Strategy Research Project

ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN ALGERIA AND THE STRATEGY OF VIOLENCE

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHAIB SMAHI
Algerian Army

USAWC CLASS OF 2011

U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED (From - To)
23-03-2011	Strategy Research Project	

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Islamic Movements in Algeria and the Strategy of Violence

| 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER |
| 5b. GRANT NUMBER |
| 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER |

6. AUTHOR(S)
Lieutenant Colonel Chaib Smahi

| 5d. PROJECT NUMBER |
| 5e. TASK NUMBER |
| 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER |

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Dr. J. Boone Bartholomees
Department of National Security & Strategy

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army War College
122 Forbes Avenue
Carlisle, PA 17013

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Distribution A: Unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
Only a work of the United States Government is not subject to copyright. The author is not an employee of the United States Government. Consequently, this document may be protected by copyright.

14. ABSTRACT

As someone with firsthand experience, fighting against terrorism, I will attempt to explain these fanatic extremist groups who used a religion of tolerance and transformed it to a fatal arsenal, to disrupt and destroy the values and ethics of a whole nation.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Islamism

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	UNLIMITED	32	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN ALGERIA AND THE STRATEGY OF VIOLENCE

by

Lieutenant Colonel Chaib Smahi
Algerian Army

Dr. J. Boone Bartholomees
Project Adviser

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Chaib Smahi

TITLE: Islamic Movements in Algeria and the Strategy of Violence

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 23 March 2011   WORD COUNT: 7,820   PAGES: 32

KEY TERMS: Islamism

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

     As someone with firsthand experience, fighting against terrorism, I will attempt to explain these fanatic extremist groups who used a religion of tolerance and transformed it to a fatal arsenal, to disrupt and destroy the values and ethics of a whole nation.

ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN ALGERIA AND THE STRATEGY OF VIOLENCE

Twenty years ago, Algeria was on its way to becoming the first democratic country in the middle east and Africa. The transition to a new era of freedom and tolerance seemed to be successful, and most of the Arab countries scorned the Algerian experience. The reason for that was the fear of the spread of this phenomenon to their countries. Algeria was seen as a part of a global process that was unstoppable and spreading across the region. The turn that events took reinforced the fear of following Algeria's example. Algeria has been going through years of terror and sabotage that caused more than 150,000 deaths, over one million internally displaced persons and over 30 billion dollars in infrastructure and material damage. It is something unseen in contemporary history. Terrorists targeted officials, security personnel, journalists, intellectuals, religious clergy—both Muslim and Christian— foreigners and ordinary citizens—babies, elderly persons, women and children. They destroyed schools, factories, public institutions, mosques, and even cemeteries.

The extreme violence that spread through the country for more than a decade, and damaged it for the future, left the international community skeptical about this experience and even wondering if Islam is compatible with democracy. The questions were where would this experiment lead? Did it have an obvious end point? Would this transition secure Algeria's democratic future?

The dilemma of Islamism in the Arab countries has to be examined using a range of factors. The most important of all has no direct connection with the principles of Islam, but is more related to a local culture rooted deeply in Arab society. This difficulty is the resistance to peaceful change that is endemic in these countries. Leaders of the

Islamic project have never been aware of the implication of the reforms they were claiming. If this project has to be applied it has to be embraced first by the entire society. Islamists are in a rush. They are not willing to wait for this end, and they have never accepted the notion that the process will take more time than they think they can afford. On the other side, the Arab states have not had the ability to accommodate the more dynamic forms of non-violent activism, and in particular, they have been unable to integrate a major Islamic movement into the formal political system.

Egypt has refused to legalize the Muslim Brothers, and Morocco has consistently refused to legalize the "Justice and Charity" movement. However, Algeria is the only Arab country that has legalized the Islamic parties in order to not exclude any citizen from enjoying his civil rights and to benefit from the savvy and knowledge of all the Algerian people. The Algerian government allowed the "Islamic Front of Salvation" well known as FIS to contest and win two elections, then decided that it could not cope with the consequences and took the critical decision to dissolve the party. The Algerian Islamists missed a great opportunity to write an important page in modern history and to make their mark on the building of a new nation. Instead of this they could drive the country into unknown turmoil and bloody violence.

The Political Environment

Under pressure of Algerian street demonstrations and huge riots in October 1988, the Algerian president made important concessions in order to positively respond to the uprising. A new constitution that would facilitate political openness was adopted. The constitution that was overwhelmingly accepted by voters allows multi-partisanism and guarantees freedom of expression. The main change was that the new constitution

limits the role of the military to its military function and prohibits its interference in political life. It also concentrated more power in the hands of the parliament.[1]

James Le Sueur stated: "Algeria had long struggled to corral political Islam and to keep the state apparatus firmly in control of religious reformers. At the same time by 1988 and 1989, Algeria's Islamists believed that they could enter into and benefit from a democratic framework".[2] This political change led to the rise of several political trends from liberalists to communists to Islamists. A full spectrum of political philosophies competing in an amazing and often foolish race to gain the support of people has tinted the Algerian scene. The Algerian constitution has limited the political parties to strict rules according to article 42,[3] which gave the authorities wide powers to frame the conditions of political life. Parties have to be registered in the ministry of interior to be legally approved.

The political changes in Algeria contributed to the evolution of political Islamic movements, and transformed them from the realm of advocacy and religious indoctrination, to test their own popular base to enable access to power. Due to the wide margins of political freedom available after Algeria turned to pluralism, Islamist have made efficient use of all means available to them, including the "religious discourse", to convince voters of the credibility of their electoral programs. Their undeclared objective was to seek to alter the foundations of the political system, which was "un-Islamic" according to their fatwa, by using tools of democracy itself. Ali Benhadj the most extreme of the FIS leader, as reported by James D. Le Sueur after the party's victory in the first round of parliamentary elections, stated:

> Democracy is one of the numerous nefarious intellectual innovations that
> obsess the minds of people. Since Islam accomplished many of the

human goals of democratic thought, without introducing the fallacy of human freedom that come from the enlightenment and from thinkers such as Rousseau, he argued, Islam was the divine answer to politics and its rules were clearly spelled out in the Quran. Those who refused to accept these rules were enemies of Islam and would have to accept their fate.[4]

This fanatic language was directed at the Algerian government, other political parties and mainly at almost 60 percent of the Algerian people who did not vote for the Islamic Front of Salvation. This speech is a modest sample of what the most important Islamic party engaged in the democratic process promised to people. The enthusiastic action of the Islamic Front of Salvation leaders and militants designed to seize power in a short time hide a very weak program to identify and pursue a long term agenda.

Historical Overview

The phenomenon of Islamism in Algeria was from the beginning influenced by various external intellectual and religious flows. Due to the restrictions imposed by the colonial power, Algerians had been denied for years their rights for education. As a response to this unjust and discriminative behavior Algerians emigrated eastwards and attended Tunisian and Middle Eastern universities. These exiled students returned after World War I influenced by the neo-reformism of Mohammed Abduh and Jamal-Din Al-Afghani. These students founded the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars in 1931 and planted the first seeds of Islamism in Algeria. Sheikh Ahmed Ben Badis, the founder of this association, strived with his associates to save Algerian culture from being eclipsed by French values and morals. They focused their efforts to correct the deviations in practice of Islam and built many schools in Algeria with the conviction that education is the capstone to raise and develop a modern Algerian society. The association played a major role to prepare the generation of the independent Algeria.[5]

4

The History of Islamism in Algeria after independence goes back to the foundation of an association called "Values" as a continuation of the former Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars which collapsed in 1957. This association was founded in 1963 under the presidency of Hashemi Tijani, Abdul Latif Sultani, and Ahmed Sahnoun. It was established by the Assembly under the guise of an educational and cultural organization. One of its objectives was the revival of Islamic values. The assembly tried from the outset to provide a moderate fundamentalist message. The members of this association focused most of their activities in mosques.

The association issued a monthly magazine called the *Islamic Discipline*, concerned with issues of Arabs and Muslims and the study of social and economic problems and cultural rights by the Islamic faith. Later in 1964, conflicts erupted between the association and the government in power with the state socialist orientation. As of September 22, 1966, the association "Values" was dissolved, after its leaders sent a cable to Egyptian President Jamal Abdel Nasser, demanding the release of Sayed Qutb, and all those leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood imprisoned in Egypt.

Regional Approach to Political Islam

The topic of the political Islamic movements, or Islamism as some would name it, is a very sensitive issue not only on the Algerian or Arabic scene, but at the international level too. The cause of this sensitivity is the dynamism of these movements that shifted recently from the advocacy of pacific communication and guidance to a higher and controversial stage based on the use of violence and terrorism as a grand strategy.

The Islamic scene today is a complex and comprehensive mosaic. It includes states based on Islamic ideas or influences such Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan and Afghanistan. Others states based on their respective experiences and political

philosophies, such as the Welfare Party and Justice and Development Party in Turkey, and the Movement for Peaceful Society and the Reform Movement in Algeria, the Islamic movement in Yemen, Jordan, and other movements of resistance to occupation.

There are also Islamic movements based on violence and extremism that adopted those techniques as a mean for action and change. Examples include, the Islamic Group and Jihad group in Egypt, the Armed Islamic group (GIA) in Algeria, and networks and Islamist cells spread throughout the world believed to be organized by the Al Qaeda network led by Osama bin Laden that are responsible for a wide range of violent events, most important of course, the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Islamic movements in the Arab countries as well as local forces, leftist and nationalist, focused their efforts to offer alternative to the problems of the post-independence era. Despite their different backgrounds, views and perspectives these Islamic factions have a common end state. They all share the ultimate dream of building an Islamic caliphate and restoring the principles and values of Islam. And if some of the factions would prefer peaceful political action, others chose the path of violence and armed action to reach this objective.

Classification of the Islamic Trends

In the context of an assessment of the ability to integrate the Islamic movements in the political process and encourage them to embrace moderation in order to allow them play a role in the process of democratization, thinkers classify Islamists into three main categories: first, Takfiri (the act of Muslims declaring other Muslims to be infidels, which is analogous to excommunication in Catholicism) Islamic armed groups, second

the Islamic Movements who renounce or condemn violence, and third Political Islamists called moderates who observe the rules of the political process.

In this study I exclude categories two and three to only focus on the first because I doubt in its ability to engage in the democratic process. This assumption is based on the foundation and doctrine of these groups, who do not accept or recognize any form of interaction with non-Muslims or debate outside the fundamental idea of the religious authority of the Islamic state. Moreover they consider violence and terror as a tool and objective. Through the misinterpretation of religious guidance and other fallacies these groups adopted a strategy of violence. This conception makes these groups too extreme to participate in the democratic process.

Dispute between religious and Islamist movements are recurrent and have become a major factor of political activity in the Arab world. Discussions and traditional political debate divided Islamists into "moderates" and "extremists", but these standards do not help much to understand these movements. The first measure is the criterion of violence. When discussing the issue of violence, it is said that the extremists accept it and use it, while moderates rejected it. The second criterion, the most important, is whether the Islamic groups or individuals Islamists accept the rules of democratic elections and their commitment to the procedural rules and the will of the people as the rule of majority over the minority.

The Spread of Islamic Awakening

The Islamic movement reflects the social and cultural foundation of Algerian society and the dynamics that shaped it through history and specifically during the colonial era. The restrictions that the French imposed on the Algerian people regarding education pushed them to emigrate to other countries in the Middle East to join the

different institutes and universities. This interaction with the Middle East created a new doctrinal inclination for two reasons: the lack of a strong indigenous scholarly tradition in Algeria, and the lack of reputable Islamic institutions like those of Al-Azhar in Egypt and Al-Zaitouna in Tunisia.

The Islamic movement in Algeria emerged as the major political force in the beginning of the Eighties. During this phase, the Islamic Movement established as fundamental a strategy, to seize power by means of a violent confrontation. 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 "MAIA" organized an attack against a police barracks, in which arms and ammunition were taken and a policeman was killed. In 1987, the leader of the MAIA was killed by the security forces and the members of the group were prosecuted.[6]

The rise of Islamic awakening was due to several factors at the international, regional and national levels. At the international level the Iranian Revolution in February 1979 succeeded in establishing the Islamic Republic of Iran. Muslim youth saw this revolution as symbolizing their aspirations to set up the Islamic State. Iranians after the victory of their revolution tried to export their revolution in various ways, including publications, journals and newspapers and through financial support to Islamic movements.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 became the main topic in the Muslim world. Afghanistan was an unknown country -- people don't even know its geographic location -- but it became a central concern debated in lectures and public fora. The Afghan jihad sparked faith in the soul, becoming a central issue for Muslims' ideology. It pushed many young people to join the Afghan jihad. The Algerian Islamic Movement managed to recruit about 3,000 volunteers to fight in Afghanistan, and Algerians began heading to Afghanistan via Pakistan and some European countries like France and Spain. Some of them left Algeria to Saudi Arabia with their final destination being the Peshawar area. They walked from there to Afghanistan.[7]

Facts indicate that several factors in the early eighties pushed the Algerian youth to travel to Afghanistan for Jihad against the Soviet invasion, including:

- The impact of indoctrination on young people with poor knowledge of Islam and the growing propaganda of the Islamic movements to go on Jihad.

- The tough economic conditions and the growing unemployment rate that Algeria experienced especially after the oil prices crash.

- The mobilization of Muslims by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to help the Afghan people and USA support for the jihadists.[8]

At the regional level the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in March 1979 were seen as a defeat of Muslims and a sign of their weakness. The assassination of the Egyptian president in 1981 by Al jamaa Al Islamia has encouraged the Islamic group in the Arab world to escalate violence as the appropriate response to the Arab regimes considered as apostate. At the national level, mosque meetings and preaching played an important role in awakening minds in Algeria. The Islamic Movement leaders

9

pass on their projects through Friday sermons and preaching lessons and guidance. Workshops in mosques and murals on walls promoted the Salafi ideology as the basis of reform. Several leaders emerged as pioneer in this area, such as Sheikh Ahmed Sahnoun, and Abdellatif Soltani. Factors like open mosques in the universities and high schools have contributed to this new mindset. Those are places for the organization and movement and collective action where the intellectuals recruited tried to formulate the concepts of Algerian political Islam. This trend has been defined as "Djaza'ra" (Algerianism), and is currently engaged in open conflict with the traditional curriculum content at the universities.

Algeria witnessed the emergence of three key Islamic movements that compete for prominence among the masses: the movement of the "Algerian Muslim Brotherhood", the so called association "Movement Djaz'ara" or "cultural building movement", and the "Salafi movement". The first was launched after the Egyptian experience and the transfer of political thought of the Muslim Brotherhood from Egypt to Algeria. The second came from the experience and the role of the historic Association of Muslim Scholars in the Algerian revolution and after independence transformed to a so called " Djaz'ara" movement which stemmed from the university students, influenced by the Islamic thinker, "Malik Ibn Naby". The third The "Salafi Movement" was inspired by the mass of the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia.

<u>Roots of Salafism and its Turning Points</u>

The emergence of the Salafi concept goes back to the Sheikh of Islam Ibn Taymyah, the imminent scholar who endeavored to eradicating beliefs and customs that he held to be foreign to Islam, and to refresh correct Islamic thought and its related sciences. He is best known for issuing the Fatwa of Jihad against the Mongols in 1300.

He declared that Jihad upon the Mongols was not only permissible, but obligatory because they ruled using their traditional code rather than Islamic law (Sharia) despite the fact that they had converted to Islam.[9]

Ibn Taymiyah did not invent the concept of Salafism, but the concept was started by the Prophet who said that people will want to add to Islam, and that these additions are evil and is rejected. In simple terms Salafism is the reversion to the roots of a pure and authentically correct Islamic beliefs and deeds. Ibn Taymiyah issued many Fatwas to fight those beliefs and heresies added to Islam. His actions produced enemies as varied as the Shiite and Sufis and the Sectarians.

Ibn Taymiyah's attempt was very successful in exposing the deviation of many groups from pure Islam. He and a few followers challenged people and eventually succeeded in enrolling a huge group of followers who wanted to return to practicing Islam like the Prophet and his companions used to do. The Prophet told us about such people when he said "Allah has put for my nation for every 100 years a man who will revive the forgotten and correct the deviation".[10] Ibn Taymiyah is considered now among the reformers (Mujadids).

After the death of Ibn Taymyah many modern Muslim thinkers still adhere to his concepts and try to follow his teaching. Among those I will mention two who have influenced and shaped Algerian history: Sheikh Ahmed Ibn Badis, the founder of the Muslim Algerian Scholars Association, and thinker Malik Ben Nabi who is considered the foremost intellectual of the post World War II Muslim world. Ben Nabi's approach is that in the nineteenth century, the relations among nations were based on power, and the position of a nation was dependent on the number of its factories, cannons, fleets

and gold reserves. However, the twentieth century introduced a new development in which ideas were held in high esteem as national and international values. According to Malik Ben Nabi, religion is a fundamental instrument in any civilization. It is a vital ideology that includes every detail of the cultural and ethical system.[11] He analyzed the Muslim society and deducted that:

> Muslims living in an underdeveloped country will no doubt feel that they are inferior to people living in a developed country. They will gradually realize that what separates people is not geographical distance, but distance of another nature. As a result of this inferiority, Muslims ascribe this distance to the field of objects. They see their situation as an abomination caused by lack of weapons, airplanes and tanks. Thus, their inferiority complex will lose its social effectiveness, leading only to pessimism on the psychological level. On the social level, it will lead to what we have elsewhere called "takdis" (heaping-up). To turn this feeling into an effective driving-force, Muslims should ascribe their backwardness to the level of ideas, not to that of "objects", for the development of the new world depends increasingly on ideational and intellectual criteria. Leaders did not perceive the ideological force of Islam, their movement failed to restore Islam's social function. The real problem was not how to teach the Muslims his faith, but how to restore its effectiveness and the social impact of the faith. In other words the problem is not proving God's existence to Muslims but how to make them sense that his existence fills up an individual's soul as a source of energy.[12]

Malik Ben Nabi then criticized the present Muslim society and argued that this is not a failure of Islam, but because Muslims and those in governance abandoned the true understanding of what Islamic values mean.

According to Ben Nabi, the basic principles of Islam promote democratic conscience through disregarding tyranny and encouraging equal rights and freedom. Ben Nabi believed that the positive aspects of democracy are part of Islam, thereby undermining the case that Islam is incompatible with democracy. The Quran (Muslims' holy book), for instance, gave the person the highest value that ever gets in the verse: "We have honored the children of Adam"[13], which reflects the foundation of the

democratic model, dealing with man's spiritual element besides his human and social aspects. For Ben Nabi the development of democracy in Islam needs not to be viewed as a move away from Islamic principles, but on the contrary, as a necessary stepping-stone toward reaching an ideal Islamic society. From this standpoint, it seems that Ben Nabi's analysis of Democracy within the Islamic framework is more meaningful and precise than that of the Egyptian Islamic theorist Sayeed Qutb who denied any form of democracy because it represented the western paradigm.[14]

Many of the reform movements in the Islamic world are better organized and more attractive to the younger generation than alternative theories. Among those movements the most prominent is the Muslim Brotherhood, which was started in Egypt by its historic leader Imam Hassan Al-Banna and spread to more than one Arab country. In some of their thinking the brothers were very close to the Salafist. This movement emerged when most of the Arab countries were under colonial domination. In order to have more credibility, they have joined their effort to some political entities and cultural and scientific associations to lead transformations in the Muslim world. This action resulted in changing the balance of power in the world and precipitated the emergence of political Islam. Later a culture clash occurred between the followers of the Salafi Wahhabi movement in the Gulf and Shia Muslims. This was fueled by the by Iraq war on Iran. The Salafi Wahhabi movement, through the support of the Arab gulf countries, was involved in Afghanistan where Arabs established under the leadership of Abdullah Azzam and fought the Soviet invasion beside the Afghans. In Afghanistan Jihadist Salafism was born, which accepted violence as a mean to express its ideas and attitudes in pursuit of transformation.

<u>The Root of the Salafist Movement in Algeria: Reference of the Islamic Revolution</u>

In fact, the link between Islam and politics is not a new trend in contemporary Algeria. The Algerian resistance movements against the French received its justification from Islam. The resistance was qualified as Jihad against aggressors and invaders; it was an obligatory duty for all Muslims. The French further consolidated this conception of colonial relationships by distinguishing Algerians from the settlers through religion. Algerians were called Muslims and the others were called Europeans. This and other policies of selective assimilation aimed at stripping the Algerians of their Islamic identity. These policies had a reverse effect on Algerian society. It strengthened Algerians' common feeling of belonging to Islam as an identity and also the belief in the sole efficacy of the Islamic model. Islam was, thereafter, a source of identity and a motive for liberation. It was this identity that the Islamic reformist movement (the Muslim Algerian Scholar Association) was trying to establish, and it was this motive that was later used by the FLN (National Liberation Front) to rally people around the nationalist agenda.

The Algerian Liberation Revolution was considered an" Islamic movement" and the main reflection the intellectual and political currents involved, in the armed struggle against the French occupation. The manifest of 1 November, 1954 stipulated as the fundamental objective the establishment of an Algerian state under the fundamentals of Islamic principles. This statement was clear on this issue, and its success depended on the degree of coherence of the National Liberation Front within this framework to prevent division of opinion under the pressure of the rest of the political currents of secularism. In this struggle against French colonialism, "Jihad" for the sake of God, aimed to free the land of Algeria and its people from foreign colonialism. By calling the

faithful to Jihad against the occupier, the FLN mobilized the Algerian people to act together in order to achieve the objective of independence.[15]

Political changes that occurred in Algeria in the 1990s allowed the evolution of political Islamic movements. These movements shifted from the realm of advocacy and religious indoctrination to test their political power in the government system. They took advantage of the political freedom available after the opening of Algeria as a multiparty system and used all means available to them including the use of "religious discourse" to convince voters about the credibility of their electoral programs that seek to alter the foundations of the political system's "un-Islamic," tools of democracy itself.

The Algerian Salafist Movement: Clashes between Thoughts and Practices

The political and economic changes that took place in Algeria have given room to the development of radical Islamic movements which crossed the lines of religious preaching to challenge the regime. The movements which had strong popular support found in the political freedom in Algeria an opportunity to target a specific audience represented by the new generation of youth through their religious speech for the regime change by democratic means.

The Islamic Front of Salvation was brought from darkness to legality after the political openness Algeria witnessed in 1989. This Islamic political entity was composed of several different Islamic sub-entities or factions which seemed socially homogenous but religiously and doctrinally deeply divergent. The dominant Salafist and Jihadi Salafist as the major components of the FIS managed to play a leading role among all the Islamist currents. They succeeded to build a strong base in the Algerian political arena because they have been able to attract the attention of ordinary Algerians through a set of slogans that promote justice and welfare. The other faction of the FIS was the

Djaza'ara (Algerianism) originally a fraction of the Algerian Brotherhood influenced by the mother organization in Egypt. All these factions converged on one main point by considering democracy as not a legitimate system of governance in Islam. Ali Belhadj the number two of the FIS did not mince his words, he said simply: "there is no democracy in Islam and If people vote against the Law of God... this is nothing other than blasphemy and the Ulema (Muslim scholars) will order the death of the offenders who have substituted their authority for that of God."[16]

After the FIS was banned, the jihadist Salafism got involved in a dark tunnel of violence against the regime. According to scientific Salafists, Salafsist militants had gone astray when they decided to confront the regime and used violence against innocent civilians. They believe that the Jihadist Salafist groups lost their pretext to fight against the regime which called for truce with other Islamic movements.

However, the Salafist movement is still suffering from the negative image created by the Salafist Jihadist groups, which have been described as a dogmatic, radical and intellectually impotent trend that made the Algerian people pay the bill of their dispute with the regime on the social, economic and political levels. Scientific Salafists have been unable to stop the jihadist's inclination's to denigrate others as blasphemers.

Strategy of Violence and Terror: From GIA to GSPC to AQIM

The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat and Al Quaeda in the land of Islamic Maghreb represent the radical Islamist movements in Algeria. In fact they are the multiple facet of the same token. This category of extremist is composed of a nebula of militant and hardliner groups seeking the immediate transformation of both state and society through a use of coercive violence. I have omitted to mention the Islamic Salvation Army or AIS which was the

armed wing of the disbanded FIS not by inadvertence, but for the simple reason, that

this group stepped away from the GIA and reached later in 1997 a cease fire agreement

with the government.

In 1996 when conducting a sweeping operation I asked a repentant terrorist

whether they have been fighting against others faction and why. What kept my attention

when he answered my question was that he called the other factions "Khawrij". The

term is used to define the first faction which rebelled against the legitimate Muslim

Kahlifa in 659 AC. Most of Muslim scholars considered the behavior of this entity as

illegal and thus must be fought till they repent. Marry R. Habeck mentioned this entity

and the point the similarity between this entity and the modern Jihadist groups:

> The Khawarij were heterodox Muslims who appeared soon after the death
> of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to claim that they alone were true
> believers: all the other "so called" Muslims were in fact apostates who had
> to be fought and killed. The similarities between these beliefs and those of
> the takfir declaring jihadis have been commented by other Muslims, and
> the accusation by Muslim experts that the Jihadis are Khawarij is common
> enough that the extremists have felt compelled to deny that they are
> anything like these heretics.[17]

The Armed Islamic Group, well known by its French acronyms GIA, is an Islamic

armed group founded in 1989 that aimed to overthrow the secular Algerian government

and establish a government under the Islamic law. It opposed any truce or dialogue with

the government. The group adopted armed violence in early 1992 after the regime in

power in Algeria abolished the overwhelming victory achieved by the Islamic Salvation

Front in the first round of parliamentary elections in December 1991.

Some sources suggest that the group is made up of some of the Islamists who

fought in Afghanistan and young people of lower social classes who split off from the

Islamic Front for Salvation. The number of its militants was estimated between 20 and

25 thousand. The group was concentrated in the Atlas Mountains east and west of Algeria on the border of Morocco and Tunisia and at the limits of the desert. This group was divided into three military zones, Eastern, Central and West, working as three semi autonomous divisions but under a unique national central command.

The ideological approach of the group was based on the fatwa issued by Sheikh Abdul Haq Ayada one of the founders and leaders of the GIA. The Fatwa stipulated that all Algerian leaders without exception and everyone citizen who served them are considered unbelievers. This "Takfiri" standpoint was translated to a series of assassinations and extremely violent operations. The group has claimed responsibility for most of assassinations of journalists, intellectuals, political activists and foreigners living in Algeria.[18]

Although the goals of the groups and the similarity of means match to a large extent the Army of Islamic Salvation - the military wing of the Islamic Salvation Front - the relations between the two groups was bad because the Islamic Salvation Army condemned some of the bloody acts of the GIA. On the other hand, any convergence of views between the GIA and the FIS is unlikely because the leaders of the Front who favor dialogue with the government have become targets for the GIA.

This group has engaged in attacks on civilians to intimidate rival groups, including the Salvation Front and to embarrass the government by showing its inability to control the state. The group has carried out some operations outside Algeria like the hijacking of an "Air France" aircraft in 1994. This group was involved in the bloody in 1997. The extreme brutality and the disregards of the basic Islamic rules of war have raised criticism from the Algerian society and the international community. As a result

18

the Algerian government gained more support from the population and was able to isolate the group and eliminate most of its leader. Hassan Hattab one of the remaining leaders took the initiative, encouraged by the Al Qaeda network, and established an opposing group known as GSPC.[19]

The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat known by its French name "Le Groupe Salfiste pour la prédilection et le Combat" and its acronym "GSPC" became famous for its alliance to the international terrorist network Al Qaeda. The group was established in 1999 and adopted from the beginning a separated position from the GIA to break away from the massacres of GIA and give a better image of Jihad. It became later Al Qaeda in the land of Islamic Maghreb "AQIM". Although the GSPC shifted away from the GIA, its objectives coincided. Its strategy to overthrow the Algerian regime consisted primarily of using violence to mobilize the people and individuals to its cause. It carries out attacks against the Algerian military and also kidnapping of Westerns tourists in an effort to weaken and ultimately overthrow the Algerian government and replace it with Islamic rule based an authentic interpretation of Quran. Under pressure of the Algerian armed forces many powerful key leaders of GSPC and AQIM have been eliminated, and many support cells were dismantled. AQIM in an attempt to ensure its survival moved away from Algeria to the south and established in the sub-Saharan countries. The area known as an uncontrolled area with weak governments allows AQIM to get more support as a transnational organization. AQIM has diversified its components through the recruitment of militants from the indigenous and neighboring countries to strengthen its presence in the region.

Islamic Movement: From Intimidation to Violent

Islamist movements were prepared to impose their rule through their own paramilitary groups. They launched a full-scale campaign of terror, killing thousands of people including foreigners, journalists and women, burning schools and industrial facilities and blowing up bridges, railways and power lines. Based on subsequent attacks, the target selection of terrorism operations in Algeria could be classified into four stages:

- Attacks against security forces and government employees

- Attacks directed at intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, artists and foreigners, especially French nationals in Algeria and France

- Attacks directed to destroy the country infrastructure as bridges, schools, railways and electricity supplies

- Attacks directed at the general population

Suicide Bombing

AQIM employed sophisticated suicide tactics for the first time on April 11, 2007. The near-simultaneous bombings of multiple targets inside Algiers, including the office of Algeria's prime minister cost more than 23 lives.[20] Shortly thereafter, AQIM vowed to continue to use suicide tactics, and proceeded to carry out five additional suicide attacks in Algeria in 2007. On December 11, AQIM carried out two near-simultaneous suicide vehicle improvised explosive device attacks that struck two UN offices and the headquarters of Algeria's Constitutional Council, killing 60 people, (including 17 UN employees), and wounding at least 170 others.[21] There was a rise in terrorist attacks claimed by AQIM during the month of August 2008, with at least 79 people killed in

various incidents across northeastern Algeria. "We decided to adopt from now on the strategy of the martyred operations in the confrontation against our enemies" said Droukdal, the head of AQIM in Algeria. "It is a fight between believers and unfaithful", he added.

<u>Massacres</u>

During the nineties, terrorist groups used massacres as a punishment for their cooperation with the government. The GIA killed without any distinction. The 1997 report of Amnesty international relate the situation in Algeria and brutalities that that targeted innocent civilian without distinction:

> Armed groups targeted both security force members and civilians. Terrorists attacked civilians whom they regarded as instruments of the State or whose lifestyles they considered in conflict with Islamic values. Sometimes they killed in the course of armed robberies or to enforce local protection rackets. Some terrorist bombings seemed intended only to create social disorder by causing a high number of civilian casualties without any apparent concern for the particular target. Increasingly armed groups killed large groups of civilians, including infants, often in apparent retaliation against villages or families that had ceased providing support to them. In September a number of teachers were murdered in front of their students. In September the terrorist Armed Islamic Group (GIA) issued an official communiqué in which it claimed responsibility for the ongoing violence, terming the massacres "an offering to God" and pledging to continue. Activists from several political parties, including the two legal Islamist opposition parties, were killed in 1997, as were cultural and media personalities such as a popular filmmaker and a television station employee.[22]

<u>Kidnapping, Extortion and Racketeering</u>

Backed by some traffickers and smuggling gangs active in sub-Saharan countries, terrorists of Al-Qaeda in the Land of Islamic Maghreb uses kidnapping in order to weaken the government and finance their activities. Attacks of AQIM have targeted tourists and foreigners employed in oil and mining sectors. AQIM has got a subsequent part of its finance through this method. Ransoms have served to increase

the recruitment and improve the equipment of the organization in arms and telecommunication capabilities. AQIM has also succeeded in releasing some of its militants jailed in sub-Saharan countries.

<u>What is Jihad?</u>

Most people attribute violence to Islam as a fundamental doctrinal element of the religion. Certainly jihad played a central role in the success of Islam as a religion and the survival of the Muslim community; it was also part of the defense of the religion trough history. The essence of jihad remains, but how people interpret the term is the variable in the equation. Jihad (to strive or struggle) is sometimes referred to as the Sixth Pillar of Islam. The importance of jihad is rooted in the Quran's command to struggle.

The two broad meanings of Jihad, nonviolent and violent, are contrasted in a well-known Prophetic tradition. It is said that when The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) returned from battle he told his followers, "We return from the lesser jihad (fight) to the greater jihad." The greater jihad is the more difficult and more important struggle against one's ego, selfishness, greed, and evil.[23] This Jihad is related to the everyday duties that Muslims should focus to build the civic society in to improve the economic, social and cultural domains. Marry R. Habeck gave a clear and concise description of Jihad:

> Yet the way the radicals talk about Jihad does not fit within modern Islamic discourse about this sensitive duty. The general Islamic understanding of Jihad today is that is it consists of both an internal and external component. Believers are urged to strive for a deep faith and to control their desires, while seeking God and the good. This internal struggle is given priority, but there is also a vision of external struggle that includes striving to make society conform to Islamic norms of justice.[24]

The second meaning of Jihad includes the right, indeed the obligation, to defend Islam and the community from aggression. The responsibility or duty of Jihad as

declaring war does not fall on individuals but on states. States have the obligation to

mobilize people to defend Muslims.

Does the Quran Condemn Terrorism?

This is the kind of question that Muslim scholars must explain to the international

community to advocate the righteousness of Islam as a religion of tolerance and peace

as it recommended for all Muslims through the Quran:

> Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and
> fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord
> knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware
> of those who are guided.[25]

Some Muslims have engaged in terrorism and used religion to justify their

actions. For many who have little previous knowledge of Islam or Muslims, acts of

terrorism committed by extremists, in particular 9/11, raise the question of whether there

is something in Islam or the Quran that fosters violence and terrorism. Islam has neither

supported nor required illegitimate violence. However, Islam does permit, indeed at

times require, Muslims to defend themselves and their families, religion, and community

from aggression. At a time when they were forced to fight for their lives, the messenger

Muhammad was told through the Quran:

> Permission to fight is given to those who are fought against, because they
> have been wronged; and surely, Allah is Able to give them victory. Those
> who have been expelled from their homes unjustly only because they said:
> Our Lord is Allah.[26]

The defensive nature of jihad is clearly emphasized in the Quran in the first verse

that was revealed in connection with Jihad:

> And fight in the way of God with those who fight you, but do not transgress
> limits, God does not love the aggressors.[27]

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received revelations from God that provided guidelines for the jihad. As the Muslim community grew, questions quickly emerged as to what was proper behavior during times of war. The Quran recommends guidelines and present regulations to Muslims regarding their conduct in time of war. Most important, verses such as follow emphasized that warfare and the response to violence and aggression must be proportional: "Whoever transgresses against you, respond in kind".

The Community and the Fight against Terrorism

The Algerian community was active in integrating the more overarching national strategy of combating terrorism. This was demonstrated by the enrollment of tens of thousands of local citizens in the municipal police which was instrumental in the strategy. More than 100,000 Algerians served as volunteers in the Patriots or the GLDs (Groupes de Legitime Defense). These groups contributed through intelligence gathering, early warnings and prompt actions against terrorist groups trying to commit criminal acts in their area or only transiting or wishing to deploy. History will record the added-value of these citizens who gave their life and property for the sake of a stable and modern Algeria. It's worthy to mention the important role of the revolution veterans who said yes to the call of duty in this critical moment, to help through their past experience, the new generation defend the same national values they were fighting for in the past.

Because terrorism was perverting religious values and using fatwas that were not only radical but totally in contradiction with Islam, Muslim clerics and Islamic associations and Sufi organizations were forthcoming in denouncing such perversions. They not only effectively demolished such unfounded and deviant discourse, but also

helped create with other national institutions a real and modern perception that was in line with Islam, as a religion that strives for peace and rejects violence and considers life sacred and rejects firmly the killings of innocents. At the heart of the Islamic ethic regarding the holiness of innocent life the following verse in the Quran:

> Because of that we ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind. And indeed, there came to them Our Messengers with clear proofs, evidence, and signs, even then after that many of them continued to exceed the limits (e.g. by doing oppression unjustly and exceeding beyond the limits set by Allâh by committing the major sins) in the land[28]

A life is worth all humanity -- this is also the core of the Algerian strategy of combating terrorism -- which was based on a deep conviction that the inhumane character of terrorism can be defeated, among other things, by the humane logic of Algeria's shared convictions: nationhood and Islam.

Civil society and political parties were also active in mobilizing the population against terrorism. They were very supportive of the idea of peace and national reconciliation. In fact, since 1999 both the Law on Civil Concord (1999) and the Law on Peace and National Reconciliation (2005) were overwhelmingly endorsed by the population through referendum. Even members of the associations of victims of terrorisms were actively involved in defending these principles and are still fighting for tolerance, peace and stability. [29]

The role of the community, therefore, was strategically important in defeating terrorism, and such criminal acts have receded noticeably. Moreover, the use of suicide attacks by terrorist groups reveals the level of despair that they have reached in a

country and a society that rejects violence and radicalism and that aspires for peace, modernity and democracy.

Conclusion

The Algerian experience in fighting terrorism has become a model that inspires many the world over. This is motivated by the fact that terrorism as a movement, an agenda or as an ideology has been defeated. This success was realized amidst western insensitivity to Algerian sufferings and indifference to Algeria's calls for international cooperation in curtailing the development of this pathological worldwide phenomenon. The terrorist attacks on American soil in September 2001 gave credence and credibility to Algeria's plight and strife. The West became very much interested in Algeria as the expert. An expertise that was acquired against a transnational movement that needs to be dealt with through a concerted international process on the basis of a consensual legal definition of terrorism set by an international legal instrument that is clear and untied to any religious or cultural stereotypes.

The Algerian President's initiative for national reconciliation can be seen as the cutting -edge in the ongoing debate among the Islamists trends in Algeria where the Muslim Brothers are seen as the most successful group that managed to cope with the regime's policies. The Algerian Islamic party "movement for peaceful society" (HAMS) has thus got several government portfolios and presented itself as an alternative to other Islamic trends and kept away from the radical religious speech. It represents the moderate Islamic paradigm well integrated and successful.

Endnotes

[1] *U.S. Library of Congress,* http://countrystudies.us/algeria/113.htm, March 16, 2011,

[2] James D. Le Sueur, *Between Terror and Democracy: Algeria since 1989, New York*, NY 10010: Zed Books Ltd, 2010, 38,

[3] *Constitution of The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria,* http://confinder.richmond.edu/admin/docs/local_algeria.pdf, March 16. 2011,

[4] James D. Le Sueur, *Between Terror and Democracy: Algeria since 1989, New York*, NY 10010: Zed Books Ltd, 2010, 44,

[5] James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria, New York*, NY: Cambridge University Press,2006, 13-14,

[6] Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria, A Political History,* London, Ithaca Pr, 1996, 81,

[7] Khalifa Hajji, The Origins and Strategic Objectives of the Al-Qaeda Organization In the Islamic Maghreb, 15,

[8] Muhamed H. Haykal, http://www.bintjbeil.com/articles/ar/020202_haykal.html, the call of Washington for Jihad in Kabul, January 20, 2011,

[9] Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror,* London, UK: Yale University Press, 2006, 19,

[10] *Shaikh Al-Islam Ibn-Taymiyah, One of the best Muslim Scholars*, http://www.islamicweb.com/beliefs/creed/taymiyah.htm, March 16, 2011,

[11] Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi, Religion, Society and Culture in Malik Ben Nabi's Thought ,231,

[12] Malek Ben Nabi, http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enwiki/en/Malek_Bennabi, March 10, 2011,

[13] http://www.qurancomplex.org/Quran/Targama/Targama.asp?nSora=17&l=arb& nAya=70#17_70,

[14] Fulla al-Ahmar, Sayyid Qutb and Malik Bennabi's Thought: Comparison and Contrast http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:9F6zJmAvY2wJ:www.hoggar.org/index.php%3Fo ption%3Dcom_docman%26task%3Ddoc_download%26gid%3D134+Fulla+al-Ahmar,+Sayyid +Qutb+and+Malik+Bennabi%E2%80%99s+Thought:+Comparison+and+Contrast+(city,+State:+ Publisher,+Month+Year),&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESiFIM9E5Ren9NR0YmvZ- sjFxZhdGOGiJ4gcMX5QgL9L2EykYBbKT6lybfCqLClpGbqDrKeFDjCfOZA-XoDuD1IJ5EKO _u2BEKd-ZHfwzYiO6s0dQIJemwFz0XvZhz5eDQozYArf&sig=AHIEtbQuWcHE6ZEB9iHt7wyr 16OTfuSSYw Accessed March 16,2011, 2,

[15] Wikipedia, Algerian War, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algerian_War_of_Independence, March 13, 2011,

[16] Wikipedia, "Islamic Salvation Front," *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_ Salvation_Front, March 02, 2011,*

[17] Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror,* London, UK: Yale University Press, 2006, 175,

[18] Lauren Vriens, "Armed Islamic Group," May 27, 2009, http://www.cfr.org/algeria/armed-islamic-group-algeria-islamists/p9154, December 17, 2010,

[19] Lianne Kennedy Boudali, *"The GSPC: Newest Franchise in al Qa'ida's Global Jihad,"* United States Military Academy, The Combating Terrorism Center, April 2007, 1-2,

[20] BBC News, "Explosions rock Algerian capital", BBC Online, April 12, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6544437.stm?ls, January 02, 2011,

[21] BBC News, "Dozens killed' in Algeria blasts," BBC Online, December 11, 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7137997.stm, January 02, 2011,

[22] Algeria Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, January 30, 1998, http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/algeria.html, March 16, 2011,

[23] Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror,* London, UK: Yale University Press, 2006, 109,

[24] Ibid., 108,

[25] http://www.qurancomplex.org/Quran/Targama/Targama.asp?nSora=16&l=arb&nAya=125#16_125, March 03, 2011,

[26] http://www.qurancomplex.org/Quran/Targama/Targama.asp?nSora=22&l=arb&nAya=40#22_40, March 03, 2011,

[27] http://www.qurancomplex.org/Quran/Targama/Targama.asp?nSora=2&l=arb&nAya=190#2_190, March 03, 2011,

[28] http://www.qurancomplex.org/Quran/Targama/Targama.asp?nSora=5&l=arb&nAya=32#5_32, March 03, 2011,

[29] Lianne Kennedy Boudali, Jihadist Terrorism in North Africa and the Maghreb, 90,