly used in counter-terrorism actions. Thus, the authorities decided to create the "Garde Communale", a corps composed of contractors working for the local council. This corps is organized into armed detachments and serves under the Ministry of Interior's administration. Their status is defined by decree.[26] Their main mission is to the defend their territorial division (commune), and to collect information on terrorist activities in their area of responsibility.

In January 1997, the government issued a decree which gave the citizens the right to that self-defense. The self-defense actions are conducted under the responsibility and the control of the authorities in charge of order and security.[27]

In parallel to anti-terrorist actions, the government took other measures to calm the situation down in order to return to the main objective which is the democratic process. In February 1995, President Liamine Zeroual decreed measures of pardon for those who are prosecuted for subversive and terrorist crimes, and who surrender themselves to the authorities. Those who joined terrorist groups and who did not commit murders and did not cause permanent disability and moral or physical damage to citizens, and those who returned back the weapons and the explosives they have to the authorities will not be prosecuted. The terrorists who did commit crimes will see their penalty reduced.[28] These measures have been completed by the a "Law Related to the Restoration of the Civilian Concord" of 13 July 1999, which stipulates that individuals involved in terrorist or subversive actions and who express their willing to stop doing such actions will benefit from clemency measures such as exemption of prosecution, probation, or reducing of penalties, according the cases.[29] Thousands of terrorists surrendered themselves to the authorities following these measures of clemency. It is within the frame of the latter law that the terrorist organization Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) abandoned the "armed struggle", and more than 5,000 of its members returned back to their homes.

In the early 1990s, Algeria called for an international effort to combat terrorism. In all regional and international meetings and forums Algeria participated in, it included terrorism in its agenda. Alongside Egypt, Algeria encouraged the member states of the Arab League to sign "The Arab Convention of Struggle against Terrorism", in Cairo, Egypt, in 22 April 1998. Another

convention was signed by the member states of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Algiers in July 1999.

The Arab league and the OAU member states commit themselves not to let their territories be used for planning and execution of terrorist crimes, and not to harbor, train or finance terrorist organizations. They also commit themselves to cooperate and coordinate measures to fight terrorism and to extradite the authors of terrorist crimes according to international rules, multilateral and bilateral conventions. Both conventions stress the exchange of information, studies and experiences; combined training; and development of practical and scientific capabilities and other practices to the benefit of the forces involved in the anti-terrorist struggle.

Even though measures taken by the Algerian government are specific to the Algerian case one may make a parallel with what is going on in the United States after the September 11th terrorist attacks. To face the terrorist threat, the U.S. government took measures unthinkable to the Americans just few months ago (because some of these measures are seen as a threat to their civil liberties). First, the Congress passed the "Anti-terror Patriot Act", an anti-terrorist law which allows the F.B.I. to monitor private lives of U.S. citizens in many ways, such as the control of electronic mail and telephone lines. Second, the President of the United States appointed the former governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Ridge, as the head of the newly created Office of Homeland Defense to coordinate all measures to deal with the terrorist threat inside the territory of the United States. Third, the United States is engaged in an anti-terrorist war which it started against the networks of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and it is likely to continue elsewhere for an indefinite time. Also, the creation of military tribunals to judge foreigners involved in terrorist attacks against the United States is underway.

At the political and diplomatic level, the United States gained the support of the International Community and succeeded in building an international coalition against terrorism, including Russia, China and many Arab and Muslim countries. Terrorist networks, including those that support terrorist groups in Algeria, are being dismantled in Europe, and their financial assets are being frozen worldwide.

For its part, the British parliament adopted an anti-terrorist law in 13 December 2001 in which the British authorities may detain without trial suspected foreign terrorists.[30] As in the U.S., certain liberties are being curtailed to enhance public security.

Algeria, which condemned the earlier the terrorist attacks of the 11th September, declared itself part of the ongoing international coalition. Its long experience in the struggle against terrorism puts it among the most active partners of the coalition. Furthermore, the recent

measures taken by the United States and the International Community will have a positive effect on the situation in Algeria with respect to anti-terrorism. Indeed, the terrorist groups which are still acting in Algeria, once cut from the apron strings of the external support, will be progressively weakened and ultimately be defeated.

THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

The notion of democracy is not new in Algeria. During the French colonial rule, in the 1920s, the Algerian national movement addressed the occupant power in different, and sometimes, opposing ways. During the brake of the Revolution (the war of independence) in November 1954, most of these political organizations put their differences aside and joined the National Liberation Front (FLN). The FLN was not a political party, but a national movement whose purpose was the liberation of the country. Furthermore, the declaration of November 1954 drew the vision of the future Algerian state: "sovereign Algerian state, democratic and social..." With adoption of socialism after the independence of Algeria, with which some of the political parties that joined the FLN during the Revolution which did not agree, there was the formation of an opposition. Some of the opposition leaders were put in jail, and others fled the country. Since pluralism was forbidden, the opposition went underground.

After almost 30 years of socialism Algeria started to shift to democracy and to promote economic liberalization. However, the first democratic try collapsed for the reasons stated earlier.

During the 1990s and today, while the fight against terrorism continues, there is also a struggle for democracy in Algeria. As stated previously, after the interruption of the electoral process on January 13, 1992, the High Security Council, assuming the mandate of the resigned president Chadli Bendjedid, announced the impossibility of continuing the electoral process until necessary conditions were achieved for the normal functioning of institutions. Two years later, on January 1994, when this mandate came to its end, the necessary conditions were not yet achieved. Many divergences remained among the different political actors within Algerian society on how to carry on the democratic process.

To fill the institutional gap, a period of transition called "National Consensus on Transitory Period" was initiated on January 29, 1994.[31] The transitory period was set for three years and aimed at the consolidation of the constitutional order which guaranties state sovereignty, a democratic and republican nature, collective and individual liberties, and the principle of acceding and exercising power through an electoral process. The governing bodies of the transitory period were the President of the state and the government and the National Council of Transition.

After having been elected by the members of the National Conference for the Transitory Period, President Liamine Zeroual was appointed as President of the state by the High Security Council on January 30, 1994. Zeroual stressed that the only way to resolve Algeria's crisis would come through dialogue with all the political forces in the country. He engaged in negotiations with the imprisoned FIS leaders in order to end the ongoing violence and to restore stability within the country. However, the failure of those negotiations in October 1994 led Zeroual to look for other ways to deal with the opposition. These consisted of a number of steps to rehabilitate the state and its institutions.

The first step was the holding of a presidential election. On November 16, 1995, ignoring boycott calls from opposition parties and death threats from Islamic militants, 75 percent of Algeria's 16 million eligible voters cast ballots in the country's first presidential election since it gained independence. Observers from the Arab league and the Organization of the African Unity termed the elections "free and fair".[32] Liamine Zeroual, who was candidate to this election, gained more than 60% of the vote cast and got elected.

Next, President Zeroual decided to revise the 1989 constitution. The amendments of the constitution were adopted after a referendum was held on November 28, 1996. These amendments are related to the creation of the Council of the State (second chamber in the National Assembly), the Law on political parties and the electoral law.

The law on political parties explicitly prohibits the existence of political parties based on Arabness, Berberness and Islam, the three components of the Algerian identity. These three components cannot be used as a means of political expression. Furthermore, the law emphasizes that parties should adhere to political pluralism and respect the Republican Constitution and the principles of rotation of power based on thefree choice of the Algerian people.

To complete the return to the democratic process, President Zeroual announced the holding of parliamentary and local elections which have respectively been held on June 5, 1997 and on October 23 in the same year. The participation in those elections of the major political parties, regardless of their ideologies, reaffirms the Algerian voters' commitment to democratic values and to the creation of a multiparty system. It also constitutes a strong message to Islamist terrorists to let them know the rejection of political violence as means to reach power by the Algerian society.

Of course, many observers and detractors from within and outside Algeria argued about the fairness of these elections and about the overall methods adopted by President Zeroual. However, there is no perfect social system in the world, and the democratic process is

indisputably, back on track in Algeria, whatever its deficiencies. Mustapha Benchenane, a professor in political science and international relations, said that:

> "democracy neither decrees itself nor is given. Algeria is no more living under dictatorship; it is in a historical phase of transition towards democracy." [33]

A new presidential election was held on April 16, 1999, and Abd El Aziz Bouteflika was elected as the new President of Algeria. The next parliamentary and local elections are scheduled to be this year, 2002. With respect to the ongoing democratization of Algeria, Cameron R. Hume said that:

> "Algeria may be turning the corner. If its second try at democracy succeeds, this outcome would augur well for democratic transitions elsewhere in the region."[34]

CONCLUSION

Algeria has faced the worst crisis of its modern history during the last ten years. An unprecedented terrorism, supported by an Islamist ideology, has threatened the foundations of the Algerian state.

The Islamist objective in Algeria was to reach political power by whatever means. While the International Islamist and some Islamist states brought their full support to destructive terrorism in Algeria, the rest of the world, and especially the West, turned their back to the ongoing crisis in this country. Some want to consider terrorist groups as militants fighting against an "oppressive" regime, doubting all efforts made by Algeria to establish democracy.

However, the Algerian government combined all elements of its national power to fight terrorism inside Algeria, and to draw the attention of the international community that Islamist terrorism is not a threat to Algeria alone. Since 1992, the Algerian government followed a successful strategy aiming at the suppression of the terrorist threat and the return to the electoral process. A high price has been paid at the expense of dozens of thousands of human lives and billions of dollars of economic damage.

Today, terrorism in Algeria is under control and the republican state is safe. The electoral process is back on track and Algerians are optimistic about their future despite a deep scar caused by ten years of sheer hell.

The wake up call of the 11th of September 2001 comforted Algeria in its views about Islamist terrorism. One can say that the world has finally joined Algeria in its fight, even though this came later than expected.

The best conclusion I see to this study is in the words of these two persons: Ian O. Lesser, a senior analyst at RAND in Washington, D.C. and former member of the State Department's policy planning said that

"After a decade of extraordinary turmoil, and despite continuing violence, Algeria shows signs of recovery and assertiveness on the international scene, its emergence and the rediscovery of the country's traditional foreign policy activism is likely to have important implications for North Africa, the Mediterranean region, and the West."[35]

Also, Ramtane Lamamra, former Algerian ambassador to the U.S. said that

"Algeria's challenge is merely synonymous with democracy versus terrorism. Ultimately, it is the success of Algeria in defeating terror that would promote multiparty democracy in the region."[36]

WORD COUNT =7628

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[1] Graham E. Fuller, Algeria, the next Fundamentalist state? (RAND,1996), 6-7.

[2] Michael Willis, The Islamist Challenge in Algeria, a political History, (New York Press, Washington square, New York, 1997), 42.

[3] Martin Stone, The Agony of Algeria, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1997), 182.

[4] Michael Willis, The Islamist Challenge in Algeria, a political History, (New York Press, Washington square, New York, 1997), 81.

[5] Ibid, 144.

[6] Ibid, 145.

[7] Ibid, 250.

[8] Ibid, 250.

[9] Martin Stone, The Agony of Algeria, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1997), 1-2.

[10] Lexique des termes Politiques, (Ed. Dalloz, 1991), 135.

[11] A.J. Tongman, "Trends in International and Domestic Terrotism in Western Europe, 1968-1988," in Western Response to Terrorism, ed Alex P. Schmid and Ronald D. Crelinsten, (London: Frank Cass and Compagny, Ltd, 1993), 29.

[12] Convention Arabe de Lutte contre le Terrorisme, Le Caire, Egypte, 22 Avril 1998.

[13] Ordonnance # 95-11 du 11 Ramadhan 1415 correspondant au 25 Fevrier 1995 modifiant et completant l'Ordonance #66-156 du 8 Juin 1966 portant Code Penal.

[14] The Washington Post, Washington, D.C.; Nov 24, 1993; Elaine Ganley.

[15] Boston Globe; Boston, Mass.; Jan 4, 1998.

[16] Le Soir d'Algérie du 11 Aout 2001.

[17] Liberté du 10 Novembre 2001.

[18] Richard Labeviere, Les Dollars de la Terreur,(Ed. Grasset, Paris, 1999}, 85.

[19] El Watan, 14 Décembre 1994.

[20] Roland Jasquard, Fetwa contre l'Occident, (Ed. Albin Michel, 1998), 189.

[21] Ibid, 156.

[22] Ibid, 30.

[23] El Khabar du 18 Juillet 1999.

[24] Gilles Kepel. Jihad, Expansion et Déclin de l'Islamisme, (Ed. Gallimard, 2000), 263.

[25] The Washington Post; Washington, D.C.; Jan 13. 1992.

[26] Décret exécutif # 96-266 du 18 Rabie El Aouel 1417 correspondant au 3 Aout 1996 portant statut de la Garde Communale.

[27] Décret exécutif # 97-04 du 24 Chaabane 1417 fixant les conditions d'exercice de l'action de légitime defense dans un cadre organisé.

[28] Ordonnance # 95-12 du 25 Ramadhan 1415 correspondant au 25 Février 1995 portant mesures de clémence.

[29] Loi # 99-08 du 29 Rabie El Aouel 1420 correspondant au 13 Juillet 1999 relative au rétablissement de la concorde civile.

[30] Le Matin du 19 Décembre 2001.

[31] Décret presidential # 94-40 du 17 Châabane 1414 correspondant au 29 Janvier 1994 relatif à la publication de la plate-forme portant Consensus National sur la période transitoire.

[32] Election Watch, Nov-Dec 1995.

[33] Arabics # 133, Jan 1998.

[34] Middle East Policy; Washington; Feb 1999.

[35] Mediterranean Quarterly 12 (Spring 2001), 8-21.

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