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UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN ALGERIA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY

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22 FEB 1996

Abstract

This thesis concerns the Islamist movement in Algeria and takes the form of a political history. It traces the modern origins of the movement from the role Islam played in resistance to French colonial rule, through the formation of the influential Association of Ulama in the 1920s and 1930s and looks at the important contribution the movement made to the war of liberation against the French between 1954 and 1962. It then focuses on the role Islam and the successor movements to the Association played in the independent Algerian state, how they were largely repressed and co-opted in the 1960s and 1970s, but how they survived and began to grow again in the 1980s. The latter and larger part of the study examines in detail the dominant role Islamism played in Algerian political life following the regime's decision to allow greater political pluralism from 1989. In particular, the role played by the main Islamist political party, the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) is considered and analysed. Attention is paid to the party's remarkable success in multiparty elections in 1990 - 1991, how this could be accounted for and how the Algerian regime and the other political parties responded to this development. The FIS's party political agenda is examined, as is the strategy it adopted to achieve its goals. The events surrounding the 1991 legislative elections, are explained, notably the Algerian military's decision to intervene and cancel the elections following the FIS's sweeping gains in the first ballot. The last chapter deals with the Islamist movement's response to the army's effective *coup d'état* and its subsequent proscription of the FIS. It looks at the development of armed Islamist resistance to the regime and how the regime and the various splintered parts of the FIS and the wider Islamist movement have sought to find a resolution to an increasingly bloody conflict.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIS	*Armée Islamique du Salut* (Islamic Salvation Army)
ANP	*Armée Nationale Populaire* (People's National Army)
APC	*Assemblée Populaire Communale* (Popular Communal Assembly)
APN	*Assemblée Populaire et Nationale* (National Popular Assembly)
APW	*Assemblée Populaire de Wliaya* (Popular *Wilaya* Assembly)
AUMA	*Association d'Ulama Musulman Algérien* (Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama)
BEC	*Bureau Executifs de Communaux* (Executive Offices of the Communes)
BEN	*Bureau Executif National* (National Executive Office)
BEP	*Bureau Executif Provisoire* (Provisional Executive Bureau)
BEW	*Bureau Executifs de Wilaya* (Executive Offices of the *Wilaya)*
CCN	*Conseil Consultatif National* (National Consultative Council)
FFS	*Front des Forces Socialistes* (Socialist Forces Front)
FIS	*Front Islamique du Salut* (Islamic Salvation Front)
FLN	*Front de Libération Nationale* (National Liberation Front)
GIA	*Groupes Islamiques Armées* (Armed Islamic Groups)
HAMAS	*Harakat al-Mujtama al-Islamiyya* (Movement of the Islamic Society)
HCE	*Haut Comité d'Etat* (High State Council)
LADH	*Ligue Algérienne des Droits de l'Homme* (Algerian Human Rights League)
MAIA	*Mouvement Algérien Islamique Armée* (Algerian Armed Islamic Movement) see also MIA

MAJD	*Mouvement Algérien pour la Justice et le Développement* (Algerian Movement for Justice and Development)
MDA	*Mouvement pour la Démocratie en Algérie* (Movement for Democracy in Algeria)
MIA	*Mouvement Islamique Armée* (Armed Islamic Movement) see also MAIA
MNI	*Mouvement de la Nahda Islamique* (Islamic Renaissance Movement)
PAGS	*Parti de l'Avant-Garde Socialiste* (Progressive Socialist Party)
RCD	*Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie* (Rally for Culture and Democracy)
RDN	*Rassemblement Democratique National* (National Democratic Rally)
SIT	*Syndicat Islamique du Travail* (Islamic Labour Union)
UGTA	*Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens* (General Union of Algerian Workers)

Glossary[1]

colons	European inhabitants of Algeria under colonial rule
fatwa	Official ruling on a point of Islamic law
hadj	Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca
hedjab	'Islamic' women's clothing
ijitihad	Independent reasoning or interpretation of the Quran and hadiths
jihad	Struggle for Islam. Often implies 'holy war'
Mahdi	Awaited divinely guided figure, who will lead Muslims to Islamic righteousness
majlis shura	Consultative council
mudjahedin	Warriors for Islam
rai	Popular Algerian fusion of traditional and modern music
sharia	Islamic law
shura	consultation
tariqa	Sufi brotherhood
umma	The Islamic nation
wilaya	Administrative departments

[1] Where Arabic words, place names and names of people are used in the text, no systematic form of transliteration has been followed. Instead, the most common or recognised spelling and form have been adopted. Where direct quotes are used, the original form is kept, even if it is inconsistent with usuage in the main text (e.g. Quran and Koran or Sharia and Sha'riah)

INTRODUCTION

Few countries have undergone as dramatic a series of changes over such a short period of time as Algeria. In the space of just five years from 1988, what was perceived as one of the most stable states in both Africa and the Arab world was transformed into a arena of political chaos and extreme violence that had claimed the lives of an estimated 40,000 people by 1995. The *Front de Libération National* (FLN) the political party that had exclusively dominated Algeria since it had famously wrested independence for Algeria from the French in 1962, had effectively disintegrated during these five short years. Algerian foreign policy, long a respected pillar of Third World diplomacy, withered away as the country became absorbed by its own internal crises. The socialist planning and rhetoric that had represented the cornerstone of Algeria's political, social and economic life since independence had by the 1990s become an irrelevance. In short, all that had outwardly characterised Algeria, for the first quarter of a century of its independent existence, had disappeared.

What had precipitated the rapid demise of these hitherto iron-clad constants and what, if anything, had replaced them? To the outside world, two things characterised Algeria after 1988. Firstly, there was the unprecedented shift by the country's leaders from a single-party state to a political system allowing the participation of political parties of all descriptions in apparently unfettered elections to all the political institutions of the state. Secondly, and more dramatically, there was the emergence of a large, vibrant popular movement which swept all before it in elections through its political party, the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS). The ideological basis of this movement was Islamism. This was an ideology which could, and for current purposes will, be defined as being one which derives its world view and vision from a fresh reading of Islam and its sources. It was one that was articulated both through individuals, but increasingly



also through popular movements, such as that which arose in Algeria, which emerged in states across the Muslim world. From the 1970s, in particular, these movements became increasingly vociferous and popular and more explicitly political in their demand that the authorities in the countries in which they organised respond to their calls for state and society to be fully founded in their vision of Islam. Increasingly in states across the Middle East, North Africa and Asia these movements became the main source of organised opposition to the established regimes.

A wealth of literature exists on the origins, ideology and overall nature of both Islamism and Islamist movements.[1] However, no more detailed explanation or analysis of the wider phenomenon of Islamism is given here since it is intended that this will become apparent as the specific case of Algeria is explored. Whilst sharing the general experience of Islamism with countries across the Muslim world, Algeria's specific historical experience largely determined the timing and particular nature of its own Islamist movement. It is this individual historical experience that will be examined in the hope that it will not only explain the origins and nature of Algeria's own Islamist movement, but also that it will contribute to further understanding of the wider Islamist movement and phenomenon generally.

In the Algerian context, the importance of the Islamist movement was not only in its popularity and success in elections but also in the fact that it was the banning and repression of the FIS in 1992, as it stood on the edge of real national political power, that was seen to be the cause of the bloody conflict that subsequently gripped Algeria.

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[1] See for example Nazih Ayubi: *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (Routledge, London, 1991); Dilip Hiro: *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Paladin, London, 1988); Bruno Etienne: *L'Islamisme Radical* (Hachette, Paris, 1987)

The pace and unforeseen nature of these developments left most outside observers searching for a coherent explanation. Foreign governments, particularly those facing Algeria across the Mediterranean and those sharing Africa's northern coast, were suddenly acutely aware of Algeria's importance. European governments were conscious of Algeria's geographical proximity - it was less than 100 miles from Spain and Italy. Economically, several southern European states had come to rely on Algeria's extensive oil and gas resources and exports. Politically, France was suddenly apprehensive about the effects Algeria's domestic upheaval would have on its own resident Algerian population which numbered nearly a million. In North Africa, the governments of Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt viewed with increasing alarm the developments in Algeria fearing that such chaos could similarly overwhelm their own countries. Not only was Algeria the largest state of all on the North African coast, but all three states had their own Islamist movements and nascent political pluralism that might ignite in a similar fashion as Algeria's had. Further East, in the Levant and Arabia, governments were uneasy at the possible spread of popular Islamist movements that could topple them and change the whole nature of this strategically and economically vital region.

Searching for a considered and historically-rooted explanation for the dramatic events in Algeria, as they developed, was difficult. Comparatively little literature on the subject of independent Algeria existed outside of the country, particularly in the English-speaking world. What little did appear usually took two forms. Firstly, studies that appeared fairly soon after 1962 and which dwelt significantly on Algeria's long and bloody struggle for independence against France (about which significant amounts had been and was to be written). Secondly, there were studies that examined Algeria's attempts at development, usually from the standpoint of leftist political economy. Both these groups of writings, whilst shedding partial light on the events in Algeria after 1988, failed to

provide any real explanation for the two fundamental features of the period - political liberalisation and Islamism.

This deficit of information and explanation has largely been rectified in France, where since 1990 there has been an increasing flow of books and writing on the whole subject of contemporary Algeria. Inevitably, the English-speaking-world, which has traditionally seen study of Algeria as a French academic preserve, has been slower to react. In the USA, a number of academic articles have been published and the occasional book. In Britain there has been, with the notable exception of a succession of detailed articles by Hugh Roberts, very little produced outside of the broad sheet press. It is for this reason that I have worked to produce this study on the Islamist movement in Algeria.

I have chosen to concentrate on specifically the Islamist movement (rather than, say, political pluralism) for two reasons. Firstly, because after 1988 the story of the Islamist movement became increasingly synonymous with the wider story of political developments in Algeria and from 1990 became the element that determined the turns of events. Secondly, the Algerian Islamist movement, in contrast to the extensive coverage that had been given to similar movements in other Arab and Muslim states, had been largely neglected. This had largely been due to the fact that, as will be shown, the movement had a very low profile until 1988 in comparison to the movements in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and, of course, Iran. However, when it became clear by the 1990s that it was Algeria that appeared to have the largest and most popular movement in the region, some study of it was clearly needed.

Subsequent studies of the movement have been produced in France. These have dealt in detail with the various aspects of the movement: its composition, its ideology, its discourse and its senior figures. There is, however, as yet, no extended analysis of the whole origins, history and development of the movement. This is why I have attempted to write what amounts to a political

history or 'interpretative chronology' of the Islamist movement in Algeria. The historical approach has been chosen for several reasons. The French approach towards the subject has been characterised, as indicated, by analysis of aspects of the movement often in a fairly philosophical and abstract sense. The emerging approach in the United States has been to deal with the topic using the established tools of political science - comparative studies, models of explanation, structural analysis. Both of these approaches have contributed significantly to an understanding of the subject. On their own, however, they risk disregarding the vital features of chronology and linear development which are central to a full understanding of such a subject. Only a historical approach can really remedy these short-comings. Without a historical perspective, there is the potential to forget the importance of the unique sequence of events that produce a unique set of circumstances and the assumption that developments are inevitable becomes unwisely acceptable. Teleology, the interpretation of the past through current events, produces a warped vision of the past and threatens to subject proper academic analysis to the political fashions and exigencies of the day. AJP Taylor, the distinguished historian, famously challenged in the 1960s the hitherto unquestioned orthodoxy that the outbreak and early course of the Second World War had been meticulously planned and executed by Adolf Hitler. By simply questioning the notion that one man, one party or even one state could orchestrate every twist and turn of European diplomacy for over a decade, he revolutionised study of the subject. Whilst I would not even attempt to claim to provide a similar service for the academic study of Algeria's Islamist movement, I am persuaded of the need and place for a historical treatment of the subject.

The study is divided into seven chronologically defined chapters. The opening chapter charts the origins and precursors of the Islamist movement as it emerged during the long period of French colonial rule. It looks at how the movement found its first modern institutional expression in the Association of

Algerian Ulama and how this Association became increasingly involved and contributed to the Algerian national struggle against France, culminating in the war for independence of 1954-62. Chapter two studies how the movement fared in the new Algerian state and how it was substantially marginalized by the new leaders of Algeria through co-option and repression, particularly during Houari Boumedienne's thirteen year presidency between 1965 and 1978. The third chapter examines developments in the decade following Boumedienne's death, how it began to grow in strength and influence whilst still being kept in check by the state. Chapters four, five and six deal with the birth and legal life of the *Front Islamique du Salut* which became the main vehicle for Islamist activism and demands following the decision by the regime to politically liberalise after severe civil unrest and upheaval in October 1988. They detail how the creation and direction of the FIS was not unanimously endorsed by senior figures in the movement, but also show how and why the party became far-and-away the most popular and influential new political party in Algeria. The response of the regime to the FIS's emergence and success is considered and the extent to which this contributed to the remarkable advances the party made. The decision by certain elements within the Algerian regime to end the period of political liberalisation and thus forestall the accession of the FIS to national political power in 1992 is also explored and explained. The final chapter is concerned with the course of the Islamist movement following the formal dissolution of the FIS by the authorities in March 1992, how it re-organises itself, how elements of it enter into increasingly bloody armed struggle with the regime and how various parts of it attempt to solve the conflict either through dialogue with the authorities or through the pursuit of military victory. Internecine disputes and even conflicts within the movement during this period are also charted.

Throughout the study four broad areas are routinely, if unsystematically, looked at in the context of the general history of the movement. The movement's

ideology, bases of support and external influences are considered as is the attitude and response to the movement of the various colonial and post-independence regimes that have governed Algeria. As a reasonably comprehensive history of the movement, the study attempts to bring together as wide a selection of sources as possible. Existing literature on the subject is drawn on, particularly for the early chapters, and comes predominantly from writing in Britain, France and the United States. From 1988 onwards greater use is made of Algerian sources, particularly newspapers, which from 1989 became much more free to openly report political developments within Algeria. Use is also made of the British and French press, which became far more attentive to Algeria in this period. Unusually for a study of a part of the Arab World, only very slight use has been made of Arabic sources. Algeria, however, is itself unusual in being effectively bi-lingual. A substantial part of the Algerian press publishes in French and large sections of Algerian academia and the intelligentsia actually prefer to use French rather than Arabic, as does the important Kabyle region. The historical scope, particularly the early part, of the study has also necessitated the use of predominantly secondary sources. The increasing violence and political uncertainty within Algeria since 1992 has made the gathering of direct material from Algeria and from interviews with individual Algerians difficult. Nevertheless, I have drawn on a number of interviews with several influential and knowledgeable figures who were either involved or closely observed events. These include both senior political figures as well as ordinary individuals Algerians. Several of these have necessarily spoken to me on the condition of anonymity.

The question of 'balance' also arises in this context - the extent to which fair coverage is given to differing views and standpoints, particularly with regard to the bitter conflict that has raged inside Algeria since 1992. Whilst I would not claim to, nor wish to, give exactly equal attention and credence to every section of opinion on the debate, I have attempted to look at as big a cross-section of

views and writings as feasible. Consequently, my bibliography includes both literature produced by the FIS in exile as well as Algerian newspapers notoriously hostile to the Islamist movement. My interviewees have included members of the Islamist movement, sympathisers with it and figures who are critical and profoundly wary of its nature and agenda.

1

ORIGINS: RESISTANCE, REFORMISM AND NATIONALISM

1830 - 1962

To appreciate the nature and reason for many of the developments in recent Algerian history and politics, some reference to Algeria and the wider Maghreb's considerable historical background and heritage, stretching back many centuries even millennia, is both useful and necessary. A number of relevant studies examine this history in far greater detail and scope than can be dealt with here.[1] Only the briefest of summaries, focusing on the most important developments, can, for reasons of space, be given here.

A: INSURRECTION AND RESISTANCE 1830 - 1871

1. Background: Islam and Algeria

Islam first arrived in the part of North Africa now occupied by the modern state of Algeria in the second half of the seventh century. Brought by Arabs from the religion's birthplace in the Arabian peninsula, Islam had effectively established itself under Arab rule by about 710 A.D. However despite the fact that Islam as a religion was accepted by the native population, resistance to Arab rule from the indigenous mainly Berber, population of the region was amongst some of the fiercest encountered by Arab armies during this period. This partly

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[1] See for example Charles-André Julien: *History of North Africa: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970); Jamil Abun-Nasr: *A History of the Maghreb in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987)

explained the subsequent embracing of the Kharijite schism of Islam by the Berbers as part of their rebellion against their more orthodox Arab masters in the early part of the eighth century - the more ascetic and egalitarian doctrines of Kharijism providing an attractive, as well as dissident, rallying point for the rebellion. Although the Kharijite Berber kingdoms established in the wake of the rebellions were eventually to disappear and Kharijite practices only persisted in small peripheral communities, it is argued that these and other historical developments were to give Maghrebi Islam an importantly heterodox complexion even after the orthodox Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence came to predominate in the region.[2]

The most visible indications of this heterodoxy could be seen in the emergence, persistence and importance of various manifestations of what was broadly termed 'popular Islam' in the region. This 'popular Islam', which did not explicitly dissent from orthodox Islam, ranged from the variety of Sufi brotherhoods and orders (*tariqas*) present in the Maghreb through to the more unorthodox marabouts or 'living saints.' The sufis, with their emphasis on the more mystic expressions and experiences of Islam, and maraboutism which involved veneration of the lives and deeds of certain individual Muslims supposedly blessed with divine grace (*baraka*), together gave a less scripturalist and orthodox dimension and hue to Islam in the Maghreb. More tangibly, the sufi tariqas, in particular, through their series of informal structures and networks, acted as mediators between localised Maghrebi society and the succession of different rulers the region witnessed over the centuries. Such a role for the sufi brotherhoods was another more peculiar feature of Maghrebi Islam, sufism elsewhere in the Muslim world playing a far more quietist and less activist part in society. In times of particular popular grievance with the ruling order, the tariqas

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[2] John Ruedy: *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1992) pp.12-13; Julien: p.19 & pp.336-337

and the other elements of 'popular Islam' actually supplied the organisational basis and leadership of resistance to the authorities. The most prominent latter example of this came with the revolts that occurred under the reign of the Ottoman Turks (who had dominated the central Maghreb region since the early sixteenth century) during the opening decades of the nineteenth century in reaction to increasing tax burdens being imposed on the local populations by the Ottoman administration.[3]

These maraboutist and sufi-led revolts against the Ottomans were soon to be eclipsed by events of far greater significance. The arrival of nearly forty-thousand French troops on the coast of Algeria in June 1830 signalled the beginning of an incursion into Algerian history as dramatic and far-reaching in its impact as the arrival of the Muslim Arab conquerors nearly 1100 years earlier. The effect of the French presence in Algeria was to be direct, through the processes of colonisation and imperial rule, and near absolute over the next 130 years, leaving a legacy that is still deceptively pervasive in independent Algeria.

Resistance and capitulation on the part of the native Algerian population both played their parts in early reactions to the French take-over of various parts of Algeria, but it was the tariqas that once again organised and led the most significant opposition to the French in the early years of their presence in Algeria. However, whilst the revolts against the Ottomans had been against fellow Muslims, the significance of the resistance against the French was that it pitted Muslim against non-believer.

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[3] Ruedy pp.28-29 & pp.40-41

2. Abd al-Qadir's Revolt

At the forefront of the resistance to the French was that of the movement led by Amir Abd al-Qadir, from the important Qadiriyya sufi order which had played a leading role in the revolts against the Ottomans. Lasting for fifteen years from his election as Amir of the tribes of the western province of Oran in 1832 to his final defeat by and capitulation to the French in 1847, Abd al-Qadir's revolt was significant for three reasons. Firstly, it was far-and-away the most successful campaign of resistance to the French. Secondly, Abd al-Qadir founded and ran an independent native Algerian state for several years ruling over a substantial part of the territory covered by modern Algeria. Thirdly, and most important of all, Abd al-Qadir conducted his war against the French and organised his nascent state under the banner of Islam, explicitly stressing throughout the *religious* motivations for his struggle against the French and for the establishment of his independent state.

The importance of Islam in the struggle against the French was almost inevitable, it being difficult to conceive of any other framework in which resistance to the Christian invader could be so effectively mobilised. Nevertheless, it was certainly the case that Abd al-Qadir specifically emphasised Islam in his campaign. Abd al-Qadir's specific use of the term 'Amir' derived from the fuller title *Amir al-Muminin* (Commander of the Believers), was indicative of the Islamic context in which he both clothed and conducted his struggle. He used it in preference to other less religious titles he could have assumed. His use also of the term *jihad* to characterise his campaign against the French was clearly much more than the expedient rallying cry of previous conflicts. This was underlined by his requesting of *fatwas* from the ulama at Fez in 1837 on a number of issues

relating to the conflict.[4] In the state he briefly led, set up following a temporary truce with the French in 1837, the application of Sharia law became an important part of Abd al-Qadir's rule there; the Amir believing that every Muslim within the areas he controlled should be subject to his prescriptions. Hence alcohol, tobacco and gambling were prohibited and prostitution and homosexuality suppressed. Similarly, soldiers in his army were obliged to be as devoted as their commander was in performing the set of five daily prayers of the devout Muslim.[5]

However, the period of peace with the French lasted just two brief years before conflict was once more resumed in 1839, this time resulting in the final defeat of Abd al-Qadir and his forces in 1847 and the end of what might be termed the first independent Algerian state.

The precise nature of Abd al-Qadir's campaign and fledgling political entity has been argued over by historians of this period of Algeria's history; points of issue ranging from the extent to which the Amir was a proto Algerian nationalist, a genuine religious zealot or simply a traditional opportunist who sought to use religious symbols and language to establish some form of political hegemony over Algeria's varied and divided population. Whilst opportunism undoubtedly played its part there can be no mistaking the genuinely *religious* nature and intent of much of his period of influence. Islam and freedom from French domination became essentially inseparable notions for most Algerians during this time. The exigencies of politics frequently pushed Abd al-Qadir into compromises and expediencies that were not necessarily strictly related to Islam and the *sharia* but such actions frequently could be seen as serving the greater goal of preserving his fiefdom and with it the unhindered practice of Islam within it. [6]

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[4] Raphael Danziger: *Abd al-Qadir and the Algerians: Resistance and Internal Consolidation* (Holmes & Meier, New York and London, 1977) pp.51-63 and p.130

[5] Ibid. p.183

[6] Critics of Abd al-Qadir's portrayal as an exclusively Islamic leader point to, for example, his willingness to cede Muslim held land to the French as part of the

3. Other Revolts and Movements 1845-1871

Abd al-Qadir, whilst the most prominent, was not the only element of resistance to the French that leaned heavily on Islam for its inspiration and orientation. Whilst active opposition in Algeria's large towns was mainly aimed at defending the established Ottoman-constructed social and political order, resistance in the country's smaller towns and rural areas invariably took on a much more religious form. From the 1840s a number of revolts occurred that were led by individuals who claimed religious inspiration. In 1845 a serious insurrection developed in the Dahra mountains led by a young charismatic figure, Bou Maza or the 'Goat Man', who proclaimed himself to be the Mahdi come to lead and deliver Algeria's Muslims at the apocalypse. A number of smaller successor movements, invariably Mahdist in inspiration, sprung up in the wake of this uprising which was finally crushed in 1847. The most notable of these was that led by Bu Ziyan who claimed to have had visions from the Prophet Mohámmed telling him that he was the Mahdi and who enjoyed considerable support in Ziban, Aurès and Hodna before his eventual defeat in 1849.[7] The last significant uprising against the French in this period took place in 1871. Sparked by economic hardship and famine, and encouraged by the defeat of the French Second Empire in Europe, the revolt once again was spearheaded by religious elements - this time the important Rahmaniyya sufi brotherhood whose support had been solicited by the revolt's leader, Mohammed al-Hajj al-Muqrani. Some

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truce he signed at Tafna with them and which allowed him to form his 'state.' This was seen as theologically inconsistent with the jihad he had proclaimed against the French. Similarly his continued use of non-Islamic courts and legal officials to administer secular law, alongside Islamic judges or *qadis* , in the areas he controlled was likewise seen as incompatible with his stated intent of creating a state founded on Sharia law. Danziger p.125; p.183; pp.192-193

[7]Ruedy pp. 65-68

historians have viewed the assumption by Muqrani, of the title of *Amir al Moujahadin* (leader of the holy warriors) and his proclamation of jihad as pure personal opportunism, but there is little doubt that the widespread support the revolt attracted was the result of Muqrani's ability to use the mobilising power of Islam. However, despite this significant popular support the rebellion suffered the fate of all those before it. It was crushed in such a significantly brutal fashion that it ensured that such resistance would not be seen in Algeria again for another generation.[8]

These later revolts differed from that headed by Abd al-Qadir in that they laid claim to the concept of Mahdism in Islam, whereas al-Qadir, although charismatic, had never attempted to portray himself in this way. Nevertheless, all these rebellions shared the common characteristics of being both intensely traditional and Algerian in origin and inspiration. The Islam that they expressed and sought to defend in the face of the French imperial onslaught was very much the popular Islam that had come to dominate and characterise Algeria over the centuries. Abd al-Qadir had emerged from the traditional rural strongholds of the sufi brotherhoods and marabouts in the west of the country. The messianism and millenialism of the various mahdist revolts reflected the even more mystic trends present in the remote and peripheral mountain and semi-desert area in which they predominantly occurred.

Although these movements spearheaded indigenous resistance to the French and, moreover, drew on Islam for their legitimacy and core ideology, it was not these traditional elements that became the true forefathers and founders of Algeria's Islamist movement. It was developments in twentieth century Algeria that produced new elements in Algerian Islam that provided the real starting point

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[8] John P. Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* (Westview, Boulder, 1986) p.31; Ruedy pp.78-79; Julien p.255

in the history and development of Algerian Islamism.

B: REFORMISM AND NATIONALISM: 1871 - 1962

1. Capitulation and Co-optation

The decades following the crushing of the revolt of 1871 were primarily characterised by a push by France to make Algeria something more than just another distant imperial possession. The pursuit of the policy of *Algérie Française* involved much more than a facilitation of greater European immigration and landowning (both of which doubled in the 1870s). It signalled an intention to transform Algeria into a quite different society: socially, politically and economically. As part of this process Algeria, became increasingly assimilated administratively, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, to metropolitan France.[9]

The implications of this for Algerian Islam were mixed. The defeat of the revolt of 1871 and the ruthless pace of colonisation, and the parallel destruction of Algerians' own institutions and social order in its wake, left Algeria's Muslims demoralised, leaderless and confused, incapable of organising any political, religious, cultural, let alone military, resistance to the enforced transformation of their society. For most the only option was acquiescence and co-operation. The French for their part, though, still feared the mobilising power of Islam and sought a two-pronged approach to what settlers, colonial administrators and metropolitan politicians alike viewed as the main potential threat to colonial authority in Algeria.[10] Firstly, as an integral and natural part of the policy of

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[9]Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.32; Charles-Robert Ageron: *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present* (Hurst & Co, London, 1991) pp.53-57

[10] Abun-Nasr: p.270

assimilation with France, the practice and teaching of Islam were curtailed: many Quranic schools were closed and religious festivals and pilgrimages were monitored and controlled.[11] More importantly, the whole of the education system, as John Entelis points out, became "designed to submerge the Arab-Muslim identity."[12] This policy of suppression of Islam and its manifestations dovetailed with the second part of the approach to the perceived 'threat' of Islam: official control by the colonial state of religion. Perhaps recognising that Islam could not be eradicated, at least in the short run, France decided to emasculate it by creating and maintaining its own Muslim clergy which it trained in its own 'Muslim' colleges and through whom it felt it could control the teaching and observance of Islam in the mosques.[13]

However, whilst such a policy worked in the mosques of the urban centres of Algeria, control of Islam and Islamic observance in the rural areas was more problematic. Indeed the tightening control of the colonial authorities on the religious establishment (which invariably saw no alternative to co-operation) in the towns and cities could well explain the growth in membership at the end of the nineteenth century of the sufi brotherhoods which attracted the support of Muslims alienated by the collaboration of the urban imams with the French.[14] The colonial administration was not unaware of this development. Although it could not exercise the same authority over the Sufi *tariqas* and rural marabouts as it could over the urban religious establishment, it was able to 'tame' the former through a combination of stick-and-carrot policies operated by its rural administrators.[15] Interestingly, John Ruedy argues that such co-optation of rural Islam, which ironically of course had provided the backbone of resistance to the

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[11]Ageron: *Modern Algeria* p.71
[12]Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.33
[13]Ageron: *Modern Algeria* p.71
[14]Ruedy p.101
[15]Abun-Nasr p.271

French earlier in the nineteenth century, was facilitated by the growth in popularity and membership of these organisations. This influx of support, he argues, diluted the orthodoxy of the brotherhoods in particular and led to "eclecticism, superstition and charlatanism", making them more susceptible to the overtures of the colonial authorities.[16] He concludes on this development:

> "Historical process combined with colonial policy to produce the irony that, in the twentieth century, the colony depended for much of its religious support upon the movement that had been the principal mobilizer of resistance to its implantation in the nineteenth."[17]

2. The Advent of Reformism

The capitulation of both establishment and rural 'popular' Islam to the assaults of the French colonial authorities marked something of a watershed for the role of Islam in modern Algerian politics. Maraboutism and the *tariqas* subsequently ceased to be the leading forces in resisting French domination and asserting Algeria's Muslim identity. The reason for this was not only the emasculating effect of co-optation by the colonial state. Far more importantly, in terms of the history of Islam and politics in Algeria, these more traditional forms of Islam were eclipsed by new Islamic ideas and movements which gained ground in Algeria after the turn of the century.

It was the ideas of the *salafiya* movement of thinkers, writers and activists that came to have a profound effect on the Islamic political thought and organisation in both Algeria and the Maghreb generally during the early years and decades of the twentieth century. Emerging in Egypt towards the end of the nineteenth century the new movement was essentially an intellectual response to the challenge of European superiority - Egypt, in common with the Maghreb having largely succumbed to the domination of the European colonial powers of

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[16]Ruedy p.102
[17]Ibid.

Britain and France respectively. The movement stressed the need to return to the pure, original religious practices of the first Muslims or forefathers (*salafiya*) as being the appropriate and best response not only to Western domination but to the generalised sense of moral and civilisational decline and inferiority which many in the Muslim World had begun to perceive. The doctrine of *salafiya* argued that the problems and failures of the Muslim world were not a function of the Muslim religion itself but rather its corruption through dilution and blending with other ideas and values which had led to backwardness and superstition. More importantly, perhaps, for Muslims demoralised and confused by the technological superiority of the Europeans, *salafiya* stressed that Islam was not opposed to scientific and technical progress. Indeed, Islam should not be afraid to borrow selectively from western ideas to enhance itself and hasten the inevitable recovery and pre-eminence of Islam once it had rediscovered its true roots in the Quran and Sunnah. In essence this new set of ideas represented a development on previous Islamic thought in that, whilst it stressed a return to the practices and principles of the earliest Muslims, it stressed the importance of progress and renewal rather than just a preservation of some existing or previous order.

The ideas of the salafiya movement were brought to the Maghreb by both native Maghrebis who had travelled, worked or studied in the Arab East and by some of the thinkers and activists of the original movement itself. The Egyptian Mohammed Abdu, one of the most central figures in the whole salafiya movement visited Tunisia in 1884 and returned again nearly twenty years later in 1903, this time travelling to Algeria itself as well.[18] His stay in Algeria in 1903 came to be viewed as an important starting point and inspiration for what has been termed the 'reformist' movement in Algeria which based itself on the teachings of the salafiyists like Abdu - salafiyism stressing the need for the 'reform' and renewal of

[18] Abun-Nasr p.355

Islam.[19] Some other writers have stressed that many of the ideas that Abdu brought with him echoed traditions and ideas already present in Algeria[20] , but there can be little doubting the symbolic and exemplary effect of his visit on many of the Algerians he came into contact with.

3. Ben Badis and the Association of Algerian Ulama

Among the people that Abdu met during his brief visit was a young Algerian named Abdelhamid Ben Badis.[21] From a respected Constantine family with a long tradition of political and religious leadership, Ben Badis became, over the next forty years, the leading and most influential exponent of the type of reformist ideas expressed by Muhammad Abdu. Ben Badis emerged as the most prominent figure amongst small groups of Algerians that were attracted to reformism and which had begun to meet in the universities from the 1890s.[22] Many of these individuals, having come into contact with reformist ideas through time spent living and studying outside Algeria in the Arab east and Tunisia (Ben Badis himself studied at the Islamic University in Tunis), became increasingly active and organised in and around Constantine by the 1920s. Newspapers were established, notably *Shihab* (The Meteor) in 1925, which served as fora for debate on Islam and the ideas of reformism as well as a means of spreading the reformist message. It was through writing in these journals that Ben Badis swiftly established himself as the movement's leading thinker and visionary. From the outset he promoted the idea of some form of more formal organisation for what was still a fairly disparate and largely unorganised group of intellectuals. This, he

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[19]Ruedy p.102; Abun-Nasr pp.333-334

[20] Allan Christelow: *Algerian Islam in a Time of Transition* in *Maghreb Review* (Volume 8, 5-6, 1983) p.128

[21]Abun-Nasr p.334

[22] Ernest Gellner: *The Unknown Apollo of Biskra: The Social Base of Algerian Puritanism* in *Muslim Society* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981) p.158

argued, would enable the movement to harmonise their efforts and doctrine in a much more effective fashion. His efforts finally resulted, after nearly six years of theological debate in the pages of *Shihab* and the other journals of the movement in the formal founding of the Association of Algerian Ulama (often known by its French acronym - AUMA) in May 1931. This organisation succeeded in attracting the support and membership of the majority of the country's reformists. [23]

In its founding articles the Association described itself as "an association for moral education" and gave as one of its primary aims the fight against the "social scourges" of "alcoholism, gambling, idleness, ignorance." It also declared its intention "to open.....centres, circles and elementary schools"[24] and indeed, these activities formed the centrepiece of the Association's work over the next two decades and attracted the involvement of growing numbers of Algerians. Although the Association itself remained numerically fairly small and elitist (the question of restrictive membership had been one of the main impediments to the founding of an Association before 1931[25]) the expansion of the movement's educational establishments, in particular, brought many more people into contact with the ideas of the reformists. The Association's clubs and intellectual circles

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[23] Ali Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940* (Moulton & Co., Paris, 1967) p.79 and pp.119-120. Merad advances several possible reasons as to why Ben Badis was particularly convinced of the need to create a formal association. Besides the references in the Quran to the *Hizb Allah* (party of God) he suggests that Ben Badis may have been influenced by the formation of similar organisations in Tunisia (where he had studied) and Egypt (where many other reformists had studied). It is also possible he was impressed by the efficacy of the Catholic Church in Algeria and by the formation and function of European style political parties and associations. Ibid. pp.120-124

[24] Claude Collot and Jean-Robert Henry: *Le Mouvement National Algerien: Textes 1912-1954* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 1978) pp.44-47

[25] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.126. The debate over membership centred around fears for the doctrinal purity of the movement if maraboutist elements joined the Association.

grew and spread in a similar fashion, and by 1934 the Association had some form of presence in virtually every urban centre of note in the country.[26]

The type of people attracted to the AUMA and its various activities appears to have varied greatly. Ali Merad, the principal biographer of Ben Badis and documentor of his reformist movement, found that its following differed in nature from place to place in Algeria, being frequently determined by factors peculiar to the individual area - such as family politics and the individual person who had originally introduced the reformist message. There was also a geographical dimension to the movement's support. It enjoyed a presence across the country, but was strongest in eastern Algeria, in and around Constantine, the home of Ben Badis and most of the senior figures in the Association, and was correspondingly weakest in the western areas of Algeria. Nevertheless, Merad concluded that reformism did appear to particularly attract certain sectors of the population more than others. Petit bourgeoisie intellectuals and tradesmen formed, according to him, "the principal support - material and moral - of the reformist cause."[27] This support was attributed to the relative openness of such people to new ideas and the progressive image that the Association projected. This contrasted with the superstitious and backward image of the more traditional forms of Islam which these mobile and mainly urbanite sectors of the population were already little attracted to. The clubs and intellectuals circles established by the Association became, in the view of one writer, the "gathering places of the Algerian-educated classes."[28] The schools and other educational establishments set up by the reformists were also popular with sections of Algeria's petit bourgeoisie and traders. Not only did they provide an alternative to the archaic traditional schools which were the fall back for those unable to gain access to the limited places in

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[26]Ibid. p.192
[27]ibid. p.206
[28]Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.44

the more prestigious French run schools, but they also provided a means of opting out of the French administered education system altogether.[29] The Islamic *madrases* emphasis on the Arabic language and on religious instruction certainly pleased conservative Muslims concerned by the cultural emphases of the French administrated schools, and many of these Muslims contributed financially to their maintenance. More importantly, they were also attractive to many Algerians for the simple reason that they represented some form of cultural and educational bulwark to the march of *Algerie Française.*[30]

4. The Assault on Traditional Islam

A major feature of reformist Islam was its emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy strictly based on Islamic scripture. This approach deviated from and contrasted markedly with the strong elements of mysticism and doctrinal eclecticism found within the traditional Algerian Islam of the marabouts and the Sufi brotherhoods. For Ben Badis and his reformers in the AUMA, these more indigenous religious phenomena were anathema and, in their view, blocked the way for Algerian Islam to become vibrant and progressive again. Consequently, Ben Badis and his followers launched a concerted campaign across Algeria to combat and discredit maraboutism and mysticism. Arguing that these practices and traditions were alien to Islam, primarily because of their emphasis on intermediaries between God and Man, and led to decadence and superstition, the reformists shifted the focus of popular Islamic leadership away from the marabouts and *tariqas* and towards their own organisation and agenda.[31] This drive had significant success in some areas resulting often in the 'conversion' of marabouts to the reformist cause. In areas such as the western region of Algeria, though, where

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[29] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.208
[30] Abun-Nasr p.334
[31] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.44; Ruedy p.102

maraboutism and sufism had always been strongest, the Association of Algerian Ulama made least headway.[32]

One of the implications of the advances reformist Islam had made against traditional Islam was that Algerians' perceptions of themselves as Muslims took on a far broader and more *national* perspective. By its very nature traditional Algerian Islam with its emphasis on holy men and living saints had been highly parochial in nature. Reformism, facilitated by its nation-wide network of schools and clubs and established dogma, had a much wider and more uniform impact.[33]

This further contribution towards the creation of a more genuinely national Algerian identity for Algerians, in addition to that provided by the Association's emphasis in its schools on the country's Arabic and Islamic heritage, undoubtedly helps explain its burgeoning popularity in the 1930s. However, it also shifted the reformists further towards addressing the whole issue of French colonial rule.

5. The Reformists and French Colonial Rule

The Association of Algerian Ulama had made clear in its founding articles in 1931 that it was an association concerned with "moral education" and thus would confine its attentions and activities to the cultural and educational fields. The eschewal of the field of politics was not just simply implied, it was explicit. The founding statutes stated unambiguously that "all political discussion" and "all intervention into political questions" was "rigorously forbidden."[34] The new Association was to be one exclusively taken up with the task of propagating the reformist message and returning Algerian society back to the true path of scriptural Islam.

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[32] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.207

[33] Hugh Roberts: *Radical Islamism and the Dilemma of Algerian Nationalism: The Embattled Arians of Algiers* in *Third World Quarterly* (Volume 10, No.2, April 1988) p.561

[34] Collot & Henry p.45

This apolitical stance goes some way to explaining the co-operative and even 'loyalist' position the reformist Ulama took towards colonial power in the years following the AUMA's creation. As early as the mid 1920s Ben Badis had argued on the pages of the reformist newspapers for good relations to be established with the French. He even argued that rule by France was beneficial for Algeria: a weak nation like Algeria needing to be taken "under the protective wing" of a strong state such as France. At the same time Ben Badis quite clearly saw the reformists' role as being to provide a mediating role between the colonial authorities and the Algerian people: "to explain to the government the aspirations of the Algerian people; to plead for their rights favourably and in all sincerity."[35]

However, the Association's expressed goal of re-establishing 'true' Islamic beliefs and practices, which Ben Badis and the other leaders of the Association did not see as necessarily incompatible with French colonial rule, inevitably clashed with the stated goals of the French. The reformists' emphasis on the reassertion of Arabic language and culture as well as the Islamic religion ran counter to French efforts to slowly eradicate the Arab-Muslim identity of Algeria's pre-colonial population. Tolerance characterised official attitudes towards reformist Islam in its early years, the colonial administration seeing little threat from this relatively small and explicitly apolitical movement. This attitude began to shift in the 1930s. On 16 February 1933 an official circular by the Secretary General of the Algiers prefecture gave voice to the growing concern within the colonial administration:

> "Most heads of orders and saintly families venerated by the natives are sincerely converted to our domination and see themselves threatened by a grouping which, by an active and skilful propaganda, recruits new adherents daily....It is not possible to tolerate a propaganda which, under the mask of Islamic culture and religious form, hides a pernicious orientation....

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[35] *Al Muntaqid* (forerunner to *Shihab*) quoted in Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.392

> Hence I ask you to survey with most careful attention meetings and lectures organised by the Association of Muslim Scholars presided over by Ben Badis..."[36]

The reference made in the circular to the 'threat' felt by "heads of orders and saintly families....converted to our domination" indicates that the reformists' campaign against traditional Islam also had political implications. The French were sensitive to assaults on the allies that they had so successfully tamed and co-opted since the turn of the century. The reformists' critique of traditional Islam had been overtly religious in nature, but the French were aware of the linkage that much of their anti-maraboutist and sufi propaganda implied. Not only was there the obvious implied accusation that the Administration was fostering heretical and impure forms of Islam, but more importantly and politically, there was an increasing tendency to point to the representatives of traditional Islam's collaboration with the colonial authorities as an indication of their degeneracy.[37]

This implied criticism of French colonial rule, whilst not articulated by those at the head of the Association, indicated to the French the willingness of the Association to tap into popular resentment of the French in order to enlarge their appeal. The early months of 1933 consequently saw a series of measures taken by the authorities which aimed at curtailing the Association's influence. Foremost of these was the Michels Decree in March which sought to prevent all but officially sanctioned imams from preaching in the mosques of Algiers - thus attempting to deny Ben Badis and his followers an important outlet for their views. [38] Such measures provoked significant protests from the movement and its followers. Further measures in 1934, notably restrictions on and closures of the

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[36] Quoted in Gellner p.167

[37] Abun-Nasr p.335

[38] The main cause of this particular measure against the reformist ulama was said to have been the inflammatory preaching of one of the senior figures in the Association, Tayyib Uqbi, who had become renown for his verbal assaults on maraboutism. Allan Christelow: *Ritual, Culture and Politics of Islamic Reformism in Algeria* in *Middle Eastern Studies* (Volume 23, No.3, July 1987) p.262

reformists' press and newspapers, led to more protests. Demonstrations in Tlemcen and Constantine, for example, in May attracted estimated crowds of 5,000 and 10,000 respectively. [39]

Fears that such demonstrations of the reformists' popular support could provoke the authorities into expanding their offensive against the movement and through that potentially destroy it, prompted efforts from some of the ulama to avert this threat. Taking the opportunity of the appointment of a new, less combative French governor in 1936, Tayyib Uqbi forged a deal with the authorities which amounted to a truce being agreed between the two sides. Under this the Administration agreed to cease its attacks against the reformists. In return Uqbi, who it should be noted had always been a firm advocate of apoliticism for the Association, agreed to tone down the political content of the Association's propaganda.[40] A further concession won by the French was the dismissal, from the post of secretary general of the Association, of Lamine Lamoudi, a figure who had been a strong promoter of the Association co-ordinating their activities with other Muslim groups. Official interest in securing this last point was indication of the growing concern that the various organised manifestations of Muslim opinion in Algeria would come together to form some form of common front against the colonial administration.[41] Indeed, it was this issue of co-operation with other Algerian organisations that came increasingly to preoccupy the Association of Algerian Ulama from the mid 1930s onwards.

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[39] Charles-Robert Ageron: *Histoire de L'Algérie Contemporaine* (Press Universitaires de France, Paris, 1979) Volume II , pp.343-345

[40] Tayyib Uqbi had declared in the 1920s: "Since the beginning of the World War I have shunned politics, and I will continue to shun it until the Day of Resurrection" *Shihab* 31.12.25 quoted in Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.126

[41] Ageron: *Histoire de L'Algérie* pp.345-346

6. The Association of Algerian Ulama and the Opposition Movements

Besides the birth of the Association of Algerian Ulama, the 1930s had also witnessed the emergence of a range of other indigenous Algerian associations that concerned themselves more explicitly with Algeria's political situation. As explored earlier, the decades following the crushing of the revolt of 1871 had witnessed a concerted assault on the identity and structure of the Muslim population of Algeria depriving them, through political, economical and educational domination, of their leadership and consciousness as a community. The years following the First World War, however, had seen (in common with large parts of the colonised world at this time) the growth, or perhaps resurgence, of Algerian Muslim organised opinion. Declining economic conditions in the 1930s combined with hostility aroused by the triumphalism of French celebrations marking the centenary of French colonial rule in 1930 resulted in these movements achieving greater attention and popular support.

Despite its official shunning of political activity, the Association of Algerian Ulama participated in the first significant act of co-ordination between these groups which took the form of the convening of a Muslim Congress in Algiers in June 1936. Encouraged by the accession of a left-wing government in metropolitan France, the Association joined with the *Federation des Elus Indigenes* (an increasingly influential organisation of mainly middle class Algerians) and the Algerian Communist Party in drawing up a programme of demands set out in a political charter. These demands essentially constituted an appeal for political and economic equality with the European *colon* population of Algeria to be achieved by formal integration of Algeria into France. The aim was to abolish the existing ambiguous arrangements and replace them with a unified system which would give the same set of rights to *colons*, native Muslims and

metropolitan Frenchmen alike, thus ending the effective second-class 'citizenship' that the second of these groups experienced.[42]

The support of the Association for this agenda was curious not only in the unlikely partners it gave them in the shape of the irreligious communists, but also in the essential integrative vision of the Congress's political charter. Whilst demands such as the separation of Muslim worship from state control and the ability of Algerians to retain their status as Muslims even after receiving French citizenship were in tune with the Association's views, total integration did not appear to be so. In early 1936, prior to the Congress, Ferhat Abbas, the leading advocate of this policy of assimilation and senior figure in the *Federation des Elus Indigenes* had written an article in his own journal *Entente* which explicitly denied the existence of Algeria as a distinct nation and nationality. He claimed that he had "examined history" and found no evidence to support such an idea.[43] Such a position fitted in well with and reinforced his argument for full integration with France: the idea of a separate Algerian nation and identity would of course provide a natural obstacle to integration with France. For the reformist Ulama, though, this view was anathema. Their cultural and religious agenda quite clearly and unashamedly stood for all those elements that marked Algeria's native population out from the European and French population: Arabic culture, Arabic language and, most importantly, Islam. In *Shihab* Ben Badis unequivocally rebutted Abbas's denial of the existence of an Algerian identity:

> "History has taught us that the Muslim people of Algeria....have their history, illustrated by noble deeds; they have their religious unity and their language; they have their culture, they have their customs...The Muslim community is not France; it cannot be France, it does not want to be France. Its population is very far from France in its language, its life and its religion; it

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[42] Ageron: *Modern Algeria* p.96
[43] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.38

> does not want to incorporate itself in France. It possesses its fatherland whose frontiers are fixed, and this is the Algerian fatherland."[44]

That this rebuttal did not create an obstacle for either the Ulama's participation in the Muslim Congress of 1936 or for their adherence to the resulting political charter is unusual, although it can be speculated that the Association's support was temporary and tactical: making use of the broad front of the Congress to advance their own agenda and aims. Indeed, when a delegation from the 1936 Congress travelled to Paris to present their charter, Ben Badis, accompanied by a sixteen member delegation from the AUMA, also presented their own separate set of demands. These included calls for recognition of Arabic as an official language and for allocations to be made to Muslim associations from the public purse for the upkeep of mosques.[45]

Support for efforts aimed at co-ordinating native Algerian opinion from the Association continued despite the evident ideological differences they had with groups such as the Communist Party and individuals such as Ferhat Abbas. The main reason for this was the attitude of the French administration. Not only did Paris appear to buckle under adverse pressure from the *colons* over the granting of any of the demands of the Muslim Congress, but official attempts at suppressing the Association resumed again in the late 1930s. Although the authorities had considered proscribing the organisation in July 1937 and had been dissuaded from this by the prefect in Constantine (who presumably felt his city stood in the front-line of any potential backlash - an indication of the perceived strength of the Association there[46]), they introduced a series of measures aimed at curtailing its activities. Members were arrested, premises searched, individual associations placed under official control and a ban placed

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[44] Quoted in Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.44
[45] Abun-Nasr p.337
[46] Ali Merad had remarked that "By 1931, the province of Constantine as a whole had been won over to reformism." Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.141

on the opening of any unauthorised schools. It was these measures (particularly the last, which threatened the very core of the Association's work) together with the authorities' failure to move on any of the demands of 1936 (particularly the refusal to retain Muslim personal status for those few Algerians granted French citizenship) that finally pushed the Ulama and the reformist movement into political opposition to French colonial rule.[47] Calling the law against the schools (introduced in March 1938) "the darkest day in the history of Islam in Algeria"[48] Ben Badis effectively signalled the end of his long-standing policy of co-operation with the authorities, when he called on the *Federation des Elus Indigenes* to cease all collaboration with the governing authorities in 1938. [49]

7. Changes and Developments: 1940- 1954

Two events occurred that changed the landscape for the reformists. The first was the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 leading to the dramatic fall of metropolitan France to the Germans eight months later in May 1940. The second, and more immediately important, event was the death of Abdelhamid Ben Badis in April 1940.

The involvement of France, the colonial power, in a major war appeared to open up the potential options for both the Ulama and Algerians generally. For the Association, Ben Badis had officially declared neutrality towards the conflict, stating that it was a conflict that did not concern Muslims. However, he was reported to have told another senior figure in the Association that if Italy were to join the conflict then he himself would not hesitate to lead an insurrection against the French.[50] Both these stances, the official and the private, were a final tangible indication of the AUMA's break with its policy of co-operation with the colonial

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[47] Ageron: *Histoire de L'Algérie* p.347
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid. p.579
[50] Ibid.

authorities. A year before the outbreak of the war, Tayyib Uqbi had officially resigned from the Association in protest over its refusal to send a message confirming the Association's loyalty to France as events in Europe took an ominous turn in September 1938.[51] The departure of Uqbi, the foremost and most strident defender of the principle of apoliticism signalled that the reformists were now committed to the political aim of securing, at the very least, a loosening of the French grip on Algeria.

Despite raised hopes the war did not initially bring much benefit to the movement. Many of its senior leaders were interned in 1939-40 over suspicions of a potential willingness to collaborate with the Axis powers and were generally not released until after the arrival of British and American troops through the North African landings in 1942-43. Ironically, the administration set up by the metropolitan Vichy government between 1940 and 1943 opted not to release them although the hated March 1938 decree on the establishment of schools was abolished.[52] The emergence of the Free French under General de Gaulle led to some hopes of change but it soon became clear that the prevailing attitude in liberated France was for an effective *status quo ante bellum* in Algeria.

The death of Ben Badis, although not unexpected, was an unmistakable milestone in the history of Algerian reformism. The loss of the man who had not only been the Association of Algerian Ulama's founder but also its guiding spirit, was clearly likely to affect the future course of the movement. However, although Ali Merad judged that reformist Islam failed to break any new ideological ground in the wake of Ben Badis's death, the doctrine of the Association having been synonymous with that of its founder[53], it made significant organisational progress in the 1940s following the release of its leaders.

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[51] Ibid. p.347
[52] Ibid. p.580
[53] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* pp.213-214

At the end of the 1930s the Association probably ran something in excess of one hundred institutions (schools, intellectual circles, clubs) across the country and in the view of the prefect of Constantine could count on no more than 1800 actual members - a fact that was used to justify easing repression of the Association since it was no longer seen as a threat. However, the Association subsequently saw a rapid rise in the number of its institutions which multiplied to several hundred by the end of the 1940s[54]. Much of this growth was the result of the work of Ben Badis's successor as leader of the AUMA, Bashir Ibrahimi. Despite lacking his predecessor's charisma and vision Ibrahimi worked hard at raising funds for the movement and building and expanding its institutional structures and supported organisations. Particular emphasis was placed on the Association's educational work - the 1940s witnessing the establishment of the movement's first important upper school: the Ben Badis Institute. The academic programmes of the schools were standardised and teachers working in them were able to move from one part of the country to another within the system. This, following in the wake of the reorganisation of the Association itself in 1937 when a central bureau and departmental committees were created, led one historian of the movement to speak of it becoming "bureaucratised" in this period.[55]

Politically, the Association lent continued support to those groups campaigning for greater rights for native Algerians and retained only the demand for separation of religion from the control of the colonial state as the centrepiece of its own agenda. The AUMA participated in the formation of the *Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté* (AML) in 1944 which sought to create another broad front for all the various Algerian parties and groupings. The leadership of the AUMA still favoured the general position of Ferhat Abbas, which in the face of

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[54] Ageron: *Histoire de L'Algérie* p.337 and p.579
[55] Christelow: *Ritual, Culture and Politics* pp.264-265; Ageron: *Histoire de L'Algérie* p.346

French and *colon* intransigence had shifted from assimilation to federation of France and Algeria. However, there was a growing popularity in the movement for the far more radical agenda being propounded by figures such as Messali Hadj who also supported the AML. Arguing for full independence for Algeria, Hadj and his *Parti du Peuple Algerien* (PPA) articulated an unambiguously nationalist platform that became increasingly popular as time and French intransigence wore on.

Despite a temporary rift with the PPA following large-scale violent unrest at Setif in May 1945, which had largely been the work of Messali Hadj's supporters and which resulted in the deaths of several thousand Muslims and the arrest of Bashir Ibrahimi, the Association grew closer to the PPA and the nationalist cause from the late 1940s into the early 1950s. There were two main reasons for this, in addition to the ongoing reluctance of the French administration to make any concessions to the Muslim population. Firstly, the growing strength of nationalism and desire for independence in the neighbouring Maghrebi states of Tunisia and Morocco in this period impressed the pan-Arab sensibilities that formed part of the ideology of reformist Islam. The consequent involvement of senior members of Algeria's AUMA in region wide organisations, Bashir Ibrahimi, for example, becoming president of the *Comite d'unite et d'action Nord Africain* in 1952, further helped convince many inside the Association of the efficacy and importance of forming common fronts with other groupings.[56] A second impetus towards unity with the nationalists was the rise to prominence within the Association of Algerian Ulama of younger more radical figures who did not share the older leadership's reticence over political activism. This stance was shared with most of the Association's younger supporters in the schools and clubs. Prominent among these were Tewfik Madani and Larbi Tebessi, the latter becoming official leader of the Association inside Algeria following Ibrahimi's self-

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[56] Ageron: *Histoire de L'Algérie* pp.580-581

imposed exile from Algeria in 1951 resulting from charges of misuse of funds being brought against him. It was with Tebessi's assent that supporters of the Association began seizing back control of the mosques from officially appointed imams beginning in the reformists' heartland of Constantine in 1952.[57]

8. The War of Independence: 1954-1962

The launching of a series of attacks against institutions and members of the colonial administration on 1 November 1954 marked what is now acknowledged as the start of the armed struggle by native Algerians against French rule and for independence. This seemingly inevitable development was generally welcomed by Ibrahimi and those leaders around him who endorsed the rebel programme shortly after the initial insurrection.[58] The Association's general assembly which convened in January 1955 published a manifesto in which it denounced colonialism, declared that the only route to a peaceful solution would be through recognition of the Algerian nation with its own government and institutions and stated that the authorities should negotiate a truce with the leaders of the revolt.[59]

This backing for the nationalist insurrection was, however, soon to be put under strain as the conflict grew and became more brutal on both sides and gaps began to appear between the positions of Ibrahimi abroad and some of the younger more nationalistic leadership inside Algeria. Use of terror by the FLN (*Front National de Liberation*), the nationalist grouping that launched the struggle, led to Ibrahimi retracting his initial endorsement and moving to an official position of neither supporting nor opposing the uprising. In contrast, Tewfik Madani, in line with his more radical and nationalist views, vigorously defended the armed

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[57] Christelow: *Ritual, Culture and Politics* pp.267-268
[58] Henry F. Jackson: *The FLN in Algeria: Party Development in a Revolutionary Society* (Greenwood Press, Westport USA, 1977) p.28
[59] Henri Alleg, Jacques de Bonis, Henri J. Douzon, Jean Freire and Pierre Haudiquet: *La Guerre d'Algérie* Volume 2 (Temps Actuel, Paris, 1981) p.188

campaign. It was thus of little surprise, in the face of a deepening of the conflict and significant efforts on the part of the FLN to unite all of Algeria's native organisations under its banner, that Madani announced his formal adherence to the FLN in Cairo in April 1956. Joined in his declaration by Ferhat Abbas, these adherences gave to the FLN the hegemony they wished and effectively rung the death knell of the independence of both the Association of Algerian Ulama and the various parties that had existed around Abbas.[60] By absorbing the other two major trends that had existed alongside nationalism within native Algerian opinion from the 1920s the nationalists of the FLN became increasingly *the* exclusive embodiment of Algerian Muslim opinion after 1956. The gradual adherence of virtually all of the AUMA's former supporters to the armed struggle of the FLN, which frequently used them to set up its own religious apparatus, resulted in the Association of Algerian Ulama formally ceasing to exist after 1957.[61]

The subsummation of reformism into the FLN provided the latter with the means of imbuing their struggle with religious legitimacy, clearly an important goal for them and one that demonstrated the impact of the AUMA on Algeria. From the initial attacks of November 1954 the rebels had assumed the Islamically-inspired title of *moujahadin* - 'fighters of the faith.' Moreover, the FLN proclaimed as one of its aims on the eve of the revolt: "The restoration of the sovereign, democratic and social Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles."[62] Once the struggle matured from the early sporadic revolts and guerrilla attacks, Islam continued to provide a symbolic underpinning for the war. *Jihad* was frequently referred to and the importance of the observance of Ramadan was emphasised by many military commanders, evoking echoes of Abd al-Qadir's moral prescriptions for his troops in their fight against the French over

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[60] Jackson p.28
[61] Christelow: *Ritual, Culture and Politics* pp.256-258
[62] Quoted in Ruedy p.159

a century earlier. Islam too was used to coerce the less fervent in the struggle through threats couched in religious terms. Jean-Claude Vatin describes these developments as the reintroduction of Islam, by the leaders of the revolt, as a "strategic weapon" to rally Algeria's Muslims to the cause.[63] Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that many of the prominent leaders and top military commanders in the struggle had devout religious backgrounds or legitimacy.[64] Tewfik Madani and Taalbi Tayeb, another former member of the Association, sat on the FLN's parliamentary body, the CNRA, following their joining of the party and, more importantly, Madani was named as one of members of the GPRA, the FLN's 'government-in-waiting' which was announced in September 1958 in Cairo.[65]

Organisationally, the AUMA provided significant support to the FLN's cause. The continued expansion of the Association's education network - the number of schools it administered doubling from 90 in 1947 to 181 by 1954, with its *madrases* alone providing an education for 40,000 pupils - provided important logistical bases for the rebels.[66] Together with the reformist-run mosques they also provided useful collection points for funds and centres for the spread of information and the nationalist message. Sermons during the month of Ramadan, in 1956 in particular, helped to stoke patriotic fervour and popular support for the struggle. This contribution of the Association to the rebellion was acknowledged by the French who shut down the group's newspaper, *El Bacair*, in April 1956 and progressively shut down its institutions and seized its assets, sending some of its

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[63] Jean-Claude Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power in Algeria* in Alexander S. Cudsi and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (Editors): *Islam and Power* (Croom Helm, London, 1981) p.146

[64] For examples of some of the military commanders who came from religious backgrounds see Alistair Horne: *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-62* (Papermac, London, 1987) p.131

[65] Jackson p.50; Alleg p.212. Madani was named Minister of Cultural Affairs in the GPRA.

[66] Ageron: *Histoire de L'Algérie* p.582

members to prison camps. By 1957 the Association ceased to have any real institutional manifestation in the country.[67]

C: CONCLUSIONS

The eventual victory in 1962 of the Algerian nationalists in their war against the French colonial state and the final achievement of full political independence clearly opened a whole new chapter in both Algerian history and the role of Islam and Islamism in it. However, it also closed a chapter: that of the role of Islam in the colonial period.

1. Changes and Developments 1830-1962: From Traditional to Reformist Islam

As has been shown, the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century in Algeria witnessed the rise of movements that explicitly based themselves on the Islamic religion and which made significant incursions into the field of politics and whose impact there was considerable.

However, these movements appeared to fall into two distinct camps that were divided not only by their ideology, origins and social and geographic bases, but also by their separate periods of dominance. The nineteenth century was dominated by groups and movements that had their roots firmly in the institutions and expressions of what has been broadly termed as 'traditional Islam' - that which manifested itself through marabouts, sufi orders and the more mystical expressions of Islam that had come to predominate in Algeria. Its nature and role has been succinctly summed-up by Allan Christelow who has said it could be defined as "ecstatic in style, predominantly rural in social foundations, and, historically, as a major factor in resistance to the French colonial invasion up until

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[67] Alleg p.188; Christelow: *Ritual, Culture and Politics* p.266

the 1880s and as strongly tinged with collaborationism from World War I onward."[68]

The effective crushing by the French of these movements by the 1880s and the resistance they organised and articulated created a vacuum into which eventually another movement stepped, one which although similarly basing itself on Islam differed significantly from earlier movements. The reformist movement that achieved eventual institutional expression through the Association of Algerian Ulama was distinct from those of Abd al-Qadir, Bou Maza and the various Madhist movements that had risen against the French in the mid nineteenth century. It grounded itself theologically in scripturalist interpretations of Islam, rather than ones based on entrenched local traditions and mysticism and drew its inspiration from foreign thinkers and movements. It also emerged in and appealed to a different section of Algerian society. Reformist Islam's open hostility to the manifestations of these more traditional expressions of Islam further underlined these differences.

The reasons for this shift from traditional to reformist Islam and its success can be explained by reference to these fundamental distinctions between the two forms. Whilst Traditional Islam played an important role in mobilising resistance against the French in the nineteenth century, its roots were still essentially and overwhelmingly Maghrebi and Algerian. The rise of Islamic reformism in the twentieth century, in contrast, reflected ideas and movements whose origins stretched wider and beyond North Africa. John Entelis, for example, sees the growth of Islamic revivalism and reformism in Algeria as part of "the broader awakening of Arab-Muslim consciousness that was taking place among the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa during the inter-war period."[69] The 1920s, the decade which witnessed the first real growth and spread of reformist

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[68] Christelow: *Algerian Islam* p.124
[69] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.42

ideas in Algeria, was also the period which saw the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt. Whilst far more influential throughout the Muslim world than Ben Badis and his followers, and differing in some important ways from the movement in Algeria, the Brotherhood shared several characteristics with the Association of Algerian Ulama: notably its emphasis on such things as doctrinal purity, Arabic-Islamic education and moral social behaviour. Both, of course, operated in the context of European colonial rule.

A second major feature of the shift from traditional to reformist Islam was the change in the type of people involved in Islamic activism. As explained earlier, when looking at the revolts of the nineteenth century, 'Islamic' resistance to the French (according to a useful typology by John Ruedy) could be separated into three basic types determined largely by geography: the defence of the old deyical establishment in the larger towns and cities; the sufi-inspired movements of the plains and small towns of the interior (of which Abd al-Qadir's was an example) and Mahdist uprisings of the more remote areas of the mountains and the Sahara.[70] It was quite clearly these last two that had a greater impact overall and, moreover, had a greater and more recognisable 'Islamic' content than the resistance in the towns and cities which was arguably more about the maintenance and protection of the dominant social and political order.

The rise of reformist Islam in the twentieth century was largely an urban-based phenomenon. Hugh Roberts explains the assault conducted by Ben Badis and his followers on the doctrinal impurity, backwardness and collaborationism of the marabouts as representing a clash between "urban, literate, bourgeois society" and the "massively illiterate rural population."[71] The victory and subsequent "hegemony" established by the former over the latter was a new and important development. This eclipsing of the old rural religious order has been

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[70] Ruedy p.67
[71] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.561

explained through reference to the rapid changes that occurred in Algeria's economic and social geography from the closing decades of the nineteenth century. French colonial policy, with its large-scale appropriations of Algerian-owned land and its centralising of administrative controls in Algeria's towns and cities, contributed, along with inherent demographic trends, to the growth in importance of Algeria's urban areas. The more cosmopolitan nature of towns and particularly cities (such as Constantine) opened Muslim inhabitants up not only to ideas emanating from the Arab east, such as reformism, but also to European and Western ideas that also contributed to the rise of reformism.[72] Ali Merad argues that whilst the specifically religious aspects of Islamic reformism might not have been particularly attractive to some Algerians, the movement's philosophical utilisation of Western concepts of modernisation and individualism appealed especially to the young. Such a stance contrasted starkly with the perceived backwardness and ideological stagnation of the marabouts and the other representatives of Traditional Islam. Nevertheless, Merad observes that the great debate between reformism and 'maraboutism' in reality left the vast majority of ordinary Algerians unmoved. It could therefore be concluded that it was the qualities of reformism itself that attracted people rather than its perceived advantages over Traditional Islam.[73] The latter was neither ideologically, organisationally nor demographically ready to form the basis of a vibrant and influential Islamic movement in the twentieth century. That role could only seriously be provided by a more urban, progressive and organised vehicle such as that provided by Islamic reformism and Ben Badis's Association of Algerian Ulama. As much as reformism appealed to "urban, literate, bourgeois society", it also fed off of it. The involvement of the urban bourgeoisie, with their awareness

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[72] F. Colonna: *Cultural Resistance and Religious Legitimacy in Colonial Algeria* in *Economy and Society* (No.3, 1974) pp.239-243

[73] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* pp.207-208 and p.435

of modern ideas of mobilisation, organisation and propaganda (which of course were growing in Europe in the inter-war years) meant that the Islamic movement became more cohesive, more orthodox and was able to spread effectively its ideas and recruit support from the other sections of society.[74]

In addition to its bourgeois following, significant support for the reformist movement in the 1920s also came from a part of the Algerian upper middle class which felt itself excluded from social and political advance within the French colonial state. Whilst some other members of the upper middle class had opted for 'Frenchification' culturally and educationally in order to achieve such an advance, this group had not and had instead opted for what Jean-Claude Vatin terms the "counter-code or counter-strategy" of reformist Islam which stressed the importance of an Arabic and Islamic culture and identity.[75]

In noting the differences between 'traditional' and reformist Islam, it is, however, possible to overstate the divide. Although different in many ways, both were essentially expressions of the same set of fundamental religious beliefs. The salafi reformism of Ben Badis and the AUMA certainly did not represent some completely new variant of Islam. Henry Munson has stressed the actual continuities that existed between traditional and reformist Islam and suggests that the latter in many ways developed from the former as a means of combating the challenge of European domination. He argues that sufism, in particular, had been historically present in both 'popular' and more orthodox expressions of Islam and that these links continued into the twentieth century with the rise of reformism. In addition, Munson argues that the supposed rural-urban divide between the two is over-emphasised - much of the leadership of the sufi tariqas being drawn from the same urban elite as their critics amongst the more orthodox urban ulama. In this way, Munson argues that to classify Maghrebi Islam into two separate

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[74] Ibid. pp.437-438

[75] Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power* pp.142-144

historically established camps - divided by ideology and the social and geographical nature of their support is largely incorrect.[76]

As indicated, Munson's argument is important in preventing an overstatement of the divide between popular and reformist Islam. However, in the Algerian context, this divide was more important than Munson would assert. Munson was writing specifically about the experience of *Moroccan* Islam and although the continuities of experience between Algeria and its western neighbour are historically substantial, Algeria was different in certain key ways. Firstly, the various expressions of popular Islam were more deeply rooted in Moroccan society as a whole and thus were more likely to have influence upon other ideas, such as reformism, that arrived in Morocco. It is important to note that it was in the part of Algeria that bordered Morocco, the western Oran region, which provided the starting point for both the rebellions against the Ottomans and Abd al-Qadir's revolt. As has been shown, both of these insurrections were led and organised by the sufi tariqas and, moreover, were largely rural, rather than urban, in origin. In contrast, the Association of Algerian Ulama emerged and found their main source of support and strength in *eastern* Algeria around Constantine where Popular Islam had traditionally been weaker and where more orthodox forms of Islam had a stronger presence.[77] Correspondingly, as has been noted, the movement was least influential in the western areas of the country where marabouts and several of the tariqas resisted its incursion.[78] It was notable also that Ben Badis and most of the other senior founding figures of the AUMA

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[76] Henry Munson: *Religion and Power in Morocco* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993) pp.81-87

[77] One of the reasons for the more orthodox complexion of the Constantine region of Algeria was its close proximity to Tunisia which was home to a large number of established centres of Islamic learning which with their emphasis on classical Arabic and study of the holy texts reinforced more orthodox expressions of Islam. Abdelhamid Ben Badis as well as many of the other senior figures in the AUMA had studied in Tunis. Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.193

[78] See Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* pp.193-194

came from what Abun-Nasr has described as "comfortable *urban* surroundings (Italics added)."[79] A second difference with the Moroccan experience was the relative absence of elements of sufism and popular Islam in the Algerian reformist movement compared to that in Morocco, the latter retaining many social and ideological links with the more traditional expressions of Islam. By contrast, there had been an extended debate within the AUMA during the early 1930s over whether the Association should retain a highly selective membership in order to prevent infiltration by maraboutist elements.[80] Both Moroccan and Algerian reformism came from the same eastern Arab sources and were both hostile to many of the manifestations of Popular Islam, but the Algerian reformists were far less qualified in their antipathy than their Moroccan counter-parts.[81]

2. Reformism and Nationalism

It was the formation of a cultural 'counter-code' that registered as reformist Islam's greatest impact on Algeria during the colonial period, an impact that ironically far outweighed any advances they may have made in their central field of religious education. It is universally acknowledged that the AUMA made a specific and vital contribution to Algerian nationalism (and thus Algerian independence) through its defining and forging of an Algerian national identity and consciousness that was much more accessible and understandable to the mass of ordinary Muslims than the more complex and essentially foreign notions and ideas of liberalism and socialism articulated by the likes of Messali Hadj and Ferhat Abbas. The Association of Algerian Ulama's motto "Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my country" succinctly indicated those things

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[79] Abun-Nasr p.334
[80] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.126
[81] For examples of this mixing of condemnation and endorsement of popular Islam by the Moroccan reformists see Munson pp.84-114

that made Algeria's Muslims distinct from their European Christian rulers. The particular importance of Islam here should not be underestimated. It could be argued that a nationalist consciousness could have been formed on the basis of either or both of the other two parts of the motto: language and territory. All three elements are almost organically linked (Arabic, for example, being the language of the Quran) but Islam played the role of an over-arching ideology which had the advantage over other ideologies, such as Marxism and liberalism, in being truly a religion and more importantly in being pre-colonial and near indigenous in origin. As Rachid Tlemcani asserts: "It was the only cultural current able to challenge colonial ideology which was aimed at the moral conquest of the native population from the beginning."[82] The fact that the French had made at times quite concerted efforts to undermine, co-opt and ultimately destroy Algerian Islam probably heightened the importance of it in the popular Algerian mind as something that stood against French domination.

The role of the French and of French policy did, ironically, contribute significantly towards the impact made by reformist Islam. The nature of the policy pursued by the colonial authorities boosted and raised the profile of the AUMA. Abun-Nasr points to "the failure of the French to assimilate large numbers of young Algerians culturally" which prevented the rise of a French-educated opposition movement.[83] Even when those Muslim Algerians who had received a French education, such as Ferhat Abbas and his liberal assimilationists, tried to represent Algerian aspirations and interests, the refusal of the French to make any concessions to them undermined them and their agenda and opened the way for the reformists. As Entelis points out:

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[82] Rachid Tlemcani: *State and Revolution in Algeria* (Zed, London, 1987) pp.51-52

[83] Abun-Nasr pp.271-272

> "The discrediting of indigenous secular movements by the colonial power allowed Islam to arise as the only legitimate and popular ideological rallying cry around which all Algerians could unify."[84]

More fundamentally, Entelis goes on to argue that the simple fact of the French presence and their policy was more crucial to an understanding of the rise of an Algerian national consciousness based around Islam than the specifics of the reformist ulama and their programme:

> "There can be no doubt that, however profound the Islamic identity at the individual or community level remained, it was the disruptive nature of French colonial policy that ultimately provoked the aggressive reassertion of an indigenous Algerian identity with strong ties to native Islamic culture."[85]

Nevertheless, the incorporation of Islamic symbols and themes, alongside more modern ones, into the programmes and propaganda of overt nationalists such as Messali Hadj and the PPA was a clear recognition of the important role Islam had come to play by the 1930s. Their coexistence there with more clearly Marxist-influenced elements may well have been due to a genuine belief in the compatibility and importance of Islamic and socialist ideas or perhaps to Messali Hadj's, for example, involvement in the Sufi brotherhoods in his youth. The most likely reason for the inclusion of Islamic values and symbols in the nationalists' agenda, though, was the evident support they had enjoyed when used by Ben Badis and the AUMA.[86] The first major nationalist unrest at Setif in May 1945, for example, saw the use of Islamic symbols and rallying cries by the rebels who spoke of *jihad* and, interestingly, raised the green and white banner of Abd al-Qadir.[87] The reformists had clearly won the argument, in the minds of the Algerian people, with the assimilationists over the issue in the 1930s of the

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[84] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.42
[85] Ibid. p.76
[86] Ibid. pp.45-47
[87] Horne pp.24-26

existence of the Algerian nation and people. Indeed, Ben Badis's rebuttal of Ferhat Abbas's article in 1936 had, according to Abun Nasr, " a deep impact on the political consciousness of the Algerian Muslims."[88] Indeed some historians have gone further and suggested that "nationalism proper" had been born with the founding of the Association of Algerian Ulama in 1931.[89]

3. The Reformist Agenda

The Association of Algerian Ulama's increasing involvement in and eventual formal absorption by essentially political questions and movements clearly confused identification of the organisation's central goals and ideology. Ali Merad speaks of the movement's "progressive slide towards areas certainly far from its primary vocation."[90] This slide was the result of the steady growth in importance of the issue of the exact status of Algeria and its indigenous population *vis à vis* France. The incursion of this overwhelmingly *political* question into the considerations and activities of the AUMA, which had unambiguously declared its intention to avoid politics, was largely the result of a growing number of its own, predominantly younger, supporters becoming involved in the issue. More importantly, it was also due to the political implications and impact the Association's essentially *cultural* agenda (with its emphasis on Islam and Arabic) and work had on the whole issue.

Nevertheless, the ease with which the politicians of the FLN, in particular, were able to subordinate the organisation to its control has led to suggestions that this indicated that the Association had retained its essentially religious and cultural character. It had, for example, made no rival bid for the political leadership of the nationalist movement.[91] Even if such leadership had been

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[88] Abun-Nasr p.335
[89] Ageron: *Modern Algeria* p.94
[90] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.433
[91] Colonna p.248

desired, the Association would have been unable to achieve it. Alistair Horne, the foremost Anglo-Saxon historian of the Algerian independence struggle, attributes the political eclipse of the AUMA during the war as being the result of its leadership's fundamental unsuitability to political activism because "tied up in their theological coils, they failed to find pragmatic applications for their doctrines."[92] Abdelhamid Ben Badis had himself addressed issues of a political character in his writings, in *Shihab*, in particular, but these did not contain many tangible proposals for a future Islamic political order (preferring to stick largely to broad principles and a critique of the existing order).[93] The death of Ben Badis in 1940 deprived the AUMA not only of its leader but of any more detailed thoughts and ideas he may have produced in reaction to developments in the political field. It was an area he had only just begun to venture into at the time of his death, and one which was to come to overshadow so much of the Association's activities in the following two decades.

If, then, the reformists of the AUMA succeeded in fundamentally retaining their original religious character and agenda, what advances did they make in this, their chosen field during this period? The reality was that only fairly limited progress had been achieved in the Association's central stated objective of spreading the reformist message and reviving scripturally based belief and behaviour amongst Algeria's Muslim population. Ali Merad believes that the popularity of the movement in the 1930s, which surpassed that of all other native movements in the inter-war period, was due not to its religious agenda but to its presentation of a range of principles (such as cultural renewal and distinctiveness, social progress) that could find support even amongst those "still

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[92] Horne p.38

[93] For a detailed analysis of Ben Badis's writings on politics and political issues see Ali Merad: *Ibn Badis: Commentateur du Coran* (Librarie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, France, 1977) pp.202-217.

indifferent to religious propaganda."[94] For young Algerians in particular who might otherwise have been put off by the severity of some of the Association's moral prescriptions (alcohol, tobacco, dancing, music and sport being "rigorously condemned"[95]) "the reformist movement of Ben Badis represented more of a source of political enthusiasm and cultural emotion than a school of moral and religious discipline."[96]

The failure of the reformists to inculcate a significant section of the Algerian population with their specific ideas and values was counter-balanced by the obvious success that had been achieved in making people considerably more aware and appreciative of Islam generally, as indicated by the nationalists' use of religious symbols and language. However, it was also argued that through its ferocious assault on the traditional expressions of Algerian Islam, the Association actually served to *weaken* the implantation and observance of Islam in the country. By attacking, on religious grounds, the most deep-rooted forms of Islam in Algeria it perhaps deprived many areas of an Islamic tradition that might be essential to the survival of the religion in the face of future non-religious challenges.[97] The rapid progress that secular forms of nationalism made both during the war of liberation and afterwards were perhaps in part facilitated by this aspect of the reformists' agenda.[98]

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[94] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.435
[95] Horne p.38
[96] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* p.209
[97] Ruedy pp.135-136
[98] Merad: *Le Reformisme Musulman* pp.438-439

2

ISLAM IN THE NEW STATE: 1962 - 1978

A: BEN BELLA'S REIGN: 1962-1965

1. Independence

The final achievement of independence in June 1962 shifted the whole focus of Algerian activity and attention away from the all-consuming struggle against the French and towards the construction and consolidation of their new state. Fracturing inevitably occurred in the institutional front and hegemony that the FLN had been able to forge during the nearly eight years of the war of liberation as different ideological, regional, personal and factional interests engaged in a struggle for pre-eminence. However, whilst liberals, Marxists, internal and external army commanders, the wilaya commanders, the imprisoned leaders and Berber-based factions entered the political and occasionally armed competition for influence, an independent and identifiable lobby arguing for a specifically Islamically-based Algeria was notably absent. The Islamic current, so robustly represented by the Association of Algerian Ulama in the two decades preceding the war of liberation, had been sidelined during the struggle, its absorption by the FLN, in contrast to other groupings that joined the front, having deprived it of its independent voice and agenda.

As has been shown (see previous chapter) the religious and cultural nature of the AUMA meant it presented no serious challenge to the organised, specifically political, elements within the FLN. Moreover, the formal adherence of the majority of the members of the Association from 1956, together with France's resultant dissolution and break-up of the Association's institutional base of schools and clubs, effectively ended the AUMA's existence as a distinct and independent entity. The death and dispersal of many of its senior figures during

the war further accelerated this process leaving the tendency as a whole in no real position to assert itself following independence.[1]

Yet as had been the case in the run-up and during the war, it was the AUMA's *ideological* rather than institutional contribution to the Algerian political scene that was its most important achievement in the period following independence. The presence of powerful competing ideas inside the FLN ensured that the specifically Islamic state, based upon sharia law, was never likely to be achieved. Such a demand had been made by Tewfik Madani and other former members of the AUMA during debates in the various organs of the FLN during the war, but these debates had proved inconclusive. Nevertheless, Islam and Islamic symbols were still clearly present in the debate and formulation of the new state.[2] In the initial power struggles between the various factions and leaders of the FLN in the wake of independence reformist Islam was regularly invoked by all the main contenders to bolster the legitimacy of their claims to power. This both recognised and reinforced the ideological primacy of reformism in both the foundations of the new state and in the popular perceptions of ordinary Algerians.[3]

The adoption of the AUMA's slogan 'Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language and Algeria is my country' as independent Algeria's national slogan was tangible recognition of the contribution reformist Islam had made to the national struggle.[4] It was notable that it was specifically *reformist* Islam, rather than just Islam generally or the traditional Islam of the marabouts and sufi brotherhoods, that was accorded this recognition. The detailing in Algeria's first post-

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[1] Christelow: *Ritual, Culture and Politics* p.268

[2] This issue of an Islamic state had been debated notably at the meeting of the CNRA (the FLN's parliament in exile) in Cairo in August 1957 where Tewfik and his supporters had clashed with elements demanding a European style liberal parliamentary regime. Jackson p.49

[3] Peter R. Knauss: *The Persistence of Patriarchy: Class, Gender and Ideology in Twentieth Century Algeria* (Praeger, New York, 1987) p.101

[4] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.42

independence constitution that Islam was to be the religion of state and that the country's president must be a Muslim[5] was further evidence of this significant ideological influence. It overid the strong liberal, Marxist and nationalist strains within the FLN were naturally inclined towards more secular forms of state and constitution.[6]

Any renewed attempt on the part of reformist Islam, to play a more tangible and active role in both the formulation and governing of the new Algerian state was, however, precluded. Tewfik Madani was given a minor ministerial position (that responsible for *habous* or religious trusts) in the post independence governments but he remained the sole and increasingly pliant representative of the former AUMA in the new regime. This effective exclusion from influence was attributable to two main factors, in addition to the explained weakness of the movement in 1962. Firstly, the desire of the FLN during wartime to subordinate religion and the AUMA to the party's control persisted into the designs and structures of the new state. Religion and all groups or tendencies referring to or basing themselves on Islamic principles were effectively co-opted and controlled by the authorities of the new state.[7] This desire on the part of the FLN to dominate nearly all aspects of Algerian life, including religion, after independence was certainly partly due to the thinly disguised ambition of several of the major figures in the party who strove to control the FLN and through it the new state itself. However there were other, ideological, reasons for this tendency which explain the second major constraint on the ulama in the period after independence.

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[5] William b. Quandt: *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria 1954-1968* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, 1969) p.217

[6] Ernest Gellner argues that support for a formally secular independent state declined when it became clear, following the flight of the virtual entirety of Algeria's European inhabitants at independence, that independent Algeria's non-Muslim population was likely to be negligible in size. Gellner pp.167-168

[7] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.81; Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power* p.123

2. 'Muslim Socialism'

The reformist ideology of the AUMA, whilst prevailing over other expressions of Islam in independent Algeria, was challenged by another, secular, ideology which threatened to hold sway in the counsels of the leadership of the new state. The ideology of socialism in its various doctrinal forms had first become prominent in Algeria in the inter-war period, finding particular manifestation in the work, ideas and organisations of Messali Hadj. During the war of independence itself, a remarkable consensus emerged amongst the FLN and its constituent elements that independent Algeria would be socialist.[8] This was a conviction common to most other nationalist movements in the decolonising world of the 1940s, 50s and 60s; socialism being viewed as the most appropriate means of achieving social and economic progress.

An outspoken advocate of Algeria's adoption of socialism was Ahmed Ben Bella the senior FLN figure who triumphed in the power struggle against other FLN leaders and who duly became independent Algeria's first President. Three months before the official proclamation of Algerian independence, the future President unambiguously declared that "Algeria will have a socialist government."[9] However, whilst he pressed ahead with what he saw as a 'socialist' programme, largely involving the take-over of land, businesses and property abandoned by the departed *colons* (which in many ways made socialist-style nationalisation unavoidable) the more fundamental question of state ideology needed to be addressed. Although Ben Bella's government initially adopted no coherently recognisable or defined socialist ideology[10], many of the basic tenets

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8 Raymond Vallin: *Muslim Socialism in Algeria* in I. William Zartman: *Man, State and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib* (Pall Mall Press, London, 1973) pp.50-51

9 *Agence France-Presse* despatch, 1.4.62 quoted by Vallin p.50

10 Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.58

of socialism as practised in other countries, particularly the inherent secularism and atheism of more Marxist ideas, appeared to clash with the influential religious ideology of reformist Islam.

Ben Bella was aware of this potential clash and how potentially damaging it could be to popular support for and perceptions of his new government. Reformist Islam had made a considerable contribution to the popular and psychological foundations of the new state. Ben Bella had himself appealed to Islamic sentiments and symbols to aid his victory in the leadership struggle. Consequently, he set about trying to 'merge' the ideology of socialism with that of Islam. Undoubtedly building on Gamal Abdul Nasser's concept of 'socialism in Islam' in Egypt, Ben Bella constantly pushed the concept of 'Islamic socialism' and the compatibility of Islam and socialism. To elaborate on this theme Ben Bella made particular use of the official press as well as Tewfik Madani, who, as a minister, proclaimed in January 1963 that "Islam is a socialist religion, it is a religion of equity."[11] More formally, the Algiers Charter of 1964, which aimed to clarify the organisation and make-up of the new state, declared socialism to be totally consistent with the nation's Arabo-Islamic heritage.[12]

3. The Rise of Islamic Opposition and Criticism: 1962-1965

Ben Bella's efforts to create his vision of a socialist Algeria were continually hampered over the next few years by an awareness on the part of the new President that many Algerians were far from convinced of his equation of his socialist programme with Islam. Despite the institutional decline of the AUMA, attachment to the Islamic values of the Association remained strong in many quarters, including amongst some senior figures within the leadership of the FLN and the army. Criticism of his removal of several religious figures from the

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[11] Quoted by Vallin p.51
[12] Ruedy p.204

government during the first year of his presidency was voiced both outside and, undoubtedly, within the regime. This prompted Ben Bella to introduce a series of measures aimed at placating this criticism. The government made the Ramadan fast and the charity offering that ended it national duties in January 1963. Later that year the government reversed its liberalisation of the sale and consumption of alcohol, which had been banned under the wartime wilaya administration of the FLN, but which Ben Bella had considered unnecessary following independence. Government decrees of 28 December 1963 forbade Muslims to drink alcohol, closed down cafés and raised taxes on alcohol.[13]

Such measures did not succeed in stemming religiously-based unease at Ben Bella's rule. The government's expanding nationalisation drive provoked opposition, as Raymond Vallin comments:

> "Islamic socialism also caused concern among religious people and prominent personalities known for their religious zeal, who considered it imprudent,if not sacrilegious to erase thirteen centuries of consensus on religious property and fall into an arbitrary collectivism whose origins were foreign to Algeria and to Islam."[14]

This concern proved not to be purely passive. As Peter R. Knauss adds: "Ben Bella appeared to be veering leftward and this provoked Muslim traditionalists to come out of hiding."[15] Some of the first of these 'traditionalists' to make their opinions known were former members of the Association of Algerian Ulama itself. Whilst most of the Association had been co-opted and neutralised by the FLN, there were still those figures who were able and willing to voice their unhappiness at the course independent Algeria was taking. Prominent among these was Bashir Ibrahimi, the former head of the Association, who had, in contrast to most of the rest of the Association, kept his distance from the FLN

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[13] Vallin p.50 & p.55
[14] Ibid. p.56
[15] Knauss p.105

during the liberation struggle (see previous chapter) and thus felt free to use formal platforms to criticise the government's direction. In the FLN party congress of April 1964, which was boycotted by a number of sections of the party which Ben Bella had also succeeded in alienating, Ibrahimi made a clear appeal, reflecting unease at the growing opposition to the government throughout Algeria. During the vigorous debate over the relationship between Islam and socialism that took place at the congress, he declared:

> "The hour is grave. Our country is sliding nearer and nearer to hopeless civil war, an unprecedented moral crisis and insurmountable economic difficulties. Those governing us do not seem to realise that what our people aspire to above all is unity, peace and prosperity and that the theories on which their actions should be founded are to be found not in foreign doctrines but in our Arab-Islamic roots."[16]

The former president of the AUMA's message was well received across many sections of Algerian society but inevitably not by the government itself. Ben Bella put under house arrest the man whom he had personally welcomed back from exile in 1962.[17]

Once again the government felt obliged to show some sign of concession to conservative religious opinion. In September 1964, the President replaced the leftist editor of the influential journal *Révolution Africaine* with an appointee who began to put greater emphasis on Algeria's Islamic nature and who drew attention to the government's programme of rural mosque-building.[18] Later that Autumn, with opposition to his regime and policies still mounting from all quarters, Ben Bella pushed several overt Marxists out of the government and in education 'Arabised' the first year of primary school and made religious training

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16 Quoted in Arslan Humbaraci: *Algeria: A Revolution That Failed* (Pall Mall Press, London, 1966) p.237

17 Vallin p.57

18 Quandt pp.230-231

compulsory.[19] Many Algerians were still highly sceptical of the real significance of these changes, having regarded the references to Islam in the Algiers Charter of 1964 (which in truth were eleventh hour additions) as largely cosmetic.[20] This scepticism was undoubtedly reinforced by a renewed drive by the regime to instil socialist values using both the officially controlled media and its allies in the socialist labour unions (such as the UGTA which had launched virulent attacks against Ibrahimi's views).[21] More importantly, the remaining religious figures in the government, mainly old AUMA figures, were finally purged in December 1964. Yet the importance of the AUMA and their views remained amongst the Algerian population and when Bashir Ibrahimi died in May 1965, his funeral was heavily attended, a fact interpreted by many as "a veiled demonstration by the more conservative elements against Ben Bella's socialist policies."[22]

4. The Emergence of Al Qiyam

Islamic opposition to the regime also took a more organised form during these opening years of Algerian independence. The Al Qiyam (Values) association made its first real impact in Algeria by holding a meeting in January 1964 in Algiers which was attended by several thousand people.[23] Ostensibly gathering to protest at the continuing influence of French culture in independent Algeria and to demand that the government take more steps to promote Arabic and respect for Islamic values, the association became a focus for both popular

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[19] Vallin p.59
[20] Ruedy p.204
[21] Vallin p.60
[22] David and Marina Ottaway: *Algeria: The Politics of a Socialist Revolution* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970) p.47n There are no available figures for the actual attendance at the funeral, but the Ottaways speak of "an enormous crowd."
[23] Estimates vary on the numbers attending. David and Marina Ottaway speak of 3,000 (Ottaway and Ottaway p.179); Raymond Vallin of 3,000-4,000 (Vallin p.56) and Hugh Roberts states that "up to 5,000" attended the association's various meetings during this period (Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.564).

protest against the regime and for independent Islamic criticism of the direction of government policy.[24]

Using public meetings and its own journals, such as *Humanisme Musulman*, Al Qiyam promoted, in much the same fashion as the Association of Algerian Ulama had done in the inter-war period, their analysis and cure for the ills of Algerian society. Containing several former members of the AUMA, the new association consciously presented itself as the inheritor of Abdelhamid Ben Badis and his movement.[25] Philosophically, the President of the association, Hachemi Tijani, secretary-general of the University of Algiers, affirmed in an interview in 1964 that he identified with the views of the main pillars of the Islamic reformist movement such as Jamal al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh (who of course had had a substantial influence on Ben Badis and the leaders of the AUMA).[26]

Hachemi Tijani also specifically identified with more recent writers, thinkers and activists, such as Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, who took a far more radical view of the need and means of reintroducing Islamic values back into Muslim societies. Qutb, for example, a senior member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, comprehensively rejected the conviction of reformist Islam that western technology and ideas could be used selectively to promote Islam and combat western influence and dominance. Instead, as he outlined in his book *Signposts*, Qutb argued that Muslim societies had become so polluted by western and non-Islamic influences that nothing short of a 'revolution' to drive out such alien influences could succeed in restoring them to the point which they could

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[24] Ottaway and Ottaway p.179n

[25] Jean-Claude Vatin: *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism: Islam in Algeria* in James P. Piscatori: *Islam in the Political Process* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983) p.104

[26] François Burgat and William Dowell: *The Islamic Movement of North Africa* (Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 1993) pp.253-254

again be seen as truly 'Islamic' societies.[27] Such radicalism was indeed reflected in both the publications and occasionally the activities of Al Qiyam, members of the association distributing tracts by al-Banna and Qutb as well as other radical Islamist thinkers such as the Pakistani Abu al-Al'a Maududi.[28] All non-Islamic influences, ancient and modern, were anathematised by the association. Members of Al Qiyam were involved in an attack on statues in a Roman theatre in Guelma[29] and more seriously *Humanisme Musulman* declared, for example, in 1965 that:

> "All political parties, all regimes and all leaders which do not base themselves on Islam are decreed illegal and dangerous. A communist party, a secular party, a Marxist party, a nationalist party (the latter putting in question the unity of the Muslim world) cannot exist in the land of Islam."[30]

The actual impact made by Al Qiyam is difficult to assess. Peter Knauss characterises the association as an "organisation of teachers, businessmen, salaried workers, and imams" and it is certainly true that it had a fairly distinguished and middle-class membership profile.[31] Indeed it had a number of sympathisers within and close to the regime including Mohammed Khider, one of the 'historic chiefs' of the revolutionary FLN, who often spoke in support of the objectives of the association and attended the January 1964 meeting.[32] Many

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[27] For a fuller explanation of the ideas and work of Sayyid Qutb see Gilles Kepel: *The Prophet and Pharaoh: Muslim Extremism in Egypt* (Al Saqi, London, 1985) pp.43-59

[28] Abderrahim Lamchichi: *L'Algérie en Crise* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 1991) p.322

[29] Mohammed Arkoun: *Algeria* in Shireen T. Hunter: *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988) pp.172-173

[30] *Humanisme Musulman* August 1965. Translation from Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.563-564

[31] Knauss p.104

[32] Quandt p.223n. There were several known sympathisers of Al Qiyam and its agenda within Ben Bella's cabinet and close to the President himself, such as Ali Mahsas, Safi Boudissa and Mohammed Seghir Nekkache. Mohammed Harbi: *L'Islamisme dans tous ses Etats* (Arcantere, Paris, 1991) p.133

contemporary observers, however, believed that the conservative and morally severe nature of the association's vocabulary and agenda would not only limit its appeal to the progressive minded but also laid it open to ridicule from the Government and socialist press.[33] Al Qiyam's reliance on French to promote their ideas (the French language edition of *Humanisme Musulman*, for example, outsold its Arabic edition) was also seen as undermining the association's demand for greater use of Arabic.[34]

The influence of the association was, however, certainly greater than these observers estimated. Many, particularly young, Algerians may well have been put off by the anti-modernism of Al-Qiyam, but many more shared the unease of the association at the direction of Ben Bella's government. Far from undermining its position, Al-Qiyam, by publishing in French, was clearly aiming to achieve a wider audience for its ideas.

More fundamentally, the activities and ideas of Al Qiyam put further pressure on Ben Bella's increasingly isolated and beleaguered regime, which although never directly challenging the state, served to undermine the legitimacy of those in government.[35] The concern with which the regime viewed the activities of Al Qiyam was demonstrated by the eviction of the association's president, Tijani, from his post at the University of Algiers in 1964.[36] The rise of the association was also a symptom as well as a cause of Algeria's growing problems at this time. For Hugh Roberts the emergence of the association was evidence of the regime's loss of control of the important "religious sphere" of

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[33] See Vallin p.56

[34] Ottaway and Ottaway pp.45-46

[35] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.563; Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power* p.136

[36] Abderrahim Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 1992) p.95

Algerian politics and life, Ben Bella being unable to find a single senior religious figure to condemn Al Qiyam on religious grounds.[37]

5.Boumedienne's Coup

Al Qiyam and the body of opinion it represented was just one of the sections of Algerian society that became increasingly hostile to Ben Bella during the first years of independence. Lack of any coherent progress in the area of economy, constant political manoeuvring and shifting of alliances and government personnel and the doctrinaire policies he seemed intent on pursuing, gradually deprived the President of any true allies outside his close personal circle and elements of the far left. Such isolation meant that when the army, which had become increasingly and fatally alienated from the government, finally ousted Ben Bella in a bloodless coup on 19 June 1965, there was virtually no public protest or resistance.

The leader of the coup and the new president was Colonel Houari Boumedienne, the vice-president and the commander of the army. A large part of Boumedienne's critique and opposition to Ben Bella, which became increasingly open in the closing stages of the latter's period of rule, was couched in religious terms. Boumedienne, who had attended both an Islamic school and the Ben Badis Institute in Constantine[38], used many of the arguments articulated by the regime's religious opponents from both the dissident elements of the old AUMA and even Al Qiyam to attack Ben Bella's policies. His stress on the importance of Algeria's Islamic roots won him significant support amongst the Islamist camp many of whom explicitly welcomed Ben Bella's downfall, sending an official communique proclaiming their solidarity and support for the new 'Council of the

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[37] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.564
[38] Knauss p.87

Revolution' and thus becoming the first group to publicly come out in favour of the coup.[39]

The Ulama were mistaken in believing that Boumedienne and the army acted primarily to defend the place of reformist Islamic values in Algeria. Despite his religious background and the support many in the army had given to the Islamists' critique of Ben Bella's rule[40], Boumedienne was aware of the extra popularity and support he could gain by 'playing the religious card.' He did not hesitate to use it in his growing struggle against Ben Bella; a feud which had its origins more in personal and political rivalry than in attachment to Islam. As David and Marina Ottaway comment, "Boumedienne's opposition to Ben Bella's policies was veiled behind a pseudo-religious argument over the compatibility of Marxist socialism."[41] Boumedienne's stress on the importance of Algeria's Arab and Islamic past and identity and his support for the Islamic criticism of the influence of foreign ideas reflected more a nationalism on the part of himself and the army (whose leadership had received favourably Ibrahimi's statement at the 1964 Congress[42]) than anything more clearly religious. Their criticism of the principles of the 1964 Algiers Charter was based more on their dislike of the principles' foreign origins than any unhappiness at their lack of basis in the Quran and the hadiths. [43]

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[39] Quandt p.238; Knauss p.107

[40] Jackson p.181

[41] Ottaway and Ottaway p.179

[42] Humbaraci p.237

[43] Ottaway and Ottaway pp.179-180. Boumedienne and the army's hostility to Marxism was also due to a concern that Ben Bella's strenthening links with the Algerian Communist Party and the UGTA would give the President the allies he needed to oust Boumedienne and the other army commanders.

B: THE BOUMEDIENNE ERA: 1965 -1978

1. Boumedienne and the Islamic Opposition 1965-1971: Incorporation and Repression

Given Boumedienne's opportunistic use of Islam it was not surprising that once again the Islamic tendency in its various shades found itself largely excluded from the centres of power in the new regime. However, aware of the damage the current had been able to inflict on Ben Bella, Boumedienne's new government sought to handle this exclusion with more deftness than its predecessor. The new strategy of dealing with the Islamic 'movement' that Boumedienne adopted from 1965 has been characterised by Hugh Roberts as having two main elements. Towards Al Qiyam, in particular, the new government pursued a strategy "combining the suppression of the association with the selective incorporation of its programme."[44]

The 'selective incorporation' of Al Qiyam's agenda was arguably the more important part of the strategy, since it appeared to succeed in presenting an Islamic image for the government whilst not appearing to be making token and cosmetic concessions as the Ben Bella government had done. From the outset Boumedienne's new government took care to put the regime on a broader footing including many of the elements and interests that Ben Bella had excluded and which eventually had caused his downfall. In practical terms this meant, for example, the appointment of Bashir Ibrahimi's son, Ahmed Taleb, to be a director of national education.[45] More subliminally, this policy meant a more meticulously built-up Islamic image for the regime which culminated in the Autumn of 1970 with the announcing by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Mouloud Kassim, of a major

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[44] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.564

[45] M. Al-Ahnaf, Bernard Botiveau and Franck Frégosi: *L'Algérie par ses Islamistes* (Karthala, Paris, 1991) p.25

campaign on the part of the state against the 'degradation of morals' in Algeria. Publicised through a significant three-month campaign in the media involving interviews and round table discussions[46], the campaign skilfully wove together nationalist and Islamic concerns arguing that the social evils of "alcoholism", "semi-nudity" in dress and the break-up of families were directly attributable to the West and its pernicious values.[47]

In tandem with this 'selective incorporation' of the Islamic agenda, the authorities also embarked on a progressive repression of the institutional manifestations of the Islamist movement. A prefectoral decree in September 1966 ordered the dissolution of Al Qiyam in the *wilaya* (region) of Algiers and three-and-a-half years later a ministerial decree banned altogether the association in Algeria. Although the timing of both moves was prompted by specific events, the sending of protest letters to Nasser following his execution of Sayyid Qutb in 1966 and continued attacks against 'improperly dressed' women on the streets in 1970, this repression was clearly part of a general plan on the part of the regime to neutralise Islamic opposition to the regime.[48]

These policies of repression and incorporation were usefully combined in the crushing of social unrest that occurred in Mostaganem in eastern Algeria in 1968. Led by the Alouia sufi brotherhood, these disturbances presented the government with the opportunity of moving against religious-led opposition whilst being able to clothe its repression in Islamic garb. The government press and officials rejuvenated the original rhetoric of Ben Badis and the Islamic reformists of the 1920s and 1930s by railing against the 'mysticism', 'obscurantism' and

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[46] Ahmed Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée: Enquête sur la Mouvement Islamiste en Algérie* (Karthala, Paris, 1990) p.22

[47] *El Moudjahid* 29.9.70 & 25.12.70 quoted in Bernard Cubertafond: *La République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire* (Presses Universitaires de France, Limoges, 1979) p.88-89

[48] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.95; Bruno Etienne: *L'Islamisme Radical* (Hachette, France, 1987) p.219

'neo-paganism' of the sufi brotherhoods and the marabouts, thus appearing to align themselves with the heritage of Ben Badis and the AUMA.[49]

2. The Reassertion of the State

The period 1965-71 was marked by the government's success in controlling the growth of a sizeable opposition movement based on Islam. The use of the twin pronged strategy of repression and incorporation had meant that far from bowing to the demands of the Islamist lobby, the government had effectively 'de-fanged' organisations like Al Qiyam by undercutting their agenda and then moving to break them up. [50]

Other factors besides this central strategy helped Boumedienne's regime achieve this. The new President's "opportunistic remobilisation of nationalist fervour", in the view of Hugh Roberts, was useful in staving-off the growth of Islamically based opposition. This was particularly the case with Algeria's successful 'riding out' of the psychological storm which hit the Arab world generally following the Arab states' catastrophic and comprehensive defeat by Israel in the Six Day War of June 1967. For many states, particularly in the eastern Arab world, the defeat presaged a significant growth in Islamic opposition groups within states as the abrupt breaking of the ideological spell of Nasser's Arab nationalism left many Arabs believing that it was the secular nature of their regimes, which had turned their back on Islam, that was largely to blame for the rout on the battlefield. Boumedienne, however, maintained and even rallied support for his regime by roundly criticising Nasser's capitulation to the Israelis. He was helped in this by the recentness of the Algerian revolution which gave the Algerian regime far greater popular legitimacy than the regimes of the Arab east

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[49] Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power* p.136; Vatin: *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism* p.116

[50] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.565

that had come to power largely through coups, colonial patronage or quasi-dynastic succession. Boumedienne built on this legacy through nationalisations and the building-up of local government in the late 1960s which undoubtedly added to his popularity and legitimacy in the public's eye.[51]

Boumedienne was also infinitely more skilful than his predecessor in handling religious opinion towards his still essentially secular political, social and economic programme. Much greater effort and care was taken to marry and merge leftist and socialist concepts and policies to Islam. For example, the government showed more sophistication in arguing that the doctrine of selective use of westernisation and progress inherent in the reformist Islamic thinking of Afghani, Abdu and, of course, Ben Badis, was essentially the same as that found in socialist ideas of modernisation. Both employed the central idea of the transformation of society through progressive thinking derived from doctrine.[52] Whilst generally this approach appeared to be successful in so much as it did not provoke any high profiled rebuttal of the sort given by Bashir Ibrahimi in April 1964, it did not always go unchallenged. In 1968, for example, Boumedienne and his health minister were forced to back down when their plans to introduce birth control were met with a united front of opposition from religious and traditionalist opinion.[53] There were clearly some policies that could not be sold, at least not yet, by the regime and the government was wise enough not to try and press ahead with such a policy and thus risk provoking opposition to the regime.

By 1970 Boumedienne and his government had recovered the new state of Algeria from the situation of crisis that Ben Bella had enmeshed it in so soon after independence. Islamic opposition to the regime, expressed both through specific organisations such as Al Qiyam as well as more generally through public

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[51] Ibid. pp.562-565
[52] Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power* p.134
[53] Ibid. p.136

unrest, had posed a genuine threat to the government in 1964-65 but, through careful handling, the threat had virtually disappeared over the following five years. As Hugh Roberts comments:

> "In this context, the Al Qiyam agitation was a false dawn, reflecting not a crisis of Algerian nationalism but merely the temporary breakdown of the state-society relationship, as a consequence of the incoherence of the Ben Bella regime."[54]

3. The *Révolution Socialiste* and the Rekindling of Islamism

The period 1970-71 witnessed a number of developments which helped stimulate Islamist sentiment once again. For Hugh Roberts this period was marked by the embarkation by the Boumedienne regime, after a successful period of control of Islamic activism, "upon a course of action which made the revival of Islamist agitation not only possible but inevitable." This course of action on the part of the regime, he argues, had two parts: a generalised leftward shift in government economic policy after 1970 and the continued push for the 'Arabisation' of Algeria's educational and administrative systems.[55]

Both of these elements formed part of the new political initiative that the President launched in November 1971. Employing unusually Marxian rhetoric, Boumedienne had declared the need to "radically change the social relations and the ownership of the means of production" and to achieve this he declared the beginning of "the second stage of the Algerian revolution from this point."[56] Thus was launched the *Révolution Socialiste,* which embodied Boumedienne's policy for the 1970s. Comprised of three constituent planned 'revolutions', in the fields of industry, culture and agriculture, the *Révolution Socialiste* contributed to the re-

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[54] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.565
[55] Ibid. p.566
[56] Quoted in Tlemcani: *State and Revolution in Algeria* p.125

invigoration of an Islamist tendency in Algeria through the workings and effects of at least two of these component 'revolutions.'

I. The Agrarian Revolution

The *Révolution Agraire* or Agrarian Revolution was the most comprehensive and most genuinely 'revolutionary' element of the *Révolution Socialiste.* Essentially it involved the nationalisation of many of Algeria's large estates which were then turned into collectives and by 1974 this policy had also necessitated the take-over by the state of the wholesaling of agricultural produce. Over and above the specific economic and social successes and failures of this policy, the effect it had on the Muslim landowners from whom the land was expropriated and the wholesalers whose trade was nationalised was substantial.[57] What was significant was that much of the opposition to this policy was expressed in religious terms, even by those not necessarily materially affected by the changes.

Quranic endorsement of the concept and legitimacy of private ownership formed the basis of much of this criticism of this policy. As various members of the AUMA had done under Ben Bella, many Islamic leaders including Sheikh Noureddine, formerly a senior member of the AUMA, came out against Boumedienne's policy.[58] Rumours circulated over whether prayers said on nationalised land were valid and the government had to call in civil and religious leaders alike to defend his policy. In 1972 the President himself felt obliged to declare that "It should be specified that no religious text prevents application of the Agrarian Revolution."[59]

The relationship this debate had to the Islamist movement is interesting. It is clear that many Islamists opposed the nationalisations for the scriptural

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[57] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.568
[58] Vatin *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism* p.104
[59] Quoted in Burgat and Dowell p.255

reasons given above. However, it appears that the Agrarian Revolution did receive support from those elements of the Islamist movement which came from poorer and peasant backgrounds and who clearly stood to benefit from the reforms.[60] There was also an element of opportunist self-interest amongst those Islamists and ulama who opposed the land nationalisations. A form of alliance emerged between the landowners and the ulama (particularly the older ulama) whereby the ulama would act as the ideological spokesmen for the landowners through attacking the nationalisations on religious grounds. In return, the landowners agreed to finance the construction of a significant number of mosques as well as fund various religious and cultural organisations.[61] The Agrarian revolution also benefited the Islamist movement in another, indirect, way by concentrating official attention on the rural areas and away from the urban areas where, as will be shown, the Islamists began to build up their support and organisation in the mid 1970s.[62]

II. The 'Revolution Culturelle' and the Impact of Arabisation

The *Revolution Culturelle,* with its essentially nationalistic aim of establishing a distinct cultural identity for Algerians in place of the overwhelmingly French one that 130 years of colonial rule had imprinted on the country, primarily influenced the growth of the Islamist movement through its core objective of securing the linguistic 'Arabisation' of Algeria. Algeria's programme of Arabisation had actually begun as early as 1964 with Ben Bella's Arabisation of

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[60] Ibid. p.256

[61] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau and Frégosi p.25 This alliance between the private sector and the Islamist movement was a fairly long standing one that had been established during the time of the AUMA (see previous chapter). Allan Christelow argues that it was government nationalisations in the period after independence that undermined the private sector thus depriving the Islamists of one of their main social and financial bases of support and explains their relative weakness in the 1960s and 1970s. Christelow: *Ritual, Culture and Politics* p.268

[62] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.34

primary education and introduction of compulsory religious instruction. It was under President Boumedienne, however, that Arabisation became a real priority for the Algerian government.[63]

Arabisation aimed to make modern literary Arabic the national language of Algeria through the important state-controlled channels of education and the administration. However, whilst Arabisation proceeded quite rapidly through the education system it advanced at a far slower pace through Algeria's large state administration. The net result of this was that the education system was turning out far more Arabic speaking students or 'Arabisants' than could be absorbed by the administrative sector which in many places was largely still Francophone. There were few jobs too for Arabic-only speakers in the state sector and the large corporations. The corporations, in particular, preferred students fluent in French or other European languages to deal with their mainly western clients and suppliers.[64]

The implications of this problem for the government and for the potential revival of Islamist agitation and sentiment were several-fold. Two particular groups suffered from the lack of employment opportunities for Arabic-educated students. A high proportion of Arabisants came from poor, originally rural families which had migrated in large numbers to Algeria's large towns and cities over the past few decades. Not only, then, did this increasingly frustrated group become a significant source of agitation in urban areas, but moreover, in coming from the rural hinterland they retained much of the religious conservatism of those areas (which had largely been left untouched by the modernist ideas of the post-independence governments) and thus were more likely to be sympathetic to

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[63] Rachida Yacine: *The Impact of French Colonial Heritage on Language Policies in Independent North Africa* in George Joffé: *North Africa: Nation, State and Region* (Routledge, London and New York, 1993) pp.228-229

[64] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.566

Islamic activism and ideas.[65] The fact that it tended to be poorer more rural Algerians that became Arabisants, whilst the wealthy, more urban groups stayed largely Francophone (through choice), also meant that the social and economic cleavages between the two groups widened as the language preferences of both met with differing success in the job market, enhancing already present social tensions.[66]

The second group that appeared to be adversely affected by the Arabisation policy and who consequently presented a potential threat to the government came from a different social background to that of the rural migrants and the possible challenge they represented was different to that of mass unrest that the new urban poor represented. A significant proportion of 'Arabised' students, particularly from wealthier and better-educated backgrounds, chose to study Arabic and Islamic law and literature at university rather than follow more Francophone-based courses in science and technology. This, however, did not do much more to improve their job opportunities than the poor Arabisant school leavers. The potential danger that this posed for the regime was that it created a significant number of well-educated but unemployed graduates whose intellectual training and political awareness could help mobilise opposition.[67]

It was thus almost inevitable that both frustrated groups would find themselves identifying with opposition to the government which identified itself with Islamic values, since not only were both groups far more aware, through their education, of Arabo-Muslim ideas and concepts, but both believed that it was the persistence of secular and French influences that was responsible for their frustration. A return to the sort of Islamic, Arabised order advocated by most Islamist critics of the government would clearly be in their interests. Indeed, Jean-

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[65] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.567; Ruedy p.197
[66] Ruedy p.228
[67] Burgat and Dowell p.257

Claude Vatin indicates that calls for greater Islamisation of Algeria, which clearly grew amongst Arabisants in the 1970s, were linked to calls for Arabisation "as a mere device for gaining access to those jobs more or less monopolised by their French-speaking co-religionists."[68] A further possible reason for the growth of an Islamist sentiment amongst the Arabisants was the influence of Arabic teachers brought in from outside of Algeria to compensate for the lack of suitably qualified native teachers. These teachers frequently brought with them the sort of Islamist ideas that were increasingly influential in the eastern Arab world in the late 1960s and 1970s.[69]

The link between Arabisation and Islamism is, however, not entirely clear. Whilst it appears that Islamist-type movements in the universities in the late 1960s largely recruited from amongst students of Arabic and Islamic studies who felt bypassed by the educational system[70], Rachid Benaissa, an Islamic activist at that time, maintains that most of the students attending the mosques and involved in Islamic groups were Francophone. The sermons in the mosques were delivered in French and it was not until later that Arabic students came to both the mosques and the organisations. More generally, Benaissa points out that the Arabic press in Algeria at this time "was more violently anti-Islamic than the Francophone."[71]

By the mid-1970s, though, Arabisation and Islamism were increasingly closely linked. The years 1974, 1975 and 1976, for example, all witnessed violent

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[68] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism* p.100
[69] Etienne p.219
[70] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism* p.100
[71] Quoted in Burgat and Dowell p.257 The reason for the relatively late arrival of Arabaphone students to the Islamic organisations at this time may, of course, have been due to the fact that the Arabisation of education was still in its infancy and its effect on the education system as a whole was only just beginning to be felt. However, this does not detract from the fact that there already was an Islamist tendency and movement in existence which Arabisation served to feed rather than create.

clashes between Arabophone and Francophone students at Constantine University over whether Algeria should adopt a traditional Islamic or modern secular legal system.[72]

Arabisation was not the only element of the *Révolution Culturelle* that served to bolster the Islamist movement. The regime's emphasis on the religious aspects of the Arabo-Muslim identity of Algerians, whilst reinforcing the state's control over the religious sphere, also increased awareness of Islam and Islamic themes thus preparing more fertile ground for the Islamist message. This was certainly true of the Campaign Against the Degradation of Morals of 1970 which, as has been shown, articulated many of the religious and moral themes of the Islamist agenda.

This was equally the case with the launch of the government backed review *Al Asala* in March 1971, a publication which sought to put the government's point of view across with regard to religion. Employing several former members of the AUMA, the review propounded the ideas of Ben Badis and his followers referring extensively to all the major figures in the movement including figures such as Bashir Ibrahimi who had not been an enthusiastic supporter of the liberation struggle or secular nationalism. Such coverage and personnel suggested that *Al Asala* enjoyed a degree of autonomy from state control. However, whilst the themes in the review were unambiguously supportive of Islamic reformism and the Islamic agenda, Luc-Willy Deheuvels who conducted a comprehensive study of it, concluded that *Al Asala* failed to provide a pole or personality around which Islamists could unite. The experience of the liberation struggle and the dominating personality of Houari Boumedienne had totally changed the landscape and deprived the AUMA of its previous prestige and influence. [73]

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[72] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.93

[73] Luc-Willy Deheuvels: *Islam et Pensée Contemporaine en Algérie: La Revue 'Al-Asala' 1971-1981* (Editions du CNRS, Paris, 1991) pp.273-274

The issue of Islamist sympathisers within the regime itself is an important one. As seen earlier, Al Qiyam had a number of sympathisers within Ben Bella's government and although Boumedienne kept a much tighter and more personal grip on Islamist activity outside the institutions of the state, this internal Islamic opinion remained. Their presence, particularly former members of the AUMA, was tolerated by the regime in return for help in providing religious legitimacy for the regime. Certain sections of the administration, notably those dealing with culture, religion and education (the traditional areas of concern of the Islamic reformists) contained significant numbers of personnel supportive of the broader Islamic agenda.[74] In this context, the *Révolution Culturelle*, particularly its central plank of Arabisation, was largely the work of these elements.

It would be mistaken to say that there was real collusion between these figures within the administration and the more radical elements of groups, but it was certainly the case that individuals such as Mouloud Kassim and his successor at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Abderahame Chibane, discreetly encouraged both the Arabisants and the Islamists.[75] The supporting ideological link between the two Islamic parties was evident. The writers of *Al Asala*, for example, although never attempting criticism of the existing regime, provided "an anchor" for the Islamist current, in the view of François Burgat, through their exposition of religious ideas. [76]

4. Government Reaction and the National Charter

By 1976 the regime appeared to show the first signs of being aware of the gradual swell of Islamic opposition it was building up against itself. One strand of the Islamically-based criticism of the government was its lack of consultation with

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[74] Deheuvels p.273; *Nouvel Observateur* 11.8.94
[75] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.35
[76] Burgat and Dowell p.254

the people, enshrined in the Islamic concept of shura. This criticism had first been raised by Bashir Ibrahimi when he had voiced his more general concern over the direction of the Ben Bella government in April 1964 calling for a "return to the principles of consultation so dear to the Prophet."[77] In 1974 tracts had appeared in Algiers bearing essentially the same message. Indeed it appears that a growing number of Algerians were increasingly restive at not only the doctrinaire attitude of the government but also at the prolonged period of unconstitutionality which had been operating since the coup of 1965.[78]

In apparent concession to this opinion Boumedienne held both a constitutional referendum and a Presidential 'election' (in practice also a referendum). The new National Charter of 1976, which the constitutional referendum 'endorsed', gave Islam the status of state religion. This change came in the wake of other concessions that had been made to the Islamic 'lobby' earlier in the year. In March the government had outlawed gambling and in August 1976 Friday had replaced Sunday as the official weekly holiday. Religious festivals were also declared official holidays with government backing being given to their full observance.[79]

These concessions were more gloss than content. References to Islam were largely brief and perfunctory with socialism instead providing the explicit ideological heart of the whole document. The brief sub-section of the Charter that dealt with religion was entitled 'Islam and the socialist Revolution' and was contained within the larger section headed 'Building the socialist society.' Furthermore, the new Charter went on to directly refute one of the core tenets of the Islamist and reformist movement when it stated:

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[77] Quoted in Humbaraci p.237
[78] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.571-572
[79] Arkoun p.173

> "The decline of the Muslim world is not attributed to purely moral causes .....There is only one way for the Muslim world to regenerate itself: it must go beyond reformism and advance towards social Revolution."[80]

This 'social revolution' clearly aimed to surpass and indeed absorb Islamic reformism and religion generally within the ideology of the state. Almost to demonstrate this stance, Boumedienne, in a reshuffle of his government in early 1977, reduced the Ministry of Religious Affairs to a sub-section of the Presidency itself.[81]

The revolutionary drive and rhetoric produced added problems for the government not only because it attracted the usual Islamic criticism of being too attached to secular and Marxist doctrines (such accusations increased when the regime developed closer relations with the communists of the PAGS party) but also for more subliminal reasons. Hugh Roberts argues that Boumedienne's fostering of a revolutionary, millenialist mentality and spirit among young Algerians in particular, encouraging them to mobilise against elements within the regime itself who resisted this 'revolution' "legitimised a radically critical attitude among the younger generation towards the existing bases of authority in the society."[82]

Contrary to their design, some of the apparent concessions the regime made served to boost Islamist opinion in the country. The apparently symbolic and insubstantive recognition in the National Charter of Islam as the religion of state gave the Islamists a potential new platform for their views. They could now appeal to the Charter itself to press openly for their agenda of Arabisation, Islamisation and application of the Sharia since Islam was now officially endorsed as the religion of state.[83]

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[80] *National Charter: Democratic and Popular Algerian Republic* (Algerian Ministry of Culture and Information, 1976) pp.18-19
[81] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.573-574
[82] Ibid. pp.569-570
[83] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism* p.104

5. The Islamist Movement 1970-1978

I. Atomisation: The New Groups

The exact shape, form and strength of the Islamist 'movement' in the 1970s is difficult to assess. The government's banning of Al Qiyam in March 1970 meant that organised focus for Islamic opinion and opposition to the regime subsequently became much more disparate and more covert. The official proscription of Al Qiyam removed only the organised manifestations of the grouping leaving a still significant number of activists committed to continuing to promote their agenda. These activists appear to have regrouped from the late 1960s in a series of successor organisations over the following few years such as Ansar Allah (which was broken up by the authorities) and then Dawa wa Tabligh.[84]

The forcibly atomised nature of the movement from the late 1960s led also to the emergence of other trends within the Islamist opposition which established groups for themselves in various parts of Algerian society. Several were inspired by and enjoyed close links with the rapidly growing and influential Islamist movements of the Arab east, particularly those of Egypt. A group of young Algerians, led by a secondary school teacher Mahfoud Nahnah, which had begun to organise themselves during Ben Bella's presidency, had strong doctrinal and personal ties with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.[85] Similarly, in 1974-75 tracts began to appear on the streets of Algeria's cities by a group calling itself Takfir wa Hijra, the same name as that given to a radical Egyptian faction. The

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[84] *El Watan* 28.2.94

[85] Harbi p.133 Mahfoud Nahnah's contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood and their ideas were apparently established through Egyptian professors he encountered during his time at Algiers University. Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.64

similarities in the extremist messages these tracts bore to the ideology of the Egyptian grouping suggested clear inspirational and possibly organisational links between the two namesakes.[86]

Another, more intellectual group of mainly students began to meet under the patronage of the former Director of Higher Studies in the Ministry of Education, Malek Bennabi, in the Central Faculty of the University of Algiers from the mid 1960s. Encouraged by Bennabi, a leading Islamic intellectual who had been involved with Al Qiyam, this unusually Francophone group undertook to establish a mosque in the faculty in 1968 where five years later they set up their own majlis shura. Despite their small, secretive and elitist nature, this group also published a review in which their cerebral discussions on Bennabi's key themes of civilisation and the compatibility of Islam and science were aired. The more domestic origins and influences of this grouping earned it over time the sobriquet of the *Djazaira* or Algerianists. [87]

II. The Universities

Bennabi and his followers formed part of a general trend by Islamists of organising themselves in the universities in the 1960s and 1970s. An indication of this development came with the wearing of the hedjab by women students. The first began to appear on the Algerian campuses in 1967, although this practice was for several years largely restricted to small groups such as those around Bennabi. These developments indicated that the universities were becoming the new repositories of Islamist sentiment in Algeria. However these groups were

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[86] *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92

[87] Séverine Labat: *Islamism and Islamists: The Emergence of New Types of Politico-Religious Militants* in John Ruedy: *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa* (Macmillan, London, 1994) p.107; Pierre Dévoluy and Mirielle Duteil: *La Poudrière Algérienne* (Calman-Lévy, Paris, 1994) p.125 For a fuller explanation of Malek Bennabi's ideas and background see Fawzia Bariun: *Malik Bennabi: His Life and Theory of Civilization* (Buldaya Ilmu Sdn, Kuala Lumpur, 1993)

neither very extensive nor particularly strong over the next few years. Not only was the movement largely confined to certain faculties in certain universities but its quite considerable efforts at proselytism appeared to meet with little success, fellow students possibly being put off by the dogmatism of its stance and propaganda.[88]

The Islamist organisations in the universities also had to contend with the far stronger leftist movements which dominated the campuses in the late 1960s and 1970s. Part of the reason for the growth of Islamist student organisations in the late 1960s had been government toleration and reliance on them to combat leftist influence in the universities at this time. However, with the advent of the *Révolution Socialiste* after the turn of the decade, Boumedienne appeared to reverse this policy as he recognised the leftists as potential ideological allies in the struggle to introduce his more radical and socialist policies. Consequently, Islamist support waned and declined back to its original base of small scattered groups of activists.[89] Those Islamists that did remain were largely driven out, silenced and excluded from the campuses by the ascendant, largely Marxist, left.[90] As a persecuted minority in the early 1970s the Islamists retreated from the campuses and increasingly focused their activities in the mosques themselves, retaining a low profile except for the occasional contribution to the Arabisation debate.[91] Arabisation, though, did signal something of a reassertion of the Islamist movement in the universities with increasing clashes between Arabophone and Francophone students from 1974. As already shown, Arabic had become increasingly associated with Islamism whilst leftist students were

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[88] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism* pp.99-100 It is interesting to note that the hedjab that began to appear on the university campuses was not the traditional white veil or *haik* of Algerian women, but was instead the semi-chador of the Arab east, thus illustrating the penetration of Islamist ideas and practices from outside Algeria.

[89] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism Versus State Reformism* p.104

[90] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.33

[91] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau and Frégosi pp.25-26

largely Francophone and secularist. This resurgence was further boosted by another switch in government policy in 1976 which reverted once more to using the Islamists against what the regime perceived to be an overly strong leftist element on the campuses.[92]

III. The Mosques

The forced retreat from activism in the universities and the refocusing of their activities in the country's mosques gave the various Islamist groups a much more secure base to work from and one which it worked to expand. One of the main features of their work in the 1970s became the construction of mosques. Able to secure official recognition as associations for each project, the Islamists worked to not only convert large numbers of buildings into mosques and build new purpose-built places of prayer, but more fundamentally sought to carve out their own independent institutional framework free from the control of the state. This was particularly achieved by securing non-governmental funding for projects which enabled them to establish so-called 'free' mosques outside of state control.[93] By 1976-77 many of the various 'discussion circles' established by the different groups had managed to escape the watchful eye and control of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and relocated themselves in the mosques.[94]

The growth in the numbers of mosques, both free and otherwise, also provided centres of contact between the various Islamist groupings. The Islamist 'movement' in the early 1970s was a fairly atomised affair with individual associations running their own preaching and teaching activities largely in isolation from each other. Abdallah Djaballah the leader of a grouping in eastern Algeria, which was active in the construction of mosques and opening of prayer

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92 Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* pp.34-37

93 These projects are the essential focus of Rouadjia's book, *Les Frères et la Mosquée.*

94 *El Watan* 28.2.94

rooms in Annaba and Constantine, speaks of him and his group having had contacts with the Djazaira in the universities but there being little overall co-ordination during this early period.[95] However, most of the 'Sheikhs' of these different associations, including Djaballah, began to meet informally from the mid 1970s in the private mosque of Abdelhamid Chentli in Constantine, which together with the eastern region as a whole remained the centre of Islamist activity in Algeria.[96]

C: THEMES AND ASPECTS

The unexpected death of Houari Boumedienne in December 1978 effectively marked the end of the first chapter of Algeria's independent history - his personality and policy decisions having dominated this early formative period. This initial period was the first in several centuries in which Algeria's Muslims were able to conduct their own affairs. What then can be concluded about the role of Islam and Islamic sentiment during these years?

1. Islam and the State

The new rulers of independent Algeria, both Ben Bella and Boumedienne and their supporters, quite clearly realised the value and importance of Islam, not just through its contribution to the independence struggle but also through its potential contribution to the construction of the independent Algerian state. The Islamic reformism of the Association of Algerian Ulama had been absorbed by both the Algerian people during the war and in the view of one commentator more or less became "the political language" of the new state. Its use by the various competitors for power in the period 1962-65 provided evidence of this. The state,

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[95] Author's interview with Abdallah Djaballah, London, 7.10.94

[96] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.156. Djaballah states that Islamist activity as a whole was restricted to the east and central (Algiers) region of the country during this period. Author's interview with Djaballah, 7.10.94

under both Ben Bella and Boumedienne, tried to incorporate this reformism into the state itself: its policies, its propaganda and its internal battles. This creation of the idea of what was widely termed 'state reformism' became a perceived source of legitimacy for those both in power and those aspiring to it.[97]

Those in power were primarily concerned with both retaining power and in advancing their own political, social and economic agendas. As has been shown in the case of both Ben Bella and Boumedienne, these agendas frequently had little to do with anything recognisably Islamic but owed more to essentially secular and particularly socialist-style programmes and ideas. Through these programmes, notably Boumedienne's 'social revolution' of the 1970s, the politicians hoped to mould and transform what at independence was still a fairly divided and fragmented society. As John Entelis points out, Islam's role in this was to be fairly limited: "A secular state with an Islamic cultural component would thus be the manner in which a nationalist synthesis would be achieved.'[98]

This 'nationalisation' of Islam, though, did not go unchallenged. The view of the political leadership that "Islam was to serve as an identity-forming instrument, not as a legal code by which to order state and society" profoundly contradicted much traditional and reformist Islamic thinking and teaching in Algeria.[99] Abdallah Djaballah was prompted to form his Islamist organisations in the 1970s because of official attitudes towards Islam. Popular ignorance of Islam was widespread and the government appeared happy to exclude it from Algerian social life and even made jokes about those who attended the mosques.[100] This clash between religious opinion and political authority, seen throughout the post-independence period, in many ways reflected a tradition in Algerian politics and

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97 Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power* pp.133-134
98 Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.81
99 Ibid.
100 Text of speech by Abdallah Djaballah to Nahda Party Conference, Sanoba Club, 7-9.9.94

society that stretched back well before independence. It can be seen in the nineteenth century revolts against both the Ottomans and the French and in the key, if initially reluctant, role the AUMA played in the run up to the war of liberation.[101]

The view that Islam and Islamist activism is a means of articulating more generalised opposition to the government, is an interesting and important one. It seems important, then, to ask how far Islamist groups and opinion in the 1960s and 1970s were promoting a clearly 'Islamic' agenda and to what extent they were an expression and vehicle for wider grievances against the state. During Ben Bella's period of power, it would seem that whilst the criticisms of his regime voiced by Sheikh Ibrahimi and Al Qiyam were essentially Islamic in nature, they reflected the growing crisis in the regime generally. Without this crisis it seems unlikely that such criticism would have received the attention it did. Under Boumedienne, the new president's broadening of the base of the regime and his use of nationalism dispelled the crisis that had built up under his predecessor and thus cut away much of the ground-swell of public unrest that Al Qiyam had briefly ridden on.[102] It is instructive that the two issues that brought the Islamist movement to the fore in the 1970s, Arabisation and the Agrarian Revolution, both had their origins in socio-economic as much as religious grievances.

Nevertheless, even if it had found its strength and voice in alliance with wider issues and grievances, the Islamist movement still retained and developed its own ideology and agenda over this period.

2. Ideology and Agenda

The achievement of independence by Algeria in 1962 clearly changed the context in which Algeria's Islamic movement operated. The colonial European

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101 Vatin: *Religious Resistance and State Power* pp.122-123
102 Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.563-575

threat to Islamic identity, culture and practice was removed but the imperative of returning Algerians to the teachings of pure scripturally based Islam remained for the supporters and members of the old AUMA. As has been seen, a section of this grouping was effectively co-opted into the state apparatus by the post-independence governments, particularly that of Boumedienne, and worked to contribute an Islamic element to the Algerian state. The section that remained outside this official framework, however, became increasingly radical in their outlook both towards the state and society in general.

This was evident from a fairly early stage of Algeria's independence. Despite explicitly claiming to be the inheritors of the legacy and ideals of Ben Badis's AUMA, Al Qiyam was a clearly more radical organisation. The association's hostility towards non-Islamic ideas and organisations illustrated earlier displayed, as Jean-Claude Vatin and Jean Leca rightly argue, "a fanatical fundamentalism, quite foreign to the thought of the founder of the Association of Ulama."[103] This hostility and radicalism was present not only in the writings and the propaganda of the organisation's leaders, Al Qiyam calling for the closure of shops at times of prayer, the exclusion of non-Muslims from public service and particularly the restriction of female emancipation.[104] It was also carried through to the actions of some of its members. Not only were members of Al Qiyam responsible for continued harassment of 'immodestly' dressed women on Algeria's streets, but threats were also issued to owners of bars selling alcohol in the capital. Such actions did not halt with the final dissolution of the organisation

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[103] Jean Leca and Jean-Claude Vatin: *L'Algérie Politique: Institutions et Regime* (Presses de la Foundation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris, 1975) p.308

[104] Ibid. The role of women in independent Algeria became an important theme of much Islamist discourse after independence. Bachir Ibrahimi had complained about the participation of young women in tennis skirts at the independence celebrations (*Nouvel Observateur* 11.8.94), Al Qiyam had called for a restriction on women's employment as a solution for male unemployment (Knauss p.104) and Abdellatif Soltani in his 1974 diatribe attacked the presence of women in offices and the military (Burgat and Dowell pp.251-252)

in 1970 and were continued by its former members and successor organisation into the following decade.[105]

The other element of this growth in radicalism, besides that addressing the perceived moral and social decline in independent Algeria, was an increasing hostility to the Algerian state itself. Official repression and alienation from the apparatus of the state contributed to this antagonism but it was a fundamental antipathy towards the perceived ideology of the new state, particularly its socialism, that underpinned much of this stance. In 1974 one of the former leaders of Al Qiyam, Abdellatif Soltani, launched a bitter attack on the regime in the form of an article. Published from exile in Morocco, the article attacked Boumedienne's socialist policies as "destructive principles imported from abroad." He equated socialism with heresy and argued that it was responsible for many social vices such as alcoholism through its support of the planting of vineyards.[106] Elsewhere Dawa wa Tabligh, one of the successor organisations to Al Qiyam, called in its literature for the abolition of socialist regimes in all Muslim countries.[107] More generally, a view increasingly propagated privately in the schools and mosques loyal to the Islamists was that the victory of Islam against the French in 1962 had been "confiscated at independence by a coalition of communists and atheists."[108]

The near total ideological breach with the whole foundation of the Algerian state that this last view implies has certain echoes of the ideas of Sayyid Qutb in Egypt. However, despite the Qutb-inspired calls for overthrow of the regime and the installation of an Islamic state through force of arms in the tracts distributed

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[105] *El Watan* 28.2.94; Aissa Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* (Editions Alfa, Algiers, 1992) p.117

[106] Harbi pp.135-139

[107] *El Watan* 28.2.94. The group proposed that such regimes be replaced with a return to the Caliphate applying sharia law.

[108] Quoted in Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.147

by Algerian Takfir wa Hijra in the mid 1970s[109], there appeared to be no real evidence of Islamist opposition to the Algerian government adopting a violent course of action. Dawa wa Tabligh were reported to have been responsible for the death of a policeman in Algiers in January 1971 and one Islamist was caught and convicted of sabotaging telegraph poles in opposition to the National Charter of 1976. Even though this last figure was the influential Mahfoud Nahnah, his was not a serious offence and these remained isolated or unsubstantiated incidents.[110]

The reasons behind these shifts are several fold. Much of the radicalism had to do with the movement's political and institutional alienation from the Algerian regime, official repression, in particular, providing a natural dynamic towards more radical positions. The movement's greater concentration on more specifically moral issues (such as those relating to women) and away from more egalitarian issues once utilised by the AUMA, has been seen as the result of the increasing monopolisation of egalitarian themes by the regime's socialist rhetoric and policies.[111] A second reason for the movement's radicalisation was undoubtedly the influx of more extremist ideas from other parts of the Muslim world, especially Egypt, which came in with far greater ease following the achievement of Algerian independence and notably, as has been shown, with the teachers brought in for the Arabisation programmes. The death of Malek Bennabi in 1973 deprived the movement of probably its most profound indigenous thinker since Abdelhamid Ben Badis and consequently turned both his followers and other groups even more towards the wider Muslim world for guidance.[112] Links with other Muslim countries were further cemented by growing financial as well as ideological ties. Saudi Arabia became an increasingly

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109 *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92
110 *El Watan* 28.2.94; Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.26
111 Burgat and Dowell p.250
112 Lamchichi: *L'Algérie en Crise* p.322

important source of funds for Algeria's Islamists by the 1970s: Islamist leaders made frequent trips to the Kingdom to exploit Saudi fears of the perceived atheistic tendencies of the Algerian regime which were fuelled by the latter's close relations to the godless Soviet Union.[113]

D: CONCLUSION

In the context of events both inside Algeria and the development of the Islamist movement across the Muslim world as a whole, Algeria's Islamists remained strictly peripheral during this period. Despite enjoying a brief broader platform with Al Qiyam in the first few years of independence their influence from 1965 remained very limited. Inside the regime the few minor ministries that contained Islamist sympathisers and co-opted former members of the AUMA saw very slight advances of the Islamist agenda. Outside, the fragmented and largely covert Islamist movement only really made itself felt through pockets of unrest and activism on the university campuses. Numerically, the movement remained a small-scale affair, a reflection of a more general decline in religious observance and awareness in the 1960s and 1970s that also spoke of the Islamists' failure to publicise their agenda.[114] Boumedienne's state building policies - his grand industrial and economic projects, the active and prestigious role he forged for Algeria in international and particularly third world politics - were clearly the main

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113 Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* pp.69-71

114 Writing in 1964 Raymond Vallin wrote of "a feeling of decline in popular religion.....Beneath the respect paid to it lies a good deal of indifference. People no longer pray in public, the pious are ridiculed, and the faithful are becoming rare, less than 1% from personal observations in Algiers" Vallin p.57 This was particularly true of Algeria's younger population where secular and nationalist ideas were more prevalent. A survey of students in 1968 showed that only 17% of those questioned identified the term 'Arabo-Islamism' with 'a state governed according to the rules of Islam' whilst 81% identified it with 'the affirmation of the Algerian national personality'. Leca and Vatin p.307

pre-occupations for both Algerians and observers of the country in the 1960s and 1970s.

Similarly, whilst the 1970s witnessed the growth of significant and muscular Islamist movements in countries such as Syria, Egypt and Iran and indeed most other Middle Eastern states, Algeria appeared to be resistant to this trend. It was totally justified for one writer in 1980 to describe Algeria as marching in "the rearguard" of the international Islamist movement and thus seek to write a piece seeking to explore the subliminal reasons why Algeria had *not* developed such a movement in this period.[115]

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115 Peter von Sivers: *National Integration and Traditional Rural Organisation in Algeria 1970-80: Background for Islamic Traditionalism?* in Said Amir Arjomand: *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam* (Macmillan, London, 1984). The main reasons that von Sivers identifies as being behind this absence include the exposure through prolonged colonial rule to European ideas, low levels of Arabic literacy, the proletarianising of parts of the rural population under the French, the small size of the traditional urban class, and the rigour of state control and planning.

3

THE RISE OF ISLAMISM: 1979 - 1988

1. From Boumedienne to Chadli

The fairly small-scale and largely clandestine nature of the Islamist 'movement' in the late 1970s meant that the Islamists' reaction to the sudden death of President Boumedienne in December 1978 was neither widely canvassed nor considered amongst the main concerns of Algeria as it sought to assimilate the fact that the dominant and shaping force of its post-independence history was now gone. Most attention focused on the succession to Boumedienne, which was resolved without any overt signs of a power-struggle with the formal election of Colonel Chadli Benjedid as President in February 1979.

Although Chadli's assumption of the presidency initially indicated continuity rather than any real break with the policies and approaches of his predecessor, this did not imply that Boumedienne's death would have no, particularly longer-term, impact on Algeria's Islamists. Nor did it indicate that the late President's largely successful containment of the Islamist 'challenge' in the thirteen years of his rule would be continued by the new President. Chadli Benjedid, although a respected figure, had been a compromise choice pushed forward by the Algerian military in preference to the two main contenders for the office. The long-standing military commander of the Oran region, the new President lacked his predecessor's charisma, intellect and vision; qualities that had enabled Boumedienne to establish control and unity over Algeria's traditionally fractious society and polity and which had succeeded in preventing the emergence of any serious challenge to either him or the Algerian state.

For Algeria's Islamists, the departure of the figure who had espoused so much that was anathema to them and, moreover, had so successfully suppressed

and silenced their organisations, was a welcome development. With a strengthening and expanding (if still relatively small-scale) institutional base in the country's mosques and universities, the various groups and associations that made up this still fairly nebulous 'movement' believed this growth was likely to continue and accelerate under the new regime.

Such thoughts were encouraged by several actions by President Chadli during his opening years of office. High-profile political opponents of Boumedienne were released from prison (most notably Ahmed Ben Bella) and, more significantly, several figures seen as sympathetic to the Islamists' agenda were appointed to the Government.[1] Abderahmane Chibane, a figure who despite his closeness to the regime had attracted the deference of many Islamists outside the administration, was promoted in July 1980 to Minister for Religious Affairs - a portfolio existing in its own right again after four years under the direct control of the presidency.[2] Committed Arabisants took over the Ministries of Information and Culture and of Primary and Secondary Education in Chadli's first government thus boosting this part of the Islamists' agenda and, more importantly, constituency of support. Evidence of this was seen in the renewed vigour with which Arabisant and Islamist students began to press their frequently interwoven agendas. Arabisant high school and university students held a long strike in the winter of 1979-80 as part of a more general campaign to draw official attention to the failings of the Arabisation programme, specifically the continued failure of most Arabisants to make progress in the job market.[3] In the universities Islamist students also began to adopt a far higher profile.

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[1] Hugh Roberts: *The Politics of Algerian Socialism* in Richard Lawless and Allan Findlay: *North Africa: Contemporary Politics and Economic Development* (Croom Helm, London, 1984) p.33

[2] Abderrahim Lamchichi: *Islam et Contestation au Maghreb* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 1989) p.152. Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.20

[3] Roberts: *The Politics of Algerian Socialism* pp.33-34

2. The Growth of Islamist Activism: 1979-1982

Having contracted under pressure from the student left in the early 1970s, the Islamists had begun to expand once more their presence and activities on the campuses from the middle of the decade (see previous chapter). Clashes with leftist students continued into the 1980s and also began to occur against the increasingly vocal and organised Berber student groups on the campuses. This latter group had also been encouraged by President Chadli's liberalising gestures and they saw the Arabisation programmes as a threat to their own language, culture and job prospects (most Berber students were also accomplished Francophones). Violence against groups allied to the regime itself also became a feature of Islamist activism in this period. In May 1981 violent Islamist disruption of several meetings organised by the leftist-led official youth movement (the UNJA) to commemorate the 'Day of the Student' led to thirty people being badly injured at one meeting.[4] Islamist willingness to attack symbols and allies of the regime was also reflected that month in attacks by students on public buildings, especially university and prefecture buildings, in cities across Algeria including Abbès, Algiers, Annaba and Bedjaima.[5]

The new found self-confidence of the Islamist students was not limited to sporadic violence against other students but also began to exhibit itself in more concrete and co-ordinated ways. In December 1979 students took over a large lecture room at the Institute of Law in Algiers and converted it into a mosque.[6] The success of this move, which was not resisted by the university authorities,

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[4] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.578

[5] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* p.116. In April 1982 the FLN headquarters in Oran and vehicles of party officials had also come under attack from rioting *lycée* students, who although essentially protesting about examination failures were also believed to have been involved with the Islamists. Knauss p.138

[6] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* p.106

appeared to encourage the campus militants generally who increasingly sought to make their ideas and presence felt in more and more areas of campus life. Overt and unsolicited recruitment, involving speeches and pamphlet distributions, in university and college classes became increasingly common-place and bolder still, was the forcing of sexual segregation in the classes.[7]

The influence of Islamist students on university campuses had thus become considerable by 1982 and could even be said to dominate certain faculties in certain universities. One non-Islamist student in Oran commented as follows on the influence of the Islamists at her university:

> "They have created an environment at the university where it is dangerous to be politically involved. Those who speak out risk being silenced by force. They have gained implicit control of the student ambience."[8]

The early years of the Chadli Presidency also saw the growth of Islamist activism in other areas. In 1979, an organisation calling itself the Group for Defence Against the Illicit (GDAI) was formed under the leadership of Mustapha Bouyali, an employee of the state electricity company. Collecting together a number of still fairly autonomous groups based in the mosques of Algiers, this organisation became significant through its increasing belief in the efficacy of armed struggle to establish an Islamic state. Under the guidance of Bouyali, a former FLN fighter, the group began, from 1981, to collect and stockpile weapons. A network of clandestine cells was established across the country which Bouyali had divided into various operational regions in probable conscious imitation of the original *wilaya* system of the FLN. The martial orientation of the

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[7] Knauss pp.119-120
[8] Ibid. p.119

organisation was confirmed by its metamorphosis into the *Mouvement Algérien Islamique Armé* (MAIA) when it merged with other smaller groups in July 1982.[9]

3. Confronting the Regime: November-December 1982

Throughout the period 1979-82 the Chadli regime had practised a fairly tolerant approach to the clearly growing Islamist tendency. The reasons for such an approach were probably linked to the presence of Islamist sympathies amongst some of the senior personnel in the government but more likely were the result of wider policy considerations and needs on the part of the regime.[10] Initially, Chadli, like his predecessor Boumedienne quietly encouraged the Islamists to stifle leftist agitation on the campuses. For Chadli, the Islamists could also be used to combat two further threats to his regime: the newly assertive Berberist movement and tendency and leftist opponents within the regime itself. This second grouping consisted particularly of those disciples and supporters of Boumedienne's more radical socialist policies who were suspicious and hostile towards the economically liberalising reforms that Chadli had begun to introduce in this period.[11]

The regime had still maintained a watchful eye over the movement particularly those parts of it which tried to make too obvious a challenge to the authorities. The government intervened in Sidi Bel Abbès in 1981 following an aggressive campaign by Islamists there under the leadership of Othmane

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[9] Lamchichi: *Islam et Contestation* p.159; Burgat & Dowell pp.265-266; Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.28 Each cell of the MAIA was headed by an Emir who provided the ideological imput for the group as well as being the sole point of contact with other cells. *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.93

[10] Knauss p.119; Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.577 It has been suggested that the failure of the university authorities to evict the Islamist students who had occupied the classroom in the Institute of Law in Algiers in 1979 had been the result of Ministerial level advice. Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* p.106

[11] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.577-579

Mohammed who had sought to take over all the town's mosques from officially-appointed imams. Significant disturbances, involving at least a thousand people, following intervention by the local authorities, finally prompted a clamp down and dismantlement of the group.[12] Official attention was also attracted to the activities of Mustapha Bouyali and his followers. The security services had noted Bouyali's rhetorical forays into the area of politics in the occasional sermons he had given at the El-Achour mosque in the Mitidja region and they monitored his activities. When Bouyali's brother was shot in a confrontation with the police in April 1982 Bouyali appeared to take the decision to form the MAIA as a more covert and organised challenge to the regime.[13]

These moves against the Islamist movement still remained exceptions to the general policy of tolerance of the Chadli regime. This approach, however, came under increasing strain throughout 1982 and was finally cast aside in November 1982 following a further outbreak of violence in the universities which had resulted for the first time in the death of a student. The fatal stabbing of Kamel Amzel, a leftist, during disturbances following elections to residence hall committees on the Ben Aknoun campus of Algiers University on November 2nd led to a significant clamp down by the authorities. Nearly 400 Islamist supporters were arrested in attempts to quell the unrest.[14]

The crack down did not, however, dampen the Islamist unrest. In reaction to the arrests, Islamists organised a prayer meeting at a university building in the centre of Algiers on November 12th. The meeting attracted several thousand people (estimates vary considerably[15]) and disrupted traffic in that area of the city for several hours as it overflowed into the streets. Such a significant display of

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[12] Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* p.118
[13] *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.93; Burgat & Dowell pp.266-267
[14] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.87
[15] 5,000 is a figure most frequently quoted (e.g. Burgat & Dowell p.263) but attendances as large as 100,000 are recorded (Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.87)

public support for the Islamists was a further clear indication of the growing self-confidence of the movement and represented something of a challenge to the Government.[16] This challenge manifested itself not just in the size of the meeting and its defiance of the threat of a further official clamp down but, more importantly, was directly articulated by the issuing of a written set of demands by the organisers of the meeting. This fourteen point document, besides calling for the release of the arrested activists, contained most of the traditional demands and rhetoric of the Islamist movement. They included demands for increases in religious and Arabic education, greater legal status for the Sharia, an end to the mixing of the sexes in schools and offices and more general railing against the incursion of Western and colonial influences in Algerian society.[17]

The regime reacted to this challenge by making further large-scale arrests including those of the three leaders of the demonstration and signatories of the list of demands. All three figures were well-established figures in Algeria's Islamist movement. Two, Abdellatif Soltani and Ahmed Sahnoun, were ageing well-respected Sheikhs, who had been members of Ben Badis's original AUMA and had continued to be active and independent through the 1960s and 1970s - Soltani having been the author of the uncompromising attack on Boumedienne's socialism from exile in Morocco in 1974 (see previous chapter). The third figure, Abassi Madani, was younger but had also been involved in Al Qiyam. He had spent a significant part of the 1970s studying for a Ph.D in Britain, but had returned at the end of the decade to teach (the sociology of education) at university in Algiers, where he played a significant role in the organisation and mobilisation of the Islamist students.[18]

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[16] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.579
[17] For the full text of the document see Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.45-48
[18] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.69; Burgat & Dowell p.263

The regime also chose this time to strike against Bouyali's MAIA. Following the discovery of several caches of arms and explosives that the various groups had built up, twenty-three members of the organisation were arrested in mid December 1982. This move by the authorities forestalled plans by the MAIA to launch a series of attacks against various official targets. Scheduled for December, these plans had included the assassination of the Prime Minister, the kidnapping of the FLN's number two figure, Chérif Messadia, and attacks against the headquarters of various organisations (such as the official women's organisation) and certain public monuments in the capital.[19]

The firmhandedness with which the regime had dealt with the Islamist movement in late 1982 was curiously not matched by its subsequent actions. Despite the large scale arrests, no Islamists were brought to trial during the seventeen months following the unrest. When proceedings finally did take place, in September 1984, 12 of the 19 defendants, on trial for acts of violence were acquitted, one was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment for the manslaughter of Kamel Amzel, and the remainder received sentences ranging from 1 to 5 years.[20] The apparent leniency of these sentences and the intervening delays appeared to be at odds with the original tough approach of the authorities.

The reason for this was continuing unease within the Government over the apparent strength and size of the Islamist movement which appeared to be undiminished by the repression of late 1982. A dramatic demonstration of the enduring support enjoyed by the movement occurred with the funeral of Abdellatif Soltani in April 1984, the ageing Sheikh having died whilst still under the house arrest he had been sentenced to following his arrest in 1982. Attended

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[19] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* pp.87-88; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.71 & p.230

[20] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.579-580

by a crowd of mourners tens of thousand strong (estimates again vary[21]) the funeral was another testimony to the mobilising powers of the Islamists. The Government's decision to postpone trials of Islamists arrested in 1982 from May 1984 (the month after Soltani's funeral) to the following September was clearly due to concerns that the trials might provoke Islamist unrest. The release of the other two leaders of the November 1982 demonstration, Abassi Madani and Ahmed Sahnoun, on the original trial date in May 1984 was a further indication of official willingness to appease the Islamists.[22]

4. Government Co-optation and Concessions: 1982 - 1986

This policy of the Government of combining repression of Islamism's militant edges with conciliatory gestures to avoid provoking the wider movement also encompassed measures aimed at undercutting the bases of Islamist support and sentiment within the country. Primarily this involved the state in efforts, similar to those adopted by Boumedienne, directed at incorporating religious activity and life into the institutional framework of the state as well as including selective elements of the Islamist agenda in government policy.

Chadli Benjedid had, as has been shown, already made several apparent concessions (albeit for different reasons) to the Islamists in the early years of his presidency, appointing sympathetic government ministers and by continuing with the Arabisation programmes. Such initiatives were continued and intensified in the aftermath of the disturbances of late 1982. Levels of government funding to Quranic educational establishments (the construction of which the government had begun itself to fund) were rapidly increased as was recruitment of young imams to serve in the mosques many of whom were trained in four new training

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[21] Al-Ahnaf, Botveau & Frégosi quote the number attending as 20,000 (p.310); Roberts cites a figure of 25,000 (*Radical Islamism* p.579); Entelis uses 100,000 (*Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.87)

[22] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.579

centres for imams that the regime established. In October 1984 the government opened the Emir Abdelkader University of Islamic Sciences in Constantine - probably the largest mosque-university complex in North Africa.[23]

These institutional moves represented not only a desire on the part of the regime to portray itself as a supporter of Islam. More importantly, they were attempts to halt the growth in the number of 'free' or independent mosques staffed by imams who had not been appointed by the state and which, as has been shown, had been such a feature of Islamist institutional expansion since the 1970s. The issue of Islamist activity and control of mosques had become one of increasing concern to President Chadli. In 1985 he had told his Prime Minister, Abdelhamid Brahimi, one of the few members of the Government who still regularly attended the mosque, to no longer do so. This was the result of an apparent fear that Brahimi was in agreement with the Islamists.[24] As a consequence of these concerns, new rules covering the mosques were introduced requiring all imams to possess a degree from an appropriate (government supervised) religious institute, and sole authority for the assignment of Muslim clergy to positions countrywide was vested in the Ministry for Religious Affairs.[25] The end of official tolerance of the existence of independent Islamist imams, which had effectively operated since the beginning of the 1970s, was signalled in a speech given by the President in November 1986.[26] In announcing the introduction of measures requiring the construction of new mosques to be subject to official approval, Chadli had declared that: "We cannot leave the

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[23] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* pp.88-89; Lamchichi: *Islam et Contestation* p.152

[24] Author's interview with Abdelhamid Brahimi, Prime Minister of Algeria 1984-88, London, 19.12.94. Brahimi was the son of Mubarak Mili, one of the senior figures in Abdelhamid Ben Badis's Association of Algerian Ulama.

[25] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* pp.88-89

[26] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.183 & p.191

mosque at the mercy of certain pernicious elements who will use it for destructive purposes."[27]

There were also continued attempts to dominate and direct the discourse, as well as the institutional manifestations, of Islam in the country. There was increased use of religious language and references by government officials and ministers in their speeches, which often sought to portray the regime and its leaders as upholders and protectors of Islam. In one speech the Minister of Religious Affairs, Abderrahmane Chibane, praised President Chadli for striving to "re-establish the hierarchy of values by placing faith in Allah above any other allegiance."[28] The government made use of the media to achieve its twin aims of gaining control of the Islamic discourse as well as persuading the populace that it was not (as the Islamists claimed) forgetting the country's Islamic nature and heritage. Television programmes on Fridays became almost exclusively devoted to religious themes and substantial media coverage was given to Sheikh Mohammed Ghazali, a cleric and former member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and new head of the Islamic University of Constantine, who spoke out against more radical interpretations of Islam claiming Islam to be a religion of 'humanism and progress.' Interestingly enough, almost exactly the same words were used to describe Islam in the new Algerian Constitution which was approved in January 1986.[29]

The regime also made various concessions to Islamist sentiment and opinion, the most important of which being the new Family Code passed and introduced in 1984. The Code, described by John Ruedy as "a blend of Islamic and traditional Algerian notions" included many stipulations, such as ones

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[27] *El Moudjahid* 12.11.86 quoted in Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.191
[28] Quoted in Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.88
[29] Richard P. Parker: *North Africa: Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns* (Praeger, New York, 1984) p.99; Amir Taheri: *Holy Terror: The Inside Story of Islamic Terrorism* (Hutchinson, London, 1987) p.182

defining and restricting women's rights to marriage, divorce and work, that were in line with Islamist social values but which were, not surprisingly, anathema to large numbers of Algerian women.[30] The strength and effectiveness of organised women's opposition had helped prevent the introduction of a similar (although, ironically, more moderate) Family Code three years earlier in 1981.[31] The successful introduction, though, of the 1984 Code was attributed to the growth in the influence of the Islamists in the intervening period. The increased use of violence and intimidation by Islamists (as witnessed in the universities) explaining the failure of the women's movement to successfully re-mobilise against the new code.[32]

Desire to undermine the Islamists' appeal was not the only reason for these official concessions. As in the 1960s and 1970s there existed elements within the regime itself that shared many of the views, if not the increased radicalism, of the Islamist movement. Chadli Benjedid's appointment of Abderahman Chibane as Minister of Religious Affairs had been popular with Islamists outside the regime and the presence of officials from the Ministry at the funeral of Abdellatif Soltani in April 1984 was evidence of the sympathy with the Islamist cause.[33] Such sympathies were not confined to individual ministries or officials. The Algerian legislative assembly - the APN (*Assemblée Populaire et Nationale)* - although consisting solely of FLN deputies, produced far more restrictive proposals for women's personal status following debates over the Family Code than had been

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[30] Ruedy p.243 Specifically the Code made women the wards of their family until marriage; prohibited Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims; made divorce "almost totally a male perogative" (Ruedy) and made a woman's right to work outside the home subject to the approval of her guardian.

[31] Ibid. For a fuller account of the debate and struggle over the 1981 Family Code see Knauss pp.125-140

[32] Ruedy p.243; Knauss p.138

[33] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.579

expected by the President. This indicated the strength of Islamic and traditionalist views in the Assembly.[34]

5. Fragmentation, Co-operation and Conflict: The Islamist Movement 1979 - 1982

Despite the impact Algeria's Islamists had made on the political scene between 1979 and 1982 and the alarm this had caused within the regime, the Islamist 'movement', such as it was, remained as fragmented as it had been in the 1970s. The contacts that had been established between the various groups from the mid 1970s were retained and even expanded, two mosques in particular becoming centres for increased co-ordination and co-operation. The Bait al-Arqam mosque became the base for the work and preaching of both Sheikhs Soltani and Sahnoun and hosted numerous conferences, lectures and discussions from 1976-77. The Ben Achour mosque also became an important focus for Islamist activity and co-operation, providing the forum for what one contemporary Islamist leader described as "the first important meeting" between representatives of all of Algeria's major Islamist tendencies and groups in early 1979. However, despite the supposed intent of this gathering to forge some form of unity between the various factions, the range of views (and undoubtedly personalities) frustrated any move towards greater co-operation.[35]

Relationships between the groups were frequently marked by rivalry and animosity, despite the fact that most of the groups and their leaders were familiar with each other. Demonstrations of apparent Islamist strength and unity, such as the November 12th meeting in 1982, frequently obscured divisions and hostility between different factions. The decision to call the rally, the idea of Abassi

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[34] *Nouvel Observateur* 11.8.94

[35] Burgat & Dowell pp.261-262 Quotes from Doudi Mohammed Abdelhadi who preached at both mosques.



Madani, had been strongly contested by the Djazaira whose majlis shura had rejected the move. [36] Furthermore, the group's leaders, Mohammed Said and Thabet Aouel Mohammed, had called on Islamists not to participate in the planned meeting. This loss of support from the Djazaira, which was still centred in the universities, led, it is argued, Abassi to solicit the participation of Soltani and Sahnoun in the show of force thus adding weight to its significance and resulting charter of demands. Despite the evident success of the move, the Djazaira proceeded to try and block attempts by Abassi Madani to speak at mosques in the immediate aftermath of the rally and before he was arrested by the authorities. [37]

On another front, the Djazaira were equally opposed to those Islamists led by Mahfoud Nahnah whose pan-Islamic ideas and contacts were in conflict with their nationalist, Algerianist beliefs. More directly, the Djazaira sought to counter the influence and growing strength of Nahnah's Muslim Brothers on their native territory of the university campuses.[38]

The relationship between Mustapha Bouyali and his supporters and the rest of the Islamist movement is an interesting one. The leader of the MAIA's involvement in the Ben Achour mosque from the late 1970s indicates that he had contacts with most of the other major figures and factions in the movement and indeed it appears that he constantly sought the support and blessing of other Islamist leaders.[39] However, there is no real evidence to suggest that Bouyali gained such endorsement. It appears that two senior figures actually sought to stop him from embarking on his campaign of violence. It is alleged that in 1981

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[36] Labat: *Islamism and Islamists* p.108

[37] *El Watan* 28.2.94 Abbassi was at this stage not attached to any of the main groupings within the Islamist movement. He had been a member of Al Qiyam in the 1960s but subsequently said he had "no confidence" in the notion of Islamic organisations and thus preferred to work independently. Author's interview with Rachid Ghannoushi, leader of the Tunisian Islamist movement, London, 18.4.95

[38] Labat: *Islamism and Islamists* p.108

[39] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.28

Abassi Madani used sermons to appeal for people not to involve themselves with Bouyali's campaign, a message that led on one occasion (in Sidi Bel Abbès at a mosque controlled by Othmane Mohammed) to him being attacked and harangued by some of his listeners.[40] It has also been alleged, in this case by one of Bouyali's lieutenants, Ahmed Merah, that Mahfoud Nahnah, who had received Bouyali on several occasions, had only done so in order to gain intelligence about the MAIA which he passed on to the authorities.[41]

6. Bouyali's Campaign: 1983 - 1987

The move against the MAIA by the Government in December 1982, which was consolidated by further arrests in January 1983 and the break-up of the command cell of the organisation, did not, however, signal the end of Mustapha Bouyali's plans for armed insurrection against the state.[42] He himself evaded the authorities and fled abroad (it is thought to either Iran or Libya) returning covertly to Algeria at the end of 1984.[43] Re-establishing contacts with many of his old supporters (92 of whom had been released by the authorities in May 1984[44]) Bouyali began to reconstitute the MAIA and plan once more for a campaign of armed resistance.

The first evidence of these plans and the re-emergence of the MAIA came in August 1985 with two significant operations being mounted by the group . The first took the form of an armed robbery at a factory near Algiers on 21 August in which the large payroll was stolen. The second six days later was an attack against a police barracks in the southern town of Soumma in which arms and

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[40] *El Watan* 1.3.94 It was furthermore alleged that Abassi reported this incident to the authorities thus precipitating the clampdown on the organisation referred to earlier.

[41] *Le Nouvel Hebdo* 18.11.90 reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.66-68

[42] Burgat & Dowell p.267

[43] *El Watan* 1.3.94

[44] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.310

ammunition were taken and a police cadet killed.[45] That these operations were something more than simple acts of criminal banditry and were aimed at securing financial and logistic supplies for an armed *jihad* was indicated by the painting of the phrase "Allah the Avenger is with us" across the gate of the barracks at Soumma following the attack there.[46]

In response to these events the government dispatched a significant force to the Atlas mountains, where the group appeared to be based, with the intention of swiftly crushing the group. Despite the relatively small size of Bouyali's band, they were able to inflict disproportionate losses in clashes with the pursuing government forces. The group continued its campaign against targets it considered to be anathema to Islam with 'un-Islamic' buildings such as girls schools, libraries, restaurants and cinemas being attacked. Bouyali himself continued to avoid capture and continued to make regular public appearances at mosques in the region. Aided by his expert knowledge of the mountainous region, gained as an FLN guerrilla in the war of independence, as well as by the evident support of the local population Bouyali managed to avoid being tracked down by the authorities until early 1987 when he was finally killed in an ambush by the security services.[47]

The fall of Mustapha Bouyali represented the end of his sixteen month campaign of armed resistance. Those members of his group who had not been killed during the course of the campaign were virtually all put on trial by the authorities in July 1987. Compared to the relative leniency of the sentencing of those Islamists arrested in 1982, the sentences delivered on Bouyali's companions this time were far more severe. Reflecting an improved official confidence in the face of the Islamist challenge as well as a desire to deal harshly

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[45] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.580-581
[46] Taheri pp.180-181
[47] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.580-581; Taheri p.181; Burgat & Dowell p.267.

with this first serious attempt at armed insurrection by the movement, the courts acquitted just 15 of the 202 defendants with five members of the group receiving the death penalty[48].

7. Support for Islamism: 1979 - 1988

Whilst the 1980s witnessed a clear increase in the confidence and activism of Algeria's Islamists, the degree of popular support the movement actually enjoyed remained unclear. The absence of any institutional unity in the movement made any attempt at calculation of support difficult. Of the main individual groups, one observer estimated that, at most, the Muslim Brothers support was roughly 20,000 strong across the country.[49] The trials of Mustapha Bouyali's MAIA gave a more concrete indication of his following, the 202 defendants in the trials of 1987 reflecting in the view of one Algerian newspaper an activist base of around 600 during the decade.[50]

For the movement generally, the albeit imprecise figures for attendance at both the 12th November rally in Algiers in 1982 and the funeral of Abdellatif Soltani eighteen months later indicate five figure levels of active popular support for Islamism. However, Hugh Roberts has observed that the significance of this level of support is reduced when it is remembered that Al Qiyam's public gatherings in the 1960s had been able to attract similar crowds to that gathered in November 1982. Similarly, attendance at Soltani's funeral, although more substantial, was comparable to that at Messali Hadj's interment ten years earlier - both men being figures largely disapproved of by the authorities.[51] It would

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[48] Burgat & Dowell p.268
[49] Mohammed Boudiaf quoted in Knauss p.121
[50] *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.93
[51] Hugh Roberts: *From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition: The Expansion and Manipulation of Algerian Islamism, 1979-1992* in Martin E. Marty & R. Scott Appleby: *The Fundamentalism Project, Volume 4: Accounting for Fundamentalisms; The Dynamic Character of Movements* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994) p.446

therefore be fair to assume that the core support for the movement had not really increased over the whole period although it is probably true that support in the 1980s was up on the level it had declined to during the previous decade.

Nevertheless, the influence the movement appeared to have over Algerian society generally clearly increased in the 1980s. This was most noticeable in the areas of dress and public social behaviour with many more Algerians adopting Islamic dress and observing Islamic mores than had been the case in the 1960s and 1970s.

Estimating the level of support for the Islamist movement in the 1980s remained difficult, but identifying the sections of Algerian society that aligned themselves with the movement became easier as it became more open and assertive in this period. It appeared that the movement attracted an extremely wide and heterogeneous cross-section of the Algerian population. Students continued to provide the most organised and visible manifestation of Islamism, but the rally held at Algiers University in November 1982 also attracted significant numbers of workers, minor government functionaries and tradesmen.[52] The involvement of these groups has been explained in economic terms, liberalising economic reforms introduced by the government having increased unemployment in the 1980s thus threatening the livelihoods of these sections of the population as well as the job prospects of students.[53] However, whilst this probably had an impact, Islamism also appeared to have a robust following amongst elements of the bourgeoisie who provided, in the view of one commentator, the main source of support for the movement outside the universities.[54]

There appeared to be no particular geographic base for the movement either. Virtually all of the activism that was witnessed between 1979 and 1982

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[52] Lamchichi: *Islam et Contestation* p.158
[53] See for example Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* pp.108-109
[54] Burgat p.169

was centred in urban Algeria, but Mustapha Bouyali's campaign of the mid 1980s was based in and around the foothills of the Atlas mountains away from Algeria's major cities.[55] Bouyali's continued ability to evade capture by the authorities was in large part due to the support he and his group enjoyed locally in the small towns and villages of the region. Larbaa, the town in which Bouyali was finally cornered by the security services, has been described as one "notorious for its Islamist sympathies."[56] Furthermore, another observer writing in the 1980s argued that support for the Muslim Brothers was actually stronger in the villages and small towns of Algeria than in it cities.[57]

The trial of Bouyali's associates provided further evidence of the heterogeneous nature of Islamist support. Amongst the 202 defendants, there were workers (49), agricultural labourers (29), technicians (4), tradesmen (22), teachers (12), students (8), artisans (5), functionaries (7), several professionals as well as a number (13) of unemployed.[58] This wide cross section of backgrounds also indicated that even the radical stance adopted by Bouyali had no greater apparent appeal to one section of Algerian society over another.

One minor qualification to this overall conclusion that the Islamist movement did not seem to markedly attract particular areas of Algerian society was that age appeared to become a feature of Islamist support in the 1980s. Details of the backgrounds of the MAIA defendants give no real indication of their ages, but it was a noted fact that specifically *young* men became increasingly involved in

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[55] Initial units of the MAIA were to be found in Algiers, Oran, Sétif, Skikda but its real strength was to be found in the Sahel and the Mitidja region. *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.93; *El Watan* 1.3.94

[56] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.581 Roberts attributes this Islamist sympathy, common to other towns in the region, to social dislocation caused by migration from the hill villages thus enhancing the appeal of the Islamist message and its certainties.

[57] Knauss p.123

[58] Analysis by Mohammed Harbi in *Jeune Afrique Plus* September- October 1990 quoted in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.28n

Islamist activism in this period. This was not just confined to the universities. As Richard Parker observed in 1983:

> "..in Boumedienne's time, mosque attendance was like church attendance in Moscow - the old, the infirm and the idle made up the congregation. This has changed in the last five years - there is a marked increase in the number of young men congregating at mosques."[59]

The involvement of particularly young men in Islamist activism, like the involvement of students, was a notable feature to be found in Islamist movements elsewhere in the Muslim World. Increased feelings of confusion and alienation in societies which have experienced rapid change has been advanced as an explanation for this phenomenon. This having led the young to take refuge in the cultural and religious certainties of the Islamists' message.[60] In Algeria it was undoubtedly the declining economic and employment prospects of the 1980s that predominantly pushed young men towards supporting groups, such as the Islamists, who were highly critical of the ruling order.

8. Ideology and Agenda

The rather fragmentary nature of the Islamist movement during this period makes an effective analysis of the ideology and agenda of the movement, as a whole, rather difficult. Nevertheless, the various tracts, speeches, publications and activities of the different groups provided some good indications of the ideas and inclinations of Algeria's Islamists.[61]

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[59] Parker pp.97-98

[60] See, for example, Knauss p.123

[61] For most of this period the movement lacked a newspaper of its own of the sort published by Islamist groups in other countries, although in the period of relative political liberalism under Chadli, before the clampdown of late 1982, a number of Islamist publications began to appear. Knauss p.120; Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.149

Much of the apparent agenda of the Islamists into the 1980s seemed to share much of that espoused by earlier Islamists such as Al Qiyam and Ben Badis's Association of Algerian Ulama. Certain social, cultural and educational demands remained a central feature of Islamist campaigns and discourse. The list of demands drawn up by Abassi Madani, Abdellatif Soltani and Ahmed Sahnoun at the time of the mass meeting of 12 November 1982 contained many of the traditional Islamist demands of the AUMA and Al Qiyam and, moreover, reflected the three leaders' past membership of these organisations. Similarly, in education, demands for greater Quranic instruction and the ending of co-education and, indeed, of all education for women after the age of twelve, were regular features in Islamic propaganda and speeches. In other fields calls for more attention to Islamic themes and issues in the media were frequently heard as were the perennial concerns about women's social behaviour and dress.[62]

There were some detectable innovations in the ideology and agenda of the Islamists. There was a widening, in some sections of the movement, of the focus and attention of Islamist activism and thought from concentration on specific religious issues and individual policies of the government (such as those identified above) to a wider analysis of the whole nature of government and the state itself.[63] This development, beginning in the late 1970s, in the independent mosques, was described by one activist who witnessed the change:

> "These were no longer lessons dealing with how to pray or perform a fast and all that. No, these were lessons at a high level in which we explained, or we searched for a method by which we could live in an Islamic state....And we also touched on the problems which the Algerian nation was confronting. We spoke about everything. Of all the situations, the economy, of all the aspects of life."[64]

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[62] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* pp.85-87
[63] Burgat & Dowell p.261
[64] Doudi Mohammed Abdelhadi quoted in Burgat & Dowell p.261

Such new emphasis, as indicated, did not simply refer to the adoption of a more critical attitude towards the government. As Al Qiyam had done in the 1960s and Soltani in the 1970s, Islamists in the 1980s continued to attack the regime's espousal of socialism, branding President Chadli 'red' or 'pink' and condemning alleged corruption in high places.[65] However, by the late 1970s, Islamists had become increasing critical of the institution of the state itself arguing that the existing political structures led to glorification of the state rather than Islam and thus disrupted the unity of the wider Muslim *umma*.[66] Furthermore, Islamists began to propose an, albeit very unformulated, alternative to the existing Algerian state. The welter of tracts and leaflets produced and distributed by the Islamists during the unrest in November 1982 frequently called for the creation of an 'Islamic' republic and the abrogation of the National Charter of 1976 and its replacement, as a constitution, with the Quran.[67]

This shift has been explained as being largely the result of the rise of younger militants in the movement who were not only more radical but more intellectually oriented than the older generation of Islamists such as Soltani, who, one commentator argues was "partially marginalized" by this new influx.[68] This influx of new ideas and leaders was in turn largely the result of the continuing and growing influence of foreign Islamist thought and movements in Algeria.[69]

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[65] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.85
[66] Vatin:: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* p.106
[67] Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.86; Robin Wright: *Sacred Rage: The Wrath of Militant Islam* (André Deutsch, London, 1986) p.212
[68] Burgat & Dowell p.259
[69] Foreign Islamist thought, it ought to be stressed was itself far from homogeneous in nature and not all of it was radical in its ideology. The Egyptian Islamist movement, which had a particularly important ideological influence on Algerian Islamism, was divided by the 1970s between followers of the more radical and revolutionary ideas of Sayyid Qutb and the more mainstream Muslim Brotherhood who officially renounced violence. Given the hostility of Algerian Islamists to the Algerian regime and the use of violence by Mustapha Bouyali, John Entelis has observed that Algerian Islamism in the 1980s was "more radical

Despite this general observation of overall continuity with a more radical and politicised edge, the segmented nature of the Islamist movement in the 1980s ensured that there was no uniform ideology. Whilst many groups were influenced by foreign ideas, groups such as the Djazaira, even though they were numerically much smaller than groups such as the Muslim Brothers, still adhered to an essentially Algerian Islamist viewpoint. More importantly, whilst violence became an increasingly common aspect of Islamist activism, particularly in the universities[70], Mustapha Bouyali's belief in the necessity and efficacy of armed struggle to install an Islamic state by force was clearly one that was not shared by most of the wider Islamist movement, as indicated by Abassi Madani and Mahfoud Nahnah's opposition to his efforts.[71] The reality was that the Islamist movement as a whole possessed no coherent programme. Individual groups, themselves, invariably lacked anything approaching a comprehensive platform. For all the rhetoric about an Islamic state, no real alternative to the status quo was produced by Islamists in this period. This was a reflection of the fact that, unlike most other Islamist movements elsewhere in the Muslim world during this

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socially and politically" than the Muslim Brotherhood. Entelis: *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* p.85

[70] There had been other incidents of Islamist involvement in violence in this period notably serious clashes that occurred when the authorities tried to use police to re-establish control over an Islamist occuppied mosque in the town of Laghouat in September 1981 as well as continued sporadic attacks on 'improperly' dressed women and establishments selling alcohol. Hugh Roberts offers a more detailed explanation of the Islamists' increasing use of violence in this period. Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.577-578

[71] François Burgat asserts that Bouyali's use of armed violence was something that the rest of the Islamist movement in Algeria "were far from adopting." Burgat & Dowell p.268

time, the Algerian Islamist movement lacked any real intellectual figure of standing, thus further explaining the reliance on and appeal of foreign ideas.[72]

9. External Influences

The issue of the impact of developments abroad upon the Islamist movement in Algeria assumed a new importance from the late 1970s at the same time as Islamism itself began to attract greater attention from observers both within and beyond the Muslim world.

I. Iran

The main explanation for both of these developments was the revolution that took place in Iran in 1978-79. The particularly remarkable and unique feature of the Iranian revolution, which toppled what had appeared to be one of the developing world's most muscular regimes, was the clear presence and, indeed, pre-eminence of Islamist ideas and language in both the revolution's leadership and in its appeals to the Iranian people who participated in their millions in the mass demonstrations which finally ousted the regime of the Shah. Furthermore it was the subsequent assertion of this already dominant Islamist strain of the revolution in the period after the fall of the Shah which resulted in the actual founding of an 'Islamic Republic' in Iran.

These developments had obvious implications for Islamist movements across the rest of the Muslim world as these groups realised that the overthrow of a ruling regime and the establishment of a society run according to Islamic principles was possible. This was no less the case for Algeria's Islamists. One of the main implications of the events in Iran was that they caused an intellectual

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[72] Such a lack of intellectual leadership was apparently even acknowledged by Bouyali himself who had stated that he was willing to step aside for a more learned figure to lead his group. Burgat & Dowell p.265

break with the essential conservatism that had been a feature of the movement since the time of Ben Badis. The popular and revolutionary nature of the Islamist movement in Iran helped also to divest Algeria's Islamists of the label of reactionaries.[73]

This helps explain the shift to the much more radical stance towards the state that the Islamist movement in Algeria adopted from the late 1970s. As has been shown, the prime movers behind this change were new younger members of the movement and it certainly appears that the Iranian revolution had a particular impact on the youth. [74] An illuminating anecdote bearing this out was told by a western Ambassador who related the story of an English teacher he knew who, in the early 1980s, asked her class of young students to write an essay about the country in the world that they most admired. Over 70% of the class chose to write about Iran.[75]

This was not to say that older members of the Islamist movement were not impressed by the example set by Iran's Islamists. In debates over unifying the Algerian movement, Sheikh Soltani had used the example of the revolution in Iran to argue the case against the establishment of a formal Islamist political party in Algeria, pointing out that Ayatollah Khomeini had not had the backing of an organised religious party when he had toppled one of the mightiest dictatorships in the Muslim world.[76]

Paradoxically, the Iranian revolution also appeared to have an impact on another prominent older Algerian who had hitherto had no involvement at all with the Islamist movement. The apparent conversion to the ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini by Algeria's first President, Ahmed Ben Bella, was a particularly surprising development given his unpopularity with the Islamists during his brief

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[73] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* pp.106-107
[74] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.26
[75] Wright p.213
[76] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.159

period in power between 1962 and 1965. His founding of the Movement for Democracy in Algeria (MDA) in 1984 and his launching, from voluntary exile in Switzerland, of a newspaper *Al Badil*, aimed at uniting Algeria's various Islamist groups under a single banner. However, despite the historical weight and influence that Ben Bella might have wielded through these means, it seems that they were the result of opportunism on the part of the former President and indeed this was largely recognised as such by Algeria's Islamists who saw him as an "unrepented socialist" and had little to do with him. This rendered negligible his overall influence on the Islamist movement in the 1980s.[77]

Besides the clear inspiration the Iranian revolution and its aftermath gave to Algeria's Islamists, evidence of more direct and tangible Iranian involvement in the activities of the movement was hard to find. The regime was evidently concerned about the influence of events in Iran and the much talked about 'export' of the revolution. Its recruitment of Sheikh Ghazali was primarily to combat this influence and it often alleged foreign and Iranian funding of Islamist groups.[78] It appears, though, that these fears were largely unfounded. As one observer remarked in 1984, emphasising the important fact that the specifically Shi'ite nature of the Iranian revolution limited its applicability to non-Shi'ite countries:

> "...while Khomeini may provide an inspiring example...Shi'i missionaries from Iran do not appear to be active in Sunni Algeria, and it is doubtful that they would have a following if they did."[79]

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[77] Burgat & Dowell p.260; Taheri p.182

[78] Taheri p.182. Following the events of late 1982, President Chadli blamed the disturbances on small groups inspired and paid by foreigners (Arkoun p.173) and during the same period the authorities published photos of suspects believed to have been involved in Islamist violence and who were described in the press as supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini (Knauss p.139). It has also been suggested that the regime's first attempt at introducing a more Islamic Family Code in 1981 was as a reaction to the Iranian revolution and the more perceptible growth of the Islamist movement in its wake (Knauss p.125)

[79] Parker p.100

Nevertheless, there does appear to be evidence to suggest, if not comprehensive links with the Algerian movement, then periodic instances of co-operation and co-ordination with individual groups. Mustapha Bouyali is believed to have spent time in both Libya and the Islamic Republic during the period 1983-84 before returning to Algeria to begin his campaign of armed insurrection. Furthermore, a statement reputedly put out by Bouyali's group in April 1986 appeared to indicate that the MAIA allied itself with the 'Party of Allah' of Iran and that six out of the seven leaders of the grouping named by the statement (which appeared also to announce the group's further metamorphosis into a group called 'Islamic Jihad') had spent time in the Party of Allah's training camps in Iran and Lebanon.[80] Apart from this, though, the only other evidence of Iranian involvement is the belief by one external observer that some branches of the Muslim Brothers might be organised by Iranians and the fact that the Iranian Embassy in Algiers appeared at times to be a rallying point for some Islamists during the early 1980s.[81]

II. Other and General Influences

Ideological influence and example, rather than direct involvement and co-operation, appeared also to be the main contribution made by other external Islamist influences to Algeria's Islamist movement in this period. Such influence and example was most obviously demonstrated by the appearance of various forms of dress, behaviour and demands by Algeria's Islamists which quite clearly had their origins elsewhere. A particular example of this was the growth in the early 1980s in the number of petitions to the authorities who ran public buildings

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[80] Taheri pp.181-182

[81] Mohammed Boudiaf quoted in Knauss p.120; Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.26

and factories that some provision be made for a place of prayer.[82] This provision had been common in the Levant but was, until the demands by what were evidently Islamist sympathisers, noticeably absent in the Maghreb. More established aspects of Islamist activity in Algeria, such as attacks on establishments selling alcohol and upon women deemed to be 'immodestly' dressed, which continued in this period also duplicated practices first witnessed outside Algeria.[83]

The use of the black chador of the Arabian peninsula by Islamist women increased notably in the 1980s, from its first rare appearances on the university campuses in the 1960s, as did other forms of dress from the Arab East. By the mid 1980s these practices were augmented by the appearance of clothing from even further east as Algerian volunteers in the war against the Russian army in Afghanistan gradually returned in 1986-87. They brought back not only Afghan 'fashions' but also militant and violent ideas that the conflict had both attracted and engendered.[84]

One of the main reasons for the increasing influence of ideas and examples from elsewhere in the Muslim world in this period was the discovery and growing use by Islamists across the Middle East of the audio cassette. By recording and producing multiple copies of sermons delivered by prominent Islamist preachers, ideas could be circulated very rapidly throughout the Islamist movement both at home and abroad. The circulation of these cassettes, usually brought back by those going on pilgrimage, was not simply limited to the 'religiously active.' Algeria's Islamists increasingly encouraged their dissemination amongst the

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[82] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* pp.100-101 Besides the demand for 'mosque space' these petitions often also included demands that alcohol be prohibited in canteens and that certain imams be given free access to the establishment's facilities. Ibid. p.106

[83] Parker p.98-99

[84] Author's interviews with eyewitnesses.

general population as well so that the ideas of preachers from as far away as Egypt, Kuwait and Syria could reach as wide an audience as possible.[85]

Ironically, the Algerian state itself assisted in the spreading of Islamist ideas. The media coverage given to Sheikh Mohammed Ghazali in Algeria, whilst undermining support for more radical forms of Islamism, helped, in many observers' views, to actually underpin Islamism generally. The large audiences the Egyptian preacher was able to attract encouraged Algeria's Islamists who welcomed such a significant platform for religious ideas and also the fact that it helped legitimise debate on Algeria's Islamic nature and future.[86]

Beyond this, though, the role external factors played in the development of Algeria's Islamist movement in this period was limited. Indeed, Algeria's movement seemed to be more autonomous than similar movements in other countries. Compared to the Islamist groupings in, for example, Egypt and Tunisia, the Algerian movement did not appear to receive significant funding from outside and even its Muslim Brothers did not appear to have as close organisational connection with the original Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as their namesakes in Syria, Sudan and Jordan.[87]

Whilst the ideological contribution of external influences to the Algerian Islamist movement was substantial and even arguably predominant, the nature, make-up and strength of Algerian Islamism was very much determined by domestic factors and events. The evident rise in Islamic activism that occurred in Algeria from the end of the 1970s had more to do with the death of President Boumedienne in 1978 than with the Iranian revolution. The precise coincidence

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[85] Parker pp.99-100; Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* pp.177-179

[86] Taheri p.182 Although close to President Chadli Benjedid, who clearly benefitted, from the respected cleric's backing, Ghazali was also known to have good relations with Abassi Madani during his time in Algeria thus underlining the links with Algerian Islamists. Author's interview with Hussein Amin, Egyptian Ambassador to Algeria 1987-90, Cairo, 13.6.94

[87] Knauss p.121

(December 1978) of Boumedienne's death with the effective collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran makes the disentangling of the relative influence of domestic and external factors all the more difficult.[88]

10. The Algerian Regime in the 1980s: Crisis and Decline

The domestic factors and events that had such a determining influence on the development of Algeria's Islamist movement took the form in the 1980s of a growing series of difficulties that the Algerian regime encountered and which clearly aided and facilitated the re-emergence of a more robust manifestation of Islamism.

The abrupt departure of President Houari Boumedienne, the dominant figure in independent Algerian history, from the helm of the Algerian state in December 1978 is clearly significant. Many of the problems the Algerian government faced politically from the late 1970s (it should not be forgotten that this period was marked by feminist, leftist, Berberist as well as Islamist activity and unrest) were as much due to the new regime under Chadli Benjedid lacking the legitimacy and the charismatic leadership that the Boumedienne regime had enjoyed as to the new regime's initially less repressive attitude towards dissent.[89] The unexpected death of Boumedienne and the consequent demise of his only semi-implemented plans for Algeria's social, political and economic development threw Algeria into confusion and opened the way for a growth in the appeal of Islamism. In the view of Hugh Roberts, this "eleventh hour collapse" of Boumedienne's ambitious nationalist project embodied in the *Révolution Socialiste* (see previous chapter) left many, particularly young, Algerians politically 'orphaned.' Having been inspired and mobilised by Boumedienne's "vision of the just society" they found themselves deprived of a guiding influence

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[88] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.27
[89] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* p.103

and vision when the President so unexpectedly died. Many of these subsequently found themselves drawn towards the group in society which did appear to offer a similar "vision of a just society." Ironically, this was Boumedienne's old adversaries in the Islamist movement who, in turn, were heartened by the removal from the political scene of the figure who had all but eliminated them in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[90]

Boumedienne's departure also heralded the beginning of a period of increasing popular disillusionment with and alienation from the government and regime. For many Algerians Boumedienne's charisma and comprehensive vision for Algerian society had encouraged them to continue their at least tacit support for his government and for the time being, until his national 'project' was completed, persuaded them to overlook the many social, economic and political shortcomings of the Algerian state. The accession to power of Chadli Benjedid, who had neither the charisma nor vision of his predecessor meant that these popular grievances came increasingly into the open.

I. The Political Field: The Absence of Consent

The continued lack of opportunity for political expression outside the strict confines of the officially ruling FLN, meant that there was bound to be some form of political unrest as indeed the Berberist, leftist and Islamist unrest of the late 1970s and early 1980s demonstrated. Although Chadli Benjedid had introduced some degree of liberalisation soon after he had come to power, much of this was subsequently rescinded following the unrest. Chadli's accession to the Presidency also signalled an increased role for the military in Algerian politics, the army, like every other group, having been subject to the dominance of Boumedienne during the previous two decades. This new influence for the military heightened popular perceptions of the exclusive and repressive nature of

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[90] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* pp.575-576

the regime, particularly as the President came to increasingly rely on a small number of senior military figures for advice. [91]

Aspects of the Islamist discourse and agenda can be interpreted as reflecting popular concerns about the political monopoly exercised by the regime through the FLN: the regular references to the concepts of justice and egalitarianism in Islamist discourses being linked to the idea of the law. In the view of many Algerians, the whole idea of the rule of law (which, it should not be forgotten, plays an important role in traditional Muslim society) had been put to one side by the post-independence regime in its drive towards the implementation of its revolutionary ideology. This absence of the rule of law together with the evident corruption, nepotism and abuse of power, which are inevitable features of closed political systems, produced an increasing popular resentment against the regime (particularly since the passing of Boumedienne, under whom such vices grew but were largely tolerated) which found an echo and a possible solution in the Islamist talk of a return to the rule of law.[92]

II. The Economic Field: Inequality and Decline

The regime was also gradually losing the confidence of the populace in its handling of the economy. Boumedienne's ambitious programme of heavy industrialisation had not produced the promised economic and social dividends for Algeria. Chadli's progressive abandonment of his predecessor's economic project in favour of a more liberalised economy inevitably led to the loss of jobs from overmanned inefficient state industries. Such redundancies boosted already high (15-20%) unemployment figures which would be inevitably swollen, as time

[91] Author's interview with Abdelhamid Brahimi, Prime Minister of Algeria 1984-88, London, 19.12.94. Brahimi claims that following his 're-election' as President in 1984, Chadli, who had previously consulted widely on policy, came to rely almost exclusively on General Larbi Belkheir, who became his Cabinet Secretary.
[92] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.586

progressed, by Algeria's consistently high birth rate. During 1980-84 alone the population grew from 18.3 million to 21.6 million.[93] Chadli's liberalisation also led to greater economic inequalities within Algeria which contrasted badly in the public perception with Boumedienne's clear commitment, whatever his other failings, to social and economic egalitarianism.[94] Such social and economic problems, which quite clearly worsened as the 1980s progressed, boosted support for the Islamists. This was not only because it fuelled disillusionment and anger at the regime, but also because Chadli's economic policies, even more so than Boumedienne's, were associated with western influence and ideas - things traditionally identified by the Islamists as being at the root of many of Algeria's troubles. As with more politically oriented grievances there was similarly no real channel for ordinary Algerians to express their growing concern and distress at their worsening economic position. For many, traditional religion became a means of both refuge from and protest at the failures of modernity.[95]

III: The FLN: The Decline in Legitimacy and the Challenge of Islamism

The swell of alienation and dissatisfaction with the failed economic, social and political promises of the regime was not peculiar to Algeria: many other countries in the Middle East experienced similar popular shifts in the 1970s and 1980s. What marked Algeria out from other countries in this regard were the implications this shift in popular perceptions had for Algeria in the context of its revolutionary origins as a state. When the FLN came to power in 1962 at the end of the bloody eight-year struggle against the French it arguably enjoyed greater popular support and legitimacy than any other comparable regime in the region, having proven itself beyond question as the champion of Algeria's Muslim

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[93] Mahfoud Benoune: *The Making of Contemporary Algeria: 1830-1987* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988) p.286
[94] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.586
[95] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* p.103

population. Growing realisation of the complete failure of the Party and the regime amongst the population, which had experienced the war of independence and hoped for so much in its aftermath, provoked a degree of disillusionment in the Algerian population unexperienced by the populations of other states in the region whose regimes had been established by coup or dynastic succession.

It has been argued that this break of confidence with the post-independence regime had consequently led many Algerians to look around for some true successor to the spirit and ideals of the original revolutionary FLN. Several commentators argued that it is in this capacity that Algeria's Islamist movement showed themselves to be suitable inheritors of the revolutionary and truly authentic mantle of the Algerian national identity. This inheritance came not only from the involvement of Ben Badis's Association of Algerian Ulama in laying the groundwork and allying with the FLN in the independence struggle but also stemmed from other more concrete continuities with the war of independence. Chief amongst these continuities is that of personnel. Senior figures in the Islamist movement of the 1980s, such as Abassi Madani and Mustapha Bouyali participated in the war as part of the FLN. The fact that Abassi had been one of the relatively small group of Algerians who had launched assaults against symbols and institutions of French rule on All Saints Day in November 1954 (the recognised start of the war of independence) indisputably gave a high degree of personal legitimacy to both himself and the Islamist movement of which he had become a senior figure.[96]

It seems that there was also a certain continuity between the outlook and behaviour of the historic revolutionary FLN and the Islamists of later years. The totality of adherence Islamist groups began to demand from their followers, the methods they used and the absolute conviction with which they conducted their mission "all vividly recall the behaviour of the wartime FLN" in the view of Hugh

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[96] Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.580

Roberts.[97] At the same time Islamism had also come to represent a form of competition to the vision and hegemony of the FLN challenging it by using the same methods and language that the revolutionary party originally used. Implicit in this state-FLN / Islamist clash, Jean-Claude Vatin also sees competition existing, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s between rival forms of Islamism. These were the socially 'radical' interpretation espoused by the supporters of Boumedienne who saw no contradiction between his socialist-style policies and the progressive ideals of Islamic reformism; and the 'conservative' Islam of the Islamists. However, with the death of Boumedienne and with him his ideological vision, the more pragmatic and managerial Algerian regime under Chadli encountered mounting difficulties in dealing with the sort of specifically ideological questions thrown up by the Islamists.[98]

11. Conclusions

A number of significantly new developments were witnessed in the Islamist movement during the decade that followed Boumedienne's death.

Firstly, and most importantly, the Islamist movement was far more active and assertive during this period than it had been at any time in Algeria's history - both before and since independence. Whilst lacking the central focus of a single unified organisation such as the Association of Ulama and Al Qiyam, which had existed in previous decades, Islamism was by the 1980s much more of a movement than a vague tendency tipped by a vocal pressure group as had arguably formerly been the case. Although this movement was numerically no stronger than it had been in the 1960s and remained fragmented between an array of groups and tendencies, a significant degree of co-ordination operated at an informal, if not institutional level. The fact that tens of thousands of people

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Vatin: *Popular Puritanism versus State Reformism* pp.107-108 & p.119

turned out for Abdellatif Soltani's funeral in April 1984, despite it occurring just the day after he died and there having been no mention of the Sheihk's death in the media, was evidence of the strength and extent of informal links between Algeria's Islamists.[99] The greater influence the Islamists appeared able to exert in this period was borne out by both the wider popular conformity to Islamist ideals of social dress and behaviour and by the regime's increased incorporation of Islamist demands and language into its own programme.[100]

Such activism, at its height during the years 1979-82, was notable not just for its raised profile (compared to the clandestinity of the 1970s) and its significant influence in various parts of Algerian society, particularly the universities, but also for its substantially more radical and militant nature. The almost habitual use of violence by Islamists in pursuing their aims in the late 1970s and early 1980s represented a break with the tactics of previous periods and also reflected the movement's new and fundamentally hostile attitude towards the regime and the state itself. This was in contrast to the stance of the Islamists in the 1960s and 1970s who had voiced their antipathy only towards specific individual policies of the state. The petition of demands presented by Abassi, Soltani and Sahnoun in November 1982 was of great significance since it set out for the first time a platform for the Islamist movement and thus issued a direct challenge to the state. In response, the state offered nothing of any substance that was new in terms of methods of controlling and eliminating the Islamists. The old approach of combining repression with concession and co-option was continued with mixed effectiveness.[101]

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[99] Wright p.212

[100] Roberts: *From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition* pp.446-447

[101] Hugh Roberts argues that although Chadli Benjedid consciously copied the largely successful twin-pronged strategy of repression and co-option of the Islamist tendency employed by Boumediene in the 1960s and 1970s, he embarked on measures of co-option and incorporation of religion *before* the activists of the Islamist movement had been properly suppressed. In contrast, Boumediene had effectively crushed organisations such as Al Qiyam before he

Discussion as to why there should be an upsurge in Islamist activity during this period revolves around two broad suggested factors: that it was the result of the influence of factors and events outside Algeria, and that it was the product of particular developments within Algeria itself. Both the timing of the emergence and many of the characteristics of Algeria's Islamist groups have clear and unmistakable parallels with similar groups and developments elsewhere in the Muslim and Arab world. However, it seems fairly apparent that whilst external factors, such as the Iranian revolution, gave shape and direction to Algeria's Islamist movement, the support it enjoyed and many of its expressions were overwhelmingly the result of changes in the country's internal political, social and economic climate both before, but particularly after, the death of Houari Boumedienne. It was his departure that provided something of a psychological as well as a political and economic watershed in Algeria's post independence history.

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launched, for example, the 'Campaign Against the Degradation of Morals.' Roberts thus argues that Chadli's approach left Islamist morale and support intact. Roberts: *Radical Islamism* p.579

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THE EMERGENCE OF THE FIS: 1988 - 1990

As Algeria entered the late 1980s it appeared that the regime had effectively solved its Islamist 'problem.' What notable agitation it had experienced in 1982-83 had not resurfaced as the decade progressed; the one exception of Bouyali's campaign being small-scale and geographically confined. In contrast to most other Muslim countries in this period, notably its immediate neighbour, Tunisia, Algeria did not see Islamist activism and membership of Islamist groups increase in the mid to late 1980s. However, by the turn of the decade Algeria was widely acknowledged as having one of the largest and potentially most influential Islamist movements in the entire Muslim world. The reasons for this rapid and unexpected development lay in the chain of events that resulted from the dramatic crisis that gripped Algeria in the closing months of 1988.

1. The Riots of October 1988

The severe rioting that swept across most of Algeria's major cities in the first two weeks of October 1988 and which resulted in large-scale destruction of property and the death of several hundred people constituted a crisis unprecedented in Algeria's independent history. Not least so for the regime whose tactics of repression, involving the use of the army's firepower against protesters as well as torture of those arrested, not only failed to make headway against the sheer size and heterogeneous nature of the demonstrations (which had grown out of a wide range of strikes and protests that had built-up through the previous summer), but also served to fuel the unrest and fatally undermine the waning popular legitimacy of the regime.

The reasons underlying this explosion of popular anger have been the subject of intense debate. Particularly between those commentators who point to

the sharp slide in living standards and growth in economic inequality in Algeria over the preceding few years as the major cause of the unrest, and those who see it primarily as an expression of a desire on the part of the Algerian people for a more liberal political system.[1] More complicating were conflicting suspicions and assertions that the demonstrations and riots were deliberately orchestrated by rival elements within the regime itself seeking to use the crisis as a weapon in internal battles. Furthermore, a significant amount of foreign media attention during the crisis focused on the role played by Islamists in the protests, demonstrations and rioting and even on the question of whether this was an Islamically-inspired uprising.

Much still remains unanswered about the real origins of these *Evénements d'Octobre*, as they became known, although it seems clear that they swiftly mobilised a significant section of the population that harboured deep and bitter resentments at the failings of the Algerian regime. The riots certainly appeared to have a political dimension given the fact that buildings and vehicles associated with the regime were targeted by rioters. However, the fact that there had been a growing popular perception that senior figures in the government and bureaucracy had corruptly benefited from Chadli Benjedid's economic reform programme whilst the rest of the population bore the brunt of Algeria's worsening economic position, clearly indicated that political and economic factors were inter-linked. This was demonstrated by the fact that businesses and institutions believed to have also unjustly benefited during the previous decade became the subject of attacks during October.

Most informed commentators were, however, united in asserting that the mainly foreign theories advanced concerning Islamists' role in precipitating the

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[1] For these two opposing points of view see Mahfoud Benoune: *Algeria's Facade of Democracy* in *Middle East Report* (March-April 1990) and Lynette Rummel: *Privatization and Democratization in Algeria* in John P. Entelis and Phillip C. Naylor: *State and Society in Algeria* (Westview, Boulder, 1992) pp.53-71

unrest were some way from the truth. Islamist activity and sloganeering were only witnessed several days into the start of the unrest thus testifying to the reality that Islamism had had no part in inspiring the demonstrators and rioters and that the Islamists were merely riding the popular bandwagon.[2]

Algeria's Islamists had, in fact, been largely taken by surprise by the events and took some days to formulate their response to these clearly portentous developments. The fragmented nature of the movement meant that, as had been the case in the 1980s, a response was unlikely to be unanimous and unified. As many of the senior Islamist figures hesitated over their response, Ahmed Sahnoun and Abassi Madani met and decided that they should arrange a peaceful march for Friday 7th both to make their presence felt and to test official attitudes towards the movement. [3] Attended by an estimated 6-8,000 Islamist supporters, the march, which took place in the Algiers quarter of Belcourt, attracted immediate attention as it became not only the first politically homogenous demonstration. More importantly, it became the first to be fired upon by the army who had been called on to the streets the previous day.[4]

The deaths of nearly fifty marchers convinced Ahmed Sahnoun that such a tactic should not be repeated by the Islamists, but the events of the day had brought to the fore another Islamist leader who took a very different line. Ali Belhadj, a young, fiery and increasingly popular preacher at the Al-Sunna mosque in Bab el-Oued had played a significant role both in organising and whipping up support for the march. Despite the death toll, the young preacher began to organise a second march to be held just three days later on 10th October. In the face of vehement opposition from Ahmed Sahnoun, who together

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[2] See particularly *The Middle East* 11.88
[3] Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* p.148
[4] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.233

with the leader of the Djazaira, Mohammed Said, tried to stop the planned march, the march took place, this time attracting an estimated crowd of 20,000.[5]

Although this march resulted also in bloodshed, with over thirty people being shot dead by the army, its repercussions came to benefit the Islamists. Whether the Islamists were perceived to be leaders or opportunists by the mass of ordinary Algerians who took to the streets in October 1988 is uncertain. What does seem clear is that they were identified by the regime as playing a central role. Whilst this recognition might initially have resulted in greater repression being inflicted on Islamists on the streets, it rapidly worked to the Islamists' ultimate advantage. Progressively realising that the situation on the streets was moving beyond that which could be controlled by a security clamp down, Algeria's leaders began to search for spokesmen for the largely 'headless' revolt that they were witnessing, with whom they could strike some agreement to halt the violence.[6] The receipt by Chadli Benjedid of an open letter from Ahmed Sahnoun on October 13, containing a list of measures that the regime should take to end the crisis, appeared to provide the regime with the appropriate potential spokesman for the rioters. Consequently, Sahnoun together with Ali Benhaj, Abassi Madani and Mahfoud Nahnah were invited to see the President to listen to their grievances. As François Burgat remarks:

> "The choice was highly symbolic. The president had just admitted the Islamists were part of the group that would allow him to renew his contract with civil society."[7]

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[5] *Algérie Actualité* 12.10.89; Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* p.149

[6] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.29

[7] Burgat & Dowell p.270. Sahnoun's letter of 13 October had called for the lifting of the state of siege that had been imposed from 6 October, greater job creation and a more equal distribution of wealth. *Algérie Actualité* 12.10.89

2. Political Reform and the New Constitution

By 13 October civil order had more or less been restored. The President went on national television to announce the government's intention to introduce a number of political reforms which would seek to address the grievances that had given rise to 'the events of October.' This intention initially took effect in the sacking of several senior figures in the regime, particularly those associated with the excesses of the brutal security clamp down during the unrest, and making constitutional amendments to make the government responsible to the National Assembly. However, it soon became clear that Chadli intended to go much further than simple constitutional adjustments. Following his formal 're-election' (he was the sole candidate) as President at the end of December 1988, he set about drafting and introducing an entirely new constitution which was formally endorsed by popular referendum in February 1989.

The new constitution's most remarkable and important feature was its removal of the twenty-five-year-old party political monopoly exercised by the FLN. The constitution accorded Algerians the right to form 'associations of a political character.' The implications of this for Algerian political life were clear: Chadli appeared to be opening up the closed Algerian political system to other groups and forces who might wish to have a say.

The reasons behind this startlingly comprehensive shift in policy by the President, more extraordinary given the fact that demands for political liberalisation of this type had not featured prominently in the unrest of October, are another source of great controversy. Abdelhamid Brahimi, Chadli's Prime Minister who was sacked in the wake of the October crisis, believed that the President's move had been partly the result of pressure from abroad, particularly

from France, to open up Algeria's political system.[8] However it seems certain that the main reason for the President's move was a desire to frustrate his opponents within the Algerian regime.

By the late 1980s the President had clearly lost much of the, albeit modest, popularity he had enjoyed both within and outside the regime during his first term as President. Internal opposition appears to have mounted along two axes: political dissatisfaction with Chadli's rule and increasing dissent with his policies of economic liberalisation that had been pursued since 1980. On the political front Chadli's increasingly closed methods of policy making, relying on a small clique of military officers, had led several senior FLN figures, notably Mohammed Chérif Messadia, the FLN number two, and Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, the Foreign Minister, to look for an alternative candidate when Chadli's second term as president came to an end in late 1988. According to Abdelhamid Brahimi, this possibility of not being re-selected by the party led Chadli to instigate trouble in October 1988 at the end of his second term, thus provoking a national crisis which allowed him to achieve re-selection by the FLN and the National Assembly through casting himself as a unifying and reforming figure.[9] The crisis also enabled the President to sack both Messadia and Ibrahimi as a convenient part of his efforts to demonstrate a break with the pre-October regime.

The President also faced considerable hostility towards his reforms from that section of the FLN and the bureaucracy that objected to the abandonment and dismantling of Boumedienne's socialist project on either ideological grounds or because of the threat it posed to their own administrative and financial power bases. It is therefore argued that Chadli seized the opportunity presented by the crisis of October 1988 (whether or not he deliberately provoked it) to open up the

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[8] Author's interview with Abdelhamid Brahimi, Algerian Prime Minister 1984-88, London, 19.12.94

[9] Ibid.

political system to provide competition to his enemies within the FLN and thus hamper or at least distract their efforts to oppose him.[10] Such a move was also seen as having similar implications for critics of Chadli's political rule. At the same time Chadli ensured that his own powers as president in the new constitution remained substantial and distinct from those of the FLN.

3. The Islamist Response: The Creation of the FIS

The moves towards political liberalisation had obvious potential implications for the Islamists. Boosted both in confidence and strength by their participation in the events of October and, more importantly, by the formal recognition the authorities had extended to them by inviting them to become interlocutors for the mass unrest, many Islamists believed that this opening-up of the political system could work to their benefit.

The immediate aftermath of the October crisis saw the creation of the first body that sought to bring all of the various Islamist groups and leaders together under one, albeit loose, institutional framework. The *Rabitat Dawa* (League of the Islamic Call) did not, however, represent an attempt by Algeria's Islamists to create an organisation which would seek to take advantage of the regime's new liberalism (which took time to become apparent). Its creation was a response to the events of October but aimed more at unifying the ranks of the movement that had become dangerously divided during the crisis. Abassi Madani's and particularly Ali Belhadj's swift reaction had created tensions between them and those leading Islamist figures who had hesitated to become involved. Ahmed Sahnoun thus became the driving force behind the creation of the Rabitat Dawa

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[10] Rhys Payne: *Economic Crisis and Policy Reform in the 1980s* in I. William Zartman and William Mark Habeeb: *Polity and Society in Contemporary North Africa* (Westview, Boulder, 1993) p.161

to prevent fissures appearing within the co-operating, if not formally unified, ranks of the Islamists.

It soon became apparent that, despite Sahnoun's efforts, the Rabitat would not be able to contain the tensions and dynamics that emerged in the Islamist movement in the wake of the October crisis. The effective entry of several of its senior figures into the realm of politics during that month had given rise to various hopes and beliefs that involvement in politics could be to the clear advantage of the movement, particularly if the significant popular and official attention and regard they had attracted could be exploited. Such thoughts were clearly encouraged by indications by 1989 that the regime planned to open up the political system to other groups and political parties. The essentially apolitical nature of the Rabitat Dawa, which explicitly sought to work for the defence and propagation of Islamic values, meant that it was not an ideal vehicle for political mobilisation. It therefore was concluded that a separate specifically political Islamist party needed to be formed to take best advantage of the rapidly opening up political landscape.

Accounts about the precise origins of the idea of an Islamist political party vary, but according to the newspaper subsequently published by the eventual party, the idea was originally that of Hachemi Sahnouni, official Imam of the Al-Sunna mosque. He shared his thoughts with Ali Benhaj, who frequently preached at Al-Sunna, who had himself been thinking along similar lines and who proposed putting the idea to the other senior members of the Rabitat. The first figure Sahnouni and Belhadj approached was Abassi Madani, who Belhadj had become increasingly close to following October. Welcoming the idea, Madani proposed that the new organisation be called the *Front Islamique du Salut* in conscious evocation of the Front element of the old FLN of which he had been one of the earliest members.[11]

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[11] Burgat & Dowell pp.273-274; Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.30

The idea was less well-received amongst other Islamist leaders. The concept of an Islamist party was a controversial one and one that had been rejected in the past. In the early 1980s Abdellatif Soltani had made clear his opposition to the formation of an Islamist political party arguing that the whole idea was associated with factions and divisions. He believed that the informal movement of various groups served the movement's aims of education and propagation far better.[12] Similarly, many of the senior figures in the Rabitat expressed their doubts when approached. Many held to the view that the central task of the movement had always been and should remain the gradual re-Islamisation of the Algerian state and society through preaching and education, rather than through politics.[13] Other reservations were voiced. Mohammed Said of the Djazaira argued that the movement should wait to see what other political developments occurred and what other parties appeared before committing itself in this manner. Abdallah Djaballah similarly counselled patience, his procrastination like many of the others hiding an understandable reluctance to surrender control of the groups and constituencies that had been carefully built up since the 1970s. Mahfoud Nahnah of the Muslim Brothers was more forthright in his rejection of the idea claiming that there were already enough groups within the broader Islamist movement. He expressed his fear that such a party might be led by "kids" rather than the proper and appropriate leadership of religious scholars.[14]

This dissent, however, was not sufficient to crush the idea of an Islamist political party which gained further impetus with the unveiling of the new constitution on 5 February 1989. Thirteen days later on February 18 the formation of the *Front Islamique du Salut* was officially announced, five days

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[12] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* pp.158-159
[13] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.75
[14] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.30-31

before the new constitution was approved by national referendum. On March 9 the party held its founding meeting. Although the new party, which swiftly became known by its acronym FIS, attracted a wide array of senior Islamist clerics and figures, the majority of whom constituted the party's *majlis shura*, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj remained the only two truly high-profile Islamist figures who participated in the launch of the party. There is some speculation as to whether, given their reservations, the other figures were formally invited to join the party. Certainly Ahmed Sahnoun when telephoned by a journalist soon after the founding of the FIS tersely replied: "They did not wait for us. We were not present."[15] Similarly, Abdallah Djaballah, when asked about his 'decision' to not join the FIS stated simply that "They left me."[16]

The absence of senior Islamist figures (which also included Said and Nahnah) meant that the FIS only represented a part of Algeria's Islamist movement and this had significant implications for the future development of the new party. It meant that the new party would be able to pursue a far more popular and political course than would have been the case with the involvement of figures such as Sahnoun, Djaballah and Nahnah. The more intellectual and specifically religious orientation of these three leaders was a likely handicap in the sort of multiparty competition for mass support that the new Algerian constitution heralded. The effective assumption of the top two positions in the new party by Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, the two Islamist figures who had had the most experience of popular mobilisation for the Islamist cause (Belhadj in 1988 and Abassi in both 1988 and 1982) was a clear indication that the new party would pursue a more popular and political direction. It seems unlikely though that Sahnoun, Djaballah and Nahnah might have been, for the above reasons, *deliberately* excluded as some have suggested The three had already expressed

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[15] *Algérie Actualité* 12.10.89
[16] Author's interview with Abdallah Djaballah, London, 7.10.94

reservations when originally canvassed and that Abassi and Belhadj were unable to see the success that a popular-political strategy would later bring them.[17] Nevertheless, it is probable that the new leaders of the FIS had been encouraged by their political experience and thus were willing to forge ahead with the project of the political party without the participation of other senior figures. It is also more than likely that personal ambition had at least some part to play on all sides.

4. Legal Recognition for the FIS: September 1989

Despite the dissenting voices, the newly-formed FIS grew strongly in its first few months. However, the formation of a political party did not, of itself, guarantee meaningful participation in Algeria's emerging political system: several potential obstacles stood in the way of this aspiration. Firstly, the interpretation and application of the new constitution had to be debated by the National Assembly (the APN: which, it should be noted, was still made up exclusively of FLN members) and made into law. More importantly for the Islamists of the FIS, was the likelihood that the law that emerged on permitting "associations of a political character" would ban a specifically Islamist political party such as the FIS. In both Egypt and neighbouring Tunisia, two countries that were also making attempts to liberalise their political systems in this period, steps had been taken to prevent the participation of an Islamist party in elections. In Tunisia this took the form of explicitly denying official recognition to the Islamist Nahda (Renaissance) Party because of its religious basis.

When the new law on political parties finally emerged from the National Assembly in July 1989, it appeared that the Algerian authorities had closely followed the example of their Tunisian neighbours. The new law banned "sectarian practice" and any party organised "on an exclusively confessional basis." Quite clearly then, the FIS seemed highly unlikely, on the basis of this

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[17] Hugh Roberts: *From Radical Mission* pp.449-452

legislation, to gain the official recognition that would allow it to participate in the series of multi-party elections the regime appeared to be opening the way for. Nevertheless, the party, along with a growing number and diversity of other parties which had also emerged, or in some cases re-emerged, in this period, filed for official recognition as a legal political party. To the astonishment of virtually everyone outside the government leadership itself, which took the decision, the *Front Islamique du Salut* was formally endorsed and recognised by the authorities on 16 September 1989.[18]

Why this decision was taken appeared uncertain. Officially, Chadli Benjedid stated that to deny recognition to the FIS would be inconsistent with the regime's new commitment to multi-party democracy. Recognition could not be extended to the Communists on the one hand whilst denying it to the Islamists on the other, he argued, as "Democracy...cannot be selective." Furthermore, he acknowledged the legitimacy of a party based upon Islam, which was, after-all, the religion of Algeria, and answered concerns about whether the Islamists would seek to abuse the democratic 'opening' by pointing out that "The activities of the Islamist party are submitted to precise rules. If they respect them, we cannot forbid them."[19]

It is possible that Chadli was genuinely committed to full democratisation and averse to banning any political party, but other explanations seem more plausible.[20] The haste with which the President gave assent to the recognition of the FIS, without even waiting for the necessary modifications to the law on political associations to be made to allow a religion-based party to be endorsed, led many to believe that other reasons must have been behind the decision.[21] It is

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[18] Robert Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics in Algeria* in *Middle East Journal* (Volume 45, No.4, Autumn 1991) pp.579-580

[19] Burgat & Dowell p.274

[20] Abdelhamid Brahimi disputes that the President ever had any real belief in democracy stating: "I know Chadli very well and I know he has nothing to do with democracy." Author's interview, 6.9.95

[21] Ibid.

likely that Chadli saw recognition of the FIS as a means of actually controlling and limiting Algeria's re-invigorated Islamist tendency, which one observer had commented as early as April 1989 had become "a crucial feature of the political scene since October."[22] Chadli was aware of the strength of the Islamists and took a gamble on including and working with them within the political system in preference to the possibility of having to fight against them on the streets if they were excluded from the system.[23] By recognising the FIS Chadli sought to split the Islamist movement and isolate its radical elements from those willing to work within the system.[24] Many Algerian Ministers stressed to foreign diplomats that by bringing the Islamists out into the open it would also give a clearer indication of the actual strength and make up of the movement. This would allow the regime to understand and control it better and ultimately repress it if necessary.[25]

The decision to legalise the FIS was, like the decision to open up the political system, also related to Chadli's relations with the old FLN. The President hoped to use the threat of the Islamists to curb opposition to him and/or his reforms in the FLN.[26] Chadli believed that support for the FLN and the FIS was likely to be balanced in elections thus allowing himself as President to dominate any future National Assembly since neither party was able to wield a majority.[27] The danger of any one party dominating would be further reduced by allowing large numbers of other parties to participate which would splinter the vote even more and support the President's strategy of divide and rule. There was

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[22] *Middle East Economic Digest* 14.4.89
[23] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.580; Author's interview with Abdelhamid Brahimi, 19.12.94
[24] Ruedy p.252
[25] Author's interview with Hussein Amin, Egyptian Ambassador to Algeria 1987-90, Cairo, 13.6.94
[26] Ibid.
[27] Author's interview with Abdelhamid Brahimi, 19.12.94

significant evidence to suggest that the regime actually encouraged certain individuals to create new parties to achieve this end.[28]

The relative importance of these factors is impossible to gauge. However, Chadli Benjedid seemed intent on both holding onto the reins of power whilst reducing the power and influence of the old FLN, whether through a desire to protect his economic reforms, his own position or even his own vision of a democratised Algeria. Legalisation of the FIS thus appeared to serve these ends.

5. The FIS Mobilised: 1989-1990

Having achieved official recognition, the FIS lost little time in organising itself and recruiting new supporters and members in preparation for forthcoming elections, the first of which were to be held for local government in June 1990. From the outset it became quite apparent that the new party was a highly organised and motivated affair. Full use was made of the network of some 9,000 mosques which Islamists had come to control to co-ordinate activity and spread the party's message at the weekly Friday prayers and sermon.[29] Within a month of its legalisation, the FIS had begun publishing its own paper, *Al Mounqid*, which was directly distributed by activists.[30] Leading FIS preachers were also filmed and the footage distributed across Algeria and at the increasing number of rallies the party began to organise throughout the country audio-visual equipment was frequently employed.[31]

It soon became clear that the FIS enjoyed a substantial level of support amongst the population. An estimated ten thousand supporters had been present at the official founding of the party in March 1989 and Ali Belhadj was able to

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[28] Author's interviews with Rachid Ghannoushi, London, 18.4.95 and Abdelhamid Brahimi, London, 6.9.95

[29] Ruedy p.253; Bradford Dillman: *Transition to Democracy in Algeria* in Entelis & Naylor p.34

[30] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.253

[31] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.101; *Algérie Actualité* 5.10.89

attract 20,000 people to his Friday sermons at Al-Sunna in early 1989, totals which could only be added to by the FIS's subsequent higher profile and recruitment drives.[32] Political campaigning and the mosque network were not the only means the FIS used to attract supporters. The party incorporated into itself and its activities the growing networks of medical clinics and social services that had been established by Islamists in Algeria's poorest urban areas during the 1980s, adding to and expanding their work. The party's activists and doctors were also the first to arrive on the scene to provide relief to victims of an earthquake in a region to the west of Algiers in November 1989.[33]

Despite indications of the Islamist party's following (*Al-Mounqid*, for example, was able to sell 100,000 copies of its first issue despite its high cover price of 5 Dinars[34]) it was not until the FIS began to organise street demonstrations and rallies that the true extent of its support became more widely apparent. In December 1989 a rally called in response to one organised by Algerian women who were protesting against the Family Code of 1984, attracted over 100,000 people outnumbering the women's demonstration by several hundred to one.[35] Several other rallies were held subsequently throughout Algeria. These shows of force culminated in a rally in Algiers on 20 April 1990 which journalists estimated drew an attendance of possibly 600-800 thousand marchers and which further enhanced the highly-organised reputation of the FIS by being conducted in complete silence and with great discipline.[36]

Such huge demonstrations of popular support, which were far in excess of anything the Islamist movement in Algeria had hitherto ever been able to attract,

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[32] *Summary of World Broadcasts* ME/0407 i 13.3.89; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.101
[33] *Taking Up Space in Tlemcen: The Islamist Occupation of Urban Algeria :* Interview with Rabia Bekkar in *Middle East Report* November-December 1992; Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.579
[34] Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.253
[35] Burgat & Dowell p.276
[36] *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90

appeared to be a clear vindication for the decision to form the party. The FIS and its leaders thus became the most popular and influential Islamists in Algeria. Those Islamist leaders who had remained outside the party became increasingly marginalized and lacking in any real influence. Some other Islamists did form parties distinct from that of FIS, but these proved to be tiny affairs incapable of challenging FIS.[37]

The Rabitat Dawa continued to exist but posed no threat to the increasing political hegemony the FIS exerted over Islamist activism. Abassi Madani actually participated with Sahnoun, Nahnah and Djaballah in the meeting that formally constituted a directorate for the organisation in October 1989. When questioned on the relationship between the Rabitat and the FIS, the leader of the FIS replied that: "The one complements the other and one will work for the other because Islam is all that matters." The other leading figures in the Rabitat were similarly anxious to reaffirm the independence and apolitical and exclusively religious nature of the organisation. Mahfoud Nahnah pointedly declared that: "The Rabitat will never be in the service of a tendency, an individual or a party. It will only be in the service of religion."[38]

The FIS and the Rabitat, nevertheless, co-operated and joined forces for the rally and march of December 1989.[39] However, the influence of those leading figures who remained outside the new party waned as time progressed. This was clearly demonstrated in the differences of opinion that emerged over FIS's plans to hold its march of 20 April 1990 in direct conflict with one planned by the FLN. Persuaded by the FLN leadership, Ahmed Sahnoun, who continued to be seen by many as the 'patriarch' of the wider Islamist movement, together with Mahfoud Nahnah urged the FIS's leaders to call off the march to prevent trouble. Sahnoun

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[37] For details of these parties see *Jeune Afrique* 18.12.89
[38] *Algérie Actualité* 26.10.89
[39] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.34

actually telephoned Abassi Madani from the UAE, where he was making a visit.[40] These pleas went unheeded by the FIS, Abassi Madani explaining that "We love Sheikh Sahnoun very much, but we also love justice. For us, it is justice that comes first!"[41] The patent failure of these attempts together with the huge triumph the march eventually constituted led to an inevitable decline in both the status and influence of both Sahnoun and Nahnah, both figures together with Abdallah Djaballah, continuing to haemorrhage supporters to the new party.

6. The Response of the Establishment: Government and the FLN

I. The Government: Inaction and Sympathy

The reaction and response of the political establishment to the rise of the FIS in this period was ambiguous. Gestures of antagonism were frequently more than matched with ones of tolerance and reconciliation. At times it appeared that elements within Algeria's ruling strata were actively encouraging and even aiding the new party.

The reason for these inconsistencies was the increasingly fragmented nature of the Algerian regime in the wake of the crisis of October 1988. The largely covert struggles that were waged inside the regime over Chadli's political position and economic policies were overlaid from 1989 by the institutional divisions that were introduced in the new constitution notably those separating the FLN from the state and carving a more independent role for the President.

Actual government policy in the year following the October crisis was notable for its increased emphasis on Islam and Islamic themes. The new constitution of February 1989, as well as omitting references to socialism,

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[40] Burgat & Dowell p.277; *Jeune Afrique* 7.5.90

[41] *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90 It was also suggested, though, that despite his eventual enthusiasm for the march, Abassi Madani had had his own doubts about it, but feared it would go ahead without him and thus undermine his leadership.

confirmed and stressed the Islamic character of the Algerian state. The National Charter was no longer the highest authority and the Islamic council was constitutionally recognised. In other areas too the regime was keen to display an Islamic orientation. Chadli Benjedid made a high-profile pilgrimage to Mecca in 1989, and in July of that year the 18th Congress of Islamic Thought was devoted to the revival of Islam.[42]

Whether this renewed emphasis on Islam represented an attempt by the regime to improve its severely damaged sense of popular legitimacy in the wake of the unrest of October 1988, or whether it sought, as it had previously done, to 'spike the guns' of the Islamists whose popularity and profile were clearly on the rise, is unclear. It seems, though , that whatever the intent behind the measures the effect was to boost the Islamists. The Law on Political Associations, for example, whilst containing the provisions against confessionally-based parties, also obliged new parties to include in their aims "the protection and the consolidation of the social and cultural blooming of the nation within the framework of national Arab-Islamic values."[43] This, it was argued, not just further legitimised Islamist ideas and aspirations, but actually served to strengthen the FIS's hand against its non-Islamist and more secularist competitors.[44]

The reaction of the political authorities to the meteoric rise of FIS following its legalisation in September 1989 was characterised by inaction and even sympathy. The Government failed to take any real steps to curb the mobilisation of the FIS even when it ventured into illegality through many of its activists' use of intimidation against members of other political parties and people seen as not

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[42] Mohammed Tozy: *Islam and the State* in Zartman & Habeeb pp.119-120 It was also notable that the guarantees of female rights contained in the Constitution of 1976 were entirely absent in the February 1989 Constitution. Ruedy p.251

[43] Article 3 of the Constitution of February 1989. Quoted in Yahia H. Zoubir: *The Painful Transition from Authoritarianism in Algeria* in *Arab Studies Quarterly* (Volume 15, No.3, Summer 1993) p.91

[44] Zoubir p.91

conforming to Islamist notions of appropriate dress and social behaviour. At times the Government appeared to be actually positively encouraging the FIS through allowing Islamist sermons to be broadcast over state television and by introducing legislation in February 1990 that allowed the FIS to establish its own trade union in competition with the official UGTA.[45] Mouloud Hamrouche, appointed Prime Minister by Chadli in September 1989, officially denied FIS involvement in a high profile violent incident involving Islamists in January 1990, thus appearing to willingly abandon a possible propaganda tool the regime could use against the FIS.[46]

II. The FLN Divided

The reasons for this extraordinary policy of the regime, which signified a complete break with the policy of trying to contain the Islamist movement which had been pursued by all the governments in Algeria since independence, were to be found in the complex internal politics of the FLN. The aftermath of the October 1988 crisis witnessed the emergence of three competitive different tendencies within the historic party as it sought to come to terms with the huge political changes the crisis had engendered. In existence before 1988 and often overlapping, these three tendencies struggled for influence in the dual and paradoxical arenas of the new electoral system where it was technically just another political party and within the regime itself where, despite its constitutional de-coupling from the state, its members dominated nearly all the government and the entirety of the National Assembly.

The first two of these tendencies or factions were delineated essentially by attitudes towards the President, Chadli Benjedid and more particularly his programme of liberalising economic reforms. As already explained, Chadli had

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[45] See Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.462
[46] *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90

been locked for some time in a struggle with elements within the FLN who were opposed to him and his reforms. The President, however, did not fight this conflict alone. He increasingly gathered around him a core of supporters who were particularly committed to his economic reforms and who constituted an opposing faction within the FLN to those who sought to thwart the reforms.

The third faction that became apparent was one that had been present much longer than these first two factions. The consistent presence of Islamist oriented figures within the Algerian regime since independence is one that has already been noted. This tendency, from 1988, became increasingly vocal, appearing to shake off its traditionally low profile and pushed far more openly for the FLN and the regime to adopt a more Islamist agenda. This became particularly apparent at the extraordinary conference of the FLN held at the end of November 1989 when a section of delegates made a robust call for the establishment of more single sex schools and the promotion of Sharia law. A keynote speech by the influential former foreign minister, Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, long seen as on the 'Islamic' wing of the party called for the reassertion of 'Arabo-Islamic' values.[47] Besides the support of high profile figures such as Ibrahimi, this tendency (often referred to using the French pun: *barbefèlenes*) appeared to have a significant bloc of support in the party, one press agency estimating that close to 60 of the 200 FLN deputies in the APN "espoused the ideas of the Islamist party."[48] Accusations were made that such a significant presence was evidence of the success of efforts by the FIS to infiltrate the former ruling party.[49] Whilst there may have been some degree of truth to this, the reality was that the Islamist tendency in the FLN had always been present and was only now

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[47] *Middle East Economic Digest* 15.12.89 Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi was, in fact, the son of Bashir Ibrahimi, the leader of the AUMA in the 1940s and 1950s

[48] *L'Agence France Presse* quoted in *Jeune Afrique* 7.5.90

[49] Such an accusation was made by the editor of the FLN journal *Révolution Africaine* who was consequently sacked from his job. *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90

beginning to really assert itself within the party. This reassertion was interpreted by many at the time as being part of an attempt to undermine the FIS by co-opting its agenda - the traditional strategy used by both Boumedienne in the 1960s and 1970s and by Chadli in the 1980s. However, it seems that this push by the *barbefèlenes* was primarily a function of the new political environment both inside the FLN and in Algeria generally which allowed this faction to press their agenda and quite possibly also helps explain the concessions to Islamist sentiment made by the regime in 1988-89. The significance of this group from 1989 became their relationship with the other two warring factions in the FLN and their relationship with the FIS.

III. Chadli and the FIS

President Chadli Benjedid continued to feel under pressure from his opponents within the regime during 1989 despite the measures he had taken to distract and divide them. The October crisis had drawn several old-guard FLN figures back into the political foreground who were forceful critics of his rule and his economic programme and reasserted themselves strongly in the party and at FLN congresses.[50] In response to this continuing threat to himself and his policies, Chadli looked once again for a means of damaging his opponents and decided that the FIS would be his tool for achieving this. It is this which explains the apparent tolerance and encouragement that was given to the Islamist party following its legalisation in September 1989. As before, Chadli believed that his interests would be best served by support for the FLN and the FIS being fairly equally balanced which would allow him to dominate any future National Assembly. However, whereas in September 1989 Chadli viewed the FIS as just a threat he could brandish at his enemies within the FLN which would allow his allies to predominate, he increasingly appeared to think that a more active

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[50] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* pp.463-464

approach was needed. This took the form of not just smoothing the path for the FIS in the run up to elections but also of seeking to sabotage the electoral prospects of the FLN. Furthermore, it seems that the President may actually have struck some manner of deal with the FIS to achieve this goal.

No concrete evidence exists of any formal agreement having been made between the FIS and the President, but there are strong circumstantial indications that this occurred. Chadli Benjedid met formally with Abassi Madani in January 1990 and it is suggested that some arrangement was achieved then.[51] The likely form of this arrangement is obviously uncertain but given the subsequent behaviour of the FIS it appears that Abassi Madani, in return for official tolerance, undertook to avoid criticism of the Government's programme of liberalising economic reforms and to shift the anti-regime rhetoric and propaganda away from the person of the President and onto the FLN generally. It was clearly remarkable, for example, that a fifteen point list of demands submitted by the FIS following the massive rally of April 20 1990 should be headed by an appeal for the continuation of the reform programme, rather than any of the more traditional Islamist demands. It appeared equally strange that the leadership of the FIS were willing to forego targets such as the President and his economic reforms, both of which were increasingly unpopular, in their otherwise unabashedly populist push for votes in the run up to the local elections of June 1990.[52]

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[51] It was also rumoured that Chadli Benjedid and Abassi Madani had had a second, secret, meeting in January in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia where a deal had been reached on the invitation of King Fahd. Author's interview with Hussein Amin, Egyptian Ambassador to Algeria 1987-90, Cairo, 13.6.94

[52] Roberts: *Doctrinaire Economics* pp.124-126 That January 1990 was the most likely date on which a deal was struck between Abassi and Chadli was also indicated by the fact that up until the beginning of that month, the FIS had criticised Chadli's reformist Prime Minister, Mouloud Hamrouche. Abassi Madani, for example, had lambasted Hamrouche for his "inability and his incompetence." Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90

In seeking to sabotage the electoral prospects of the FLN, Chadli and his allies sought not just to make sure that the former ruling party did not achieve a majority (which appears to have been a fear of the President during 1989) but also sought to shift the regime's unpopularity away from himself and his reforms and onto his opponents in the FLN. The re-entry of many of his sternest critics into the ruling circles of the party in 1988-89 provided Chadli with the opportunity of letting them take on the difficult task of defending the FLN and its record in government whilst distancing himself from the party. It was notable that the President was largely absent from the campaign to support the party he was still a member.

There were also accusations that information damaging to the FLN was deliberately leaked and publicised. The most prominent of all was the claim in March 1990 by the former Prime Minister, Abdelhamid Brahimi, that an estimated $26 billion worth of funds had been lost from the national coffers over a period of time through embezzlement and kickbacks by government officials.[53] This 'revelation', which drew to near fever pitch the already powerful popular perception of the FLN regime being one rotten with corruption and greed, inflicted further huge damage on the FLN and those who sought to defend its record. The FIS, in particular, immediately seized on the figure and vigorously publicised it. Brahimi, however, claimed that his statement did not represent a deliberate or sudden 'revelation', but was a figure he had quoted in answer to a question put to him following a speech at Algiers University.[54] The prevalent accusation that the former prime minister had co-ordinated his remarks with Chadli and Hamrouche beforehand was also weakened by the facts that Brahimi had been dismissed by Chadli in 1988 and was fiercely criticised by Hamrouche following the incident.

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[53] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* pp.464-465

[54] Author's interview with Abdelhamid Brahimi, London, 6.9.95

Nevertheless, it had provided a potent propaganda weapon for the FIS which it used to great effect.

There were suspicions that although still a member of the FLN, the former Prime Minister was interested in seeing a FIS victory in the local elections. This was not only due to his growing rift with elements of the regime but also because he may have seen the FIS as being much closer to his own ideals. Alongside Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, Abdelhamid Brahimi enjoyed the reputation of being one of the more high profile members of the FLN's Islamic wing - sharing with the former Foreign Minister the religious prestige of being a son of one of the senior members of Abdelhamid Ben Badis's original AUMA. Clear recognition of this reputation came with approaches made by the FIS itself at the end of 1989. Initially wary of such contact, Brahimi finally agreed to meet Abassi Madani in February 1990 and the FIS's motivations in seeking such a meeting rapidly became apparent. Although Brahimi made it clear that he was a member of the FLN and intended to remain so, this did not stop the leader of the FIS from subsequently making passing public suggestions that the former Prime Minister could reassume that office in a future FIS administration.[55]

Brahimi's revelations induced another bout of infighting within the FLN over who was to blame for this alleged corruption, thus further weakening the party in the run up to the local elections.[56] Indeed, the multiple splits within the party had reduced it to a state of near catatonic inaction. As one Algerian newspaper commented as late as April 1990:

> "Since October 1988 the FLN has walled itself in profound silence. It has rarely taken a position on anything and when it has it has been evasive. Towards the FIS, it has adopted an approach of extreme prudence."[57]

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[55] Author's interview with former senior Algerian minister
[56] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.463
[57] *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90

IV. Mehri and the 'New' FLN

A valiant attempt to rally the party was made by its new chief Abdelhamid Mehri who had sought to renew the party and present it as a new entity to the public. Increasingly disillusioned with the apparent willingness of his former ally, Chadli Benjedid, to abandon the party, Mehri fought hard in the months preceding the local elections to achieve a more robust front for the FLN. His plans for a counter march by the party on the same day as that of the FIS on April 20, however, had to be abandoned in the face of enormous official pressure to avoid bloody confrontations on the streets. This brought further humiliation and division on the former ruling party.[58] Even when the FLN was able to put on marches across Algeria the following month, only the one held in Algiers attracted significant numbers of people and was due mainly to the established organisational apparatus of the old FLN.[59] Conscious of the threat the FIS posed to their expected domination of the new multi-party system, the FLN took steps to counter it. These included, for example, an attempted legal challenge by Mehri to the FIS's use of mosques for partisan and electoral purposes.[60]

Few concessions, however, were wrung from the Government which proceeded with its plans. Chadli and his allies clearly believed that the ideal scenario of a split vote between the FLN and the FIS was likely. On the eve of the local poll the President told one diplomat that he expected the FIS to poll no more than 20-25% of the vote.[61]

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[58] Ibid. It was suspected that the FIS march was also part of a deal with the authorities, in which Abassi agreed to not let his followers get out of control.
[59] Burgat & Dowell pp.277-278
[60] *Jeune Afrique* 7.5.90
[61] Author's interview with Hussein Amin, 13.6.94

7. The Local Elections of June 1990

The assumption that independent Algeria's first multiparty local elections were likely to be a two horse race was confirmed by a number of factors. The announced boycott of the election by two of the more prominent opposition parties, the FFS (*Front des Forces Socialistes*) and the MDA (*Mouvement pour le Démocratie en Algérie*) each led by one of the nine 'historic chiefs' of the war of liberation, on the grounds that opposition parties had not been given sufficient time to organise themselves before the poll, obviously narrowed the voting options.[62] More tangibly, the fact that only the FLN and the FIS were able to put up candidates in all the electoral divisions implied that there was unlikely to be any breakthrough by a third force or party.[63]

A third confirmation of the dominance of the two parties came with the release of an opinion poll by the government, following the FIS rally in Algiers in April 1990, which reported that between 40-50% of the votes in the local elections were likely to go to the FLN with 20-30% likely to be won by the FIS. The complex links between the government and the FLN must inevitably have cast at least some doubt on the veracity of the poll, but the FLN went into the poll confident of picking up as much as 55-65% of the votes cast.[64] It was consequently a shock both to the FLN and most other observers and participants in the poll when it became clear, as the results of the 12 June voting emerged, that it was the FIS which had achieved the share of the vote anticipated by FLN.

The nature of the poll, which involved combined voting for both commune councils (APCs) and regional *wilaya* assemblies, made overall voting figures difficult to calculate, but there was no doubting the comprehensive nature of the FIS victory. The party received 54% of the votes cast in the commune elections

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[62] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.580
[63] Burgat & Dowell p.279
[64] *Middle East International (MEI)* 6.7.90

and over 57% of those in the *wilayas*. It consequently took control of 853 of the 1539 commune councils and 31 of the 48 wilayas. The victory was further compounded by the disastrous performance of the FLN, which managed to poll barely half of its rival's total, taking just 28% in both sets of results. The remainder of the votes went to the profusion of smaller parties and independents, the largest single party vote being just 2% for the RCD (*Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie*).[65]

Once the immediate shock of the results had settled in, there was something of a rush by observers, particularly in the West and the Western media, to try to suggest that the results were in some way inaccurate and misleading. Many pointed to the abstention rate of 35% and suggested that much of this figure and probably a significant slice of the FIS's eventual vote would have probably gone to the FFS and MDA if these parties had participated and given the electorate a wider choice than that between the equally unappetising, FIS and FLN. Other commentators pointed to certain election rules which they argued artificially influenced the results. The existence of a proxy vote, for example, which enabled a man to vote on behalf of his wife, served to effectively double the vote of the FIS, it was suggested. The rule that gave an automatic majority of seats in the APCs to the leading party, irrespective of whether it had achieved a majority of the popular vote in the commune, was also cited as inflating the apparent scale of the FIS's victory.[66] Some simply argued that the strong presence of FIS activists on the streets on the day of the poll influenced or intimidated voters into voting for them.[67]

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[65] Jacques Fontaine: *Les Elections Locales Algerienne du 12 Juin 1990: Approche Statistique et Géographique* in *Maghreb-Machrek* (No.129, Juillet-Septembre 1990) p.125

[66] See *The Economist* 16.6.90

[67] François Burgat and Jean Leca: *La Mobilisation Islamiste et les Elections Algériennes du 12 Juin 1990* in *Maghreb-Machrek* (No.129, Juillet-Septembre 1990) p.6. Hugh Roberts argues that the absence of Government officials from

However, these points were, in reality, of strictly limited significance. The abstention rate on the day of the poll although significant at 35% was more or less consistent with non-voting rates in free elections in most other countries. The participation rate was remarkably high given the negative image voting had inevitably accrued during the years of meaningless elections that occurred before 1988 when voters had had no effective choices put before them but had still been obliged to vote. Even though the Islamist party did appear to make particular use of the proxy system, the assumption that women were necessarily more inclined to vote against FIS than their husbands is questionable. Large numbers of women often attended FIS rallies and demonstrations in the run-up to the elections.[68] On the issue of the 'winner takes all' system operated in the elections, although it resulted in the FIS winning control of a greater percentage of councils than their simple share of the popular vote (they won 65% of the wilaya councils, for example), this did not alter the fact that at both local and regional levels they had achieved a clear majority of the popular vote. Nothing could really dismiss this central reality.

8. Support for the FIS: Social and Geographic Bases

The election results provided a valuable and unprecedented insight into the nature of support for Islamism in Algeria by providing indications of who exactly had voted for the FIS. More pertinently, it also provided possible evidence as to what had motivated people to cast their vote in such large numbers for a party representing a tendency that had been seen as little more than an extremist fringe movement less than two years previously.

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many voting booths on the day of the poll was a conscious policy to allow the FIS to use such tactics to maximise their vote. Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.462

[68] Burgat & Dowell p.280 The FIS had also established their own women's section. *Jeune Afrique* 12.2.90

Given the comprehensive dominance of the FIS in comparison to the other parties in the election, it was almost easier (and, arguably, as instructive) to look at who had *not* voted for the FIS. The results showed that several areas had clearly not come out strongly for the Islamists. These areas were predominantly the rural south together with a few pockets in the more urbanised north. The reasons for these areas' resistance to the Islamist tide were relatively easy to identify. In the rural south the majority of the councils were won by the FLN. Here, the dominance of the former single party of state was retained partly because of the continued relative esteem the FLN enjoyed in this traditional area (because of its role in the war of liberation), and because it had escaped much of the social and economic problems that had afflicted the urban north. It was also true that the entrenched FLN control made ballot-rigging more possible.[69] Those pockets of the north which had not voted for FIS were identified as being ones dominated by the country's Berber community: notably the communes of Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia. The reasons for this largely lay in the established antipathy of much of Algeria's Berber community to Islamism: the movement's stress both on the Arabic language and strict social conformity being widely perceived by the Berber community as being a threat to their own distinctive language and culture. The affiliation of the areas of Grand Kabylia and the Soumma Valley (which contained Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia) to parties other than the FIS was demonstrated by the particularly low turnout in these areas, which indicated a clear response to the boycott call by the Kabyle-based FFS. When people did vote in these areas it was predominantly for the similarly secularist and Berberist RCD which won clear majorities in both Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia.[70]

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[69] *Jeune Afrique* 20.6.90

[70] Fontaine pp.124-133. Keith Sutton, Ahmed Aghrout and Salah Zaimeche: *Political Changes in Algeria: An Emerging Electoral Geography* in *Maghreb Review* (Volume 17, No.1&2, 1992) pp.3-27. This pattern was also repeated in the Mzab region which voted predominantly for independent candidates. Fontaine p.133. Arun Kapil explains this by stressing the persistence of maraboutist and

On the basis of this evidence it appeared that the FIS vote was concentrated, with the noted exceptions, in the more urbanised north of the country. The election statistics graphically testified to this fact. In Algeria's three biggest cities (all in the north of Algeria), Algiers, Oran and Constantine, the party attracted shares of the popular vote of 64%, 71% and 72% respectively.[71] The particularly urban character of the FIS vote was further emphasised by the fact that the party won control of 90% of the councils and two-thirds of the seats in urban areas of more than 20,000 people. In contrast, its share of seats fell to roughly 40% in areas of less than 20,000 inhabitants.[72] Support for the FIS therefore appeared to be clearly linked to the particular problems of the urban areas, such as housing and shortages, which had been hit disproportionately hard by Algeria's increasing economic problems. Indeed, of central importance, and arguably of far more relevance than any explicitly political factors, in coming to an understanding of the outcome of the election, is an appreciation of the social and economic conditions that were prevailing in Algeria at this time.

It was quite clear that little improvement had been witnessed by the majority of ordinary Algerians in social and economic conditions since the unrest of October 1988, which had been fuelled and probably sparked by rapid social and economic decline. Shortages, overcrowding and price increases at the same time as wage freezes all continued to be a feature of everyday life for ordinary Algerians. Unemployment which had risen from 11% to 25% between 1984 and 1988[73] showed signs of continuing to rise, exacerbated by both the government's

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sufi tendencies in the more remote areas of Algeria's south and west (which may also help explain the FLN strength in the south) and thus their resistance to more modern and urban Islamism. Kapil: *Algeria's Elections Show Islamist Strength* in *Middle East Report (MERIP)* September-October 1990

[71] Burgat & Dowell p.279

[72] Fontaine p.132

[73] John P. Entelis: *Introduction: State and Society in Transition* in Entelis & Phillip C. Naylor: *State and Society in Algeria* (Westview, Boulder, 1992) p.18

accelerated economic liberalisation programme (which resulted in the slimming-down of the workforces of state-owned enterprises) and by Algeria's continuingly prodigious birth rate. The pyramid-shaped demographic profile that this birth-rate had produced for Algeria over time meant that the majority of Algeria's unemployed were very young (most employers inevitably preferred to cut back on recruitment rather than force redundancies) which in turn meant that there was a large pool of idle and discontented youth. This section of the population had few attachments to the ruling political order and had no nostalgic memory of the achievements of the FLN in the liberation struggle.[74] It was thus inevitable that given the opportunity to express their political opinions through the ballot box, this section of the population, together with other large groups in Algerian society who had suffered in the worsening economic and social climate of the late 1980s, would vote heavily to punish the party that represented the existing political establishment: the FLN.[75] The most effective means of humiliating the FLN was thus to vote for that party that was best placed to defeat it. Since late 1989 the only party capable of filling this role was the FIS.

Despite these observations, social and economic deprivation and a consequent desire to reject the FLN were not the only motivating factors for FIS voters on June 12. A sizeable bloc of people voting for the FIS that day were those who were genuinely attracted to and supportive of the Islamist agenda. To distinguish between these two blocs and thus assess their relative strengths within the FIS vote is clearly unfeasible, and they may in fact be so closely intertwined as to be indivisible. As one Algerian youth who voted for FIS

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[74] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.585

[75] It was not just the urban areas that experienced social and economic hardship and which consequently voted for the FIS. In the area of Jijel the FIS took roughly 75% of the seats despite the fact that the area was not particularly urbanised. The probable reason for this was that Jijel was one of the most deprived parts of the country, thus emphasising that deprivation was probably of more importance than urbanisation (even though the two were often synonymous) in understanding the nature of the FIS vote. Fontaine p.132

explained, the FIS's radical and eschatalogical message represented the only perceived alternative in an otherwise bleak future:

> "In this country, if you are a young man....you have only four choices: you can remain unemployed and celibate because there are no jobs and no apartments to live in; you can work in the black market and risk being arrested; you can try to emigrate to France to sweep the streets of Paris or Marseilles; or you can join the FIS and vote for Islam."[76]

Nevertheless, the massive marches and street demonstrations the FIS had been able to organise in the lead-up to the elections bore witness to the fact that the party clearly had a large, ideologically committed core of supporters. Attendance at the FIS's meetings and mosques was notable for the overwhelming predominance of men between the ages of 20 and 40, but it appears that far from all of these were unemployed youths.[77] Traders and small business men were also found to be, frequently financial, supporters of the party and whilst FIS support electorally had been concentrated in the poorer districts of Algiers, the party also performed well in some of the higher class areas of the capital.[78] Although having variations in its level of support, the strength of the FIS vote demonstrated once again the breadth of the apparent appeal of Islamism across geographic region and social class as shown by its ability to put up candidates in virtually every division for the elections.[79]

9. Ideology and Agenda of the FIS

The formation of a political party by Algeria's Islamists and its competition in elections provided the movement, or at least that part of it which had joined the

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[76] *New York Times* 25.6.90 quoted in Mark Tessler: *The Alienation of Urban Youth* in Zartman & Habeeb p.98
[77] *Algérie Actualité* 5.10.89
[78] Sutton, Aghrout & Zaimeche p.11 & 14; A. Djeghloul: *Le Multipartisme à L'Algerienne* in *Maghreb-Machrek* (No.127, Janvier-Mars 1990) p.199
[79] Dillman: *Transition to Democracy in Algeria* p.34

party, with a concrete opportunity to present its agenda to the electorate. Indeed, multiparty democratic politics demanded it.

An analysis of the FIS between its creation in February 1989 through to its victory in June 1990 reveals two main things about its agenda and proposed programme: firstly, the effective absence of any really lengthy or radical political and economic policy programme, and secondly the continued emphasis by the party on a number of specific, largely social, themes. This is revealed by looking at both formal policy statements and documents issued by the party as well as interviews given by senior party figures during this period.

I. Economic Policy

Several documents advancing FIS's plans for Algeria were issued by the party from its formation and most of these made reference to economic issues. The party's first formal policy document *Projet de Programme du Front Islamique du Salut* was unveiled at the meeting officially launching the party on March 9 1989 and devoted just under a third of its contents to the FIS's view of and plans for the economy which were largely reiterated in later policy documents.

These plans attracted a significant amount of criticism and scorn from opponents of the FIS and Western commentators alike for their lack of apparent detail.[80] It was more true to say that the plans lacked innovation - balance and moderation characterising their tone and contents with only minor changes and reforms advocated. The unremarkable content of the programme was exemplified by the opening statement of the section dealing with the economy:

> " The economic policy of the FIS is founded on the search for an equilibrium between the needs of consumption and the conditions of production, on the complementary relationship between quality and quantity, taking account of

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[80] See for example *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90 and Zoubir p.92

demographic growth and of cultural development and the imperative of economic independence."[81]

Such sentiments were likely to be found in the economic programmes of virtually any political party. The one possible exception to this - the stress on economic independence - being in the Algerian context similarly unremarkable because of the nationalism that had traditionally characterised economic relations with the West. Changes and reforms were advocated by the party but these tended to take the form of uncontroversial proposals to better harmonise education with the needs of industry, to introduce more technology and to expand regional trade. More specifically Islamic proposals were contained in the programme but these were largely vague and confined to references that a particular area of the economy or a specific policy should "conform to the spirit of the Sharia."[82] A commitment to the establishment of Islamic banks, which banned usury, was expressed but few details of how this was to be achieved were given. Such a rather nebulous impression of the Islamic content of the party's economic proposals was further added to by Abassi Madani's later assertion that Algeria's economic crisis did not have a material base and would find its solution in the recovery of morality and religious faith.[83]

What was, however, noticeable about the FIS's economic plans was the apparent support they appeared to give to the private sector and the market. Reference was made to the rights and conditions of the worker and an overall need for equity, but the document lambasted the failings of the planned economy which it argued had served "to discourage the spirit of initiative...to the profit of mediocrity and incompetence." It correspondingly spoke of the need "to fix parameters limiting the intervention of the State in industrial ownership and to

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[81] *Projet de Programme du Front Islamique du Salut* 9.3.89. Extracts reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.179-187
[82] Ibid.
[83] *Algérie Actualité* 19.10.89

protect the private sector." More significantly there was a call for decentralisation of public enterprises and the encouragement of "competition, the agent of plenty."[84] These last two policies were significant in that they represented the main planks of Chadli Benjedid's economic reform programme over the preceding decade. It was thus their presence within the FIS's programme that helped persuade Chadli Benjedid that the party could be recruited as an ideological ally in his struggle against the anti-reformists within the FLN. This had further been confirmed by Abassi Madani's statement at the beginning of January 1990 that:

> "The FIS is more concerned than anyone for these reforms and demands their application."[85]

So whilst the FIS had sacrificed the propaganda tool of the unpopularity of the effects of the reforms, it had not been entirely opportunist in tacitly supporting them. Their inclusion in the programme of March 1989 reflected an established preference for liberal economics in Islamist economic thought across the Muslim world and it was thus simply a case of further emphasising them (as shown in the petition of April 1990) to gain valuable concessions from the regime.[86]

II. Women, Social Policy and Education

The vast majority of the literature produced by the FIS in the period 1989-90 focused on social, cultural and educational issues and represented a significant departure from current Algerian Government policy. The traditional Islamist

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[84] *Projet de Programme du Front Islamique du Salut* 9.3.89. Extracts reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.179-187

[85] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90

[86] It has been argued that it was this preference for liberal economics and support for the Government's reform programme that led to the exclusion of Abdallah Djaballah from the FIS at its creation since the Sheikh adopted a far more critical approach. (Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.450) However, it is highly unlikely that the leadership of the FIS were aware of any potential deal being struck with Chadli Benjedid as early as the start of 1989.

concerns over the role of women in society and the need to Islamicise and Arabise the education system remained central to the programme of the FIS.

The party's initial policy document, *Projet de Programme du Front Islamique du Salut*, made clear the new party's view that the Algerian woman's role should primarily be in the home. It indicated that a woman would thus be given a financial incentive to stay in or return to the home arguing that "her work at home must be legitimately considered as a social and educational function, giving her the right to a pension."[87] The importance of this issue to the party was demonstrated by the FIS's first significant show of force in December 1989 when it participated in the organisation of a counter demonstration to one held by women demanding the abrogation of the Family Code of 1984 which (see previous chapter) had reduced the rights and role of women in Algerian society. Five months later in April 1990, the role of women was included in the fifteen point petition the party unveiled following their mass rally on the 20th of that month. Point 12 of the list of demands argued for the need to "Assemble the conditions for the protection of the dignity of the Algerian woman" - widely acknowledged shorthand for the return of women to the home and possible curbs on their dress and social relations.[88]

Besides emphasising the importance of women remaining in the home to bring up children and maintain family life, the FIS also argued that this facilitated the creation of more much needed job opportunities for Algeria's young men. Such a policy also supported the party's commitment to sexual segregation in Algerian society, Ali Belhadj arguing that it was actually immoral for men and women to work together in the same office.[89] The ending of co-education was also an expressed priority for the party. Benazouz Zebda, who became

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[87] *Projet de Programme du Front Islamique du Salut* 9.3.89. quoted in *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90

[88] Text reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.49-51

[89] *Jeune Afrique* 29.1.90

recognised as the third most senior figure in the party, claimed that the mixing of the sexes at schools and universities had led to the "proliferation of bastards."[90] At the same time the party also made clear its opposition to birth control.[91]

Overall, social policy together with education, provided the party with most of its favourite themes and it was clear that the FIS aimed to establish significant control over these areas. As Abassi Madani stated in an interview:

> "Our principle concern is with education and the family. It is impossible to achieve an Islamic society without mastering education and this equally demands a healthy and conscientious family."[92]

Apart from the overriding aim of segregation, the other main concern of the party in education was to continue Arabisation and spread it to institutions such as medical schools and schools of technology. Abassi Madani notably rarely used French in public. [93]

III. Policy on Political Power and Pluralism

The FIS gave very few indications of the sort of political institutions they intended to make use of or indeed create when and if they achieved political power. Abassi Madani referred on several occasions to the party's desire to establish an Islamic state, although precisely what this might entail was never properly elaborated. Until the party began to attract the huge popular following that it did at its demonstrations from the end of 1989, it appears that no serious consideration was given by the party to the prospect of it taking power. When asked in October 1989 about the FIS's numerical strength, Abassi Madani gave the surprising reply:

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[90] Interview with Benazouz Zebda, *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.89
[91] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 12.2.90
[92] Ibid.
[93] *Jeune Afrique* 20.6.90

" Our numbers are of little importance, the elections are not our aim. Our aim is the total transformation of the political, economic, social, cultural and civilisational crisis. All of these because we are in clear crisis. Getting out of this crisis is our starting point."[94]

As the elections of June 1990 approached and the party began to realise that the wielding of eventual political power was a significant possibility, specifically political demands became an increasing feature of the FIS's discourse. The petition of April 1990 was dominated by political demands such as the dissolution of the National Assembly with elections to be held within three months, the creation of an independent body to oversee elections, the end of the FLN's monopoly on parts of the media and the creation of an independent judiciary.[95] However, most of these demands could be seen as merely facilitating, rather than explaining, the party's policy. As one Algerian newspaper suggested at the time, having just attracted such a huge display of popular support, the FIS perhaps decided that it should push to make best use of this support at elections on the grounds that it was "now or never."[96]

The stunning success the FIS had enjoyed in pursuing the electoral path to power and influence also seemed to have silenced that, admittedly fringe, part of the Algerian Islamist movement that had advocated the efficacy of armed Islamist struggle. Some activity was witnessed such as the attack on a court house by a small group of Shi'ite Islamists in January 1990 and the reported involvement of members of Algerian Takfir wa Hijra in the unrest of October 1988, but these incidents were small scale and peripheral to the main movement.[97] Much of this

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[94] *Algérie Actualité* 2.5.91
[95] Text of petition in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.49-51
[96] *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90
[97] Lamchichi: *L'Algérie en Crise*; *La Presse* 18.1.90. The incident at the Palace of Justice in Blida involved six men believed to belong to a Shi'ite organisation called Sunna Wa Sharia.

was due to the fact that most members of this tendency were still in prison following their conviction in the wake of Mustapha Bouyali's campaign. Nevertheless, several former associates and sympathisers of Bouyali did assume senior positions within the FIS at its creation, the most high-profile of which was Ali Belhadj himself who had been arrested and imprisoned in the 1980s for his involvement with the MAIA.[98] Indeed, despite public disavowals of the use of armed struggle[99], the party retained considerable sympathy for Bouyali's struggle. Ali Belhadj referred to Bouyali as being part of Algerian Islamism's historic heritage alongside Abdelhamid Ben Badis.[100] Abassi Madani argued that Bouyali had been pushed into the adoption of violence through intransigence and repression on the part of the regime.[101] Collectively, the party called for the release of all Islamist prisoners (implying the MAIA) in both the first issue of its paper, *Al Mounqid*, and in its petition of April 1990.[102]

One aspect of the FIS's thought and agenda which attracted considerable attention, especially in the aftermath of the June victory, was its attitude towards democratisation and its attendant values of pluralism and respect for the electoral process. Of particular concern to those people who were anxious that the country's democratisation programme be continued were statements made by Ali Belhadj. From the outset the young teacher and preacher made no secret of the fact that he viewed Algeria's new political system strictly as a means to an end

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[98] *Le Monde* 24.8.89 Those founders of the FIS who had also been involved in Bouyali's MAIA included Mohammed Kerrar, Said Guechi, Bachir Fakih and Abdelkader Moghni. *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.93

[99] Benazouz Zebda, for example, denied the use of armed struggle stating that the FIS's fight would be "against delinquency and evil." Interview with Benazouz Zebda, *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.89

[100] Interview with Ali Belhadj, *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.89

[101] *Algérie Actualité* 2.5.91 Abassi claimed: "Bouyali was teaching, was preaching, was thinking that dialogue would succeed...He was shocked when the door of dialogue was slammed in his face and he was treated with violence."

[102] *Le Monde* 6.10.89; Text of petition reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.49-51

rather than as any kind of end in itself.[103] He saw politics as a staging post on the way to Islam and the rule of 'divine politics.'[104] Whilst this view could be interpreted as expressing, albeit in an unusual way, the legitimate desire of any political party to see introduced its particular agenda and thus one not necessarily inconsistent with the principles of liberal democracy, Belhadj was in fact quite specific in his actual rejection of the idea of democracy:

> "Democracy is a stranger in the House of God. Guard yourself against those who say that the notion of democracy exists in Islam. There is no democracy in Islam. There exists only the shura with its rules and constraints...We are not a nation that thinks in terms of majority-minority. The majority does not express the truth."[105]

Belhadj was similarly forthright and specific in his view on the central concept of multi-partyism and political pluralism, appearing to issue a clear warning to those parties that did not make due reference to Islam:

> "Multipartyism is not tolerated unless it agrees with the single framework of Islam.....If people vote against the Law of God...this is nothing other than blasphemy. The ulama will order the death of the offenders who have substituted their authority for that of God."[106]

These were not isolated, polemical statements. It became clear that in Belhadj's view, which stemmed from his devout and fundamentalist religious beliefs about the exclusive truth of Islam, there should be no place in Algerian society for anyone who either did not share these convictions or sought to express a dissenting opinion or identity. Nor were these views ones that were not

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[103] Interview with Ali Belhadj, *Al-Bayane* December 1989 reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.71

[104] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.33

[105] *Algér Republicain* December 1989 quoted in Catherine Belvaude: *L'Algérie* (Karthala, Paris, 1991) p.108

[106] *Horizons* 23.2.89 quoted in *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90 Belhadj also wanted the Constitution changed to link multipartyism to Islam.

shared by a significant section of the party's supporters. Belhadj's hugely popular Friday sermons, which attracted up to 20,000 people each week, were full of denunciations of followers of other religions, liberals, foreign governments and leaders of other parties.[107]

For some of FIS's opponents, the practical implications of these views were felt even before the party was able to wield political power following victory at the ballot box. The Algerian Communist Party, the PAGS (*Parti de l'Avant Garde Socialiste*) obviously occupied a diametrically-opposed position in the new party political spectrum to that of FIS. Indeed, the Islamist party made combating the PAGS, which it saw as a party espousing atheism as part of its communist ideology, a priority.[108] As an almost certain consequence of this, meetings organised by the PAGS in the Spring of 1989, as it waited like FIS to be officially recognised, became the target of attacks by Islamic militants, as did those organised by the avowedly secularist and Berber-based RCD.[109] In addition to this new political dimension there was also a rise in this period in attacks on more 'traditional' targets of Islamist violence. Unmarried couples, unsuitably-dressed women and establishments selling alcohol all appeared to come under renewed threats of violence, particularly once again at the universities, in the period 1989-90. Popular music events in Algiers during this time were cancelled due to threats from religious militants and there were cases of vandalism to martyrs' graveyards (tombstones were seen by many Islamists as being 'un-Islamic').[110]

The FIS's leadership, however, was quick to deny responsibility for such incidents, blaming "communist infiltrators" as well as the FLN for carrying out the violence to discredit the FIS.[111] Foremost in denying FIS involvement in these

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107 Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.33
108 *Jeune Afrique* 18.12.89
109 Sutton, Aghrout & Zaimeche p.14; Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* p.112
110 Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.144-146
111 *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90

incidents was the party leader, Abassi Madani, who actually condemned violence "from wherever it came" and stressed that his party chose "the path of dialogue for the settlement of all questions, whether political, economic, social or cultural."[112] Such language stood in marked contrast to that employed by his deputy, Ali Belhadj, and like Belhadj, Madani appeared to be consistent in his stance. When asked what the discourse of FIS was, Madani replied simply "Moderation" and added that "Our doctrine is moderate and centrist because Islam is a religion of moderation." In further stark contrast to his deputy, Madani expressed his full commitment to the idea of democracy and when asked about the thorny question of sharia-prescribed punishments, such as stoning for adultery and amputation for theft, he replied that such punishments could only truly be applied in a fully Islamic world where peace, work and security would eliminate the causes of such crime. Again, on the issue of minority rights, there was an unambiguous contradiction of his deputy's views: "We will respect the minority, even if it is composed of one vote." [113]

Such demonstrative differences of opinion and tone within the upper echelons of the party naturally attracted much debate as to the reasons for this. For some, particularly opponents and critics of FIS, Belhadj's intemperate discourse represented the true face of the party: Madani playing the role of a front man to assuage the fears of would-be voters for FIS, trying to disguise the party's agenda with woolly talk of tolerance and democracy. This strategy was exposed, they argued, when Madani, who was the only senior FIS figure who regularly dealt with the media, was closely questioned and was forced to admit that the party had qualifications to its endorsement of democracy:

> "We will consider that those who have been elected by the people reflect the opinion of the people. In contrast, what we will not accept is the elected

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112 *El Moudjahid* 26.12.89 quoted in Rouadjia: *Les Frères et la Mosquée* p.298n
113 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 12.2.90

> member who harms the interest of the people. He must not be against Islam, the Sharia, its doctrine and its values. He must not be able to make war on Islam. He who is an enemy of Islam is an enemy of the people."[114]

Significantly, in this respect, the leader of the FIS also refused to say what would happen to the PAGS and the staunchly secularist RCD if the FIS came to power.[115] More generally, observers saw the 'double talk' by FIS as a mechanism by which the party could avoid losing its place in the electoral system (still a potential threat if the they pushed too far, despite the likely agreement with Chadli) through Abassi's emollient public statements whilst Belhadj's hard-line rhetoric would retain the party's popularity amongst the militants on the street.[116] As Robert Mortimer observed on Madani and Belhadj: "The contrasting styles of these two leaders combined a soft and hard sell that appealed to a wide range of disaffected Algerians."[117]

A second reason advanced for inconsistencies in the party's line related to a belief that such inconsistencies reflected real divisions that existed right at the heart of FIS between moderates and hard-liners. Such an idea was naturally dismissed by the party's leaders when it was put to them. Madani claimed that the idea of factions and tendencies was an essentially Western one and argued that a form of collective responsibility operated in the party with all opinions being subject to the approval of the party's ruling council the majlis shura, meaning that neither he nor Ali Belhadj were able to express their own individual opinions.[118] However, given the divergence of tone it is doubtful that this mechanism of

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114 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90
115 *Jeune Afrique* 19.3.90
116 Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.33
117 Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.579
118 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 12.2.90. When questioned on the subject of his deputy's hostile view of democracy the leader of the FIS resorted to a philosophical answer about the different meanings of democracy since its inception by the Ancient Greeks. Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90

collective responsibility operated as well as Madani seemed to claim. Indeed, despite the apparently well-structured organisation of FIS, there often appeared to exist a gap between the party's grassroots and the leadership: the strategy of the leadership often not being clear to the party members and the latter sometimes acting outside the direction of the leadership (which perhaps supports the claims of the leaders that the party was not responsible for acts of Islamist violence and intimidation.)[119]

10. Structures and Organisation of the FIS

The precise structure and organisation of the FIS remained largely obscure during the first eighteen months of its political life. According to statements made at its founding, the party was officially run by a majlis shura consisting of around 35 members. However, apart from a few more high-profile figures, the exact composition of the council was unknown. Journalists who tried to discover more about the party received little or no co-operation from the party's leadership.[120] With the exception of the occasional interview by Ali Belhadj and a very few other senior figures, Abassi Madani was the only leader whom the party appeared willing to let speak to the media.

Although Abassi claimed in January 1990 that "the structuring of the FIS is still not achieved", the high degree of organisation and discipline the party appeared to exert at its rallies and demonstrations indicated a significant degree of institutional organisation.[121] More details about the internal workings of the party were to emerge later, but it appears that it was headed by a four man National Executive consisting of Abassi, Belhadj, Benazouz Zebda and Hachemi Sahnouni. This was drawn from the majlis shura which, as indicated earlier by

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119 Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.32
120 *Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90
121 Interview with Abassi Madani,*Algérie Actualité* 4.1.90

Abassi was the formal decision-making body of the party. Below this the FIS had a highly hierarchical structure of *wilaya*, commune and even *quartier* branches of the party.[122] This hierarchical structure suggested that authority in the party came from the top down, although the extent to which this occurred with, for example, the selection of local candidates for the June 1990 elections is disputed.[123] Overall though, the mechanisms of the party, particularly in terms of decision-making and ideology, remained shrouded in secrecy and thus created the degree of confusion amongst the rank and file referred to earlier.

11. External Influences and Support

Examination of and speculation about the FIS's ideology and agenda also prompted questions about the extent to which the party was influenced, and indeed supported, by Islamist movements and governments elsewhere in the Muslim world. Inevitably, significant attention focused, as it had done in the 1980s, on links with Iran. There was, however, little evidence to suggest any real links with the Islamic Republic. Ali Belhadj acknowledged the influence of the Iranian revolution on young Islamists in Algeria, but termed such influence "annoyances" and furthermore expressed his important theological differences with Iranian Shi'ism.[124] Similarly, Abassi Madani, when questioned on the existence of a branch of Hezbollah in Algeria replied:

> "Hezbollah? This is nothing but a label. Behind it there is nothing. It is just a minority. Algeria is Sunnite."[125]

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[122] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.102

[123] Hugh Roberts claims that selection of candidates for the elections was by the FIS's majlis shura (Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.448) whilst Dévoluy and Duteil claim that the selection was made by the party's regional offices (Dévoluy & Duteil pp.126-127)

[124] Interview with Ali Belhadj, *Al-Bayane* December 1989 reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.70-72

[125] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 26.4.90

Of perhaps more relevance were alleged links with Saudi Arabia. On the ideological level, it was argued that elements of Saudi Wahhabism could be witnessed in both the attacks by militants on tombstones and in supposed plans by FIS to ban women from driving cars.[126] On the practical level it was alleged that the party received funds from Saudi sources, including a reported donation of $1 million from a Saudi businessman.[127] Support also came from the Saudi ulama who sought to promote a form of 'moderate' Islamism, capable of participating in power and thus preventing the movement moving towards a more militant Iranian-style Islamism.[128] Indeed, rumours that the Saudi King Fahd had attempted to broker a deal between Chadli Benjedid and Abassi Madani in January 1990 spoke of the King being motivated by his fear of Iran which he perceived to be close to Ali Belhadj. [129]

As evidence of the possible competition for influence between these two states, there were reports of large numbers of cheap books on religious subjects from both Saudi Arabia and Iran appearing in book shops during this period.[130] Abassi Madani, for his part, denied that the FIS was inspired by any models emerging from Iran, Saudi Arabia or even Sudan. When questioned specifically about Saudi Arabia, he stated that there were no official contacts between his party and Riyadh (which, as far as he was aware, still supported the existing

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126 *Jeune Afrique* 29.1.90
127 *Libération* 11.8.94
128 Belvaude pp.107-108 It was also suggested that Saudi backing for the FIS was prompted by a long-standing antipathy to the Algerian regime because of its revolutionary origins and prominent role in Third World politics. There was also a feeling that Algeria was not truly 'Arab' and that this could be rectified by the FIS's programme. Author's interview with former Algerian diplomat.
129 Author's interview with Hussein Amin, Cairo, 13.6.94. It is said that King Fahd actually believed Belhadj to be in the pay of Tehran and thus sought to boost Abassi whom he portrayed to Chadli as a moderate figure.
130 Belvaude pp.107-108

regime in Algeria) although he suggested that there might be some now that the FIS had been legalised.[131]

As for links with other countries, the ideological links with Egypt appeared to remain strong. Ali Belhadj cited both Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb as influences on him. However, the fact that he also cited his former teachers, Soltani and Sahnoun, indicated the essentially Algerian nature of FIS.[132] It was also suggested that such ideological links with the Arab east were strengthened by the sending abroad on scholarships in early 1989 of many of the Islamist students arrested during the unrest of October 1988. Having spent time in countries such as Syria and particularly Egypt, these students returned with new and radical ideas gained from contacts they had established there with local Islamists. This move by the authorities was portrayed as an exercise in removing disruptive elements from the political scene. However, there were suspicions that the idea for the scheme came from Islamist sympathisers within the regime.[133] However, despite both this and the probable agreement that Chadli had struck with the FIS, the President was clearly aware of the potential dangers of allowing the FIS to establish external links and acquire more radical ideas. It was probably for this reason that Abassi Madani was denied access to the International Islamic Conference that the Algerian Government hosted in May 1990 and which was attended by such notable Islamists as Rachid Ghannoushi of Tunisia and Hassan Turabi of Sudan.[134]

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131 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 12.2.90

132 Interview with Ali Belhadj, *Al-Bayane* December 1989. Belhadj also stated that he liked to read the works of Ibn Taymiyya, the Islamic thinker and activist whose ideas were a central inspiration to the Saudi Wahhabist movement, thus supporting the view that Saudi Wahhabism could be identified in some of the FIS's ideas.

133 Author's interview with former Algerian diplomat.

134 *El Watan* 1.3.94

12. The Failure of the Secular Opposition

One of the marked features of the period from October 1988 through to June 1990 was the near total absence of any political grouping that effectively challenged the virtual monopoly that was exercised over the political scene by the FIS and the FLN. There appeared to be no real third alternative to what many Algerians saw as these two equally unattractive options. This was not due to any shortage of political parties, twenty formally applying for official recognition in the immediate aftermath of the July 1989 Law on Political Associations. Indeed, the sheer number of non-Islamist opposition parties weakened and divided any support such a potentially attractive 'third option' might be able to attract. Most of the secular opposition parties were unable to establish nation-wide grass-roots organisations in preparation for the elections in contrast to their rivals in the FIS, who were able to use the mosque network, and the FLN, which took full advantage of the structures and organisation of the former single party apparatus. The boycott of the June 1990 poll of the two other parties which did appear to have a more established following, the FFS and the MDA, served to accentuate the dominance of the FIS and the FLN which were able to squeeze the potential vote and support of other parties exploiting the popular fear or dislike of each other.[135]

Tactical support was undoubtedly a prominent feature of both the FIS's and the FLN's vote in the June elections. As already shown, dislike of the FLN made a huge contribution to the FIS's victory in the poll, but it is also true that many of those who cast their vote for the FLN did so not as an endorsement of the record of the FLN, but out of a desire to block the advance of the Islamists. Although

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[135] The effect of the absence of Ahmed Ben Bella's MDA with its past emphasis on Islam and the Iranian revolution, on the FIS's electoral performance is uncertain. It was however notable that the FIS's *Projet de Programme du Front Islamique du Salut* was first published in the MDA's newspaper, *Tribune d'Octobre*, on 22 March 1989. *Algérie Actualité* 12.10.89

antipathy towards the FLN ran deep in Algerian society, it ran deeper still in some parts against the Islamism of the FIS. The party attracted far stronger reactions, both positive and negative, from people than the FLN did. A graphic illustration of this was provided by the appearance of Abassi Madani on television during the election campaign as part of a series of programmes where the main party leaders were questioned by journalists about their aims and policies. The FIS's leader appeared to attract not only a larger audience than that for other leaders but his appearance elicited dramatically varying responses from people watching. In the telephone opinion poll conducted after the appearance of each leader, Madani scored an unremarkable 3.5 out of 10 on a scale of approval. However this figure, an average for all the calls received, hid the fact that out of the 380 calls, 199 gave Madani a score of zero whilst 104 gave him the maximum possible score of 10.[136]

The efforts of both the secular opposition parties and the FLN were also undoubtedly hampered by the high-profile backing the French media gave to them throughout the election campaign and the correspondingly virulent criticism it heaped on the FIS. Such support proved to be entirely counter-productive since it seemed to confirm the FIS's propaganda against the other parties that they were the vehicles of Western and anti-Islamic values.[137] The FLN was particularly damaged in this respect since it had long bolstered itself up on the legitimacy it had gained by winning independence from the French.

13. Conclusions

There can be little doubting that the events of October 1988 and the changes that occurred in Algeria both subsequently and consequently represented a watershed of opportunity for Algeria's Islamists. It was an

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136 *Jeune Afrique* 19.3.90
137 Zoubir p.96; Burgat & Dowell p.282

opportunity they wasted no time in exploiting to the full. Despite significant bursts of activity at various points during the previous three decades since Algeria won its independence, the Algerian state had always been able to suppress and control it so that it never really represented any substantial challenge to the political order. That Algeria looked so far away from an Islamist upsurge on the eve of the October unrest suggests that the movement's growth, despite the decline in popular living standards that had occurred in the 1980s, was far from inevitable.

This is not to suggest either, though, that the crisis of October and Chadli's decision to open up Algeria's political system made the Islamist rise unavoidable after 1988. Shrewd decisions and moves on the part of Islamist leaders such as Madani, Belhadj and Sahnouni were clearly important. The movement's swift exploitation of and high-profile involvement in the latter stages of the unrest of October, despite having played no part in its instigation, provided a rallying point of dissent to the regime for ordinary Algerians in the absence of any other prominent and coherent grouping. The decision to form a political party solidified this growing support and when the unexpected decision came to allow participation of the FIS in the political system, the new party had the resources and the organisation to ensure that it had no secular competitors in the struggle to provide an alternative in the polls to the unpopular and discredited FLN. Its exploitation of the offer apparently tendered by President Chadli in early 1990 further boosted itself and its electoral prospects.

The stunning success the FIS experienced in the eighteen months from its creation led many commentators to observe that the Islamist party had assumed the mantle of popular legitimacy that had once been worn by the historic FLN during and immediately after the war of liberation. Lahouari Addi observed that their were remarkable similarities, in terms of their shared emphasis on populism,

between the FIS's programme and the FLN's National Charter.[138] However, whilst such comparisons were often overstated, it was certainly true that this was a line that the FIS leadership itself sought to promote. In one of the first interviews he gave following the creation of the FIS in February 1989, Abassi Madani claimed that the new party was simply reclaiming the lost legacy of Algeria's revolutionary struggle against France. "The FIS wants to save the experiences of November (1954) which have been lost" he stated.[139]

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[138] See Lahouari Addi: *De la Permanence du Populisme Algérien* in *Peuples Méditerranéens* (Nos. 52-53, July-December 1990) pp.42-43

[139] Interview with Abassi Madani in *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.89

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ISLAMISM AND THE FIS CENTRE STAGE: 1990 - 1991

A: JUNE 1990 - MARCH 1991

1. Reactions to the FIS Victory

Despite the shock of the scale of the FIS victory in the local elections, the major players did not take long to react and prepare themselves for the next stage in the political conflict. For its part, the FIS organised massive enthusiastic demonstrations on the first Friday after the results of the election were announced. Abassi Madani was besieged by the flow of domestic and foreign journalists as well as foreign diplomats who came to see him, anxious to hear the plans and thoughts of the leader of what was now clearly Algeria's most popular political party.[1]

The size of the FIS victory had similarly taken all the various factions of the regime by surprise. President Chadli's strategy of encouraging the Islamist party in an effort to prevent a victory by (and thus damage his opponents within) the FLN, had clearly seriously underestimated the popular support for the FIS *vis à vis* the former ruling party. Despite this miscalculation, the President appeared to remain robustly confident that having defeated his enemies in the FLN he could prevent the FIS from potentially threatening his power base. He announced at the end of July 1990 that elections to the National Assembly would take place some time within the first quarter of 1991 and privately reassured foreign diplomats, anxious over the potential consequences of a repeat victory by the FIS in the National Assembly elections, that the party was highly unlikely to do as well in subsequent elections. The local elections were portrayed as being of little

[1] Burgat & Dowell p.285n and p.284

consequence and would mark the high water mark of Islamist support which would ebb away in the forthcoming months.[2]

One of the reasons Chadli stated for his optimism was his belief that the FIS would struggle to maintain its level of popular support once it took control of the majority of local authorities it had won in the local elections. The party, he argued, would prove incapable of fulfilling the frequently ambitious promises it had made during the election campaign and would consequently suffer increasing popular disillusionment.

2. The FIS in Local Government

Considerable international and domestic attention became focused on the activities and performance of the 853 communal (APC) and the 31 regional (APW) councils that the FIS took control of following their June victories. Of greatest concern to most observers was the extent to which the party would seek to impose its vision of an Islamic society on Algeria's daily social fabric and the extent to which this would appear to threaten and impinge individual liberties.

Within a matter of weeks of the new local administrations taking over, reports rapidly began to emerge indicating that those councils controlled by the FIS did indeed appear to be set on imposing their strict ideals on local social life and affairs. The Provincial Assembly in Constantine and the City Council in Algiers voted to end co-education. Oran City Council banned a popular 'rai' music festival in favour of one committed to 'patriotic Islamic music' and suspended subsidies to cultural associations that were not of a religious nature. In Tipasa, the wearing of swimming costumes and shorts on the streets was prohibited. In Jijel the local authority rejected all correspondence not written in Arabic.[3] Across

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[2] Author's interview with Hussein Amin, Cairo, 13.6.94

[3] *The Economist* 4.8.90; Djillali Liabes: *La Democratie en Algérie: Culture et Contre-Culture* in *Peuples Mediterranéens* No. 52-53: *Algérie vers L'Etat*

Algeria there were reports of a generalised clamp down upon and closing of cinemas, bars and wine-shops in the areas controlled by the FIS.

The speed with which such reports appeared in both the national official press and foreign newspapers, however, indicated the readiness of the regime (as well as foreign governments, particularly the French) to try to discredit the FIS. Gradually, reservations about and qualifications to such stories began to appear. It emerged that the bans on swimming costumes and shorts on the streets of Tipasa and the closing elsewhere of alcohol-selling establishments were, in fact, measures already introduced by the previous FLN-controlled authorities and which had hitherto met with little opposition or comment. Other reports of the so-called 'war' FIS councils had declared on rai music François Burgat characterises as being "often distorted by the government, or simply fabricated by the government press."[4]

The reaction of the FIS's leaders when they were questioned about such stories was frequently one of exasperation. For them, whether the stories were true or not was not the real issue. As Abassi Madani responded when asked about what had become known as the 'War of the shorts' in Tipasa: "The story of the shorts is not the problem. The things that count are the problems of housing, unemployment and money."[5] A similar attitude was adopted by Ali Belhadj on the issue of the supposed clamp down on music: "In Oran there is no drinking water, but we hear talk of rai. Water and housing come before rai."[6]

That the FIS wanted, then, to be judged on their managerial performance and the provision of essential services to the populations in the areas they

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Islamique? Juillet - Decembre 1990, p.47; Dillman: *Transition to Democracy in Algeria* p.39

[4] Burgat & Dowell p.284

[5] *Le Figaro* 31.7.90

[6] *Horizons* 29.9.90

controlled did not give them any respite from their critics who were quick to point at the new authorities' failings and inability to deliver the promises of dramatic economic improvement that had been made during the election campaign. Some critics went beyond the standard accusations of incompetence and even alleged nepotism and corruption.[7] Such accusations were similarly contested by the FIS and its defenders. On the issue of competence, the fact that within days of the June election FIS workers were on the streets of Algiers clearing rubbish that had accumulated during a long strike in the capital, was highlighted.[8] More importantly, it was clear that the FIS had inherited local administrations which were in a very poor state following years of appalling FLN mismanagement.[9] As Abassi Madani explained: "We have found in the APCs the politics of scorched earth."[10] This, together with the growing demands of the local populations increasingly pressurised by failures at the national level to produce economic and social improvements, made it highly unlikely that even the most competent of local authorities (let alone totally inexperienced ones like those of the FIS) could make much of an impact in the shorter term, certainly not within the first few months of taking control when accusations of incompetence were at their height.

It was also clear that the government did all it could to frustrate the new authorities and ensure that they made little progress. Only two months before the June elections, local powers had been "spectacularly reduced" (Burgat) by the government and the newly elected authorities were able to enjoy far less financial autonomy than their predecessors whose accumulated debts were made the responsibility of the new administrations.[11] Speakers from the APCs and APWs at

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[7] See for example Zoubir pp.99-100 and *Révolution Africaine* 20.6.91
[8] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.585n
[9] Burgat & Dowell p.283
[10] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 30.8.90
[11] Burgat & Dowell pp.283-284; Bouthenia Cheriet: *Islamism and Feminism: Algeria's Rites of Passage* in Entelis & Naylor p.202. Local councils also complained that public enterprises 'threatened' them to get them to pay outstanding debts owed to them. *Horizons* 29.9.90

a local government conference organised by the FIS on 28 September 1990, complained bitterly of the lack of co-operation they received from the government and civil servants when they tried to establish agencies and mechanisms to deal with the myriad problems their local areas faced.[12] Six weeks later on 15 November four thousand FIS councillors presented a motion to the President formally protesting at the hostile attitude of central government to their administrations.[13]

On the issue of corruption and nepotism, it was argued that the FIS-controlled administrations, far from employing friends or relatives or even party workers frequently appointed people outside of the party in order to make use of the most competent people available.[14] Even if there was corruption and nepotism to be found in some authorities, though, it was difficult to argue that this would have been on a scale that even approached that witnessed during the previous period of FLN control.

The popularity of these authorities can be seen as one measure of the performance of the local councils. Although any meaningful measure of this could not be achieved until further elections, there did not appear to be any noticeable signs of disenchantment with the local authorities. Most people appeared to continue to blame their worsening economic and social conditions on the central government. Whilst claims by some FIS activists that local people "enthusiastically supported local governments with voluntary assistance and additional taxes"[15] should be treated with a certain amount of scepticism, the inevitable popularity of 'Islamic souks' which many authorities, in conjunction with

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[12] *Horizons* 29.9.90
[13] *Le Monde* 17.11.90
[14] Burgat & Dowell p.285
[15] Anwar Haddam: *The Political Experiment of the Algerian Islamic Movement and the New World Order* in Azzam Tamimi (Editor): *Power-Sharing Islam?* (Liberty, London, 1993) p.135

the organs of the party, set up to provide low cost goods to the poor, can not be denied.[16]

Overall, it appears that the FIS's record in local government in the period following their electoral successes of June 1990 appears relatively undistinguished in the wider context. The scale of the tasks its councillors faced and the limited (and reduced) powers that they were able to wield meant that their impact was at best slight. In terms of the changes it tried to make to social behaviour at the local level, whilst many of these were, as demonstrated, subject to exaggeration or fabrication, it seems clear that many local authorities did make identifiable attempts to try and bring social behaviour closer to its own set of norms. Non-Islamists in areas won by the FIS spoke of a tangible "atmosphere of fear"[17] developing in the aftermath of the FIS victories of June 1990, but it seems that no significant draconian social measures were introduced in most FIS-controlled regions and any changes that did occur usually affected only a small minority of the population in each area.[18]

3. The FIS and the Gulf Crisis: The Populist Option

At the same time as the FIS was dealing in the second half of 1990 with the domestic challenges of local government , events outside of Algeria began to make a rare and important incursion onto the national political scene. These events were to have particular implications for the party.

The shock of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 and the subsequent dispatch of US. troops to Saudi Arabia, was felt, because of the region's Arab and Muslim identity, almost as keenly in the Maghreb as it was in the Mashraq where the crisis itself actually unfolded. In Algeria, the government

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[16] Burgat & Dowell p.285; *Algérie Actualité* 11.4.91
[17] Author's interviews with eyewitnesses.
[18] Burgat & Dowell p.284

reacted by calling for Iraq's withdrawal and the removal of foreign troops from Saudi soil. Initially, this position was shared by the FIS which, although particularly sensitive to the presence of non-Muslims so near to Islam's holiest places in Saudi Arabia, wished to offer no support to Saddam Hussein who they rightly saw as a secular and anti-Islamist Ba'athist.[19] Thus Abassi Madani condemned the "arrogant" and "colonising" behaviour of the United States whilst describing the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait as "unacceptable."[20] Following the traditional Algerian diplomatic role of mediation, both Abassi and Ali Belhadj embarked on shuttle diplomacy between Baghdad and Riyadh in an effort to resolve the crisis, hoping particularly to use their links with the Saudis (whose support of the party provided another incentive for not favouring the Iraqis) to good effect.[21]

However, as 1990 drew to a close with no sign of an Iraqi withdrawal and the likelihood of western military action against Iraq growing, there were increasing signs that the even-handed stance adopted by both the government and by the FIS was out-of-step with that of the bulk of the ordinary population. It rapidly became apparent that most Algerians saw Saddam Hussein, despite official discouragement from the FIS as well as the government, as a heroic Arab nationalist standing up to western threats. This perception was sharpened by the commencement of air strikes against Iraq in mid-January 1991.

The massive popular support which Saddam Hussein enjoyed in Algeria presented the leaders of the FIS with a considerable dilemma. They recognised that they faced the risk of losing the substantial electoral support they had attracted only six months earlier in June 1990, through being seen to be far too

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[19] Hugh Roberts: *A Trial of Strength: Algerian Islamism* in James Piscatori (Editor): *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis* (The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991) p.143

[20] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 30.8.90

[21] Robert Mortimer: *Algerian Foreign Policy in Transition* in Entelis & Naylor pp.261-262

balanced in their antipathy towards Iraq and western military intervention.[22] Furthermore, there were fears of being outflanked by other opposition parties, notably the MDA of Ahmed Ben Bella who had made a high-profile return to the country in September in 1990, and who had been the first to organise public demonstrations and call for the dispatch of volunteers to help defend Iraq.[23]

Forced to choose between preserving the loyalty of its popular base and staying true to both its Islamist and anti-nationalist doctrines as well as its Arabian financial supporters, the FIS appeared to make a clear decision to ride the popular impulses of the Algerian people and unambiguously back Saddam. In a multi-party demonstration against the war on 18 January, in which most demonstrators marched under banners calling for peace, the FIS marched under explicitly pro-Iraqi slogans. Furthermore, Ali Belhadj appeared in combat fatigues at the rally and called on the government to open training camps for volunteers to go to Iraq.[24] Whilst such unabashedly populist pitches were primarily aimed at retaining the attention and support of mass opinion, the FIS also made sure that its domestic interests and agenda continued to be advanced. Thus at a FIS-only demonstration on 31 January, calls for a date to be set for the National Assembly elections were mixed in with denunciations of the western powers and messages of solidarity with Iraq.[25]

The comprehensive defeat of Iraq within a few weeks inevitably brought an effective end to the debate in Algeria and attentions returned more fully to the domestic scene. However, the Gulf crisis as a whole clearly had an impact on the FIS and revealed something about the party's nature and identity. Hugh Roberts argues that the crisis appeared to confirm the FIS's "doctrinal shallowness, but

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[22] Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* pp.143-144
[23] Mortimer: *Algerian Foreign Policy in Transition* p.262
[24] For one Algerian journalist, Belhadj's call for military volunteers had the second, ulterior motive of creating a well-trained militia for the FIS. *Algérie Actualité* 24.1.91
[25] Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* pp.141-143; Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.35

also its militancy and political flexibility" demonstrated by its populist decision to opt for retaining its popular support in preference to staying closer to its Islamist doctrines and Saudi supporters. This choice also marked for Roberts "a major stage in the 'Algerianisation' of the FIS" through its response to domestic rather than foreign (Saudi) and trans-national (Islamist) pressures and factors.[26]

B: APRIL - JULY 1991: CRISIS AND CONFRONTATION

As the war in Iraq and Kuwait drew to a close in the early Spring of 1991, the attention of the FIS began to re-focus on events inside Algeria and increasingly upon its own internal politics. Very little was publicly known about the internal workings of the FIS during its first two years of life, with even the membership of the party's ruling council, the Majlis Shura, being shrouded in mystery. Throughout 1989-90 Abassi Madani had been the only public voice of the party, with the occasional interview or statement by Ali Belhadj providing an exception to this. However by 1991 this monolithic front that the party had been able to retain began to fissure, not publicly at first, but enough by the middle of the year to be apparent to everyone within the party and beyond.

1. The Emergence of Islamist Competition

The first signs of discord within the FIS following its victory in the 1990 local elections emerged over the issue of its relations with and place within the country's wider Islamist movement. As has been shown (see previous chapter), far from all of Algeria's senior Islamist figures joined the FIS on its creation in February 1989. Although most had involved themselves in the far looser and

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[26] Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.144 Roberts actually argues that because of the relative absence of non-Muslim minorities in Algeria, the FIS were successfully able to blend the idea of pan-Muslim solidarity with the more popular ideas of pan-Arab solidarity. p.143

more apolitical Rabitat Dawa organisation formed the previous November, many had had doubts about the theological and practical need of a specifically political party to further the Islamist movement's aims. However, it was several of these figures who appeared in the wake of June 1990 to rethink their objections and join the field of political competition. This did not take the form, though, of responding to an invitation by Abassi Madani in June 1990 to join the FIS, but rather involved the creation of new and separate Islamist parties.

A number of Islamist type parties were formed in the latter half of 1990, but only two came to be of any real significance: those formed around Mahfoud Nahnah and Abdallah Djaballah respectively. Both senior and influential figures in the Islamist movement since the 1970s, Nahnah and Djaballah officially transformed their existing apolitical associations into political parties in December 1990. Nahnah's *Al-Irchad wal Islah* assumed the Arabic acronymed title of HAMAS (Islamic Reform Movement) whilst Djaballah's *Nahda* (Renaissance) association retained its name, although it was frequently referred to by its full French title of *Mouvement de Nahda Islamique* (MNI).

The reasons behind the creation of these two new political parties were several fold. The most obvious, if base, impulse behind the setting up of the parties was the realisation by their founders that the astounding success that the FIS had discovered during the first eighteen months of its existence had pushed all those Islamist figures who had not joined the party to the political and organisational margins. Mahfoud Nahnah and Ahmed Sahnoun's abject failure in trying to prevent the FIS staging its march of April 1990 (see previous chapter) had been a graphic demonstration of this marginalisation. It was clearly a calculation on the part of Nahnah and Djaballah that the only means of retaining any influence within the broader Islamist movement was to join the party political fray.[27] For both leaders this meant forming their own parties rather than joining

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[27] Burgat & Dowell p.288

the FIS, since this latter option risked the final abolition and subsummation within the FIS of any remaining independent power bases they possessed.

A second consideration was that the new Islamist parties represented recognisably different strains of Islamism than that embodied by the FIS. Both HAMAS and Nahda were portrayed as essentially more 'moderate' expressions of Islamism. A more accurate characterisation was that they operated a far more cerebral and genuinely religious discourse than that held by the FIS, the experience of the Gulf War having further demonstrated the latter party's deepening attachment to political populism. For Mahfoud Nahnah, this more intellectual approach did appear to imply a more moderate and less demotic approach. Although the party's name, HAMAS, was an allusion to the HAMAS of Palestine (the Algerian version was purposely founded on the third anniversary of the Intifada) the choice of name reflected more a desire for popular attention and recognition than an indication of the party's espousal of radical ideas and violent activism.[28] Intellectually, Nahnah proclaimed his belief in an Islam that was "open to the modern world and founded on *ijitihad*.." and he made clear his commitment to the establishment of an Islamic state by stages and "based on dialogue, removed from violence (and) from political and religious terrorism."[29] This gradualist approach was also reflected in his far more unambiguous acceptance of the basic tenets of democracy demonstrated by his belief that plurality of thought represented "maturity" and his declared willingness to co-operate with non-Islamist parties at elections.[30] This stood in contrast to the frequently ambiguous signals coming from the FIS. In more specific terms, too, Nahnah and HAMAS appeared distinct from the party of Madani and Belhadj. *Al-Irchad wal Islah* had had an active women's section and Nahnah was unequivocal in his

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[28] Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.136; Burgat & Dowell p.288
[29] Quoted in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.38 & p.42
[30] Interview with Mahfoud Nahnah, *Révolution Africaine* 10.4.91

support of the right of women to work and for an expansion of the Family Code to protect their rights, and he was vociferous in his condemnation of violence against women.[31]

Abdallah Djaballah's Nahda appeared close to Nahnah's HAMAS in terms of this more intellectual discourse although Djaballah's differences with the FIS amounted arguably to less than those between HAMAS and the FIS. Differences of political strategy towards the institutions of the state and over theological conceptions of *ijitihad* have been cited as demarcating the line between MNI and the FIS, but Arun Kapil, for one, has described them as "purely tactical" and thus a means to preserve Djaballah's independence. In fact, in places, the MNI's discourse appeared as radical as that of the radical wing of FIS, making plain its opposition to the existence of secular parties and its wish to impose the veil on women, stances both Mahfoud Nahnah and (in public at least) Abassi Madani had declared themselves to be against.[32] Like Madani, Djaballah would nonetheless speak more generally of working within the "framework of democracy and pluralism."[33] One way in which the MNI appeared to differ from both the FIS and HAMAS was in its vociferous condemnation of the government's economic reform programme, an issue both other parties had appeared to broadly, if often tacitly, support. Opposing further privatisations of the public sector, Djaballah denounced the liberalising reforms which had been accelerated under the prime ministership of Mouloud Hamrouche since September 1989 as having "opened the national market to domestic wolves and foreigners."[34]

A third and far more contentious reason advanced for the entry of HAMAS and the MNI into the party political arena was that of encouragement and even

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[31] Burgat & Dowell p.288n; Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.38; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* pp.104-105
[32] Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.111
[33] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.107
[34] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.44

orchestration by the regime. It is argued that the formation of both parties was seen by the regime as a means of dividing and splintering the large Islamist constituency that the FIS had been able to monopolise in the June elections.[35] Cited as evidence of official collaboration were meetings both leaders had had with the regime and the fact that both new parties appeared to be well financed following their creation. Whilst such charges ignored the more genuine motivations, detailed above, for forming political parties, there was at least some substance to the claims in the case of Nahnah and HAMAS. In contrast to Djaballah's criticism of official policy in the economic field in particular, Nahnah offered little serious criticism of the regime and even often took its side in subsequent confrontations with the FIS.[36] Nahnah had also enjoyed unusually good relations with the authorities since his release from prison soon after Chadli Benjedid came to power and his absence from the organised agitation of the Islamist movement in the early 1980s (see chapter 3) was further indication of his closeness to the regime.

2. Attempts at Unity

That regime manipulation was not the primary motivating force behind the formation of HAMAS (or Nahda) was indicated by Mahfoud Nahnah's expressed belief that the Islamist parties should not compete directly with one another (thus undermining the regime's desire to fracture the movement). Instead the leader of HAMAS called for a common front between the parties. Soon after the founding of HAMAS, he organised a conference to this end on 20 September 1990 to which he invited over 300 Islamic associations as well as political parties. However, whilst Djaballah and the MNI were very favourable to some form of

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[35] Burgat & Dowell p.289
[36] Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.110

'Islamic alliance', the leadership of the FIS made it quite clear that it was not and did not attend the conference.[37]

The FIS officially rejected the idea of an alliance on the grounds of it being essentially divisive. Its leadership maintained that the FIS was the sole legitimate representative of Islamist political activity in Algeria and thus implied that the objective of those Islamists that did not join the party was division. Abassi Madani described Nahnah's initiative as "a call for division under a slogan of unity" and characterised his subsequent decision to create a separate political party as "a stab in the back."[38] Ali Belhadj rejected Nahnah's initiatives on theological grounds referring to a hadith to claim that "there is no alliance in Islam" - Islam having abolished all previous alliances.[39] However, the FIS were far from united on this view. A growing number of the leadership of the party became attracted to the idea of such an alliance. This was often because many of them had belonged to groups established by Nahnah and particularly Djaballah before the creation of the FIS in 1989 and the idea of rivalry and division left them personally and theologically uneasy. Such a view became increasingly shared by the FIS's rank and file who began to chant slogans and display banners to this end at FIS marches and rallies.[40]

The main opponent to the creation of an alliance was Abassi Madani. He consistently resisted such a move and this explains the party's failure to respond to Nahnah's overtures. The hostility of the FIS's leader to a common Islamist front was interpreted by some as a result of personal antipathy Abassi felt towards Nahnah as the main proponent of the alliance. The leader of HAMAS's lack of an explicit backing for the FIS in the 1990 elections together with his subsequent claim that the FIS victory was one for the wider Islamist movement clearly irked

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[37] Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.137; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.107
[38] Abed Charef: *Algérie: Le Grand Dérapage* (L'Aube, France, 1994) p.110
[39] Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.40
[40] Charef pp.109-110

the President of the FIS.[41] He remained suspicious of the Blida-based leader and his relations with the regime, actually referring to Nahnah in one newspaper interview as "Chadli's man."[42] However, this did not explain why Abassi was opposed to alliance with Abdallah Djaballah's MNI. Not only did Djaballah enjoy much closer relations with the FIS, but, unlike Nahnah, he had openly called on his supporters to vote for the FIS in June 1990 and was attributed with securing victories for the party in his organisation's heartland in eastern Algeria. [43]

The main reason behind Abassi Madani's opposition to an alliance was that the FIS leader feared it would critically weaken both the party's strategic position as well as his own position as leader. At the time of the creation of the FIS, Abassi, Nahnah, Djaballah and, of course, Ahmed Sahnoun, had arguably been the four most senior and influential Islamist figures in Algeria. The fact that Abassi was the only one of the four to become involved in the new party meant that he was able to dominate it. The creation of an 'Islamic Alliance' appeared to threaten this dominance and might appear to put both Nahnah and Djaballah on an equal footing once again with Abassi (as indeed was their aim).

Although there was a strong element of personal ambition on the part of Abassi Madani in this regard, there was also a concern that any threat to his dominance was a threat to the long term strategy he had personally forged for the

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[41] Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.137; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.105 At the elections Nahnah had only called on his supporters to vote for 'Islamists' rather than specifically for the FIS. Although as Roberts points out this invariably amounted to the same thing.

[42] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Horizons* 5.5.91. Abassi's antipathy towards Nahnah was also shared by some of the more radical elements in the FIS. They too suspected his relationship with the regime (particularly with regard to the Bouyali affair - see chapter 3) and disliked his apparent moderation. Following the party's creation there were incidents of FIS militants tearing down HAMAS posters, interrupting the party's meetings and attempting to prevent Nahnah himself speaking. Violence was also used in attempts by FIS members to wrest control of mosques that were controlled by HAMAS supporters. Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.42

[43] Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* pp.110-111

FIS. Abassi's belief and determination that the FIS could win at least a share in political power had been clearly demonstrated by the populist tactics the party had employed during the Gulf War. The involvement of figures such as Nahnah and Djaballah potentially put at risk the 'electoralist' strategy Abassi had forged. The more intellectual and religious orientation of both leaders made them more ambivalent towards the aim of full political power as their failure to form political parties before 1990 amply demonstrated. Their involvement might also complicate and weaken Abassi's relations with the reformist elements within the regime, Abdallah Djaballah's hostility to the economic reform programme providing a potentially major impediment to continued co-operation.[44]

As 1991 progressed Abassi Madani came under increasing pressure from both the FIS's Majlis Shura and its ordinary members to respond to these appeals of unity. The leader of the party became progressively isolated only able to resist pressure on the issue by relying on the personal loyalty of his deputy Ali Belhadj whom many claimed was actually personally in favour of an alliance.[45]

The internal conflicts within the FIS came by the Spring of 1991 to become entwined and complicated by developments in relations with the regime which had the effect of creating further fault lines within the party and further weakening the position of Abassi Madani.

3. The New Electoral Law of Spring 1991

Following the FIS's victory in June 1990 relations between the party and President Chadli and his supporters in the government had clearly cooled as

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[44] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.467

[45] Abdallah Djaballah claimed that Belhadj had supported the idea of a union when it was initially put to him. Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* p.178 Pressure for unity also came from Ahmed Sahnoun and the Rabitat Dawaa which continued to meet in this period (see chapter 4). From the Spring of 1991 Sahnoun began to hold weekly meetings to get the parties to present a single list at the forthcoming legislative elections. *Horizons* 5.5.91

disputes over local government and the country's stance on the Gulf War had demonstrated. Nevertheless, whilst there appears to have been no renewal of the covert arrangement Chadli had fashioned with Abassi in early 1990 to defeat his enemies in the FLN, the leader of the FIS again met discreetly with the President in the aftermath of the local elections. There the leader of the FIS secured a commitment from Chadli that the regime would proceed to hold elections to the National Assembly in similarly unfettered conditions under which those at the local level had been held. In addition it was alleged that there was even an indication from the President that he might even be willing to co-operate and share power with the FIS following the legislative elections.[46]

How genuine this alleged commitment from Chadli Benjedid to Abassi Madani was is dubious. If the FIS were to repeat their triumph at the local level at the national level the President clearly would want to retain good relations with them. However, Chadli did not anticipate this happening and from 1990 worked to ensure that the FIS would not achieve a majority in the elections. By late 1990 his initial hope that FIS difficulties in local government would lead to a decline in the party's popular support showed no clear cut signs of occurring. Similarly, the emergence of HAMAS and the MNI had made no obvious inroads into the FIS's base of popular support. Turnout at HAMAS-organised rallies, for example, was a fraction of that which the FIS could expect to attend its own events.[47] It thus became apparent to the President that he would need to look for other means of reducing the FIS's popular support.

In March 1991 a new electoral law was presented to the outgoing national assembly (APN) for approval. It was quite clearly aimed at strengthening potential FLN representation in future elections to the National Assembly (now scheduled

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[46] Author's interview with Rachid Ghannoushi, leader of the Islamist Tunisian Nahda party, London, 18.4.95. Ghannoushi was in self-imposed exile in Algeria during 1990-91 and had close contacts with the FIS.
[47] Burgat & Dowell p.289

for June following postponement due to the tumult over the Gulf crisis) at the expense of the main Islamist party.

The electoral bill's main proposal was to increase the number of seats in the assembly from the current 295 to 542. Whilst this did not in itself appear to favour any party in particular, the fact that the new extra seats were allocated disproportionately to the south of Algeria, the only region where the FLN had performed well in the 1990 local elections, revealed the obvious intent behind the move. The effects of this manipulation of the electoral boundaries for political purposes, known as 'gerrymandering', were most starkly illustrated by comparing the electorates of the proposed districts: 7,000 voters in some southern areas being accorded the same representation as parts of Algiers containing 75,000 electors. Inevitably, the new districts with the largest electorates, mostly in Algiers, were ones that had voted most heavily for the FIS in 1990.[48]

It was no surprise, then, that the APN, which was still exclusively composed of FLN deputies, approved the bill. It had even amended it to further favour the FLN over the FIS. Originally providing for a second ballot contested by the leading three candidates who emerged from a first ballot in each district, the electoral bill was amended by the assembly to reduce the second ballot to just two contesting candidates. Such a change was perceived as likely to aid the FLN since the second ballot was most likely to produce a contest between the FIS and the FLN as the two largest parties nation-wide. In such a situation, it was believed, the bulk of the votes which had gone to the smaller (predominantly secular) parties eliminated in the first ballot would flow to the FLN as the lesser evil to the FIS.[49]

The effectiveness of this strategy by the government received apparent confirmation by a series of opinion polls that were conducted soon after the

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[48] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.588
[49] Ibid.

passing of the electoral law. They revealed similar levels of support for the two main parties overall, but showed clearly that in a straight fight between an FLN and a FIS candidate in a second ballot, most voters would back the FLN. Thus even if the first ballot showed, as one poll suggested, a 33-24% lead for the FIS over the FLN, a second ballot would transform this into a 54-46% (45-38% if abstentions from the first round are considered) victory for the former ruling party.[50]

4. The Battle for the General Strike

Faced with such a blatant attempt to sabotage their electoral chances (which were clearly deemed good following the party's triumph the previous summer) the FIS leadership responded with angry protests. The party branded the new electoral law "high treason" and Abassi Madani, for the first time attacking the President in person, accused Chadli of betraying the agreement he had struck with the FIS in which he had promised to conduct the electoral process openly and fairly.[51] At the beginning of April the leader of the FIS held a press conference at which he made a set of demands. These included the abrogation of the new electoral law, more opposition party monitoring of the process, which should be free from government and APN interference, and a call for the holding of presidential elections within three months of the assembly elections.[52]

For Abassi Madani the regime's new plans for the electoral law dealt a heavy blow to his central strategy of achieving political power through the ballot

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[50] *Algérie Actualité* 9.5.91. A poll published three weeks later showed an even larger second ballot split of 62-38 (51-32) in favour of the FLN. *Algérie Actualité* 30.5.91

[51] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.588; Burgat & Dowell p.293; *Jeune Afrique* 5.6.91

[52] *El Moudjahid* 3.4.91

box.[53] His fury at Chadli Benjedid's betrayal was evident in both his personal attacks on the duplicity of the President (whom hitherto he had avoided any criticism of) and in his calls for early presidential elections.[54] Yet the regime appeared impervious to the loud protests both from the FIS and many of the other opposition parties. It seemed that Abassi Madani's personal and political strategy for achieving power had been irreparably damaged. Not only did the FIS look unlikely to gain even a simple majority in elections to the National Assembly, but any presidential ambitions Abassi must inevitably have harboured were similarly threatened by the fear that an FLN victory could pave the way for a fourth presidential term for Chadli Benjedid.[55] Within a few days, the FIS leader appeared to have produced a potential solution to this dilemma. From early April Abassi began to threaten that the FIS might launch a general strike in order to force a change in the new electoral laws.[56] Typical of these, and of the new more radical tone he had adopted was his speech to a party rally in Oran on 1 May:

> "We are ready to embark on elections, but with guarantees...the first of which is not to act according to these repressive (electoral) laws, as we cannot achieve legitimacy through illegitimacy, unless the President of the Republic complies with the opinion of the Islamic Salvation Front. One of the characteristics of the (FIS) is to demand and to struggle. When making demands does not prove convincing enough, striking to achieve what is right

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[53] Rachid Ghannoushi observed that "Abassi Madani realised after the changes to the electoral law that the electoral system could not lead to an Islamic state. Author's interview with Rachid Ghannoushi, London, 18.4.95

[54] When asked in the previous August (1990) about whether the FIS would demand Presidential elections following ones to the National Assembly, Abassi Madani had replied that this was a "secondary" issue compared to that of the National Assembly. Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 30.8.90

[55] Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* pp.177-178 Abassi Madani was almost certainly aware that an opinion poll at the beginning of May had shown that nearly 60% of those questioned perceived him to be the most popular party leader, as against 12% for Hocine Ait Ahmed of the FFS and 11% for Abdelhamid Mehri of the FLN. *Algérie Actualité* 9.5.91

[56] See for example *Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB)* ME/1041 A/18 9.4.91 & ME/1048 A/7 17.4.91

becomes necessary, God willing. It is a general strike, a political strike, not a conventional union one for limited demands."[57]

In issuing such warnings Abassi Madani did not have the formal approval of the leadership of the party, having not formally discussed the issue with the Majlis Shura beforehand. His motivations in both making this unilateral move and in not consulting widely were several fold. First and foremost, Abassi saw a general strike, or the threat of one, as one of the only means of persuading the government to abandon its attempt to electorally hobble the FIS through the election laws. He considered the other two possible options open to the party, that of acceptance of the changes and that of a boycott of the forthcoming elections as being equally damaging. The first of these alternatives would have led to defeat and humiliation for the party, whilst the second risked charges of being unwilling to play the democratic game and may even have led to the sidelining of the party politically.[58] Abassi had witnessed the effectiveness of a general strike that had been called by the main Algerian trade union federation, the UGTA, in the previous March and saw it as a potentially effective political tool.[59] The fact that the idea of a general strike had also been canvassed by a coalition of several of the secular opposition parties also clearly influenced Abassi, not least through the fear of being outflanked by such a move.[60]

A secondary motivation for Abassi Madani in calling for a general strike was that it could prove to be a useful weapon in his internal battles with the rest of the FIS leadership. Not only would it provide a means of distracting attention from the increasingly pressing issue of alliance with the other Islamist parties, but by leading the strike call Abassi hoped to forge more direct links with the FIS's mass membership and thus strengthen his hand against opponents nearer the top of

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[57] *SWB* ME/1062 A/14 3.5.91
[58] Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.146
[59] Charef p.135
[60] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.468

the party.[61] During the first few days of May, Abassi's opponents had made increasingly public their unhappiness with the independent nature of his leadership. On May 1, in a move clearly aimed at limiting Abassi, a declaration emerged from the Majlis Shura stating that "Declarations and important political decisions can only be taken by the Majlis Shura."[62] A week later, in an article in *El Mounqid*, the Majlis issued a communique restating their desire for a common front with the other Islamist parties:

> "The FIS regards, in all sincerity, that the unity of the Islamic ranks is a duty in order to prevent (the emergence of) contradictory political positions capable of thwarting the desired Islamic solution."[63]

Abassi Madani was aware that the party's supporters had repeatedly demonstrated their enthusiasm for mass action through rallies and marches and thus he undoubtedly hoped his general strike call would prove popular and increase his standing with the FIS's rank and file. More generally, such a strategy could also serve to reinvigorate support for the party overall and thus counter any slippage of support that may have occurred since the previous June.

Having more or less unilaterally taken the decision to stage a general strike, Abassi Madani was faced with the difficult task of persuading the Majlis Shura to back him. For many on the FIS's ruling council, the electoral law was not the crucial issue that Abassi perceived it to be. Despite participating in the original party political project that was the FIS, a significant section of the party's leadership remained more committed to the doctrinal rather than the strategic aspects of the party.[64] Loyal to the original specifically religious objectives of the Association of Algerian Ulama, the achievement of political power was a

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[61] Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* p.180
[62] Quoted in Charef p.112
[63] Ibid.
[64] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.468

secondary consideration. As a result, many viewed Abassi's proposal of a general strike with apprehension fearing that such a confrontational policy could threaten the significant gains and influence the party had already achieved.[65] Rachid Ghannoushi, the leader of Tunisia's Islamist party, Nahda, spoke for many in the FIS's Majlis Shura when he tried to dissuade Abassi Madani from pursuing such a course:

> "I tried on many occasions to persuade him against such a course of action, telling him, 'This path can only lead to prison.' I asked him why he wanted to take this risk when the FIS ruled so many councils. 'Even if the changes to the electoral districts work against you, the FIS will remain the strongest party'.....However, he was absolutely convinced"[66]

Abassi Madani worked hard to persuade the Majlis Shura of the wisdom and efficacy of a general strike. Finally, following a stormy meeting of the Majlis Shura on 23 May, Abassi Madani was able to declare formally the party's intention to call a general strike to commence two days later on 25 May having promised members that the strike would only last three days.[67] However, it was reported that as many as seventeen members of the ruling council had opposed the move, leaving Abassi Madani with a bare majority of the 38 strong membership backing his initiative.[68]

5. The General Strike

The strike commenced as threatened on 25 May, the government having remained unmoved by its prospect. It soon became apparent, however, that the

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[65] *L'Hebdo Libéré* 19.6.91 reproduced in *Maghreb Machrek* (No.133 Juillet - Septembre 1991) p.125
[66] Author's interview with Rachid Ghannoushi, 18.4.95
[67] Charef p.114; Séverine Labat: *La "Grève Sainte" de Mai-Juin 1991* in Reporters Sans Frontières: *Le Drame Algérien* (La Découverte, Paris, 1994) p.141
[68] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.466

strike call had elicited only a very weak response. As one journalist observed, "shops and cafés stayed open, schools and universities continued giving classes, buses and trains ran on, and the wheels of industry failed to grind to a halt."[69] There were some reports of the petroleum sector being hit by the strike, but the only part of the workforce which appeared to respond to the strike was that working for the FIS-controlled local councils.[70] Officially estimated participation in the strike was just 5%.[71] This figure could not be seen as a reflection of a general reluctance to strike on the part of the Algerian workforce: the general strike called by the UGTA, less than three months earlier in March had been a recognised success. The fact that the FIS's opposition to this earlier strike, expressed through its own trade union organisation, the SIT, which called on workers to disregard the UGTA's call, had been comprehensively ignored should perhaps have indicated to the FIS the lack of influence they were able to exercise over Algeria's workforce.[72]

The manifest failure of the tactic of a general strike created another quandary for Abassi Madani. Not only had he tied himself and his leadership of the party closely to the success of the strike,[73] but it also seemed clear that the regime intended to continue with its plans for the legislative elections which were to take place on 27 June with the campaign officially beginning on 1 June. Despite his previous assurances to members of the Majlis Shura, Abassi decided on May 28, the third and last day of the strike, to extend the strike. Whether this decision was taken with formal reference to the party's Majlis Shura later became the subject of intense debate with various members of the council claiming that

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[69] *The Middle East* 7.91
[70] Burgat & Dowell pp.294-295; *The Middle East* 7.91
[71] *El Moudjahid* 18.7.91. This figure was quoted by the Prime Minister but was one that was not seriously disputed despite its origins.
[72] Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.107; *Algérie Actualité* 14.3.91
[73] As *Le Monde Diplomatique* observed, "Put purely and simply, an end to the strike would have signified the political end of Abassi Madani." 7.91

they had not been consulted.[74] Nonetheless, the same day two press agencies received copies of a communique apparently signed by the members of the FIS ruling council which called for an immediate end to the strike and which attacked the original idea of a strike:

> "The call to strike, especially at this time, constitutes a plan which works to the interest of the authorities in undermining the FIS and preventing the achievement of the Islamic way."[75]

Such an allusion to the complicity of those who called the strike with the regime, was made more specific with the allegation of the presence within the FIS of "certain personalities who work for the regime."[76] In response to such a thinly-veiled personal attack on himself, Abassi Madani denounced the communique as a fake. However, despite the fact that the authenticity of the document was never subsequently proved, there was little doubting that its contents reflected the views of at least some of the members of the Majlis Shura, as was later to become apparent.

Aware that dissent within the party would mount the longer the strike was extended, and that as the strike continued its failure to make any real impact would damage himself and the FIS generally, Abassi Madani decided to change tack. The strike had amply demonstrated that the FIS's main popular support certainly did not lie with Algeria's workers. The leader of the FIS thus decided that it was time to mobilise what had always been clear was the party's main constituency: Algeria's urban unemployed youth. By bringing this numerous section of the population onto the streets of the capital, Abassi clearly hoped to recreate the same impact its previous marches and demonstrations had had on official opinion. In order to put pressure on the government, Abassi arranged a

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[74] *Algérie Actualité* 1.8.91
[75] Quoted in Charef p.115
[76] Ibid.

meeting with the Prime Minister, Mouloud Hamrouche, on May 29 where, as well as restating the FIS's demands, he informed him of the FIS's intention to organise demonstrations in Algiers. Hamrouche refused to make concessions but anxious to avoid trouble and aware of how disciplined earlier FIS marches and rallies had been, he gave verbal agreement to the FIS's peaceful occupation of four sites in the centre of the capital.[77]

6. Confrontation with the Regime

By the fourth and fifth days of the strike, the FIS's supporters had already begun to emerge onto the streets to take part in marches and demonstrations. Despite Abassi's peaceful intent (indicated by the agreement with Hamrouche[78]), tension and friction began to mount in the capital between the demonstrators and the police. The high level of discipline and organisation that the FIS had been able to display for its previous set-piece one day shows of strength proved difficult to maintain over an extended period and clashes became inevitable as May proceeded into June. These clashes became increasingly serious and violent, occasionally involving exchanges of gunfire, and spread across the city as the FIS supporters began to occupy other districts of Algiers. As the original strike moved towards the conclusion of its second week and injuries and even deaths from the confrontations mounted, riot police moved to dislodge groups of Islamists from both the squares in the capital they had occupied as well as from the streets of Islamist strongholds elsewhere in the capital such as Belcourt and Bab el-Oued. These attempts by the state's regular forces of order, dramatically gave way on the night of June 5 to the intervention of the Algerian army which moved armoured cars into the capital to finally end the occupations. [79]

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[77] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.469; Labat: *La 'Grève Sainte'* p.142
[78] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.469
[79] Burgat & Dowell p.295

This significant move on the part of the regime, which was accompanied by President Chadli dismissing the Hamrouche government, postponing the elections and declaring a four month 'state of siege', indicated a clear desire to break the impasse. However, despite the use of force against the FIS, the authorities appeared still willing to deal with the party's leaders. With battles between Islamists and the army continuing on the streets, Sid Ahmed Ghozali, Hamrouche's replacement as Prime Minister, met with Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj on 7 June.[80] Later that day the two leaders declared to party supporters gathered at the Al-Sunna mosque in Bab el-Oued that they had won sufficient concessions from the government and thus the FIS would be calling off both the general strike and the protest campaign. As Abassi Madani was to repeat later that day in an interview:

> " The talks which have taken place between us and the regime have resulted in the agreement on holding early presidential as well as legislative elections within these (next) six months, God willing. Mr. Ghozali has been appointed Prime Minister of a government which will supervise free, legitimate elections devoid of any suspicions of rigging. We tell all workers to go back to work tomorrow."[81]

The following day Ghozali, appeared on television to confirm this commitment (although he made no specific reference to presidential elections) as well as indicating that he would seek revision of the electoral law:" I promise you that I shall exert my utmost efforts to provide all the necessary guarantees for the organisation of free and clean elections."[82]

The inevitable feeling by Abassi Madani that he had won a considerable victory for the FIS came, however, to be short-lived as the authorities began to gradually reassert themselves throughout the remainder of June. This reassertion

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[80] Labat: *La 'Grève Sainte'* p.143; Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.147
[81] *SWB* ME/1094 A/2 10.6.91
[82] *SWB* ME/1095 A/1 11.6.91

took the initial form of arrests of members of groups on the radical fringes of the FIS which were widely acknowledged as provoking much of the violence of the first week of June. There was little reaction to this by the FIS, which perhaps felt itself tainted by the activities of these groups, but alarm clearly grew as the arrests and security swoops increasingly targeted members of the mainstream party itself.[83] Tensions mounted as the month progressed and the numbers of FIS members arrested grew. Serious violence, however, did not occur until 25 June when police and army, in what was clearly an attempt to test the strength of the party, moved in to reinstate 'symbols of the Republic' (usually the FLN slogan: 'By the people for the people') that had been removed from the front of town halls controlled by the FIS.[84]

Aware that the authorities and the army clearly seemed to now have the advantage, Abassi Madani, already furious that Chadli and Ghozali had appeared to have reneged on their promise to announce a date for presidential elections and reinstate sacked strikers[85], issued a warning stating that: "If the army does not return to its barracks, the FIS will have the right to call for the resumption of jihad like that of November 1954."[86] This combined threat of civil strife and appeal to revolutionary history did not serve to deter the authorities who finally moved against the leadership of the party itself in the final days of June. Leaders of FIS-controlled councils, members of the Majlis Shura and finally, on 30 June, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj themselves, were arrested.

The arrest of the party's two most senior figures represented a clear triumph by the authorities who in the space of a month had dramatically reversed their fortunes *vis à vis* the FIS. The fact that they were able to move so swiftly and successfully against the party's leadership with such surprisingly little resistance

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[83] Burgat & Dowell p.296; Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.148
[84] *El Moudjahid* 24.6.91; *Le Monde* 25.6.91
[85] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 4.7.91
[86] *Le Quotidien de Paris* 30.6.91

and public reaction (there was some agitation but nothing approaching the near popular insurrection that one may have expected[87]) was largely due to the removal first, by arrest, of the middle tiers of the FIS. This cut communication links between the top leadership and the mass support and membership of the party on the street. The disruption of the highly structured and hierarchical nature of the FIS had further thwarted attempts to organise mass opposition and reaction to the arrests.[88]

There was a determination on the part of the authorities to portray the crackdown against the FIS as both necessary and within the law. The new prime minister, Ghozali, emphasised that "the state of siege did not occur to stifle the Islamic option but to save the country and the citizen."[89] Precisely what the country and the citizen were being saved from was more specifically elaborated at the military tribunal which was convened at Blida at the beginning of July to charge Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj with specific crimes. The seven charges that were formally levelled at the two leaders included ones alleging organisation of rebellion, the setting-up of unauthorised armed forces, the obstruction of the economy and incitement of citizens to take up arms against the state.[90] It was this last charge which, officially at least, was the pretext for the arrest of Madani and Belhadj. Abassi Madani's apparent call for jihad two days before his arrest was offered as explanation for his detention as was Belhadj's more explicit call at the

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[87] Burgat & Dowell p.297 There were demonstrations reported in Mostaganem and Constantine but the rest of the country remained quiet. *Financial Times* 3.7.91

[88] Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.107; *Jeune Afrique* 4.9.91

[89] *Horizons* 21.7.91

[90] *The Guardian* 13.7.91 It was also widely alleged that the FIS had abandoned its electoral strategy and that the whole pre-planned aim of Abassi Madani's tactics during the crisis was the overthrow of the whole regime. However, the simple fact (amongst others) that the FIS had nominated candidates for all the electoral districts and had had printed half-a-million election bills and posters ready for the imminent National Assembly elections indicates that this was not the case. *Le Monde Diplomatique* 7.91

Al-Sunna mosque a week earlier on 21 June for people to stock up with "arms, explosives and kalashnikovs."[91] In addition to this, more detailed evidence was offered in the case of Belhadj. On the basis of information supposedly obtained by the authorities following the arrest on 9 June of a French convert to Islam, Guyon Didier Roger, it was alleged that the FIS's number two had taken the lead in the setting up of a clandestine armed grouping aimed at destabilising the Algerian state.[92] Belhadj's declaration of 21 June appeared to support such allegations as did his expressed opinion three days earlier that "Islam recommends us to have weapons and to use them against our enemies."[93]

As well as striking at the members and leaders of the FIS, several thousand of whom had been arrested by the end of June[94], the authorities also moved against the institutional bases of the party. As well as putting pressure on FIS-controlled local councils, the army acted against the mosques. Use of mosques for political purposes having already been prohibited in the previous Spring, many of the preachers of mosques which were known to be collecting centres for financial contributions to FIS were detained.[95] Attendance at mosques, it was officially ruled, was to be restricted to the mosque itself and must not spill into the streets as had become the norm in many areas.[96] To this end access to popular and militant FIS-controlled mosques in Kouba and Bab El-Oued was controlled by the army - non-residents of the area being excluded. On August 18 the party's two newspapers, *El Mounqid* and *Al Forkane* were banned for alleged "appeals for civil disobedience and violence."[97]

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91 *La Presse* 21.6.91
92 *Le Quotidien de Paris* 19.6.91; *La Presse* 19.6.91
93 *SWB* ME/1103 A/15 20.6.91
94 Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.149.
95 Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.145; *La Presse* 4.7.91
96 *Financial Times* 28.6.91
97 Burgat & Dowell pp.297-298

7. The Regime and the Military

The comprehensive nature of the regime's crackdown against the FIS, which went some way beyond that needed to end Islamist agitation on the streets and the activities of the party's militant fringes, indicated that there had been a shift in official attitudes towards the FIS. The arrest of so many of the party's activists and, most importantly, its two leading figures was evidence of a growing belief within the regime that the FIS needed to be cut back. A significant challenge had been mounted to the regime by the party and the regime needed to respond. For President Chadli this challenge took the form of a threat to his own personal power base, the whole crisis having resulted for the first time in the leader of the FIS attacking Chadli personally and moreover, demanding early presidential elections.[98] For other parts of the regime, notably the army, the FIS had made a perceived insurrectionist challenge to the Algerian state itself, something which the army was pledged to defend.

The re-entry of the Algerian army, the ANP (*Armée Nationale Populaire*) into the political scene was a significant aspect of the crisis. It had formally exited the political stage following its universally condemned role in the bloody repression of the riots of October 1988 and had largely accepted the non-political role it had been accorded in the new constitution of February 1989. Nevertheless, despite the political changes that swept Algeria after 1988, the ANP remained, not least in its own perception, central to the Algerian regime. It should not be forgotten that both Chadli Benjedid and Houari Boumedienne before him, had moved directly from the military into the Presidency.

The military's position on Chadli's push towards democratisation was never unambiguously expressed, but it was certainly extremely wary of the FIS and had

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[98] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.469

voiced its opposition to the party's legal recognition in September 1989.[99] Largely trained abroad in secular states such as the Soviet Union and France, most of Algeria's senior military figures were essentially hostile to the ideas of Islamism which it saw as a threat to the foundations of the Algerian state as well as to their own positions, should it achieve political power. The chief of the military, General Mustafa Chelloufi, was privately critical of both the FIS and of the Government's tolerance of its activities in the run up to the local elections of 1990.[100] He spoke several times of the army's intention "to defend the Constitution", against elements which "want to exploit democracy" statements which were rightly taken as implicit warnings to the Islamist party.[101]

From the FIS's point of view the antipathy the military felt towards it as both a party and a movement was clearly mutual. Increasingly aware that it was the army rather than the FLN which represented the ultimate potential threat to their political ambitions, the leadership of the FIS were ready to issue counter threats, when necessary, to those put out by the military. When Chelloufi banned the wearing of the *hedjab* by women working in military hospitals in April 1990, Ali Belhadj played on the military's fear of infiltration:

> "There are in the army, the police, and the gendarmerie, civil servants who adore God and they will be able to remember that."[102]

This mutual hostility persisted even following the replacement of Chelloufi with a figure, Khaled Nezzar, who was generally perceived to be far less fundamentally hostile to Islamism. None the less, Nezzar also proved unreluctant

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[99] Zoubir p.97
[100] Ibid.
[101] Quoted in Abdelkader Yefsah: *Armée et Politique depuis les Evénments d'Octobre: L'Armée Sans Hidjab* in *Les Temps Modernes* (Janvier-Fevrier 1995, No.580): *Algérie: La Guerre des Frères* p.161
[102] Quoted in Burgat & Dowell p.292

to re-state the military's position on any potential threats to the stability of the country. On 13 September 1990 he confirmed the army's willingness to:

> "..respond to any organized excesses that might jeopardise the national unity of the country...(and) would not hesitate to intervene and to re-establish order and unity so that force remains in the hands of the law."[103]

This implicit warning was issued in the growing climate of domestic tension that followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait at the beginning of August, a period which witnessed a further worsening of relations between the two forces as Ali Belhadj, in particular, raged against the ANP's unwillingness to go to Iraq's defence.[104] With this background of continued and rising antipathy, Abassi Madani, whilst formulating his strategy of a general strike in the Spring of 1991, felt the need to issue a warning to the military to prevent it intervening if his plans were implemented. Thus, even before the intention to hold a strike was formally announced, Abassi declared that:

> "In the event of the military coming onto the streets, we will fight, I swear that if a single drop of blood is shed, we will combat the military until its complete annihilation."[105]

That this threat was not carried out following the army's eventual deployment on the streets on the night of June 5 was, of course, due to the calling off of both the general strike and the street demonstrations by the FIS following the apparent concessions it had won from the government by 7 June.

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[103] *L'Horizon* 13.9.90 quoted in Zoubir p.97

[104] Burgat & Dowell p.292 Ali Belhadj also made an unambiguous reference to October 1988 (about which the army still felt defensive and vulnerable), speaking of regimes which used their arms against their own people rather than in wars against external aggression.

[105] Quoted in Zoubir p.98

How autonomous a role the ANP played in the run-up to the intervention of June 5 is not entirely clear. Although President Chadli clearly welcomed and supported their involvement, how far this involvement was solicited and to what degree it was volunteered is difficult to ascertain. The President had regularly hinted for some time at the possible return of the army if there was a crisis on the streets, but this may have been a simple threat to keep the FIS in line rather than a serious declaration of intent.[106] Nevertheless it was clear that in June 1991 both the Presidency and the military were united on the need to restore public order and reduce the power of the FIS. The military backed the striking of a 'deal' with the FIS in order primarily to ease the mounting crisis, but whether at this stage the army intended to use the ensuing calm simply to plan its later assault on the party is less apparent.[107] Some Algerian commentators remarked on the fact that the official instructions to remove the slogans from the front of the town halls controlled by the FIS in late June came from the military authorities rather than from the Government. This was potentially significant since not only did it indicate the apparent independence of the military, but also it was this incident which was acknowledged as having produced the violent response from the FIS's supporters that led to and was officially quoted as a justification for the subsequent crackdown against the party.[108] Chadli appeared to be in accord with this approach, but vetoed the military's subsequent demand for the FIS to be banned.[109] However, despite Chadli's wishes prevailing on this last issue, the political re-emergence of the military constituted a potentially rival source of authority and power to the President within the regime.

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[106] John P. Entelis: *The Crisis of Authoritarianism in North Africa: The Case of Algeria* in *Problems of Communism* (May-June 1992) p.79
[107] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.590
[108] *SWB* ME/1109 A/1 27.6.91 The FIS were subsequently to claim that Abassi had explicitly told the FIS controlled local councils not to resist the removal of the slogans (he had suggested they film it as evidence) but that the security forces had deliberately provoked confrontations. *La Cause* 5.7.94
[109] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.474

8. The FIS Divided: June-July 1991

The escalating crackdown of June by the authorities and the realisation that Abassi Madani's grand strategy had not, after all, succeeded in its objectives opened up the divisions in the FIS that had been suspended during the height of the crisis. For the first time dissent within the party was aired very publicly. On June 23, as the arrests of FIS militants mounted, three founding members of the FIS and members of its Majlis Shura, appeared on Algerian television to call for an opening of dialogue with the authorities. More importantly, they collectively denounced Abassi Madani who in the words of one of them, Bashir Fakih, was "a danger for the FIS and for Muslims." Fakih also stated that he would suspend his membership of the party if Abassi continued as leader of the FIS. The three accused the leader of the FIS of being autocratic and of ignoring decisions reached by the Majlis Shura and called on people to heed only the statements of the latter and ignore Madani. Another, Ahmed Merrani, argued that elements within the party were deliberately pushing for violent confrontation with the regime and the third figure, Hachemi Sahnouni argued that it was imperative that dialogue be opened with the authorities "in order to save the blood of Muslims."[110]

These accusations precipitated a bitter and public war of words between Abassi Madani and his three detractors. The leader of the FIS, with the backing of his allies in the Majlis Shura announced the expulsion of both Fakih and Merrani[111] from the party. Hachemi Sahnouni was spared this fate following a public retraction of his criticism and the intervention of his close friend and ally, Ali Belhadj. In response, Fakih denounced Abassi Madani as a "tyrant" accusing him of participating in politics with the sole goal of becoming President. Fakih

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[110] *La Presse* 27.6.91

[111] Merrani claimed himself that he had suspended his membership of the party and announced his intention to withdraw from politics and concentrate on "study of the Quran" and "adoration of God." *Horizons* 1.7.91

also alleged that a number of members of the Majlis Shura had formally demanded Abassi's resignation in May.[112] However, despite the seriousness of these allegations and the relative political weight of figures like Fakih (who headed the Oran branch of the FIS) and Merrani (who headed the influential Social Affairs Commission of the party)[113], Abassi was skilfully able to isolate his critics within the party and ensure that their call for the party's membership to ignore his instructions was not heeded. In this he was significantly aided by the public perception that the dissidents were stooges of the regime, an impression that their appearance on state-run television had reinforced.[114]

This did not, however, put an end to dissenting opinion within the upper reaches of the party expressing itself. Three other influential members of the Majlis Shura, Mohammed Kerrar, Said Guechi and Achour Rebhi, who were subsequently joined by Hachemi Sahnouni following his retraction, formed a delegation which opened contacts with the government in an attempt to start dialogue and secure the lifting of the state of siege and the release of the large numbers of FIS members who had been arrested since the beginning of June.[115] Kerrar and Guechi had been part of the faction of the Majlis that had opposed Madani's plans for the general strike and they were also supported in their subsequent search for dialogue with the authorities by Benazouz Zebda, the

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[112] Charef p.116

[113] *La Presse* 4.7.91

[114] Zoubir p.101 There were subsequent reports and allegations that the dissenting figures in the Majlis Shura had colluded with the regime. *Le Figaro* (4.7.91) reported rumours that certain members of the Majlis met secretly with government officials with a view to forging a 'non-aggression pact' with the FIS. Supporters of Abassi Madani were also to later claim that Kerrar, Zebda, Merrani, Fakih and Sahnouni had been in contact with General Tewfik, the Head of Military Security, well in advance of the general strike. It was this fact, it was claimed, which explained Abassi Madani's reluctance to refer decisions to the Majlis for fear of telegraphing his strategy to the authorities. *La Cause* 5.7.94

[115] *Le Figaro* 5.7.91

second vice-president of the FIS and editor of *El Mounquid* who saw it as the only route out of the continuing crisis.[116]

The arrest and imprisonment of Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj on 30 June, in the midst of these developments clearly exacerbated the growing divisions and factions within the FIS (which some argued encouraged and allowed the authorities to arrest the two leaders[117]) as the struggle appeared to open out from discussion of strategy to that of control of the leadership of the party itself, in the absence of the movement's two most prominent figures.

The question of succession to Abassi's and Belhadj's day to day leadership of the party came to be contested by two forces. Within three days of the two leaders' arrest, Mohammed Said, proclaimed himself Madani's successor during prayer time at the Oued Koreiche mosque in the casbah of Algiers, claiming that Abassi Madani had nominated him as his successor prior to his imprisonment. This claim was vociferously disputed by members of the Majlis Shura, who although fostering individual leadership ambitions of their own, asserted that Abassi had in fact bequeathed authority to the Majlis itself.[118] Members of the Majlis were particularly incensed at Said's claim to the leadership since he was far from being an established figure within the party. Despite being a noted figure in the Islamist movement, Said had not joined the FIS at its creation (see chapter 4) and instead had become active in the Rabitat Dawa in which after Ahmed Sahnoun, he had become the second most influential figure. He had finally joined the FIS in June 1990 at the invitation of Abassi Madani and thereafter rose swiftly within the party.[119]

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116 *Jeune Afrique* 17.7.91

117 The editor of the independent daily, *El Watan* remarked: "If the FIS had been united, Madani would not be in prison - it simply would not have been allowed to happen." *Trade Finance* 9.91

118 Dévoluy & Duteil p.132; Charef p.117

119 Khelladi: *Algérie: Les Islamistes Face au Pouvoir* p.152; Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.467; Author's interviews.

Antipathy towards Said inside the Majlis Shura was not just limited to his late entry to the FIS (Hachemi Sahnouni even accused him of not possessing a membership card at the time of his leadership proclamation[120]) but was also linked to the fact that he had been the acknowledged leader of the Djazaira grouping since the early 1980s. The traditionally secretive and elitist nature of the Djazaira (see chapters 3 and 4) made some suspect that Said was attempting to seize the direction of the FIS for the grouping and its shadowy agenda. Such accusations were sharpest from those on the more strictly religious and salafist wing of the FIS who had always been suspicious of the Djazaira's pragmatic and nationalistic agenda.

Mohammed Said's 'succession' was, however, short-lived. Having threatened to launch a jihad unless the party's two leaders were released, he himself was arrested by the authorities on July 7. Notably, though, the undisputed leadership of the FIS did not then pass to the Majlis Shura but to a young hitherto low-profile figure, Abdelkader Hachani, whom Said had nominated as his deputy at the time of his own leadership claim.[121] That Hachani's claim was not disputed, like that of Mohammed Said's, by the other members of the Majlis Shura, was due to several factors. Although not a senior figure in the party, Hachani had been a member longer than Said and had originally been part of Abdallah Djaballah's organisation, rather than an adherent of the Djazaira. This, together with his emphasis on the strictly provisional nature of his leadership whilst Abassi, Belhadj and other leaders were still in prison, helped persuade the Majlis Shura to accept his leadership which it formally confirmed at the end of July.

The nature and orientation of Abdelkader Hachani's leadership of the FIS would later become more apparent (see chapter 6). However, the struggle over both the direction and latterly the leadership of the party and its outcome had

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120 Charef p.117
121 Dévoluy & Duteil p.132

revealed much about the hitherto concealed factions in the party. During the period May - July 1991, the divisions within the party were widely interpreted from the outside as being between moderates and hard-liners. The 'moderates', represented by figures such as Fakih, Merrani and Sahnouni, were seen fighting to prevent Abassi Madani and his supporters from pushing the FIS into a 'hard-line' confrontation with the regime. A much more accurate characterisation of the dispute would be, as has been indicated earlier, between those who had more political objectives for the FIS and those who were more content with pursuing specifically religious ends. Indeed, as Hugh Roberts points out, the struggle could be seen as taking place between religious radicals and pragmatic moderates, with Abassi Madani and his supporters comprising the second grouping.[122] That the chief opponents of Abassi and his tactics were figures who had far from 'moderate' backgrounds (compared to the leader of the FIS) undermines the notion of 'moderate' opposition to him. Several key adversaries, such as Fakih, Mohammed Kerrar and Said Guechi had been involved in Mustapha Bouyali's insurrectionist MAIA in the 1980s.[123] Hachemi Sahnouni was not only close to Ali Belhadj but had frequently matched the deputy leader of the FIS's fiery and intemperate rhetoric and discourse.[124] It was also remarkable that Sahnouni, Fakih and Merrani had, in their famous television appearance, concentrated their attacks on Abassi Madani, the perceived voice of moderation within the leadership, and completely ignored Ali Belhadj whose immoderate pronouncements Madani was forever having to explain and excuse.[125]

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122 Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.466
123 *El Watan* 1.3.94; Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.108
124 For example, according to one report Sahnouni had declared that if the FIS were to win the planned national elections it would introduce "immediately the Sharia, would ban secular and communist parties and would expel the President." Charef p.130
125 *L'Humanite* 27.6.91

The claim of Mohammed Said to the leadership of the party produced another interesting dimension to the internal politics of the FIS. Said's precise ambitions in claiming the helm of the FIS were never fully elucidated during his short (4 days) as 'leader.' He himself presented it as a simple and unselfish response to a crisis, stating that: "I am neither an intruder or a seeker of leadership. (But) Confronted by this vacuum, I have assumed my responsibilities."[126] Nevertheless, the speed with which the move was made and the nature of the Djazaira and its agenda must confirm suspicions that Said wanted to steer the FIS in a particular direction. It was notable that his main critics came from the same group that had opposed Abassi Madani. Ahmed Merrani, in particular, was unremitting in his accusation that Said, together with Hachani, had perpetrated a 'coup' against the leadership of the FIS on the part of the Djazaira. However, although Merrani portrayed Abassi Madani as being a fellow victim of such a coup, it was noteworthy that Hachani had been one of Abassi's closest allies in the Majlis Shura and had backed his plans for the general strike.[127] It was thus clear that Hachani's accession to the leadership represented a triumph for Abassi Madani (confirmed by Hachani's stressed reference to the provisional nature of his own leadership, in deference to the imprisoned Abassi) and his allies rather than for some shadowy third faction. If Mohammed Said had planned some 'take-over' of the FIS on the part of the Djazaira, his nomination of Hachani as his deputy and his loud demands for the release of the FIS's leadership, indicated that his plans were closely allied to and supportive of Abassi Madani.[128] It is clear that Abassi, Said and Hachani all feared the leadership of the party falling into the hands of the more strictly religious radicals of the party who might abandon the whole pragmatic, political

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126 Charef p.117

127 *Algérie Actualité* 1.8.91

128 A communique signed by Said and Hachani explicitly acknowleged "the authority of Abassi Madani as President of the FIS" FIS Communique 2.7.91

and electoral strategy of the FIS. Like Abassi, the Djazaira's more intellectual and modernist outlook convinced it of the efficacy and importance of such an 'electoralist' strategy.

C: THE FIS AS A PARTY: 1990 -1991

1. The Structure of the Party

The structure of the FIS changed somewhat following the party's success in the local elections of June 1990 which had seen the party enter into institutional frameworks in the public domain. The FIS installed throughout the country a network of its own administrations that largely paralleled the official administrations.[129] Thus executives of the party were established at both wilaya level (Bureau Executive Wilaya - BEWs) and at the communal level (BECs). These two levels formed the second and third tiers of the party's organisation below that of the supreme BEN (Bureau Executive Nationale) and above those centred around the mosques and the committees of the quarters. The top three levels of the party continued to possess five commissions dealing with the issues of organisation and co-ordination, education, social affairs, planning and programming and information. An 'Islamic' trades union body was also established by the FIS, the SIT (Syndicat islamique du travail), which comprised nine different professional sections.[130]

In terms of the decision-making structure of the party, it seems quite clear that this was a strictly top-down affair. Both the BECs and the BEWs were

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[129] Dévoluy & Duteil p.126 In the Chlef region FIS-controlled councils had established 'parallel tribunals' to judge private, especially family, law, and in Algiers the city hall had been effectively turned into the 'national seat' of the movement where Madani frequently held press conferences. *Libération* 16.7.90; *La Presse* 4.7.91

[130] Ghania Samai-Ouramdane: *Le Front Islamique du Salut a travers son organe de presse (Al Mounquid)* in *Peuples Mediterranéens* No.52-53: *Algérie Vers L'Etat Islamique?* (Juillet-Septembre 1990) pp.158-159

answerable to the BEN which dictated policy to the FIS-controlled local councils "of which", Ghania Samai-Ouramdane remarked in 1990, "any freedom of action is not permitted."[131] Officially the BEN was subordinate to the Majlis Shura of the party, which remained the highest decision-making body within the party and which was responsible for all strategic policy. However, as had become apparent, Dévoluy and Duteil characterised the decision-making process of the FIS as oscillating "between a system of hazy consensus and the personal power of its president, Abassi Madani."[132] Such a judgement would seem to be borne out by the ongoing conflict Abassi had with certain elements of the Majlis Shura during the early part of 1991, as he sought increasingly to make his own policy whilst still formally recognising the Majlis's authority.

Much, however, remained unknown about the precise internal workings of the FIS as a party. As has been indicated, until the crisis of mid-1991, very little was known about the senior figures in the party apart from Abassi Madani and to a lesser extent, Ali Belhadj. The party seemed intent on maintaining this secrecy. When questioned in an interview in August 1990 about the membership of the Majlis Shura, Abassi Madani replied evasively: "You will know them soon."[133] The reasons behind this lack of frankness are unclear, although given the events of 1991, it seems likely that it was a policy which aimed at concealing the fractious internal nature of the party from the public gaze.

2. Support for the FIS

Although there were no elections in this period to back observations up with more empirical data, further information on the composition of support for the FIS did emerge. The opinion polls that were published in May 1991, although

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131 Ibid. p.158
132 Dévoluy & Duteil p.126
133 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 30.8.90

clearly not as unambiguous as election results, were able to give added insights into the people who, publicly at least, lent their support to the FIS.

A poll conducted on behalf of *Algérie Actualité* and published on 9 May 1991 recorded not only the levels of support for the various political parties but also revealed the apparent levels of support the parties enjoyed within different sections of the electorate. When broken down into different age groups, the FIS, which had recorded an overall level of support of 38% across all age groups, saw its support vary considerably between the age groups: enjoying the support of 55% of those aged 18 to 19, whilst recording only 28% for those electors between the ages of 50 and 59. The figures revealed a declining level of support for the party across the age bands covering the ages 20 to 59 thus indicating, with the intriguing exception of those aged 60 plus (where the party recorded 36%), that the older a voter was, the less likely he or she was to vote for the FIS. The survey also reported findings about both the educational profile of the FIS's supporters and the balance between men and women. On the first category the poll revealed that the party received above average levels of support amongst those voters who had just secondary, primary or no education at all, but that it performed particularly badly amongst those with supplementary education. There was also a notable imbalance in the share of men and women expressing support for the party: 44% of men backing it compared to only 32% of women.[134]

A further poll published by the newspaper three weeks later on 30 May analysed voting intentions, this time by region and occupation. The figures on the regional pattern of the FIS's support did not reveal anything particularly dramatic. The party's declared followers were spread across all of Algeria's four main regions in proportions roughly similar to that of its main rival, the FLN. The party

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[134] *Algérie Actualité* 9.5.91 The figures for the support for the FIS amongst the different educational levels were 41% amongst those with no formal education at all; 39% for those with just primary education, 44% for those with secondary and 23% for those possessing supplementary education.

seemed also to enjoy similar levels of support in both urban and rural areas: having recorded an overall level of support of 29%, the figures for the urban and rural zones were 30.5% and 27% respectively. This appeared to demonstrate an evening out of the party's support, since the local elections of June 1990 had shown that the FIS's following was predominantly urban in character. The breakdown of the FIS's supporters by profession revealed the similarly widespread nature of the backing for the party: it being the only party to register responses in all twelve of the categories of occupation in the survey. As with the regional share-out of its potential vote, the FIS's figures roughly shadowed those of the FLN with the exception of the unemployed where the Islamist party received a significantly higher proportion of its support than the former single party did.[135]

What explanations could be offered for these findings? The youthful profile of the FIS's voters revealed by the first poll can largely be explained by reference to two factors. Firstly, unemployment was significantly higher amongst the young producing greater levels of disillusionment with the regime and a corresponding desire to inflict defeat upon the FLN. Secondly, attachment to the memory of the FLN victory in the war against the French was largely absent amongst Algeria's young: those Algerians under the age of thirty having been born after independence and thus having no residual nationalistic respect for the historic achievement of the FLN. The FIS registered its lowest level of support amongst those Algerians who were in their twenties when Algeria gained its independence and were thus those most likely to have been directly involved with the revolutionary struggle and the FLN. The poll revealed that the former single

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[135] *Algérie Actualité* 30.5.91 The comparison with the profile for the FLN is made not only because it is the only party recording over 10% support but also since the figures regarding the region and occupation in the survey are expressed as percentages of each party's total support rather than as percentages of the region or the occupational group, thus making observations about the relative levels of support between the parties in each category difficult to make.

party still enjoyed its highest levels of support amongst this latter group, now in their fifties. The apparent anomaly of the recovery in following for the FIS amongst those Algerians over the age of 60 can not easily be explained, but reference to the above mentioned factors may be useful. Those of retirement age were hit possibly as hard as those without work by the economic crisis that the country continued to experience. This group also remembered a time before independence and before the FLN, thus holding the party in slightly less reverence than the generation below them. The educational profile of FIS supporters, with its relatively low share of those possessing supplementary education (it was the only educational group in which it did not have a lead over other the parties) can probably be linked again to the party's base in the poorer sections of Algerian society, which are likely to be less well-educated. The third finding of the first *Algérie Actualité* poll, that a significantly greater percentage of men than women in the Algerian electorate backed the FIS, must be seen as reflecting a belief or fear that women would be worse off under a Islamist-run government. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the party that campaigned on the most aggressively secularist platform, the RCD, received more than twice as much support from women, in the poll, as it did from men (11% compared to 5%)[136].

The findings of the second opinion poll showed, as has been indicated, that the FIS enjoyed an even wider pattern of electoral support across Algeria's regions and in its urban and rural areas than that which it had received in June 1990, there being no notable relative concentrations or absences of support between Algeria's four main regions (although, it should be noted that within these huge regions there were still likely to be variations[137]). The analysis by

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[136] See *Algérie Actualité* 9.5.91

[137] The central region of the country contained both areas such as Algiers itself, where the FIS had done particularly well in June 1990, as well as the Tizi Ouzou area, where it had done demonstrably poorly. This appeared to be still the case

occupation confirmed this comprehensive spread of FIS support, but the party's relatively large proportion of followers from amongst the unemployed (and a corresponding relatively low percentage, compared to the make-up of the other major parties, amongst employees in the state sector) appears to confirm the link suggested above between unemployment, youth and support for the FIS. Overall, the two surveys appear to construct a picture of the FIS's base of support continuing to come from the poorer, younger and less well-educated layers of Algerian society.

The two opinion polls gave potentially valuable insights into the composition of support for the FIS, but their findings need to be regarded with a certain amount of caution given the failure of similar polls before the local elections of June 1990 to predict the size of the FIS's victory. However, other more observationally based evidence does seem to back up some of the finding of the polls. The failure of the general strike called by the FIS in May to elicit any significant response amongst Algeria's workforce did, as has already been shown, demonstrate that the party did not enjoy substantial support amongst this part of Algerian society. Conversely, the large numbers of unemployed youths the party was able to mobilise for marches and demonstrations from the beginning of June indicated that this was where the FIS's real strength lay.

Other evidence suggested that the nature of the FIS's following remained consistent with that of previous conclusions about the backing for the party before the June elections. Whilst the bulk of its activist base (as distinct from people who would just vote for the party at an election) was clearly comprised of the urban, male unemployed, the FIS continued to have a following in the

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since the FFS, which was based in Tizi Ouzou, was shown by the poll to find nearly 98% of its support (registered at 10% nationally) in the central region. *Algérie Actualité* 30.5.91

universities, particularly amongst science and technology students. Similarly, many of the party's leaders were engineers or technicians and it appears that the party enjoyed significant support generally from this type of profession.[138] Support for the FIS continued to be found amongst merchants, businessmen and entrepreneurs. It has been argued that it was these groups which helped to cushion the financial blow the party received when Saudi funds were withdrawn following the party's decision to back Iraq during the Gulf War. There was also believed to be backing for the party amongst those traders involved in the country's growing black market. One of the reasons advanced for the party's popularity amongst this sector was the perception that the FIS backed free market reforms.[139]

The FIS's attachment to populism ensured that none of these sections of support were taken for granted by the party, particularly the urban unemployed poor, whom the opinion polls had shown formed such an important part of the following of the party. Projects were adopted to aid and thus guarantee the loyalty of the populous bottom rung of the ladder of Algerian society. Ramadan of 1991 saw the establishment of 'Islamic' souks where Algeria's poor could buy basic goods at lower than usual prices because the FIS arranged for transportation and retail services to be given free.[140]

Evidence also appeared concerning the size and nature of the support for the other Islamist parties. In the case of Mahfoud Nahnah's HAMAS it appeared that its constituency of support differed from that of the FIS. The opinion polls published in May 1991 indicated that HAMAS attracted a more middle class, professional following than the FIS which drew the vast bulk of its popular support

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[138] Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.106
[139] Remy Leveau: *L'Algérie en Etat de Siège* in *Maghreb-Machrek* (No.133, Juillet-Septembre, 1991) p.93; Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* pp.106-107
[140] Benjamin Stora: *Le FIS: A la Rechereche d'une Autre Nation* in *Cahiers de L'Orient* (No.23, 1991) p.85; *Algérie Actualité* 11.4.91

from the young unemployed.[141] Whilst HAMAS was able to attract such a constituency, reflecting its more intellectual and less populist discourse, the fact that it made few inroads into this mass popular base of FIS indicated that the party was likely to stay on the political margins come election time. Despite holding well-attended meetings in the south of Algeria and having notable pockets of support across the country (the party soon had 916 local offices[142]), particularly around Nahnah's hometown of Blida, opinion polls indicated that FIS support was roughly ten times that of HAMAS.[143] In the case of Abdallah Djaballah and Nahda, although initially observers believed that the party had significant support in the east of Algeria around Djaballah's traditional base in Constantine, opinion polls in the Spring of 1991 showed the party as failing to register even 1% of voting intentions.[144]

3. Programme and Agenda

Despite the inevitable surge of interest in the nature and content of the FIS's political programme following the party's victory in June 1990, precise details remained difficult to identify and many of the old contradictions and ambiguities remained.

I. Pluralism and Democracy

Chief amongst these issues was the party's stance on pluralism and democracy. Besieged by the national and foreign press in the wake of the local elections, Abassi Madani, as the chief spokesman for the party, continued to reiterate his line of liberal toleration of diversity. Questioned on other parties'

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141 *Algérie Actualité* 30.5.91

142 Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.41 Of these local offices, 133 were women's sections.

143 Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.137; *Algérie Actualité* 30.5.91 & 9.5.91

144 Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.110; *Algérie Actualité* 30.5.91 & 9.5.91

stated fears about their possible fate under a (now more likely) FIS-led national government, he claimed that "The other parties are not our enemies, but our brothers", arguing that they would, in fact, have a vital role to play under a future FIS government:

> "Islamic rule is not against opposition. There was opposition in the time of the Caliphs and the companions of the Prophet. How would we be able to discover our errors if there was not an opposition to point them out to us? Must we relive a scenario like October 1988 to correct our mistakes?"[145]

The fact that the FIS had accepted co-existence with other parties in local government, he argued, was evidence of the genuineness of this stance. Fears about a return to the one party state he thus maintained were groundless and pointed, in this context, to the participation of the communist PAGS in the electoral process and asked, with reference to Stalin, Mao and Ceausescu: "Who has mocked liberties as much as the communists?"[146]

On the issue of the imposition of the sharia and specifically its implication for women, Madani claimed that it would only be introduced gradually. He stated emphatically that he would "never, never" impose the wearing of the veil on women, arguing that whilst the party strongly believed that this was the correct form of dress for women:

> "The problem is one of education. It is not one able to be resolved with penal sanctions....We struggle against the illness not against the person who is ill."[147]

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[145] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 25.7.90
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

Such apparently unambiguous statements continued to contrast sharply with those emanating from other parts of the party's leadership. Hachemi Sahnouni, the party's second vice-president, stated on 8 May 1991:

> "In the case of (the FIS achieving) a majority at the next legislative elections, we suspend the constitution, we ban secular and socialist parties, we immediately apply the sharia, we immediately get rid of the President of the Republic"[148]

Such sentiments reportedly closely echoed statements made by Ali Belhadj at this stage who continued to attack the notion of liberal democracy.[149] Writing in *El Mounquid* the FIS's deputy leader declared:

> "In Islam sovereignty belongs to the divine Law; in democracy, sovereignty belongs to the people, to the mob and to charlatans."[150]

Once again these were not isolated utterances confined to a few radical individuals. As one observer commented on Sahnouni's statement, "Declarations of this sort had been the common currency of FIS preachers these last two years."[151] Nor did it appear that these views were restricted to figures within the party's leadership: banners declaring 'Death to Democracy' appearing at FIS demonstrations in the following June.[152]

Abassi Madani continued to be pressed by the media on the continuance of such divergent views on these critical issues within the leadership of the party. One interviewer put to him the reported view of Ali Belhadj that democracy was a vehicle for communism and Berberism. The FIS spokesman replied that he had not heard his deputy express such a view but if he had then he believed that it

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148 *El Watan* 4.8.91 quoted in Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.104
149 Charef p.130
150 *El Mounquid* No.23 reproduced in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.93
151 Kapil: *Les Partis Islamistes en Algérie* p.104
152 *The Tablet* 20.7.91

was a "theoretical point of view", there being "several conceptions of democracy."[153] On another occasion Madani defended Belhadj by claiming that the young imam's aggressive rhetoric when preaching (when most of his more extreme statements were made) was not a true reflection of his overall character, maintaining that in reality "Belhadj is very gentle. The problem is that he doesn't show it."[154] It was clear that despite the tactical need to retain the support of the party's radical militants, the president of the FIS was discomforted by his deputy's rhetoric. One broadly sympathetic political figure challenged Abassi on Belhadj's belligerent proclamations:

> "I told Abassi to tell Belhadj not to say such radical things. Abassi reddened with embarrassment and replied that he had told him many times to do so, but he could not control him."[155]

II. Economic Policy

On the subject of the economy and economic policy the FIS's stance appeared to shift during this period. Its initial policy programmes, though lacking in detail, had favoured, in accordance with much established Islamic economic thought, more liberal economic practices (see chapter 4). As previously explained, it was this stance which allowed the party to strike a deal with President Chadli to help support him and his allies against those elements in the FLN and the regime who were opposed to liberalising economic reforms.

Although this economic doctrine attracted the electoral and financial support of merchants and entrepreneurs, Abassi Madani appeared to repudiate this existing position in an interview at the beginning of May 1991 when he launched a blistering attack on the government's reform programme:

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153 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 25.7.90
154 *Le Figaro* 31.7.90
155 Author's interview with senior Algerian political figure.

> "...there will never be reforms. These things called reforms are in fact nothing other than an operation to enable the regime to steal from the pockets of citizens, make the poor still poorer and trying today to exhaust the money of the wealthy."[156]

He criticised the government for failing to help traders and businesses with exports whilst "opening all the doors and according all the facilities" to foreign competition, a policy he termed "a dangerous deviation from Algerian history." He directed his fire also at the International Monetary Fund which he blamed for much of the escalating problems and poverty in Algeria saying that it had blocked national solutions to the crisis and having "dictated its conditions and orders" had left the Algerian people to "pay the bill."[157]

The reason behind this startling *volte face* by the leader of the FIS could be discerned by the date that these remarks were made: early May 1991. April 1991 had seen the unveiling of the regime's new electoral code. It was this event which, as has been shown, provoked the breach between Abassi Madani and the President whom he believed had deceived him. Not only, therefore, did Abassi's fury lead him to attack Chadli himself and call for early presidential elections, but also clearly led him to dramatically terminate his tacit support for the President's economic reform programme.

As for the FIS's own economic policy, little of any real substance was added to its original proposals (see chapter 4) and the party proceeded to be increasingly vague about its own position. Earlier in 1991, before Abassi's outburst in May, the party held a symposium on the government's reform programme but as one Algerian journalist attending remarked: "one tried in vain to identify the content (of the FIS's economic view and programme)."[158] This ambiguity and lack of definition on policy was a clear reflection of the increasingly

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[156] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Horizons* 5.5.91
[157] Ibid.
[158] *Algérie Actualité* 14.3.91

populist direction in which the FIS moved following June 1990 and which had been exemplified by its behaviour in the Gulf War. Because of its desire to maintain its breadth of popular support, the party was forced into making often inconsistent statements. Thus in the same interview Abassi Madani would promise new housing and an expansion of social security as well as committing the party to "seriously reducing taxation."[159]

4. Foreign Links and Influences

The question of foreign links and influences on the FIS continued to be an issue in this period as its domestic enemies and many foreign commentators sought to uncover a 'foreign hand' behind the activities of the party.

I. Saudi Arabia

The issue of links with Saudi Arabia came very much to the fore during the Gulf Crisis with the party appearing to turn its back on its alleged Saudi sponsors and FIS militants swapping the Saudi flags that had often been seen at rallies for banners supporting Saddam Hussein and Iraq.[160] Whilst such a development could be interpreted as demonstrating the absence or weakness of the FIS's Saudi links, the announcement by the Saudi Prince Sultan Ibn Abdelaziz on 26 March 1991 that his country had been funding the party was judged by one observer as revealing a fact that was "a secret to nobody."[161] The timing of the declaration, following the end of the Gulf War, was perhaps chosen by the Saudis, angered by the FIS's backing of their enemy in the war, as being that which would cause maximum damage to the FIS, showing it to have not only backed the losing side in the conflict but having also been supported by foreign

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159 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 25.7.90
160 Leveau p.94
161 Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi pp.35-36

money. The accusation of foreign sponsorship was clearly damaging in a country where national independence was so highly regarded and, in the face of appeals in the press for stricter prohibitions of foreign funding of political parties, Abassi Madani strenuously denied the accusation stating that it was "a lie without foundation" and if Prince Sultan did in fact say this "he did not mean it."[162] He claimed that the party had not received a penny from any known state and alleged that such accusations were part "of a vast plan to de stabilise the FIS."[163] All the available evidence, however, suggested that the FIS had been backed by Saudi funds.

II. Iran

There continued to be little effective evidence of any real links between the FIS and Iran, despite the latter's declared interest in seeing an Islamic regime established in Algeria.[164] During the crisis of June 1991, the Iranian Ambassador in Algiers had been summoned to the Algerian Foreign Ministry to explain his country's ties with the FIS.[165] However, Ali Belhadj's already explained (see chapter 4) theological differences with the Islamic Republic clearly served to limit any such potential links. Abassi Madani, who was more willing to praise aspects of the Iranian regime, when asked about links with Ali Akbar Mohtachemi, a leading Iranian radical and key figure in the pan-national Hezbollah, asked in return who Mohtachemi was. When told ("the spiritual guide of the Iranian revolution"), he replied that he was still unaware of him. This denial appears to be more genuine than that issued over links with Saudi Arabia.[166] In fact, Iran and Hezbollah seemed to exercise their greatest influence with small specifically

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[162] Quoted in Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau & Frégosi p.36
[163] *El Moudjahid* 3.4.91
[164] See Mohammed Mohaddessin: *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat* (Seven Locks Press, Washington, 1993) p.87
[165] *Middle East International* 2.4.93
[166] *Algérie Actualité* 7.3.91 & 4.7.91

Shi'ite groups such as Sunna wal-Sharia.[167] One foreign diplomat noted the emergence of at least five mosques in late 1990 which were financed and encouraged by the Iranians.[168]

III. Egypt

A third country which had alleged links with Algeria's Islamists, although not at state level, was Egypt. Around the time of the June 1990 elections Egypt's Ambassador to Algeria, Hussein Amin, was informed by the Egyptian intelligence services of links being established between Egypt's radical Islamist groups such as the Gamaat Islamia and Al-Jihad and members of the FIS. In a move to halt such contacts, Hussein Amin re-introduced visa requirements for Algerians wishing to visit Egypt, in June 1990, so that FIS members could be vetted. This was swiftly reversed, however, on the orders of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who Amin believes had been put under pressure by complaints from Chadli Benjedid.[169]

Contact between the FIS and the more constitutionalist and less radical sections of the Islamist movement in Egypt, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, were minimal. Adel Hussein, the Secretary General of the Egyptian Labour Party, under whose banner the Muslim Brotherhood competed in elections, stated that despite both groups' participation in elections, links between his party and the FIS were "very limited."[170] For the FIS's part, Abassi Madani expressly stated that "the FIS is not a movement of the Muslim Brothers, its position is different."[171] This

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[167] Burgat & Dowell pp.289-290

[168] Author's interview with Hussein Amin, 13.6.94

[169] Ibid. Amin believes that Mubarak was heavily influenced by Chadli, who he believes wished to aid a FIS victory in the electoral process. However, it seems likely that the Algerian President took the imposition of visa requirements as a slur on Algeria generally.

[170] Author's interview with Adel Hussein, Secretary General of the Egyptian Labour Party, Cairo, 19.6.94

[171] Interview with Abassi Madani, *Algérie Actualité* 30.8.90

lack of contact and co-operation could be explained by the close relations Mahfoud Nahnah continued to enjoy with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the leader of HAMAS having originally established links with the organisation in the 1960s.

On a more theological level, the replacement of Sheikh Muhammad Ghazali (see chapter 3) with Sheikh Yussef Al-Karadawy, a fellow Egyptian, as rector of the Abdul Qadir mosque, in early 1989, was seen by some observers as having a significant influence on the development of the Algerian Islamist movement. More of an intellectual than his predecessor, Al-Karadawy deepened the roots of Islamic ideas in Algeria although his more moderate approach made only limited headway against the more hard-line and fixed views of Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj.[172]

IV. General

Overall, the FIS seemed quite anxious to deny foreign links and influences. Despite the presence of Rachid Ghannoushi, the influential leader of the Tunisian Nahda party, in Algeria during 1990 and 1991, links with other Islamist movements in the Maghreb were similarly denied.[173] The use of any 'models' for a future FIS-run Islamic government was also rejected. When questioned in an interview about the possible use of the examples of Iran and Saudi Arabia in this context, Abassi Madani replied:

> "Neither one nor the other. Our only model is the Prophet. We are equally guided by the rightly-guided Caliphs. The systems of which you speak are not able to be of any use to us. We respect them, certainly, but we have our own model."[174]

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172 Author's interview with Ibrahim El-Bayoumi Ghanem, National Centre for Social and Criminological Research and observer at 1991 legislative elections in Algeria, Cairo, 26.6.94

173 *Le Figaro* 31.7.90

174 Interview with Abassi Madani, *Jeune Afrique* 25.7.90

This determination to be seen to be pursuing a rigidly independent line free from any foreign influence and support can be seen as evidence of the nationalistic influence of the Djazaira on the thinking and stance of the FIS, or more likely a simpler populist desire to appear as a party beholden to its grass-roots supporters. Nevertheless, the FIS was notable for being virtually the only significant Islamist grouping in Algeria which did not assume a name already used for or by another Islamist group outside of Algeria. HAMAS (the occupied territories), Takfir Wa-Hijra (Egypt), Nahda (the more usual name for the MNI - Tunisia) as well as many smaller groups, chose names that reflected the importance of outside images and symbols.

D: BEYOND THE FIS: THE SECULAR AND MILITANT CHALLENGES

1. The Militant Fringe

The political reforms of 1989 had resulted in Algerian Islamism largely shedding the covert forms it had assumed during the preceding two decades and manifesting itself in more overt structures such as religious associations and political parties. However, there remained elements of the movement that preferred a more clandestine existence, particularly those groups that espoused achievement of Islamic aims through force.

Initially it appeared that the opening of the electoral option to Islamism had totally eclipsed the idea of a need for armed insurrection, such as that attempted by Mustapha Bouyali, particularly following the FIS comprehensive election victories of June 1990. Nonetheless, the period 1990-91 produced evidence to suggest that such groups, although numerically small, were still present and occasionally active. Beginning in 1990 a number of violent acts including armed robberies, attacks on drinkers in a bar in Baraki, an assault on a military barracks

in Blida and an exchange of fire with police in December 1990 occurred.[175] These actions were often attributed, particularly by the media, to supporters and members of the FIS, but it subsequently became clear that responsibility predominantly lay with Islamists associated with the various radical groups, particularly Takfir Wa-Hijra, which had been in existence since the 1970s (see chapters 2 and 3). Augmented and now dominated by the returned volunteers from the war in Afghanistan, groups such as Takfir became gradually more active, particularly in the Belcourt district of Algiers.[176]

The militants of Takfir and other similar groups had explicitly rejected, on ideological grounds, the constitutional and peaceful path to the achievement of an Islamic state that the Islamists in the FIS had apparently embraced. However, despite this divide, it became clear during 1991 that Takfir was associating itself increasingly closely with the FIS. A violent battle which took place for control of the Abi Obeida mosque in Bachdjarah in May 1991 was fought between HAMAS militants and members of Takfir who had allied themselves with the FIS in the struggle against Mahfoud Nahnah's party.[177] Takfir also participated in the FIS's protests against the electoral law the following month, their presence at demonstrations being apparent, according to one observer, by the way its supporters marched in tight squares with clenched fists wearing combat fatigues under their traditional Islamic dress. The transformation of the largely peaceful demonstrations into bloody confrontations with the security forces has been blamed on the actions of Takfir militants who were also reported as being

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[175] *Le Monde* 12.6.91; *Horizons* 30.12.90; *Le Temps* 25.12.90

[176] The organisation was also reported to be present in a belt to the south of Algiers comprising areas such as Baraki, Eucalyptus and El Harrach, although the leader of the group, alleged by a Tunisian newspaper, *Le Temps*, to be a Moh El-Wahrani, lived in Belmourdes to the east of the capital. *Le Monde* 12.6.91; *Horizons* 30.12.90; *Le Temps* 25.12.90

[177] Ahmed Rouadjia: *Le FIS: A L'Epreuve des Elections Legislatives* in *Les Cahiers de L'Orient* (No.23, 1991) p.80

responsible for the shooting of five members of the police and army on the first night of the curfew.[178]

It was thus unsurprising that it was members of Takfir and other Afghan veterans who were the initial targets of the arrests and security sweeps carried out by the government from the beginning of June which reportedly uncovered arms caches belonging to the group (who themselves claimed to possess in excess of four thousand guns).[179] The army moved decisively to try and crush the organisation, in what became known as the 'Battle of Belcourt', on the night of 30 June/ 1 July, seeking to flush its supporters out of their stronghold in the Khaled Ibn Walid mosque (known locally as 'Kabul') in what proved a largely successful operation.[180]

That the FIS were not altogether happy with Takfir's association with their activities was revealed by the lack of protest coming from the party's leadership when the latter's members became the first to be arrested by the authorities at the beginning of June.[181] This was in spite of the alleged links between the group and Hachemi Sahnouni, the FIS's second vice-president.[182] There was clearly a feeling that the provocative role of the group did not generally serve the ends of the party. Nevertheless, despite their defeat in Belcourt and the arrest of a large part of its membership (claimed to number 16,000[183]), Takfir had reportedly regrouped itself in another stronghold in Béni Mered to the east of the capital.[184]

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178 *The Middle East* 7.91
179 *Jeune Afrique* 10.7.91; *The Middle East* 7.91
180 *La Presse* 4.7.91
181 Roberts: *A Trial of Strength* p.148
182 *La Presse* 27.6.91
183 Takfir's own claim. *The Middle East* 7.91
184 *La Presse* 4.7.91

2. The Continued Failure of the Non-Islamist Opposition

Part of the reason for the scale of the FIS victory in the local elections of June 1990 was seen to be the lack of an effective secular alternative for Algerians to vote for: those secular opposition parties that did exist having either boycotted the poll or proved too small, fractious and narrowly based to mount a real challenge to the FIS and the FLN. It was hoped by many outside observers that the entry of the two large opposition parties that had boycotted the 1990 poll, the MDA and the FFS, together with a greater unity of purpose on the part of all the opposition parties, galvanised by the results of June 1990, would break the monopoly the FIS and the FLN had so far established on the electoral process.

The return of Ahmed Ben Bella, the MDA leader, to Algeria from exile in September 1990 attracted considerable domestic and foreign media and popular interest and speculation. It was thought that the first president of independent Algeria and one of the original 'historic chiefs' of the liberation struggle might be able to provide a charismatic alternative to the FIS: his revolutionary nationalistic credentials together with his endorsement of Islamism (see chapter 3) offering the necessary political ingredients for a winning political platform.[185] As has been shown, the MDA were the first political party to back Iraq and call for volunteers to be sent there during the Gulf Crisis.

Ben Bella's populist instincts, however, were increasingly equated with simple opportunism by most Algerians. Chief amongst such opportunism was his stance towards the FIS itself which saw wild fluctuations over a short space of time as he appeared to be deciding whether he stood to gain most by rallying to the FIS or against it.[186] The lack of credibility Ben Bella and the MDA

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[185] Burgat & Dowell p.286

[186] See, for example, Interview with Ahmed Ben Bella, *Jeune Afrique* 26.9.90; and Anne Dissez: *Les Partis 'Democrates': L'Impossible Coalition* in *Les Cahiers de L'Orient* (No.23, 1991) p.100

consequently appeared to enjoy with the electorate was indicated by the opinion polls carried out in May 1991: the party failing to register 2% support in either survey.[187]

More genuinely popular was the FFS led by another of the original 'historic chiefs' of the war of independence, Hocine Ait Ahmed. A demonstration organised by the party in Algiers in December 1990 was able to attract the support of an estimated 500,000 people. However, whilst this was an impressive show of force by the party, it appeared unlikely that the FFS would be likely to build on this support since its power-base, despite its fervour, was largely restricted to Algeria's Berber population. This was illustrated by the fact that the focus of the rally in December 1990 had been to protest against the government's plans to spread 'Arabisation', something the Berbers traditionally saw as a threat to their own language and culture.[188] Thus whilst galvanising significant support within Berber areas, particularly Kabyle, it looked unlikely that the FFS could attract enough support on its own to challenge the two major parties.

Given the shortcomings of the FFS and the MDA the most viable alternative for those Algerians who were not Islamist and were opposed to the government, was the construction of some form of united front for the secular opposition parties. Such an attempt was indeed made in 1990-91 by some of the largest opposition parties including the MDA, the RCD and various smaller parties that had fought separately against each other in the June 1990 elections, to form an alliance for the upcoming legislative elections.

However, this 'Group of Eight', as it became known, gradually broke up as differences of policy, strategy and personality emerged to frustrate efforts to create a coalition of the parties. The inclusion of the well-supported FFS as part

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[187] *Algérie Actualité* 9.5.91 & 30.5.91. The actual figures for MDA support in the two polls were 0.7% and 1.98% respectively.
[188] *Libération* 28.12.90

of the group was clearly crucial to its success but despite an extended courtship this was never achieved. One of the main reasons for this was undoubtedly the presence of the RCD within the coalition which drew its main base of support from the same source as the FFS, the Kabyle. The RCD had attracted the bulk of the Kabyle vote that had not responded to Hocine Ait Ahmed's boycott call in June 1990. Thus because of the rivalry between the two parties which extended to the parties' leaders themselves, the leader of the RCD, Said Saadi, suspected that withdrawal of his party would be a condition for FFS participation in the alliance. The inclusion of the MDA, which had an Islamist fringe, also created problems. Four MDA members started a hunger-strike to protest at (amongst other things) the party's alliance with militantly secularist parties, such as the RCD, which, in their view, did not recognise Islam.[189] Finally, the government's plans for a new electoral law, revealed in the Spring of 1991, forced the parties to contemplate what stance they should adopt in the event of a second ballot producing a run-off between FIS and FLN candidates. For two of the parties, the PRA and the MAJD, the defeat of the corrupt governing party, the FLN, was the imperative and thus, in such a situation, the opposition candidate, even if belonging to the FIS, must always be backed to remove the government.[190] The militant secularism of the RCD compelled it, in contrast, to back any candidate capable of defeating the Islamists of the FIS which it saw as a far greater threat to Algeria than the FLN. Such a fundamental division on strategy and who the main enemy of the proposed alliance should be, therefore seemed to ensure that a common front between the parties could not be achieved.[191]

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[189] Dissez p.94 & p.98

[190] PRA - *Parti du Renouveau Algérien*; MAJD - *Mouvement Algérien pour la Justice et le Dévelopment.* Ironically, the MAJD was lead by the former FLN Prime Minister (1988-89), Kasdi Merbah, who had primarily formed the MAJD to combat his former party whose failings he now bitterly denounced.

[191] *Jeune Afrique* 1.5.91

The continued failure of the secular opposition parties to attract significant amounts of support away from the FLN and particularly the FIS (opinion polls revealed that even combined support for these parties was still well below that for either of the two major parties) was due to their own failure to attract the core of the Algerian electorate: the poor and unemployed. For Ahmed Rouadjia, their essential constituency was rather different and largely "...confined to the narrow universe of the cultured 'petite bourgeoisie' of the big cities."[192] Thus the FIS was free to gather up the support of the populous bottom ends of Algerian society whose opposition to the regime was clear. The FLN continued to exploit the extensive networks of patronage within the state enterprises and institutions. The opposition parties were also unable or unwilling to use their more educated constituency to construct viable alternative programmes for the governing of Algeria, a fact that was often ignored by those commentators who accused the FIS of lacking a political and economic programme of any real substance.[193]

E:CONCLUSIONS

The year that stretched from the party's victories in the local elections in June 1990 through to the crackdown on its activities the following June witnessed the FIS taking centre stage in the unfolding drama of Algeria's ambitious programme of political reform. Whilst a strong showing had been expected from the party in the local elections, the scale of their triumph had not, which had meant that attention had been more widely focused on other parties and actors. The achievement of 55% of the vote signified to everyone that the FIS was the clearest beneficiary of the electoral programme and thus stood the greatest chance of wielding most political power following future national and presidential elections.

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192 Rouadjia: *Le FIS: A L'Epreuve des Elections Legislatives* p.76
193 Dissez pp.95-96

It was this prospect of real political power that animated both the internal and external dynamics of the FIS in this period. Abassi Madani became convinced, in the wake of June 1990, that the party's primary objective must be the achievement of maximum political power through the ballot box with all other considerations making way for this greater goal. This explains both the FIS's populist swing towards backing Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War and its precipitation of the crisis of May-June 1991. The first was necessary to ensure that the party retained its mass electoral following and the second was viewed as essential to prevent the regime effectively blocking the party's path to political power through changes to the electoral law. In pursuing such a strategy, Abassi Madani exposed rifts between himself and those in the FIS who did not see the achievement of political power through elections as the primary objective of the FIS. Ahmed Merrani, one of Abassi's sternest critics during the crisis, argued that the FIS had been originally created to participate in party political competition as a vehicle for propagating the Islamic movement's ideas rather than with the objective of actually taking political power.[194]

For Abassi, victory rather than mere influence was the essential aim and ultimate prize for the party. Whilst he may well have been motivated in part by personal ambition, it was notable that firstly, his policy was the one carried through and, more importantly, enthusiastically backed by the party's rank and file on the streets. Secondly, it was his allies that were victorious in the struggle for the party's leadership with those who sought to return the party to a more narrow and religiously hard-line agenda.

The Spring of 1991 also witnessed the severing of the links and co-operation between the FIS and the Presidency that had operated since January 1990. The precise effect that the crisis of May-June had had on the nature, structure and stance of the regime and its composite faction were not fully

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[194] Interview with Ahmed Merrani, *Le Figaro* 12.1.92

apparent in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. The use of force, however, in early June and more portentiously the re-entry of the ANP into the political scene, indicated that a new configuration was emerging (see chapter 6). In the wake of the local elections, President Chadli Benjedid had correctly perceived the FIS to be the main threat to him as was shown by the increasing pressure he put on the party in local government and ultimately in the amended electoral law of April 1991. It remained to be seen whether he would continue to perceive the FIS in this way following the comprehensive repression the party had suffered during June and July 1991.

6

THE EVE OF POWER: THE FIS AND THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS 1991 - 1992

A. THE POLITICAL SCENE JULY - DECEMBER 1991

The crisis of June 1991 created the greatest disturbance to the Algerian political landscape since October 1988, surpassing the fall-out emanating from the FIS's surprise victory in the local elections of June 1990. This time both the Islamist movement and the regime were significantly affected by the crisis and both sought to reorder and regroup themselves in the wake of the dramatic events of the summer.

1. The Regime and the Government July - December 1991

Despite being generally acknowledged to have emerged in a superior position to the FIS, given the repression the Islamist party had been subjected to, the regime had been forced to change and reconstitute itself. The fall of Mouloud Hamrouche's government at the height of the crisis in early June and the appointment of Sid Ahmed Ghozali in his place brought to an end his twenty-month old reformist administration. More fundamentally, it signified a further breach in the separation of the state from the FLN as a political party. Not only was this shown by the composition of Ghozali's new administration which contained a large number of new and independent technocrats in preference to members of the FLN who were largely excluded from the new government, but it was also seen in Chadli Benjedid's resignation from the post of President of the FLN on 28 June. These developments represented an attempt by Ghozali and Chadli to distance and disassociate themselves and the new government from

the previous regime.[1] The new Prime Minister, in particular, reinforced this impression by proceeding to verbally attack the FLN at every possible occasion.[2] Moreover it appeared that the President had abandoned his attempts to transform the FLN into his own vehicle or 'Presidential party' believing that by appearing more consensual and independent he would possibly attract broader popular support.[3]

The image of independence that the regime wished to display, however, was belied by clear indications that Chadli had allied himself with new forces within the Algerian state. The exit of the overtly reformist Hamrouche and his replacement by Ghozali, who had played a significant role in the economic strategy of the Boumedienne era, indicated that more conservative forces had returned to the fore.[4] Such forces were not, however, primarily constituted by the old enemies of Chadli's economic reforms in the FLN, but rather by the army. The ANP's re-entry on to the political scene in early June 1991 to quell the street protests of the FIS had clearly signalled an intent to at least have more of a say in political developments. It was the military that had primarily demanded the departure of Hamrouche as Prime Minister, although for reasons of his perceived failure to manage the escalating crisis rather than through any antipathy to his programme of political and economic reforms.[5]

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[1] Keith Sutton and Ahmed Aghrout: *Multi-Party Elections in Algeria: Problems and Prospects* in *Bulletin of Francophone Africa* (No.2, Autumn 1992) p.63; John P. Entelis and Lisa J. Arone: *Algeria in Turmoil: Democracy and the State* in *Middle East Policy* (Volume 1, 1992) pp.32-33

[2] See Charef pp.204-205

[3] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* pp.469-470

[4] Entelis & Arone pp.32-33

[5] Yefsah: *Armée et Politique* p.163n. Yefsah rightly dismisses suggestions that the army had primarily demanded Hamrouche's resignation because his anti-corruption initiatives had threatened some of its senior figures. Whilst this may have been a consideration, the desire to restore order on the streets and political stability was more important. Yefsah pp.163-164

This primary concern with public order was reflected in the military's lack of involvement in the day-to-day running of the government following the resolution of the crisis by July 1991. Having failed to persuade President Chadli to ban the FIS it made no attempt to interfere with initiatives to restart the electoral programme that had been suspended following the disturbances of mid 1991. Despite his 'Boumediennist' past, Sid Ahmed Ghozali and his government did much to display liberal and reformist credentials over the following months, casting some doubt on suggestions that the changes to the regime heralded a return to old-style Algerian politics. Two inter-party conferences were organised on 30 July and 24 August supposedly to provide a forum for dialogue between the regime and the various political parties and to try to establish some consensus on the future course of Algeria's political development and reform. Although there was widespread scepticism about the government's aims and sincerity with these moves (the FFS boycotted the first conference and the FIS both - although dissident figures such as Mohammed Kerrar, Bashir Fakih and Ahmed Merrani attended) and the conferences achieved little consensus on the electoral law, there was an eventual declaration that the aborted legislative elections should take place before the end of the year.[6]

It soon became apparent that both Ghozali and the Presidency were intent on proceeding with the electoral programme. The lifting of the state of siege which had been declared in June, on 29 September, a few days earlier than it was due to end, was seen as an indication of this intent. Ghozali also embarked on a concerted attempt to reform the most controversial aspects of the electoral law of the previous April. September and October witnessed a fierce battle between the Prime Minister and the National Assembly, as the exclusively FLN-composed legislature sought to resist efforts to reduce the number of electoral

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[6] Jean-Jacques Lavenue: *Algérie: La Démocratie Interdite* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 1992) pp.157-161

constituencies, to remove the right of husbands to vote on behalf of their wives, and to make it easier for independent candidates to stand for election - all measures perceived by the APN to be hostile to FLN interests. Despite Ghozali frequently threatening to resign if the reforms were not endorsed, the new electoral law emerged from the Assembly on October 13 with few of the changes for which Ghozali had hoped. Constituency numbers were reduced from 542 to 430 (rather than to the preferred original number of 295) and there was no concession on the issue of proxy voting. In response to this relative failure, the Prime Minister attempted to get the Presidency either to have the electoral bill put to a second reading or to organise a referendum on the subject. Chadli refused both requests and announced on October 15 that the first round of the legislative elections would take place on December 26.[7] However, Ghozali was subsequently comforted by the fact that the Constitutional Court, to whom Chadli had referred the proxy vote rule, ruled on 29 October that the rule was 'null and void' on the grounds that it conflicted with other legal articles.[8]

Where the FIS fitted into this renewed commitment to the electoral process following the party's comprehensive suppression by the regime in June-July 1991 appeared initially uncertain. The government had made no indication of wishing

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[7] *The Economist* 12.10.91 & 9.11.91; *Financial Times* 16.10.91. The APN was so opposed to Ghozali's proposed reforms to the electoral law because many deputies felt that they would damage the electoral prospects of the FLN of which they were all still technically members. They were in favour of retaining the proxy vote because it was believed to work to the FLN's advantage in the deeply traditional south of Algeria where the party had performed strongly in 1990. Its support for a larger number of constituencies reflected its desire to retain the gerrymander of the original electoral law of April 1991 which created proportionately more electoral districts in the FLN supporting areas. Despite the reduction in seat numbers eventually achieved by Ghozali, large disparities between electorates in various districts persisted. For example, the average electorate size in the southern Saharan wilayate of Illizi was 3,633 compared to that for Algiers which was 49,777 (there were similarly large figures for Oran and Constantine). Sutton & Aghrout p.62

[8] *Summary of World Broadcasts* ME/1212 A/15 29.10.91; *The Guardian* 18.10.91

to ban the party despite its crackdown. It gradually became apparent, in the wake of both the crisis and the failure of attempts to help the dissident members of the Majlis Shura to win control of the party, that the new approach was to try and 'build bridges' with the new leadership of the party whilst keeping the old leadership firmly under lock and key. This new approach was exemplified by Ghozali himself in an interview in which he sought to draw a distinction between the old and new leaderships of the FIS when questioned on the possible banning of the party:

> "It is not a question of banning any party. We made clear the distinction between the party and certain of its leaders who have chosen a dead-end."[9]

This was borne out by the new prime minister's actions which included the freeing in August of several hundred lower-ranking FIS militants arrested in June whilst retaining most of the more senior members in detention.[10] The regime also heavily publicised the discovery of 20,000 documents of an allegedly "subversive nature" found at a printing works at Blida and signed by Ali Belhadj, seeking to further justify his and the other FIS leaders' imprisonment.[11]

Despite the refusal of the new leadership of the FIS to take part in the two inter-party conferences in July and August, the government kept up attempts at dialogue with the party. The minister responsible for the electoral law asserted in an interview in September that he had retained links with the party throughout the crisis and had contacts with both the old Majlis Shura and the new Provisional Executive Bureau (BEP).[12] It appeared that the regime was anxious that the FIS participate in the forthcoming elections to the National Assembly. It released

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[9] *El Moudjahid* 18.7.91
[10] Burgat & Dowell p.298; Ghozali also sought to persuade employers to take back some of the 12,000 workers who had been sacked for responding to the FIS's strike call in May *Financial Times* 28.6.91
[11] *El Moudjahid* 18.7.91
[12] *Horizons* 5.9.91

Mohammed Said from prison on December 7 having released Abdelkader Hachani, the provisional leader of the FIS, who had been taken into custody by the authorities on 28 September, a week earlier. Hachani's release was viewed by one Algerian newspaper "as an appeal to the FIS to participate in the elections."[13]

This did not mean, however, that the government was any better disposed towards the FIS than its predecessor. Ghozali had included in his new cabinet of technocrats and independents, two women renown for their anti-Islamist views which, in Robert Mortimer's view, "served notice that he intended to preserve a liberal secular regime."[14] Nor was it implied that the regime would henceforth be more tolerant of Islamist violence and street activism. Periodic warnings were issued by the regime throughout the Autumn of 1991 about the consequences of an attempted return by the FIS to the tactics of confrontation of the previous May and June. When President Chadli announced the date of the elections on October 15, he stated that despite the continuation of the electoral process "neither the citizen nor the state will accept behaviour outside the constitution and the law."[15] Similarly, when the FIS announced its intention to hold a series of marches across Algeria on December 6, Abdelkader Hachani was summoned to the Interior Ministry and warned of a possible blood bath if the party went ahead with its plans.[16] This robust stance reflected the influence of the army on the government. Having failed to persuade Chadli to ban the FIS in June-July 1991 and having gone along with his plans to proceed with the elections, Algeria's military chiefs were intent on seeing that the FIS could not repeat its challenge of the previous May and June. The appointment of General Larbi Belkheir as new

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[13] *Algérie Actualité* 13.2.92
[14] Mortimer: *Islam and Multiparty Politics* p.590
[15] *Financial Times* 16.10.91
[16] *The Economist* 14.12.91 All marches by political parties were banned in the run-up to the election.

Interior and Local Authorities Minister in December 1991, with responsibility for overseeing the elections, indicated this resolve on the part of the ANP as did a law passed on December 5 which allowed the regional *wali* administrations to call upon the military in the event of a crisis.[17]

None of these developments appeared to aim at explicitly discriminating against the FIS, merely to restrain its excesses, and the regime's commitment to democratisation and the electoral process seemed uncompromised. Why the regime had retained this commitment and in particular why it was so anxious to secure the FIS's participation in the process, given the crisis of mid 1991, was a matter of some debate. Chadli and Ghozali continued to publicly express their belief in the virtue of persisting with democratisation. Ghozali's battles with the National Assembly over the electoral law and his stated view that "You either have 100% democracy or zero percent...You can't have exceptions to democracy" when questioned on FIS participation, appeared to bear witness to this conviction.[18]

The reality was that both men still adhered to the strategy of going ahead with the elections in the hope and expectation of an inconclusive result, with no single party achieving a majority. Such a result would allow the President (and possibly the Prime Minister[19]) to play the influential role of adjudicator and kingmaker. This divide and rule strategy was bolstered by the heightened prospect of a failure on the part of the FIS to secure a majority in the legislative elections. The disappointing opinion poll ratings for the FIS of earlier in the year (see previous chapter) were confirmed by Chadli's own polls in the Autumn of 1991 which continued to suggest that the FIS would not secure more than 30% of

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[17] Charef p.224 & p.229
[18] *Financial Times* 28.6.91
[19] There were suggestions that Ghozali harboured such ambitions for himself. *Jeune Afrique* 4.9.91

the vote.[20] This, aided by the absence, through imprisonment, of a large part of the party's leadership, encouraged the regime to believe that the FIS could be safely allowed to compete in the elections. As François Burgat comments:

> "The general staff and the chancelleries in Algiers seemed convinced that the elections were pushing towards that equilibrium that was the dream of all the leaders in the region: an Islamist party that was domesticated and whose integration in the institutional system would not call the political survival of the regime into question."[21]

Furthermore, Ghozali and Chadli were convinced that exclusion of the FIS, which was still clearly the most popular opposition party, from the electoral process would greatly undercut the perceived legitimacy of the elections and would provide the FIS with the excuse to adopt a more violent path of opposition to the regime.

For these reasons it was concluded that continuation with the elections on the broadest possible basis was the best route for Algeria. This was certainly perceived as preferable to either the exclusion of the FIS or the abandonment or suspension of the process altogether in the wake of the June crisis, both of which would have led to violent confrontations with the Islamist movement.

2. The FIS July- December 1991

I. Recovery

As has been shown, the crisis of June 1991 affected the FIS far more than it had the regime. Despite the initial apparent victory of securing in the first week of June both the fall of the Hamrouche government and promised concessions on the electoral law and presidential elections, the subsequent crackdown by the army culminating in the arrest and detention of Abassi Madani, Ali Belhadj and

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[20] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.474
[21] Burgat & Dowell p.299

many of the party's senior figures swept away any perceived earlier gains. The attendant splits in the party and the battle for its control during and immediately after the crisis had, in the eyes of both the regime and the other opposition parties, ended "the myth of the invulnerability of the FIS."[22]

Despite these significant reverses, the FIS was able to regroup itself effectively over the late summer. A conference was held at Batna at the end of July which gathered together the remaining members of the party's Majlis Shura together with representatives from nearly all the regional BEWs. The gathering produced a decisive victory for the supporters of Abassi Madani over the dissenting voices in the party. Not only did the conference reaffirm the leadership of Abassi and Ali Belhadj and formally recognise Abdelkader Hachani as provisional leader, but also succeeded in suspending and marginalising most of the dissidents. Having already formally expelled Ahmed Merrani and Bashir Fakih from the Majlis on June 25 following their appearance on national television, the Majlis confirmed at Batna the suspension of Benazouz Zebda, Hachemi Sahnouni and Mohammed Kerrar from the Majlis.[23] The one remaining notable dissident, Said Guechi, escaped this fate but realising the direction events were moving in, left the conference before its conclusion. This, together with the complete absence from the conference of Zebda and Sahnouni, gave Abdelkader Hachani and his allies the narrow majority they needed to achieve these changes. In place of these excluded figures the party co-opted twelve new members onto the Majlis Shura, as representatives from the regions which included, significantly, Mohammed Said (still at that time in official custody).[24] Hachani characterised

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[22] *Jeune Afrique* 11.9.91
[23] Lavenue p.165
[24] Charef p.214

these changes as "strictly functional"[25] but it was clearly an attempt to bolster his and his allies' majority on the party's ruling body.[26]

The new provisional leader of the party (who carried the official title of President of the BEP) worked hard over the weeks following the conclusion of the Batna conference to convince the party's grassroots that he and the new Majlis Shura remained loyal to the line of Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj. This together with the recuperation that the party as a whole was undergoing in the aftermath of the events of June, meant that nationally the FIS kept a very low profile throughout the Summer of 1991.[27]

By the beginning of the Autumn, the FIS had sufficiently recovered itself to begin to look outwards again and it rapidly became apparent that although the leadership of the party may have received a severe blow during the crisis of the previous Spring, the base of the party's activist support remained intact. Over the following months the FIS was able to demonstrate its continued ability to mobilise large numbers of its supporters. Within a week of the lifting of the state of siege on September 29, the FIS staged a rally at the 20th August stadium in Algiers which was attended by "scores of thousands" of people and four weeks later on 1 November an estimated 300,000 participated in a march held by the party through the capital.[28]

II. The Debate over Participation

These impressive displays of strength, however, concealed an intense debate and uncertainty within the new leadership of the party over the future strategy of the FIS. Central to this debate was the response the party should adopt to the government's apparent determination to continue with the electoral

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[25] Interview with Abdelkader Hachani, *Algérie Actualité* 1.8.91
[26] Charef p.214
[27] Ibid. p.215
[28] *Jeune Afrique* 20.11.91; *The Economist* 12.10.91

process. Initially, in the immediate wake of the June crisis, the FIS's rejection of the regime's invitation to the government-party conferences of 30 July and 24 August seemed inevitable and understandable given the recent crackdown on the party and the imprisonment of its leaders. It branded the conferences as disingenuous attempts on the part of the regime "to retrieve its lost credibility."[29] However, as time progressed and as the FIS was not officially banned, the state of siege was lifted and Ghozali made plain his desire for the FIS to participate in the elections, the party faced more of a dilemma over whether it should respond to the Prime Minister's overtures and announce its participation in the elections.

Abdelkader Hachani publicly reaffirmed the FIS's commitment to the electoral route to power by stating that "We can not arrive in power other than through free and proper elections."[30] However, he and the new leadership of the party made clear their conditions for rejoining the electoral process. Whilst initial demands included the lifting of the state of siege and the reappointment of workers sacked for their participation in the FIS-organised general strike of the previous May, the central demand was and remained the release of Madani, Belhadj and the other senior leaders of the movement. This primary pre-condition for participation was continually restated whenever the question of FIS involvement in the elections was raised. Moreover, Hachani stated that the party would not only boycott the elections but would also "exert every available means, within the framework of the law, so that there will be no elections."[31]

This determination to prevent the holding of the elections if preconditions were not met revealed the nature of the dilemma the FIS faced - in view of the government's determination to proceed with the elections even in the event of a FIS boycott. Neither boycott nor participation represented satisfactory stances for

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[29] FIS communique quoted in Lavenue p.163; *El Moudjahid* 27.7.91
[30] Interview with Abdelkader Hachani, *Algérie Actualité* 1.8.91
[31] Quoted in Entelis & Arone p.33n

the party. Participation without securing concessions from the regime would appear like compromised capitulation and weakness, whilst a boycott risked marginalisation for the party and possibly invited repression from the regime which could portray the party as being in reality anti-democratic. Rabah Kebir, one of the group of younger figures which had risen to prominence in the leadership of the FIS following the Batna conference, believed that Ghozali's overtures towards the FIS were not genuine and that in reality the Prime Minister hoped for a boycott by the FIS:

> "The Government pretended that it wanted everyone to join the elections and it did not want it to seem that the FIS was excluded. If the FIS did not participate in the elections it wanted it to appear that it was the FIS's fault"[32]

This debate was played out within the leadership of the party with more detailed strategic and tactical considerations being raised on both sides. Those who favoured participation argued that it offered the ultimate prize of political power. Since it appeared that the FIS's essentially urban support had remained solid, they argued, this would be able to provide the party with, at the very least, a significant voice in the new National Assembly and might even be sufficient to secure an absolute majority.[33] Furthermore, it was argued that failure to participate would result in the FIS's support shifting, perhaps irretrievably, to the other smaller Islamist parties such as HAMAS and the MNI who intended to run candidates in the election.[34]

Such a view was disputed by those within the leadership who feared that support had already begun to slip towards the other Islamist parties and that together with the adverse impact of the June crisis would mean that the

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[32] Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95
[33] *Jeune Afrique* 20.11.91
[34] Interview with Rabah Kebir, *Algérie Actualité* 31.10.91; Lavenue p.126

achievement of a majority by the FIS was an unrealistic scenario.[35] Being simply the largest party was not to be seen as an advance for the Islamist cause, as Hamza Kaida observed of the opponents of participation:

> "For them, an electoral failure is not to be dismissed. It would be fatal, for it would strike the FIS at its base, constituted by activists mobilised by their rejection of the system, and would make the movement an ordinary opposition party. In abstaining to participate in the elections, the FIS would continue, instead, to channel discontent and would nullify the results because of the poor turnout..."[36]

Whilst this debate continued, attempts were made to win concessions from the regime; such concessions being of obvious particular importance to those within FIS who backed participation, seeing them as a means of strengthening their case in the internal debate within the party. On September 7 Abassi Madani, Ali Belhadj and the six other senior imprisoned FIS leaders embarked on a short hunger strike in an ultimately unrewarded effort to pressurise the authorities, through the fear of creating martyrs, to release them or at least have themselves accorded the status of political prisoners.[37] A second attempt to win concessions took the form of trying to persuade the government to let the imprisoned leaders appear before a civilian rather than a military court. Although President Chadli appeared at one time to hint that this might be possible and that the leaders might even be released following a deliberately public and humiliating admonishment in front of the court, no concessions were wrung on the issue.[38]

At the same time, the FIS leadership proved anxious to portray itself as operating within the law. This was demonstrated by Hachani's statement quoted

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[35] *Jeune Afrique* 20.11.91
[36] Ibid.
[37] *Jeune Afrique* 18.9.91; BBC African World Service News 10.9.91 The hunger strike was eventually called off following the visit of a religious delegation who advised the prisoners to abandon the strike. *El Watan* 19.9.91 referred to by *SWB* ME/1182 A/18 19.9.91
[38] *Middle East International* 20.12.91; *The Economist* 9.11.91

earlier about preventing the holding of the elections by using "every available means, *within the framework of the law.*" Such an approach was designed not only to persuade the regime to make some form of goodwill gesture, but also to avoid giving the regime and the army any excuse to crack down on the party. On 20 September, Hachani stated that FIS activists would not respond to provocation, having disavowed violence and actions that might undermine security.[39] A week later when Hachani himself was arrested by the authorities following Friday prayers at the Bab El-Oued mosque, the loudspeakers at the mosque appealed to worshippers not to respond to provocation from the heavy police and army presence around the area.[40]

In spite of these attempts and displays of restraint on the part of the FIS, Madani and Belhadj remained in custody. With no public concessions to justify their participation, the FIS continued to decline to join in the electoral process even after the campaign for the first ballot for the National Assembly formally commenced on December 5. Then, on 14 December, just twelve days before voting was due to take place the party issued a statement declaring:

> "To take a step towards the establishment of an Islamic state... the FIS will take part in the forthcoming legislative elections."[41]

This decision obviously demonstrated that the ongoing debate within the FIS had been resolved, but what at this late stage had decisively shifted the debate within the party? It seems clear that the arrangement of forces on either side of the debate over participation was not a random affair and continued to reflect the divisions in the FIS that had first come to light in the aftermath of the June crisis.

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[39] *SWB* ME/1184 A/16 23.9.91
[40] *The Economist* 12.10.91
[41] *The Guardian* 16.12.91

Ironically, given the closeness with which the debate over participation echoed that which had occurred in the party over the general strike in May, it was Abdelkader Hachani and his allies who pushed for participation.[42] The explanation for this paradox lay in the fact that whilst Hachani and new senior figures in the leadership such as Rabah Kebir and Othmane Aissani had supported Abassi Madani's overall political and electoral strategy, they were even more pragmatically inclined than the official leader of the FIS and recognised that the tactic of confrontation had clearly failed in May and June.[43]

The final decisive shift in the debate over participation came with the release by the authorities of both Hachani and Mohammed Said within a week of each other in October-November. This development (as the Ghozali government clearly intended) not only reintroduced two powerful voices for participation back into the internal debate within the party, but also gave Hachani, in particular, much greater weight and credibility within the FIS as someone who had suffered for the party.[44] Throughout November and early December, as well as embarking on a campaign to persuade the party, Hachani remained in contact with the regime as he made public and private hints that the FIS would compete in the elections in an effort to induce further concessions from the authorities. It was also notable that, following his release, Hachani refrained from repeating the FIS's call for early presidential elections. In response to these overtures, the FIS's two main newspapers, *Al Mounqid* and *Al Forkane*, banned since August, were allowed by the authorities to publish again on 18 November. [45]

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[42] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.472

[43] The provisional leadership of the party was in contact with the original imprisoned leadership, through lawyers and family visitors. (Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95). However, whilst it is known that the imprisoned leadership was divided on the issue of participation in the elections, the exact opinions of Abassi and Belhadj are unknown. *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92

[44] Lavenue p.42; Charef p.216

[45] Charef p.220 & p.227; Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.473

It was evident, even before the official announcement on December 14, that Hachani had already decided that, even without the achievement of the central concession of the release of Abassi, Belhadj and the other imprisoned leaders, the FIS should participate in the elections. The party had selected candidates for all 430 constituencies to be contested in the election in advance of any other party and at a rally on December 6 Hachani had spoken of the achievement of an Islamic state through the ballot box.[46] The holding of the rally itself represented evidence of the defeat of the faction within the FIS which was deeply opposed to participation. Hachani's decision to hold a rally in preference to the planned march, following the warning by the Interior Ministry of bloody consequences if a march took place, marked a rejection of the hard-line alternative to participation, which favoured confrontation with the regime on the streets.[47]

III. The Militant Fringe

There was evidence during late 1991 that suggested that parts of the Islamic movement, including FIS members, had already begun to turn to more violent alternatives to participation. The weeks preceding the declaration by the FIS that it would enter the elections witnessed a number of violent incidents involving Islamists. On November 1, the same day that the FIS held its last march through the capital before such demonstrations were banned following the opening of the electoral campaign, Islamist militants attacked a residence of the FLN where the ex-prime minister, Mouloud Hamrouche was holding a meeting.

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[46] *The Economist* 14.12.91; *Middle East International* 20.12.91 The FIS had actually submitted Abassi Madani, Ali Belhadj and its other imprisoned leaders as candidates for the election and as possible means of putting pressure on the government. However, their candidatures were officially rejected on the grounds that candidates had to register in person. *Jeune Afrique* 20.11.91

[47] Lavenue pp.124-125; *Jeune Afrique* 20.11.91

Similarly, even before the campaign was underway, Ahmed Ben Bella had his meetings disrupted by stone-throwing Islamists.[48]

Far more serious, though, were a spate of related incidents that occurred on Algeria's eastern borders at the end of November. Three policemen died in an armed attack by an estimated sixty armed Islamists on a border post at Guemmar on 29 November, following discoveries by the police of significant caches of arms and exchanges of fire with militants in the surrounding El Oued region earlier that week. These events, which the government claimed were indications of a planned and widespread Islamist terror campaign against the state, were generally acknowledged to have been instigated by Aissa Messaoudi, also known as Tayeb al Afghani, whom the police had been seeking to hunt down. Although, as his *nomme de guerre* suggests, Messaoudi was connected with the extremist wing of the Islamist movement involving Afghan veterans in groups such as Takfir wa-Hijra (see previous chapters) which were not controlled by the FIS, there were indications that Messaoudi did, in fact, have connections with the FIS. Whilst televised 'confessions' by captured members of his group, who claimed to belong to the FIS and an armed organisation, should be viewed with some caution, it was established that Messaoudi himself was an active member of the FIS-established trade union, the SIT.[49]

Despite the regime's ongoing efforts at this time to persuade the FIS to participate in the elections, much was made by the authorities of this link to the party. The Defence Minister, Khaled Nezzar, appeared on television to accuse the FIS publicly of being directly or indirectly involved - a charge both the FIS and

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[48] *Jeune Afrique* 20.11.91; *Reuters* 28.11.91 Hugh Roberts suggests, rather improbably, that these attacks were orchestrated by Ghozali and Chadli to sabotage the electoral chances of both the MDA and the FIS. Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.473

[49] *Reuters* 29.11.91; *Associated Press* 29.11.91; *Jeune Afrique* 11.12.91; *BBC African World Service News* 10.12.91 The authorities claimed to have finally wiped out the group following an attack by the security forces on December 9.

the SIT were quick to rebut claiming that it would not serve the party's interests to be involved in attempts at violent insurrection.[50] Abdelkader Hachani suggested that the incidents may have in reality been the result of an intra-army feud, but he effectively acknowledged the FIS involvement in the incidents when he stated that "You don't punish the whole family for the misdemeanours of some members."[51] This comment appeared also to indicate his desire to avoid official moves by the authorities against the FIS as a result of the incidents and in addition he stated that "Violence is not part of our methods. The FIS operates inside the law."[52]

These incidents were not the only testimony to the existence of a section of the FIS that dissented from the FIS's official overall strategy of participating in elections. The Batna conference of July witnessed the exclusion not only of those individuals who had attempted rapprochement with the regime, but also of two members, Said Mekhloufi and Kameredine Kherbane, who in contrast advocated a more confrontational approach to the regime. At the beginning of 1991, Mekhloufi had published and distributed a pamphlet entitled "Principles and Objectives of Civil Disobedience." As well as promoting civil disobedience, Mekhloufi and his pamphlet implicitly criticised the whole 'democratic' electoralist strategy of the FIS by asserting amongst other things that "The point of view of the majority has not any value" and indicated that more direct methods should be employed by Islamists to force the regime to relinquish power. He was publicly criticised by Abassi Madani at the time, but it was not until the opportunity of the Batna conference six months later that supporters of the electoral strategy were able to oust Mekhloufi and his close ally Kherbane from the Majlis Shura.[53] It was

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[50] *BBC African World Service News* 9.12.91; *Jeune Afrique* 11.12.91
[51] *BBC African World Service News* 2.12.91 & 10.12.91
[52] Quoted in Charef p.221 It was argued that Hachani was wrong-footed and embarrassed by the whole incident .
[53] Charef pp.189-195

notable that although neither Mekhloufi nor Kherbane were directly linked to the incidents that were to occur later in the year, both, like Aissa Messaoudi, had served as volunteers in the war in Afghanistan.

B: THE FIRST BALLOT: DECEMBER 26 1991

1. The FIS Campaign

Despite their late entry into the electoral contest, the FIS worked in the twelve remaining days before the first ballot to ensure that the party would attract a maximum level of support. The party fielded candidates of an unusually high level of education (a quarter of them had post-graduate qualifications[54]) and fought a highly professional campaign, opting for lower-profile activities such as door-to-door canvassing and continuing its social action programmes in the poor areas to attract support. Sermons in mosques were used to get across the party message rather than employing the more usual medium of mass rallies.[55] Particular attention was focused on the multitudinous young urban unemployed, who frequently made up 60% of their age group and whose desperation at the still declining socio-economic conditions in Algeria and disillusion with the regime could be turned, as it had in June 1990, into votes for the FIS. Much was made, by the FIS in this context, of the revealed corruption of the ruling FLN and the 'missing billions' embezzled by corrupt officials and politicians of the regime.[56]

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[54] Fawzi Rouziek: *Algérie 1990-1993: La Démocratie Confisquée?* in Pierre Robert Baduel (Editor): *L'Algérie Incertaine* (Edisud, France, 1994) p.43 The FIS fielded more post-graduate educated than any of the other parties contesting the election. This indicated the growing influence of the better educated nationalist wing of the FIS, this wing of the party providing in Abed Charef's view, the "overwhelming majority" of the candidates in the election. Charef p.219

[55] *The Independent* 17.1.92; *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92

[56] *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92; *The Independent* 30.12.91 The FLN, in response, portrayed itself throughout the campaign as a 'hostage' of the political system and claimed that itself, as a party, had been the true initiator of political reforms after 1988.

2. The Results

When the results of the 26 December poll began to appear it once more became apparent that the hopes and expectations of the regime and the other parties, that the FIS would struggle to get more than 35% of the vote, were woefully misplaced. For the second time in eighteen months the FIS triumphed massively. The party took over 47% of the total votes cast, even further ahead of its nearest rival, once again the FLN, which secured less than 24% of the vote, than it had been in 1990. No other single party succeeded in winning more than 10% of the votes cast. Indeed, it appeared that the voting patterns of the local elections had persisted at the national level: the FIS totally dominating the urban north (taking over 50% of the vote in Algiers, Constantine and Oran and most other large towns); the FLN performing best in the large southern Saharan wilayate; and the wilayate of the Kabyle rejecting both the FIS and the FLN and voting for a third party (this time Ait Ahmed's FFS).[57]

What made this victory even more comprehensive than these voting percentages suggest, was the number of seats in the new National Assembly the FIS had been able to secure. It rapidly became clear, as the results were announced following the December 26 poll, that the electoral system, despite the efforts of the outgoing FLN-dominated Assembly, had dramatically favoured the main Islamist party. Of the 430 seats to be contested 231 were won outright in this the first ballot, by candidates who had been able to win 50% or more of the vote in their individual constituencies; the remaining 199 proceeding to a decisive second ballot to be contested by the leading two candidates from the first ballot. It was a shock to everyone in Algeria, perhaps even to the FIS itself, when it was

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[57] For voting statistics see Sutton & Aghrout pp.76-77 Full and comprehensive voting statistics of the results were, however, never fully published. Only those relating to successful or near-successful (that is, proceeding to the second ballot) were fully released. Sutton & Aghrout p.65

revealed that the FIS had won no fewer than 188 of the 231 seats decided at the first ballot. For the FLN, which the system had supposedly favoured[58], the outcome of the election in terms of seats was a disaster: securing just 16 seats outright. This was less than the FFS which had managed to scoop 25 and which had the second highest tally behind the massive gains of the FIS.

The results also made it clear that all the factors suggested in the period since the 1990 elections to indicate that the FIS would fail to hold onto the support it had garnered in those elections, had proved to be of little importance. The return of the parties who had boycotted the 1990 polls had little effective impact. Hocine Ait Ahmed's FFS votes, heavily concentrated in the Kabyle, came overwhelmingly from RCD voters and abstainers in 1990, and Ahmed Ben Bella's MDA won a derisory 2% of the popular vote. Similarly, the much vaunted incursion of the smaller Islamist parties into the FIS's vote was in the event marginal: Mahfoud Nahnah's HAMAS took 5.4% to the MNI's 2.2%.[59] The supposed mobilisation of women, freed by the abandonment of the procuration vote rule, against the 'threat' the FIS posed to women's rights similarly never materialised. Despite the FIS's strong backing for the retention of the procuration rule (Hachani describing its abandonment as "in reality a development for the worse"[60]) it actually appeared not to hinder and possibly aided the party. In traditional areas where, regardless of political or religious views, women voting was frowned upon, one Algerian journalist noted that the only women voting in any numbers on polling day were those from FIS-supporting households.[61] It appears that the FIS instructed its supporters to ensure that all their female

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[58] Whilst some of the worst excesses of the electoral law had been mitigated, glaring disparities in electorates still existed - see footnote 7.

[59] The FIS even managed to secure five times the vote of HAMAS in Blida, the hometown and stronghold of HAMAS's leader, Mahfoud Nahnah. *Algérie Actualité* 9.1.92

[60] *El Moudjahid* 9.9.91

[61] *Algérie Actualité* 2.1.92

relatives went to the polling booths.[62] The much highlighted failings of the FIS-run local councils also seemed to have made no effective difference: voters clearly continued to blame their declining social and economic well-being on the central government.

3. The Implications

The results of the 26 December ballot had clearly profound implications for the political future. Having won 188 seats in the first round of voting, the FIS needed to win just 28 out of the remaining 199 seats to be contested in the second round of voting to achieve an absolute majority in the new National Assembly. Given the fact that it was the leading party in 144 (and was the challenging party in another 43) of these remaining seats, it also seemed entirely feasible that the FIS eventually could win the 99 seats required to give it a two-thirds majority in the Assembly which it could use to press for changes to the Constitution. Furthermore, in the likely event that supporters of HAMAS and the MNI in the first round would cast their votes for FIS candidates in the second round, Keith Sutton and Ahmed Aghrout have estimated that the main Islamist party would sweep two-thirds of the remaining seats. It is worth noting at this point that although the percentage of the vote won by the FIS declined from roughly 55% in June 1990 to 47% in 1991, the percentage fall (roughly 8%) nearly exactly equalled that picked up jointly by the MNI and HAMAS in 1991 (7.5%) indicating that percentage of the voters backing Islamism had remained constant at both elections.[63] (It should be added, however, that the overall turnout

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[62] *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92

[63] Sutton & Aghrout p.60 & p.70; *MEED* 24.1.92 On the issue of whether the other Islamist parties' leaderships would have encouraged their supporters to vote for the FIS in the second round, Abdallah Djaballah, leader of the MNI, claimed that no such decision was taken because he believed that the electoral process would be aborted before a second round could be held. Author's interview with Abdallah Djaballah, London, 7.10.94

at the two elections fell between 1990 and 1991 meaning that the total 'Islamist' vote in 1991 was some half-a-million votes down on the earlier election[64]) Overall, as Sutton and Aghrout conclude:

> "As the FIS were within 5% of an overall majority in many of the undecided seats, any result other than a FIS government after January 16th (the date fixed for the second ballot) seemed very unlikely."[65]

C: REACTIONS TO THE BALLOT: DECEMBER 1991 - JANUARY 1992

1. The Secular Opposition

For the secular opposition the elections had once again demonstrated their failure to break the dominance of the FIS and the FLN at the ballot box. Between them they had taken only just over 20% of the vote (if the figures for HAMAS and the MNI are excluded) and won just 28 seats. Once again it appeared that these parties' discourses had had little influence on the mass of illiterate young that constituted so much of the electorate.[66] The reactions to their relative failure and the massive gains of the FIS varied considerably between the parties.

For several of the secular opposition parties it appeared imperative that the electoral process must now be suspended and the second round of voting cancelled to prevent the FIS achieving a majority in the new National Assembly. Foremost among parties taking this line was the RCD which had won less than 3% of the vote in the elections (and thus could be seen as having nothing to lose[67]) and the communist PAGS. Both parties, which had applauded the June

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[64] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* pp.475-476
[65] Sutton & Aghrout p.66
[66] Zoubir pp.102-103
[67] Burgat & Dowell p.300

crackdown by the authorities against the FIS, clearly saw the threat a FIS majority posed to their own militantly secularist vision of Algeria as a far greater evil than the suspension of the electoral process.[68] Working with other similar-minded groups and parties such as Kasdi Merbah's MAJD, various women's associations and elements of the League of Human Rights (LADH), 'Committees for the Support of Republican Algeria' were created to call for the abandonment of the second ballot.[69] The first communique of the national *Conseil National de Sauvegarde de l'Algérie* (CNSA) declared, "It is improbable that democracy will be saved by those who denounce it (the FIS)."[70] Said Saadi, the leader of the RCD, called for strikes, demonstrations and the use of "any means, including violence" to prevent the holding of the second round of voting which he claimed would "bury Algeria...It would condemn us to chaos."[71] A similar line was adopted by Abdelhak Benhamouda, leader of the national trade union, the UGTA, who declared:

> "We are legalists, but if the institutions do not fulfil their functions, it is our duty to resist and to participate in all initiatives aimed at countering the advance of the Islamists."[72]

A different line, however, was taken by the largest and most successful secular opposition party in the elections, the FFS. Its leader, Hocine Ait Ahmed, called on the day after the first ballot for the continuation of the electoral process. Despite being as politically opposed to the agenda of the FIS as most of the other parties, he argued against annulment of the elections stating that: "A

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[68] Dissez p.100 The PAGS had always opposed the legalisation of parties based on religion.
[69] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.84 These committees almost certainly had the backing of senior figures in the establishment. *Financial Times* 2.1.92
[70] *Algérie Actualité* 30.12.92
[71] *Daily Telegraph* 2.1.92; *Financial Times* 2.1.92
[72] *Jeune Afrique* 24.1.92

crisis of democracy cannot be solved other than through more democracy."[73] Accordingly, his strategy to block the likely FIS victory in the second round was to mobilise the 'democratic camp' and ensure that it turned out in maximum numbers to vote in the deciding 199 second ballots. An impressive rally and 'March for the Defence of Democracy' was organised by the FFS together with the LADH and women's associations, and was attended by an estimated 300,000 people on 2 January. At the rally Ait Ahmed called for the mobilisation of the 6.3 million Algerians who had abstained or spoilt their papers in the first ballot. Together with the fact that the FIS's total vote had fallen by 1.2 million since 1990 it was highlighted that over three-quarters of the electorate had *not* voted for the FIS on December 26 and thus could potentially be mobilised.[74]

The leader of the FFS also alleged that over 900,000 polling cards had not been distributed before the election, thus disenfranchising a significant 10% of the electorate. For some this and other irregularities on polling day held out hope that a legal block to the FIS's advance could be found. In all, 341 complaints about irregularities in individual constituencies had been lodged with the Constitutional Council which had the power to annul and re-run elections in individual constituencies if the complaints were upheld. The majority of such complaints (174) came from the FLN which made a variety of allegations of malpractice against the FIS, most of which were reproduced in the pro-government *El Moudjahid* newspaper. It was alleged that the FIS had used intimidation and impersonation as well as arbitrary disqualifications of voters by its local council officials, who were responsible for the running of the ballots, in attempts to maximise their vote and minimise that of their opponents. Despite the

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[73] Burgat & Dowell p.300; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.84

[74] *The Guardian* 3.1.92; Burgat & Dowell p.301 There was an unusually high number of spoilt ballot papers from the first poll, 924,906, which was almost certainly due to the complicated nature of the ballot paper itself. Hugh Roberts argues that this complexity was deliberately contrived by Larbi Belkheir to sabotage the FIS's vote. Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.475

spurious nature of some of the FLN's complaints (against, for example the FIS's provision of transport to the polling booths), Sutton and Aghrout believe that the fact that the local councils, most of which were controlled by the FIS, were in charge of the electoral process meant that the allegations should be taken seriously.[75] It was also alleged, with undoubted justification in certain areas, that FIS-controlled councils struck the names of voters who had abstained in 1990 off election lists.[76] Nevertheless, despite the large number of complaints lodged with the Constitutional Council, it was unlikely that a sufficient number would have been upheld to make an effective difference to the FIS's tally of seats.[77] As Jean-Jacques Lavenue observes, the legal paths to blocking the FIS were largely wishful thinking on the part of their advocates:

> "...it rapidly became apparent that neither the annulment of the disputed results, nor the mobilisation of the first round abstainers...would probably be sufficient to prevent the FIS from obtaining a majority in the second round."[78]

2. The FIS Between the Ballots

The comprehensive nature of the FIS's victory in the first ballot and the virtual certainty of the party achieving a majority at the second ballot (and, through that, its first taste of national political power) excited the party and clearly vindicated all those who had argued for participation in the elections. Whilst delight and exuberant expectation at the prospect of power were evident amongst the FIS's rank and file in the wake of the results of the December 26 vote, the party's leadership was more restrained in its response to the startling victory they looked set to achieve.

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[75] Sutton & Aghrout pp.67-68; *El Moudjahid* 22.1.92
[76] *Financial Times* 2.1.92
[77] In refusing to overturn the results of the first ballot, the Constitutional Court ruled that challenges to the results were justified in as few as a dozen individual constituencies. Burgat & Dowell p.302n
[78] Lavenue p.174

I. Tactics and Strategy

The reason for the FIS leadership's measured response to the party's victory was due to a realisation on the part of the senior figures in the leadership that the prospect of assuming power risked the intervention of the military. The FIS had enjoyed a delicate and tacit truce with the ANP since the events of the previous June when the army had made amply clear its continuing antipathy towards the FIS and the implications of its programme. Whilst it had subsequently appeared that the military would probably have been willing to tolerate a FIS presence in the new National Assembly, it was far from certain that it would take a similar attitude towards a FIS majority in the Assembly and particularly not one of a size significant enough to be able to change a constitution that the army had pledged itself to defend and uphold. It was in reference to this consideration that Abdelkader Hachani warned crowds of party supporters that "victory is more dangerous than defeat" and thus urged them to show once again moderation and restraint and so avoid giving the army an excuse to move against them and curtail the electoral process.[79] Similarly, Aissani Othmane, generally recognised as the third most senior figure in the new leadership, argued that the period between the two ballots was the most vulnerable time for the FIS: once the party had secured a majority in the second ballot, the unambiguous legitimacy this would bestow on the FIS would prevent both the army intervening and the President siding with it if it did. He also reminded the party that it had been when Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj had warned the military against intervention that it had moved to arrest both leaders.[80] Hachani made it quite clear in a press conference following the December 26 poll that he did not anticipate confrontations with the military:

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[79] *Algérie Actualité* 9.1.92 This response by Hachani revealed that he had probably neither expected nor unambiguously welcomed the massive scale of the FIS's victory.

[80] Dévoluy & Duteil pp.53-54

> "There is no conflict between us and the armed forces. It is a supposition which has no foundation. We say to the army, it is God who has led us to power through the people, and it is time for the army to protect the people's choice and we believe the army will not hold back in doing this."[81]

The leadership sought to eschew partisan and triumphalist predictions of how they would operate once in the National Assembly. Hachani spoke openly of the party's readiness to co-operate with both the Presidency and other parties in the APN, calling at one point for the formation of a coalition government.[82] Despite the struggle between the two parties that had been the central feature of the election, it appeared there was considerable evidence, both before and after the first ballot, that the FIS and at least elements of the FLN would be willing to co-operate in government. The FLN's leader, Abdelhamid Mehri, had admitted in November that the FIS "were a fact of Algerian political life" with which he hoped he could form a government of national unity to guarantee for the country "a period of stability of 2 or 3 years."[83] For the FIS, Abdelkader Hachani declared his willingness to work with the FLN claiming that the FIS was willing to make use of all the available expertise in Algeria.[84]

Particular attention had focused, in this context, on the linking role certain senior figures on the 'Islamic' wing of the FLN might play in any future such arrangement. Most prominent of these were the former Prime Minister, Abdelhamid Brahimi, and the former foreign minister, Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, who had actually helped found a 'Committee of Support for Political Prisoners' in October 1991 which called for the release of Abassi Madani and the other imprisoned FIS leaders.[85] This development signified not only the movement of

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[81] *The Independent* 30.12.91
[82] *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92
[83] *Le Monde Diplomatique* 12.91
[84] *El Moudjahid* 30.12.91 Hachani also mentioned the FFS in this context.
[85] *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92; Lavenue pp.164-166

the Islamic wing of the FLN towards the FIS, but more importantly clearly reflected the more nationalist orientation of the FIS itself. The accession of Mohammed Said, the leader of the Djazaira to the Majlis Shura in July 1991 had had an impact on the party's new, younger and more pragmatic leadership as the Djazaira's more nationalist ideas had become increasingly evident in the FIS in the Autumn of 1991. Abdelkader Hachani had marked the nationalist anniversary of the beginning of the liberation struggle on November 1 whilst Abassi Madani had previously explicitly boycotted the celebrations. In its programme too, the new leadership of the FIS abandoned traditional Islamist distrust of Berber culture and began to use the Berber language, Tamazigh, in its propaganda as an expression of the Algerian identity.[86] Abdelkader Moghni of the FIS underlined this new link with the FLN when he criticised those whom he claimed "want to sow discord between the FIS and the *patriots* of the FLN. (Italics added)"[87]

A consensual approach was also adopted towards the presidency. The FIS realised that Chadli's behaviour and role was not only vital in the inter-election period, but that he would still wield considerable constitutional and political powers *vis à vis* the National Assembly even if the FIS achieved an absolute majority in the chamber. Hachani affirmed that although his party would call for presidential elections following the conclusion of the legislative ones, it would not seek to impose or force this objective, saying that this matter could be "left for later."[88] This thus implied, as Hachani also stated explicitly, that the FIS were prepared to co-habit with Chadli following the legislative elections. Hachani declared that "there would not have to be a problem with the President of the Republic."[89]

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[86] Aissa Khelladi: *Les Islamistes Algériens a l'Assaut du Pouvoir* in *Les Temps Modernes* (Janvier-Fevrier 1995, No.580) pp.146-147
[87] *Algérie Actualité* 9.1.92
[88] *The Independent* 30.12.91; Dévoluy & Duteil pp.52-53
[89] *El Moudjahid* 30.12.91

The fact that many of these statements declaring the party's willingness to co-operate with other political forces were often carefully qualified, indicated that the party still intended to push through its own political programme. Hachani's willingness not to press for early presidential elections was thus conditional on the FIS having "all the real guarantees to apply our programme, so as not to betray people who voted for us and our aims."[90] Similarly, whilst the FIS's leadership affirmed that it would respect the Constitution, Hachani stated that he would be "obliged to modify it" if the people demanded it.[91] Despite similar promises to accept the National Assembly's rules once there, Abdelkader Moghni indicated the party's desire to reduce the President's powers by loosening his control of the Defence and Foreign Ministries.[92] This was all quite within the FIS's constitutional rights, but it demonstrated the party's determination to make full use of the political power it looked set to seize at the second ballot.

There were, however, indications that the party was also intent on introducing changes that went beyond and outside the Constitution. The prospect of the world's first democratically elected Islamist government had attracted considerable foreign media attention to Algeria. Anxious to pick up on any immoderate statements made by members or leaders of the FIS, these journalists reported much that appeared to cast doubt on the liberal and pluralistic credentials of the party. Plans and desires, once in power, to establish popular tribunals to try the party's enemies; to ban the secular parties and secular press and to allow only divorced, widowed and orphaned women to work, emerged.[93] Hachani moved to explicitly deny many such stories stating, on the first issue, that there would be "no popular tribunals, nor settling of scores, nor a blood

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[90] *The Independent* 30.12.91
[91] Dévoluy & Duteil p.55
[92] *The Times* 31.12.91
[93] *Financial Times* 30.12.91

bath"[94] However, his statements on the FIS's supposedly moderate and tolerant plans for Algerian society were, like his statements on co-operation with other political forces, carefully qualified:

> "The FIS will guarantee individual and collective liberties *in the framework of Islamic law* and will tolerate the existence of parties other than Islamic ones."[95] (Italics added)

Similarly, he spoke of upholding "the freedom of the press *in keeping with our Arabo-Islamic principles.*"[96]

The reasons for these qualifications and indications of a much more hard-line FIS agenda, which may have seemed dangerously provocative to the army, were connected with the fact that the party still had to keep its own radical constituency in check by assuring this constituency that the FIS still planned to radically transform Algerian society. This was a balancing act the party had kept up throughout the Autumn of 1991. During Abdelkader Hachani's imprisonment in October, Rabah Kebir and Abdelkader Moghni had (probably consciously) recreated the roles played by Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj in 1989-91 with Kebir's public moderation being combined with Moghni's radical denunciation in the mosques of democracy as "blasphemy."[97] Similarly, after the first ballot, it was at the Friday sermons at the mosques that the most uncompromising speeches and declarations by the senior figures in FIS were made to the party's militant faithful. The day after the first ballot, a Friday, Mohammed Said warned that Algerians "must change their customs regarding clothing and food" and another senior figure declared that the other parties and those who voted for

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[94] *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92
[95] Ibid.
[96] *El Moudjahid* 30.12.91
[97] Charef p.217; *Jeune Afrique* 20.11.91 Following Ali Belhadj's arrest, Moghni had assumed his influential position as main preacher at the Al Sunna mosque in Bab El-Oued.

them "must announce (their) repentance publicly."[98] On the following Friday, January 3, at Bab El-Oued, Abdelkader Hachani himself was heard to pronounce that: "these elections have demonstrated that there are only two parties - the Party of God and the Party of the Devil" and similarly also affirmed that "Our fight is between Islamic purity and democratic impurity."[99] Such statements appeared to contradict the President of the BEP's other pronouncements on the importance and intrinsic value of democracy.

Where the real convictions of the leadership lay is uncertain. Ibrahim El-Bayoumi Ghanem believes the conflicting messages reflected the difficulties the new more moderate post-June 1991 leadership faced in retaining its radical rank and file support whilst remaining committed to a more thoughtful and genuinely pluralistic agenda. Bayoumi quotes Hachani, in particular, as stating on the vital issue of the FIS's willingness to cede power in a future election that:

> "If the majority of the people voted against the Sharia and Islamic Government, it would be through a failure of the FIS not because of the apostasy of the people. Therefore we must cede power to someone else."[100]

However, there were many who doubted that this was in fact the case and that the immoderate statements, as in the case of Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, were the true face of the FIS which would be fully revealed once they had fully secured their victory at the second ballot. Even if the party's leadership may have had more liberal and democratic convictions, it is questionable whether they would have been capable of restraining the radical and populist impulses of the

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[98] *The Independent* 2.1.92; *The Guardian* 28.12.91
[99] *Algérie Actualité* 9.1.92; *Financial Times* 11.1.92
[100] Author's interview with Ibrahim El-Bayoumi Ghanem, Cairo, 26.6.94

party's militants both in parliament and on the streets once the second round of voting had occurred.[101]

II. The Agenda of the FIS

Besides the collection of often contradictory statements made by individual FIS leaders, there were more tangible indications of the FIS's programme at this time. The party issued a sixteen page manifesto following the first round, which purported to give a more detailed and defined account of the FIS's agenda. The document declared the party's intention to extend Islamic Sharia law to a highly comprehensive number of aspects of Algerian public and private life: family law, schools, associations between men and women, the police force, the army and factories and firms. More specifically, the document indicated the party's desire to regulate women's dress and work (expressed as an intent to "reinforce the faith in women's morality") and "combat" sexual promiscuity. On the institutional level the document called for reform of government at all levels.[102]

The period following the first ballot also saw the FIS indicating, usually under questioning from foreign journalists, its priorities, once in government, on less emotive and more technical issues such as the economy and foreign policy. Overall the party appeared to stick to its general commitment to a mixed economy, Rabah Kebir condemning equally the "impious capitalism of the last few years and the state socialism that had preceded it."[103] Correspondingly, Hachani argued that he had no objections on "religious grounds" to privatisation

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[101] It appeared that this was already occurring. Several hundred Islamists, some armed with knives, tried to disrupt the opposition march and rally of January 2. *The Guardian* 3.1.92

[102] *Financial Times* 8.1.92

[103] *The Independent* 28.12.91 Kebir subsequently stated, "We didn't fully support Chadli Benjedid's economic reforms....His programme for reform was unclear. In terms of decisions, sometimes it was socialist, sometimes capitalist. We rejected this because we were seeking a rational solution to solve Algeria's economic problems." Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95

of Algeria's state-owned industries and enterprises but was opposed to the selling-off of "publicly-owned strategic industries." He was, however, much more critical of foreign involvement in Algeria's ongoing programme of economic liberalisation, terming the new hydrocarbons law in Algeria, which permitted foreign companies to exploit the country's oil and gas resources, a "transaction of shame." He was equally hostile to the ECU 400 million loan made by the European Community the previous Autumn to aid Algeria's economic recovery, which he denounced as being "made by countries who are enemies of Islam."[104] Nevertheless, this antipathy to foreign involvement in Algeria which reflected the new influence of more nationalistic Djazairist views within the leadership, were tempered by commitments to maintain relations with the IMF and other foreign creditors as well to standing by Algeria's existing international treaties and agreements. Hachani assured that "Algeria is not going to be isolated from the world."[105] In this, the FIS's leaders were clearly acknowledging that if they did achieve power they could not afford to alienate the outside world if they wanted to attempt to solve Algeria's grave economic problems. It subsequently became apparent that discreet contacts had been established by officials of the FIS with Western governments and multinationals to assure them that their investments in Algeria would be respected.[106]

3. The Regime and the Prospect of a FIS Victory

Most important of all in terms of reactions to the results of the voting on December 26 was, of course, that of the regime itself.

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[104] *Financial Times* 8.1.92

[105] *Financial Times* 8.1.92; *The Independent* 30.12.91 Hachani also criticised foreign media reports forecasting the "Iranisation" of Algeria. *El Moudjahid* 30.12.91

[106] *Financial Times* 30.12.91

I. President Chadli Benjedid

From the outset it appeared that the FIS's triumph in the first ballot and almost certain achievement of a majority in the second, whilst not being his preferred or expected result, did not unduly alarm and perturb President Chadli Benjedid and there was no suggestion that he wished to either interrupt or delay the second round of voting. Two days before the election, he had declared himself prepared to cohabit with an opposition government and he did not seem to demur on this statement once it became apparent that such a government would probably be an exclusively FIS one.[107] Furthermore, there were persistent reports that either personally or through an intermediary Chadli had secretly begun negotiations with the FIS on the framework of a cohabitation agreement with a FIS dominated National Assembly and government.[108]

The explanation for why Chadli adopted this response to the FIS's electoral advance, especially since such an approach appeared to go against the advice of his closest advisors, was to be found in Chadli's awareness that as President he was far from being in a politically weak position vis à vis the FIS.[109] Even if the Islamists were able to secure a majority in the National Assembly, the Presidency still, constitutionally, wielded considerable political powers. These included the ability to appoint and dismiss governments and ministers as well as the ultimate authority to dissolve the Assembly itself.[110] Institutionally, both the army and the bureaucracy were subject to his control and both clearly were far

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[107] Lavenue p.256

[108] The reports and rumours circulating about such a deal varied from stories of Abdelaziz Khelloufi, the secretary-general of the Presidency, or more neutral figures acting as intermediaries for Chadli in negotiations with senior figures in the FIS; through to a story about Chadli himself supposedly meeting FIS leaders at a ski resort near Blida at the end of November. Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* pp.174-175; Dévoluy & Duteil pp.43-44

[109] Burgat & Dowell p.303

[110] *Jeune Afrique* 9.1.92

more likely to back him rather than the FIS in the event of clashes and confrontations with a FIS-controlled Assembly and government. Moreover, despite agitation by the FIS for presidential elections to be held as soon as possible after the conclusion of the legislative ones, Chadli still had two years of his presidency to run until his current mandate ran out in December 1993. It was thus perhaps hoped by him that he would be able to control and even use and weaken the FIS and therefore neutralise the threat of an Islamist agenda being applied in Algeria.[111]

This said, it was possible that a further explanation for Chadli's espousal of the idea of cohabitation was that the President viewed it as the legal and proper response to the latest development in the programme of political liberalisation and democratisation that he himself had instigated in 1988-89. Thus a personal commitment to seeing the process through has been seen to play a role. Chadli's own honour, which he had vested in the programme originally, was perhaps at stake.[112] Such a view was not necessarily incompatible with the more probable explanation that Chadli wanted to continue with the electoral timetable to retain his position. It is certainly possible that Chadli believed that he could best ensure the survival of his 'democratic project' by pressing ahead with the second ballot and then using his powers to curb the potentially anti-democratic excesses of the FIS.

II. The Algerian Military

Chadli's sanguine response to the results of the election was not reflected in the Algerian military's assessment of the implications of the ballot. Whether or not the scale of the FIS's victory had been anticipated by the senior figures in the army, it was clearly not welcomed by them. The historic antipathy between the

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111 Ibid. 16.1.92
112 Ibid.

Algerian military and the country's Islamist movement has already been explored (see previous chapter), but the now very real prospect of FIS dominance of the government and the National Assembly sharpened both the nature and intensity of the army's hostility to the FIS and its agenda.

For many senior figures in the military, a FIS government would spell disaster, politically and economically, for the Algeria they had pledged themselves to defend. There were considerable fears for the already highly fragile condition of the country's economy. Fear of the FIS coming to power threatened to further deepen the nation's colossal debt (estimated at $25 billion in December 1991[113]) through capital flight and the cancelling by foreign petrol companies, of agreements aimed at increasing exploitation of Algeria's oil and gas resources.[114]

Politically, the Algerian military felt certain that the FIS would bring instability and conflict to large areas of Algerian life, developments that the ANP had historically pledged itself to prevent. The FIS's victory in the first ballot had, as has been shown, produced great alarm amongst significant sections of Algeria's population and there were indications that many opponents of the FIS were already preparing for armed conflict with a future Islamist government.[115] Of particular concern were the ethnically distinct areas of Mzab and Kabyle which had decisively rejected FIS candidates at the elections of 1990 and 1991.[116] The threat of civil war could not be ruled out.[117] It was also probably the case that, despite the ANP's past, at least some of the senior figures in the military had become committed to the goal of democratisation as the best avenue for Algeria

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113 *MEED* 27.12.91
114 Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.175
115 Author's interviews with eyewitnesses.
116 The Mzabite areas had predominantly voted for independent candidates in both elections, whilst the Kabyle, as has been shown, supported the RCD in 1990 and the FFS in 1991.
117 Charef p.253

to achieve the traditional goals of development and modernisation to which the ANP had always been publicly attached.[118]

More crucially and more importantly for the military were fears it held for its own integrity and survival if the FIS were able to achieve a majority in the National Assembly. There was considerable concern amongst the senior figures in the army that once in power the Islamists would waste no time in seeking to use their new political powers to attempt to neutralise their traditional foes, and only truly powerful enemies, in the general staff of the military. Such fears were also shared by more junior officers who also saw themselves as the potential targets of the rumoured 'popular tribunals' and who, having often had a secular and frequently foreign military training were similarly anxious for the survival of a modern and secular state.[119]

The military were not reassured by Chadli's confidence that he could keep the Islamists in check with the use of his constitutional and institutional powers. They doubted his strength of will and ability to constrain the Assembly and feared he might 'defect' to the Islamist camp to preserve his position.[120] Despite both Chadli and Abdelkader Hachani's vehement denials[121] the ANP were already highly suspicious of the rumours and reports circulating about the President conducting secret discussions with the FIS, one of which alleged that the dismissal of the senior personnel in the army had been conceded by Chadli in return for a cohabitation agreement with the party.[122] Neither were they persuaded by arguments that the FIS under Abdelkader Hachani's post Batna Conference leadership was significantly more moderate than the leadership the military had helped imprison the previous June. The military were aware that the

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118 Zoubir p.106
119 Dévoluy & Duteil p.45 & p.47
120 Charef p.254
121 *Algérie Actualité* 30.12.92
122 Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.84; Zoubir p.103; *The Guardian* 14.1.92

FIS continued to be influenced by directives coming via relatives and lawyers from Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj in prison in Blida and also believed that whatever the intentions of the leadership of the party, the FIS's rank and file would force the party to implement a radical agenda once in power.[123]

The leaders of the military were aware that their own position and room for manoeuvre could be sharply reduced once the second ballot had taken place. Any move the military might make against the FIS after the conclusive second ballot could put severe strains on the integrity of the army, the loyalty of the troops being confused and possibly divided by the election of an apparently legitimate new Assembly.[124] The declared intention of the FIS to secure the release of all its members and supporters arrested in June 1991 and prosecuted by military courts under the state of siege represented a clear challenge to the all-important authority of the military.[125] Given these factors, then, it was clear that if the military were to move against the FIS and somehow block their achievement of a legislative majority, it would have to do so before the holding of the second round of voting scheduled for 16 January.

D: THE 'COUP D'ÉTAT': JANUARY 1992

1. The Military Plot

A covert meeting was held at the end of December to discuss the options available to the military. It was attended by all the senior military figures in the country including Khaled Nezzar, the Defence Minister; Abdelmalek Guenaizia, Chief of the General Staff; leaders of the navy, the Gendarmerie and the security services; and the commanding colonels of the military regions. Little time was lost

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123 *Nouvel Observateur* 16.1.92
124 Dévoluy & Duteil p.45
125 *Jeune Afrique* 16.1.92

in agreeing that the FIS's path to electoral victory should be blocked and discussion then focused on how this was to be best achieved. Whether through a genuine attachment to constitutional legality or, more likely, for tactical reasons, it was decided that the FIS's progress to victory should, as far as possible, be blocked by constitutional methods rather than by physical force.[126]

Chadli Benjedid, as President, held the key to such moves. It was his determination to press ahead with the second ballot and then cohabit with the FIS that so alarmed the military and he was clearly the main obstacle to any plan aimed at averting a FIS government. For Nezzar, Guenaizia and the other figures at the secret meeting, it was therefore evident that Chadli had to go. His resignation would not only remove the personal obstacle he represented but would also help force the suspension of the second round of the election.[127] In order to persuade the President of the necessity of his resignation a comprehensive petition of military officers began to be compiled to demonstrate to Chadli the strength and solidarity of feeling within the armed forces.

The second question to which the military leaders gave attention was who should then replace Chadli as President. According to the Constitution, in the event of the death or resignation of the President, the Presidency should provisionally pass, until proper elections could be held, to the President of the National Assembly. This, however, constituted a problem to Nezzar and his colleagues. The outgoing President of the Assembly, Abdelaziz Belkhadem, despite being a member of the FLN, was perceived as being far too sympathetic to the FIS. His efforts to act as peace broker during the crisis of June 1991, which had involved him in several meetings with the leaders of the FIS, had earned him the sobriquet of the 'valet of the FIS.'[128] Such a figure, with an established

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126 Dévoluy & Duteil pp.42-43
127 Burgat & Dowell p.303
128 Dévoluy & Duteil p.60

reputation for seeking compromise with the Islamists, was clearly even more unacceptable to the military than Chadli and therefore a way (preferably constitutional) had to be found around this obstacle. It was decided that Chadli, in addition to tendering his own resignation, must also be persuaded to dissolve the existing National Assembly before resigning, and thus prevent the triggering of the constitutional mechanism which would lead to Belkhadem succeeding him as President. Succession to the Presidency would then pass, by the military's calculations, to Abdelmalek Benhabyles, the head of the Constitutional Council and a far more acceptable figure to the military than either Chadli or Belkhadem.

The decision to pursue this strategy was concluded at another meeting of the senior figures in the military on 4 January. According to a source close to the Presidency, Khaled Nezzar went from this meeting to the offices of the President where he then spent the night persuading Chadli of the unavoidable necessity of his resignation. Having listened to Nezzar and having seen the list of 181 military officers who signed the petition requesting his resignation, Chadli, having first secured assurance that he would be replaced by a strong regime, then agreed to step down.[129]

However, the military plotters' plans for a 'constitutional coup' suffered something of a setback after they had successfully persuaded Chadli of their designs. By January 5 it had become clear that the President of the Constitutional Council, Abdelmalek Benhabyles, had refused to co-operate with the military's plans to let him become interim president.[130] According to Benhabyles he could

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[129] Ibid. p.68 & p.70 There are differing accounts of the chronology of these developments. Paul-Marie de la Gorce claimed that the military finalised their plans on the 7th or 8th January and did not manage to persuade Chadli to step down until a few days later - the President still convinced of the wisdom of carrying on up until January 10. *Jeune Afrique* 16.1.92 The chronology offered by Dévoluy & Duteil has been used in the main text since it is the most detailed, it appeared later (and is therefore more likely to be more considered and accurate) and quotes a source close to the presidency for its details.

[130] Ibid. p.75

not assume the Presidency since the Constitution only provided for the President of the Constitutional Council becoming President in the event of the death, not the resignation, of an incumbent President.[131]

This development finally forced the military leaders to abandon their plans to utilise the proper provisions of the Constitution to achieve their plans. They remained, however, anxious to maintain, what François Burgat terms, "a legalistic facade."[132] Thus it was planned that following the official announcement of his resignation, Chadli would cede power to the High Council for Security (HCS) which would appoint his successor. Attachment to the appearances of constitutionality was supposedly maintained since the HCS was an existing body and was provided for in the Constitution. However, its defined role in the Constitution was simply to act as a consultative body to the Head of State on issues of state security and was clearly not intended to act, even in a provisional capacity, as an executive or legislative body.[133] The planned defence for this constitutional deviation, though, was to be that the Constitution itself did not provide for the simultaneous absence of both the National Assembly (having been dissolved by Chadli - supposedly five days before his resignation[134]) and the President. Therefore extraordinary powers needed to be granted to other constitutional bodies such as the HCS which itself would specifically assume the powers of the National Assembly.[135] The real explanation for the emergence of the HCS into the political foreground was that it was dominated by senior military officers including Nezzar, Guenaizia and Larbi Belkheir, the Minister of the Interior.[136]

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131 *Daily Telegraph* 14.1.92
132 Burgat & Dowell p.302
133 Lavenue p.179
134 *Jeune Afrique* 24.1.92 This was not known, however, until after Chadli's resignation itself.
135 Burgat & Dowell pp.301-302
136 *Middle East International* 24.1.92

2. The 'Coup': January 11-16 1992

Finally, on 11 January, just five days before the second ballot was due to be held, the military's rapidly constructed plan to thwart the FIS was launched with the appearance of President Chadli Benjedid on national television. In a quiet voice and what one observer described as "sober informality"[137], Chadli announced his resignation to the nation, declaring that:

> "Given the difficulty and gravity of the current situation, I consider my resignation necessary to protect the unity of the people and the security of the country."[138]

The following day the HCS stepped to the fore, as planned, and issued a statement announcing "the impossibility of continuing the electoral process until necessary conditions were achieved for the normal functioning of institutions."[139] Tanks and troops moved onto the streets to guard important points and buildings in Algiers. On the same day the HCS announced the appointment of a *Haut Comité d'Etat* (HCE) which would function as a collective successor to President Chadli. Despite the constitutional provisions that presidential elections must follow within 45 days of the death or resignation of a president, the HCE assumed, on the claimed advice of the Constitutional Court, the presidential mandate Chadli had 'won' in 1988 and which was due to formally expire in December 1993.[140]

The HCE was revealed as comprising five figures: Khaled Nezzar; Ali Kafi, the leader of the Veterans Association; Tijani Haddam, the rector of the Paris Mosque; and Ali Haroun, the Human Rights Minister in Ghozali's government.

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137 *The Guardian* 13.1.92
138 *Middle East International* 24.1.92
139 *The Guardian* 13.1.92
140 Burgat & Dowell p.302

The fifth figure, and the one who was to assume the leadership of this new collective presidency, was Mohammed Boudiaf, a veteran leader of Algeria's war of liberation, who had been forced into exile in Morocco by Ben Bella in 1964. Boudiaf duly returned to the country after nearly 28 years away on January 16 to assume the daunting task that Algeria's military leaders had bestowed on him.

The composition of the HCE indicated what impression the military planners of the 'coup' wished to give. One observer noted that each member represented "a symbolic piece of the collective field" of Algeria.[141] Ali Kafi, as secretary-general of the veterans association, the ONM (*Organisation Nationale des Moudjahidine*) was chosen to provide the historic link with the suffering and sacrifice of Algeria's birth through the war of liberation. Ali Haroun, a doctor in law and Human Rights Minister, clearly represented the new regime's desire to portray itself as concerned about legality and human rights, despite the nature of its accession to power. The choice of Tijani Haddam was an evident attempt to give the regime a degree of religious legitimacy and thus perhaps limit the inevitable backlash and condemnation from the Islamists. This last choice of the rector of the Paris Mosque also reflected a desire to emphasise the modern and liberal tendency that Haddam supposedly exemplified.[142] Significantly, Ahmed Sahnoun, the leader of the Rabitat Dawa and senior figure in the Islamist movement, had also been approached to take this 'religious' seat on the HCE, but had refused.[143] The presence of General Khaled Nezzar, as Defence Minister and the figure widely perceived as the 'brains' behind the 'coup', on the HCE needed little explanation.[144]

The choice of Mohammed Boudiaf, as the head of the new collective Presidency, was perhaps the most significant of all. It appears that Nezzar and

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141 *Jeune Afrique* 24.1.92
142 *Jeune Afrique* 24.1.92; Dévoluy & Duteil pp.77-79
143 Dévoluy & Duteil p.79
144 *Jeune Afrique* 16.1.92

his fellow conspirators were aware of the need to give the regime a fresh image and an enhanced sense of legitimacy, to counteract the negative impression of the coup and perhaps even to reconstruct some kind of popular support for the regime (which had all but vanished over the preceding years). A number of different names were discussed but the choice of Mohammed Boudiaf, with his high-profile historic revolutionary record, was felt to give the new regime the image of legitimacy it required. More importantly, though, it was realised that Boudiaf's long absence from Algeria cleared him of any suspicion of the corruption that was popularly perceived to be endemic within the Algerian establishment and regime, and which had so aided the FIS's electoral triumph.[145] His choice as the new figurehead for the regime came relatively late on in the coup plotters' plans. It came after Abdelmalek Benhabyles' refusal to assume the presidency. From an interview given by Boudiaf in Morocco on January 9, it is clear that he himself was unaware of plans regarding him at this point.[146] Less than a week later he had returned to Algeria to take up his new position.

3. Reactions

News of the effective coup d'état by the military against Chadli, the electoral process and ultimately the FIS, came as no surprise to many inside and outside Algeria. As François Burgat observed: "The uncertainty concerned only the time when they would make their move - before or after the first round of voting."[147] Indications of the plans of the military were evident in advance of the formal announcement of Chadli's resignation on 11 January. Abdelkader Hachani voiced his concern on January 8 over troop movements across Algeria and the

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[145] Burgat & Dowell p.303; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.175; Dévoluy & Duteil pp.79-83

[146] *Jeune Afrique* 24.1.92 According to Dévoluy & Duteil, the decision finally to contact Boudiaf was taken on 8 January. Dévoluy & Duteil p.83

[147] Burgat & Dowell p.298-299

parallel lack of apparent preparation by the authorities for the holding of the second ballot scheduled for January 16:

> "We want to know what justification there is for this deployment. If it is because of the second round, why have they deployed in regions where seats were decided at the first poll?"[148]

For the FIS these fears were confirmed by the train of events that began with Chadli's resignation. A journalist accompanying Hachani on an internal flight he was making at the time, noted the FIS leader's tense if unsurprised reaction to the news of the President's resignation, when informed of it mid-flight.[149] Rabah Kebir later stated that "We expected that the army may cancel the elections, but our expectation was not 100%."[150] The party's leadership was clearly aware of the importance of formulating a careful response to these developments and the need to prevent the initiative they had won from slipping, or being seized, away from them. Thus whilst initially dismissing Chadli's resignation as "a piece of theatre"[151] (which it nonetheless took the credit for[152]) it was not until January 13, following a secret meeting in the suburbs, that the FIS formally responded to the developments of the previous three days.[153] The statement issued by the party declared Chadli's resignation to be unconstitutional and the new 'regime' illegitimate and the result of a comprehensive conspiracy. Attention was drawn to the purely consultative function the Constitution accorded to the HCS which consequently had no legal right to take over the reins of power. This treasonable

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148 *Financial Times* 9.1.92
149 *Nouvel Observateur* 16.1.92
150 Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95
151 *The Independent* 13.1.92
152 *SWB* ME/1280 A/5 17.1.92
153 *The Guardian* 14.1.92

act by a small clique, the statement declared, was a betrayal of both God and the Algerian people and one which all Algerians should stand together against.[154]

The relatively restrained tone of the statement, especially with regard to action to be taken against the new regime was remarked on by many observers who expected a far more robust response, perhaps even a call to arms, from the Islamists who were witnessing a transparent attempt to rob them of their electoral victory. However, the FIS felt that their strength and therefore their legitimacy had been proven during the first round of voting and there was no need for a confrontation yet.[155] In addition there was the ever-present concern that the military were simply waiting for another excuse to crackdown upon and this time possibly ban the FIS altogether. Accordingly, the FIS continued to restrain itself and avoid confrontation with the regime in the same fashion as it had since June 1991. A rally to be held by the party on hills outside Algiers was cancelled in the wake of Chadli's resignation, and Abdelkader Hachani, whilst calling on the party's supporters to oppose the coup, promised that the FIS "would pursue the application of its programme in a peaceful manner and rejects the use of violence."[156] An official communique from the party on January 17 called on the population not to respond to provocations from the security services, a message that was backed by more hard-line senior figures in the party such as Abdelkader Moghni, who implored crowds at the Al Sunna Mosque not to "furnish them with the opportunity they are waiting for."[157]

Besides these initial reactions, the FIS was aware of the need to develop a clear strategic response to the coup. Correspondingly, the party announced at a press conference at Algiers Town Hall on 15 January three proposals which it was putting to the regime. Firstly, that the electoral process be allowed to

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154 *MEED* 24.1.92
155 Ibid.
156 *The Independent* 13.1.92; Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.238
157 Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.238; *The Guardian* 18.1.92

continue. Secondly, that the presidency should be assumed by Abdelmalek Benhabyles until the National Assembly elections were concluded, at which point the new President of the Assembly would take over as Head of State. Presidential elections should then be held as soon as possible. Thirdly, that all political prisoners, including the FIS leaders at Blida, should be released.[158]

The FIS also entered into discussions with other political parties which rejected the coup. This perhaps surprising move, may have reflected the sincerity of Hachani's earlier calls for inter-party co-operation and even a coalition government in the National Assembly, but more likely it demonstrated the FIS's realisation that it must construct as broad a front as possible against the regime so as to undermine its legitimacy. Whilst some parties, such as the RCD and the PAGS openly and unambiguously applauded the termination of the electoral process, other parties, notably those which had won seats in the first round, shared the FIS's opposition to the coup.[159] Hocine Ait Ahmed of the FFS refused to deviate from his unwavering commitment to democracy and the elections, despite having been approached to co-operate with the plotters before the coup. He was now willing to co-operate with the FIS in order to attempt to have the cancellation of the elections reversed.[160] More interestingly, the FLN joined the FIS and the FFS in opposition to the HCE which the party's leader, Abdelhamid Mehri, branded as "anti-constitutional", thus emphasising the separation of the party from the core of the regime.[161] Meetings between the leaders of the three parties took place through the 15th and 16th of January, the FIS announcing on the first day its intention to form a parallel parliament consisting of the 231 deputies elected in the first round of voting.[162]

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158 *SWB* ME/1280 A/5 17.1.92
159 *Jeune Afrique* 24.1.92
160 Dévoluy & Duteil pp.50-51
161 *Middle East International* 24.1.92
162 Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.85 & p.238

4. Repression and Dissolution of the FIS: January-March 1992

It soon became clear "that the initiative was fast slipping away from the FIS.", as one Western journalist noted during Abdelkader Hachani's speech to the party's faithful after prayers on Friday 17 January.[163] Indeed, in what increasingly appeared to be a replay of the events of the previous June, growing numbers of FIS militants began to be arrested by the authorities. This accelerated following the first reported attack on the regime by Islamists, which occurred on the night of 18 January when an army barracks was attacked at Sidi Mousse to the south of Algiers, resulting in the death of a soldier.[164] On 22 January Hachani himself was arrested after calling on soldiers to "give up their allegiances to despots" a statement interpreted by the authorities as an illegal incitement for the army to mutiny.[165] The editor and various staff on the newspaper which printed Hachani's call to the soldiers, *El-Khaber* were also arrested. Hachani's successors to President of the Executive Bureau of the FIS, Othmane Aissani and Rabah Kebir were also detained as soon as each attempted to assume the position following the arrest of the previous holder.[166] Several FIS deputies elected to the National Assembly in the first round of voting in December also began to be arrested.[167]

The regime also struck, as it had done in June 1991, against the institutional and organisational bases of the party. On 22 January Sid Ahmed Ghozali, who had remained Prime Minister (having fully supported the coup) announced measures that banned all political activity, including all speeches "of

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[163] *Daily Telegraph* 18.1.92
[164] *Financial Times* 20.1.92
[165] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.239
[166] *The Independent* 24.1.92; Lavenue p.257 Rabah Kebir was officially arrested for allegedly issuing a statement calling on people not to recognise the new regime. *Middle East International* 7.2.92
[167] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.85

a political nature", at mosques.[168] Decrees were passed prohibiting worshippers spilling onto streets outside mosques, and the army began to turn away people trying to attend the most popular mosques. It was as the army moved to replace the imams of the estimated 8,000 mosques controlled by the FIS that the first violent conflicts with the Islamist movement began.[169] In Batna on February 5 clashes erupted following the sentencing of an imam for breaking the government's ruling on politics in mosques (this was the pretext for most of the arrests and replacements of imams) which presaged similar incidents across the country, particularly in the capital, as supporters of the FIS came onto the streets to challenge the authorities' ruling.[170] Clashes over the weekend of 7 to 9 February left, according to medical services, 40 dead and at least 300 injured as firearms began to be used by both sides.[171]

Finally, on 9 February in the face of a mounting tide of violence against them, the authorities announced a state of emergency. Furthermore, the Minister of the Interior, Larbi Belkheir, announced the beginning of legal procedures to officially dissolve the FIS on the grounds that it had attempted insurrection against the state.[172] Whilst dissolution of the FIS had clearly been the ultimate objective of the military from the start, it appeared that the new President of the HCE was less committed to this end. Up until 3 February, Mohammed Boudiaf denied that he wanted to ban the party but insisted that the FIS must operate within the framework of the law. Six days later he declared that although he did

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[168] *MEED* 31.1.92; *The Independent* 24.1.92 Ghozali had established close links with the military and attempted to portray himself as the civilian spokesman of the new regime. He publicly made much of the "irregularities" of the first ballot and bolstered the appearance of the legitimacy of the regime when he appeared on television to claim that he, as Prime Minister, had ordered the tanks and troops onto the streets in the wake of the coup. *Jeune Afrique* 16.1.92; *Middle East International* 24.1.92

[169] *Middle East International* 7.2.92

[170] *Middle East International* 21.2.92; *The Observer* 9.2.92

[171] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.85; *The Observer* 9.2.92

[172] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.85

not wish to dissolve any party which respected democracy, dissolution was inevitable since "the FIS wanted to use democracy to destroy it."[173] It was clear that Boudiaf had been swayed by both the mounting violence and pressure from the military. Having been dissuaded once, by President Chadli in June 1991, from breaking up the FIS, the ANP was determined that this time their will should prevail.

The regime moved swiftly to defeat and dismember the FIS in the wake of the 9 February announcements. Making full use of the extensive extra-ordinary powers the state of emergency granted the security forces, which included wide-ranging powers of arrest and curtailment of rights of association, the military began large-scale arrests of FIS militants.[174] Five new 'detention centres' were set-up on 17 February in the Sahara to house the between 5,000 (the official figure) and 30,000 (the FIS's estimate) Islamists arrested in the security swoops as clashes continued to occur across the country.[175] In response, the remains of the FIS leadership attempted to rally support to the party by organising a rally for February 14 but evidence of the intent of the military to prevent this occurring forced the plan to be abandoned to avert a blood bath.[176] It proved to be the last major act of the party. The FIS was formally dissolved, following the completion of the procedures instituted by the Interior Ministry, by an Algiers court on 4 March 1992. It was found guilty of multiple violations of the law.[177] However, as Abderrahim Lamchichi remarked, by this stage there was not much left of the FIS to dissolve:

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[173] *MEED* 14.2.92; *Middle East International* 21.2.92
[174] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* pp.85-86
[175] Ibid. p.86 & p.240
[176] *Middle East International* 21.2.92 The fact that this decision by the FIS leadership to call off the rally was largely followed indicated the strength and endurance of the communication lines in the party: the order being mainly disseminated through the mosques following prayers on the previous Friday.
[177] *The Guardian* 5.3.92

"..its seat in Algiers had been shut, its newspapers banned, its 250 town halls confiscated, its principal leaders imprisoned, its militants interned in security camps.."[178]

E: CONCLUSIONS

The events of January to March 1992 finally brought to a close Algerian Islamism's brief three-year foray into the arena of party political competition for political power. The cancellation and annulment of the elections by the 'new' regime formally signalled an end to Algeria's wider and similarly short-lived experiment with democratisation and political pluralism.

The period since the events of the Summer of 1991 had seen the FIS regroup itself under a younger more pragmatic and nationalistically oriented leadership that ensured that the party continued with the electoralist strategy pursued by Abassi Madani. It was, ironically, the remarkable success that this strategy once again enjoyed at the ballot box on December 26, that proved to be the undoing of both the strategy and the FIS. As Hugh Roberts observed, the FIS were confronted in the wake of the ballot with "not an electoral triumph but a strategic disaster."[179]

This disaster took the form of provoking the one force that could bring a lasting halt to the whole electoral process and the FIS's chance of some national political power, into doing precisely that. Having re-entered the political arena in June 1991 the Algerian military had allowed themselves to be persuaded by President Chadli that permitting the FIS to continue to function represented the most sensible option for the retention of civil peace and stability. The results of the first ballot demonstrated that the President's calculations and reassurances about the reduced strength of the FIS been wildly inaccurate. Chadli's willingness

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[178] Lamchichi: *L'Islamisme en Algérie* p.86 The military had closed down the Algiers headquarters of the party shortly before the announcement of the state of emergency on 9 February. *Financial Times* 10.2.92

[179] Roberts: *From Radical Mission* p.474

to countenance a FIS dominated National Assembly which could plunge Algeria into chaos and facilitate a concerted assault on the army's privileges and senior personnel pushed the leaders of Algeria's military to act.

The resolution of the army and their apparent effectiveness in carrying out the curtailment of the electoral process and the subsequent dismemberment of the FIS did, however, obscure one important fact. The results of December 1991 had demonstrated the remarkable resilience of the FIS. Despite suffering serious internal splits, the banning of its newspapers and the removal of many of its leaders including its two most senior figures, the party had still nearly gathered as many votes as all the other political parties combined. It had lost some 1.2 million votes since June 1990 but had still managed to retain the support of more than three-and-a-quarter million Algerians - nearly a quarter of the total electorate. By simply discarding the electoral process and sweeping away the institutional manifestations of the FIS, the leaders of the Algerian military risked provoking a substantial section of the Algerian population by ignoring the demands and concerns they expressed in voting so massively for the FIS.

7

THE DESCENT INTO CONFLICT: THE FIS, THE GIA AND THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION 1992 - 1994

A: THE BEGINNING OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE

1. The New Regime: Boudiaf's Initiative - January-June 1992

The formal dissolution of the FIS at the beginning of March 1992 signalled the effective closure of the period 1989-92 which had been dominated by the FIS. The ending of this period also implied the need, on the part of the regime which had established itself in January, to provide a workable alternative path for Algeria in place of the turbulent one taken by Chadli.

It rapidly became apparent that the inspiration and driving force behind such a new course would be provided by the new President himself: Mohammed Boudiaf. Boudiaf was conscious of the need to act in three particular areas, civil order, the economy, and political legitimacy, to set Algeria back on a stable path. As has been shown in chapter 6 the new regime engaged swiftly in seeking to 'maintain public order', with a security clamp down and mass arrests and in addition to these measures large-scale security operations were mounted to hunt down armed opposition to the regime.[1] The government faced a daunting challenge to revive the Algerian economy which struggled under a colossal external debt of $25 billion (entailing a debt service ratio of over 70%), negative growth and high unemployment, particularly among the young.[2] For Boudiaf, though, improvement in the economic situation was a priority. For him the strength of the Islamist tide which the FIS had ridden so successfully over the previous three years was a clear product of the economic crisis that had

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[1] *MEI* 26.6.92 & 12.6.92
[2] *MEED* 27.12.91

continued to grip Algeria through that same period, and thus rapid economic improvement would serve to cut back Islamism as swiftly as it had risen.[3]

Boudiaf's third and most complex objective was the exclusion of Islamism from the political field and its replacement with some form of alternative able to attract the kind of popular support and legitimacy that the FIS had so clearly shown itself able to attract. Following the official dissolution of the FIS, Boudiaf made it clear that re-legalisation for the party was out of the question. He argued that the party had put itself outside both the law and society by its actions, stating that it had shown itself willing to "stop at nothing to monopolise power" and had made murder "part of their philosophy of taking power." Consequently: "It has not left any chance of reconciliation. Absolutely none." [4]

Whilst Boudiaf's antipathy to the FIS as a party was unambiguous, he was aware of the importance of winning over and avoiding the alienation of those three-and-a-quarter million Algerians who had voted for the party on 26 December. The regime's tough response to unrest and violent opposition, was demonstrated by handing-out of thirteen death sentences to Islamists involved in the attack on the border post at Guemmar in November 1991 (see chapter 6) and the President's threat to send another 10,000 people to the detention camps in the Sahara if deemed necessary for the salvation of Algeria.[5] This was, however, mixed with clemency. Charges brought against Abdelkader Hachani and Rabah Kebir were publicly rejected by the courts when they came to trial (although both were still detained) and the regime progressively released many of the estimated

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[3] *El Moudjahid* 17.5.92

[4] Ibid. The return of any substantially similar political grouping was also ruled out by the President who pointed to the provisions of the 1989 constitution which banned the establishment of political parties based solely on religion to justify his repression of the FIS and promised that future constitutional revision would further bolster this prohibition.

[5] *MEI* 15.5.92; *The Guardian* 18.4.92

9,000 people detained in the security clamp down of February-March, whom Boudiaf described as "simple stone-throwers."[6]

In terms of more tangible measures to construct a more popular and legitimate ruling order, Boudiaf and the HCE sought to widen the political base of the regime. Aware that the coup d'état of January and the HCE were widely seen as illegitimate, having been explicitly condemned by the three parties which had attracted the most votes in the first ballot (the FIS, the FLN and the FFS), the regime consequently attempted to draw in former members of other political parties and tendencies. In a clear appeal to the constituency of the FIS two moderate Islamists, Sassi Lamouri (ex-HAMAS) and Said Guechi (co-founder and former member of the FIS) were appointed to the ministries in the new government. Hashem Nait Djoudi, former general secretary of the FFS was appointed as transport and telecommunications minister.[7] In an attempt to fill the void left by the dissolution of the National Assembly, elections to which were postponed indefinitely by the regime[8], a National Consultative Council (CCN) was created. Launched on 22 April 1992, the CCN aimed to include a range of prominent personalities who would advise the government despite not enjoying any formal powers. However, attempts to tempt figures from other parties to join this body proved less than successful: Hocine Ait Ahmed, the leader of the FFS, turned down the government's offer of the chairmanship of the Council.[9]

Boudiaf also attempted to create a mass popular organisation in the country at large capable of mobilising opinion and support. On its launch the Rassemblement Democratique National (RDN) was heralded by the President as "the framework to discuss difficulties at all levels of national life with the

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[6] *MEI* 15.5.92; *Jeune Afrique* 2.4.92; *MEI* 12.6.92
[7] *MEI* 6.3.92
[8] Boudiaf had stated that elections would be held within two years "provided the circumstances are right for true democracy." (*MEI* 21.2.92) Hints also emerged that Presidential elections could be held within the year. *MEI* 26.6.92
[9] *MEED* 5.6.92

authorities."[10] The RDN encapsulated Boudiaf's overall strategy for regaining political consensus and legitimacy. Incorporating twelve other, albeit insignificant, political parties the RDN began to set up branches across the country as Boudiaf made a concerted pitch for the sort of personal and direct legitimacy that Houari Boumedienne had been able to achieve during his presidency (see chapter 3).[11] Boudiaf mounted extended tours across Algeria to popularise and explain both the RDN and his ideas generally. It was during one of these tours at Annaba that he was assassinated on June 29 1992.[12]

The death of independent Algeria's fourth President, gunned down by one of his own bodyguards whilst making a speech, threatened to push Algeria even deeper into political crisis and malaise. The crisis was magnified by the widespread conviction, despite the apparent Islamist sympathies of the bodyguard responsible for the killing and the obvious interest Islamists would have in murdering such a resolute opponent of their agenda, that the assassination had been planned and facilitated by senior figures *within* the regime. The evidence behind these suspicions can not be fully listed here, but it was widely accepted that during his five-and-a-half months tenure as President, Boudiaf had succeeded in making several powerful enemies who had begun to see him as a threat to their entrenched interests. The most widely endorsed theory behind the President's death was that in seeking to accrue popular support and legitimacy for the regime, particularly through his much-vaunted campaign against endemic and large-scale government corruption, Boudiaf had threatened the vital political and especially financial interests of important figures within both the military and bureaucracy. Corruption trials had already begun; starting with the prosecution of an ex-major general, Mustapha Belloucif. Despite accusations

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[10] *MEI* 10.7.92
[11] *MEED* 5.6.92
[12] *MEI* 10.7.92

that he had become a symbolic scapegoat, there was significant concern in several important quarters over whether other highly-placed figures would be similarly indicted.[13]

Whoever was behind the assassination and whatever motives they may have had, it did seem clear that the incident was not the orchestrated work of the recently dissolved FIS or the wider Islamist movement. However, whilst FIS figures explicitly denied allegations that the dissolved party was behind the assassination, communiqués purporting to come from the party appeared to welcome the development:

> "The FIS announces the good news to the Algerian people and the inevitability of the materialisation of their hopes of the installation of an Islamic state."[14]

2. The Response of the Islamist Movement

I. Initial Reactions

Following the official confirmation of the dissolution order by the Court of Algiers, a number of the few remaining unimprisoned FIS leaders (including four members of the party's Majlis Shura) appeared at the Arqam mosque in the southern Algiers suburb of Chateau Neuf on 4 March. In front of an estimated gathering of 5,000 and in contravention of the authorities' ban on political messages at mosques, FIS Communique No.21 was read out.[15] Giving the party's official reaction to the dissolution order the communique said that the party had not been surprised by the move and robustly stated that:

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[13] For fuller accounts and theories behind the assassination of Boudiaf see Dévoluy & Duteil pp.190-215 and *The Independent* 24.7.92

[14] *Le Monde* 2.7.92

[15] *Reuters*, Algiers, 6.3.92

"The FIS represents a case, a nation, a religion and a history which will not die away due to a mere dissolution decision."[16]

More ominously the statement went on to declare that:

"The dissolution of the FIS is a return to the rule by the sword and the self-interested elite domination which opens up the state to unpredictable consequences and dangerous developments, as long as the country remains in the control of a gang who has no respect for the Sharia or the constitution."[17]

What was implied by "unpredictable consequences and dangerous developments" appeared uncertain at this time. The communique stayed in line with established FIS practice in avoiding making any appeal for public unrest beyond calls to people to remain "steadfast."

In fact, popular reaction to the FIS's dissolution appeared remarkably muted and that which did occur was suppressed. Small groups which tried to protest in Constantine and the outskirts of Algiers were dispersed by tear gas and gunfire. More structured forms of protest against the decision, such as the formation by Islamist students of the MUDCP (Mouvement Universitaire pour la Defense du Choix du Peuple) were similarly clamped-down on.[18] The apparent lack of public reaction to events was the result of the efficiency of the security operation by the regime against the FIS and the Islamist movement. As had been the case in June-July 1991, the large scale arrests of both senior and intermediate leaders of the party had deprived the FIS of its usually impressive mobilisational powers.[19]

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[16] FIS Communique No.21 5.3.92
[17] Ibid.
[18] *MEI* 20.3.92; *Jeune Afrique* 2.4.92
[19] By April 1992, 109 of the FIS's victorious candidates in the December 1991 ballot (including those proceeding to the second round) were held in detention along with 28 presidents of APWs, 200 presidents of APCs and 528 members of

Clandestinely issued calls for armed resistance purporting to come from the FIS appeared over the following few months. Whilst these elicited no direct and immediate popular response, there was a quite clear and progressive increase in violence generally during this period.[20] Increasing clashes between the police and armed militants occurred in Algiers and bombs exploded outside newspaper offices and at Constantine University in early May. There was also a growing number of assassinations of members of both the security forces and the judiciary: 70 police officers being killed, through either attacks on individual officers or small stations, by the beginning of August.[21]

Such attacks appeared to indicate that resistance to the regime, albeit on a relatively small scale, was becoming increasingly organised, despite the disarray of the FIS and the absence of an unambiguous endorsement of a strategy of armed resistance by any of its senior figures. The reason for this apparent paradox was that it was groups outside the formal framework of the FIS that had initiated organised armed resistance to the regime.

II. The Formation of the Armed Groups

The manifest failure of the FIS's 'legalist' strategy, following the January coup, strengthened the conviction of those radical Islamist elements that had remained outside the party, that only force of arms could achieve an Islamic state. These elements thus became the immediate spearheads of attempts by the wider Islamist movement to attack and bring down the new regime.

APWs who had assumed office following the FIS's victories in the elections of June 1990. *Jeune Afrique* 2.4.92

[20] An example of such calls appeared in a clandestine newspaper of the FIS on 20 April 1992 which issued an appeal "to pass on word of arms." The veracity of this message was, however, questioned by some members of the FIS who pointed to the fact that it was unsigned. *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92

[21] *MEI* 15.5.92 & 1.5.92; *Algérie Actualité* 13.8.92

Elements of the shadowy Takfir wa Hijra and the various veterans of the Afghan war that belonged to the organisation or operated close to it were at the forefront of the initial attacks on the security forces in early 1992. They had already demonstrated their eagerness to confront the regime by attacks on the security forces during the disturbances of June 1991 and the subsequent assault on the border post at Guemmar in November 1991 (see chapter 6).[22] However, following the deaths and arrests of several prominent figures, including Aissa Messaoudi (leader of the Guemmar attack) who was arrested in February, the various groups associated with Takfir retreated by the summer of 1992 from their urban bases around Algiers to the rural maquis.[23]

However, despite their established tradition and experience of armed resistance Takfir wa-Hijra and the Afghans soon came to be overshadowed in the maquis by the materialisation of a far more important grouping .

The year 1992 marked the reappearance of several of Mustapha Bouyali's key lieutenants in the maquis under the banner of the MAIA, or just MIA (*Mouvement Islamique Armé*) as it was increasingly known. It indicated an intention to relaunch the guerrilla war the grouping had waged against the Algerian government between 1982 and March 1987 when Bouyali had finally been killed by the security services and most of his small, but dedicated, band of followers imprisoned. The release of the last of those convicted of being involved with Bouyali and the MIA on 29 July 1990 following an amnesty led to the gradual and clandestine re-formation of various cells of the organisation. This culminated in a reconstitution of the MIA itself in January 1991. Despite the flight of some figures abroad and the adhesion of some others to the FIS, senior figures in the old MIA such as Abdelkader Chebouti, Mansour Meliani, Azzedine Baa and Mouloud Hattab remained in Algeria and had kept their distance from the FIS. At

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[22] *MEI* 21.2.92

[23] *Jeune Afrique* 23.12.93 & 11.11.93

odds with the constitutionalist strategy of the FIS, they continued to hold to the martyred Bouyali's belief in the efficacy and importance of armed struggle.[24] They preferred not to attack the regime openly, as elements of Takfir wa-Hijra and the Afghans did, in 1991, but by the summer of 1992 the veterans of the MIA had moved to become the main source of organised armed resistance to the regime.

A third, and vital, strand to the organised armed Islamist opposition to the regime was that connected with the two dissident members of FIS, Said Mekhloufi and Kameredine Kherbane. Formally ejected from the party's Majlis Shura at the Batna conference in July 1991 following their advocacy of a return to armed struggle, Mekhloufi and Kherbane continued to enjoy an important array of contacts with a wide variety of Islamist elements, both inside and outside Algeria. Kherbane had been a former head of the Arab Mujahedin in Peshawar in Pakistan during the war in Afghanistan and through this had numerous connections and friends throughout both the Muslim and Western worlds. For his part, Mekhloufi, also an Afghan veteran, had close and cordial relations with Kamel Assamer, leader of Takfir wa-Hijra, and had spent time in Jordan 1990-91 as the chief co-ordinator of the Islamist effort to send volunteers to fight for Iraq during the Gulf crisis of that period. These connections together with the important positions the two had held within the FIS as members of the Majlis Shura (Mekhloufi had also been head of security for the party) meant that both had the potential to play crucial co-ordinational roles: between the various and disparate components of the Islamist movement, the various emerging elements of the armed resistance and ultimately between the armed groups and the FIS itself.[25]

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[24] *Algérie Actualité* 7.12.93 & 23.2.93
[25] *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92

III. Attempts at Co-ordination

Attempts at co-ordination between the various factions began as early as mid-January 1992 when Said Mekhloufi and several radical figures close to him met with the Bouyalistes Abdelkader Chebouti and Mansour Meliani in Zbarbar in the mountains. Despite the atmosphere of suspicion that prevailed at the meeting, it succeeded in establishing an important precedent and the group met again two weeks later at the beginning of February when they were joined in their discussions by a prominent 'Afghan'. The beginning of the first violent clashes with the security forces at the start of February 1992 (not unconnected with the February meeting) and the subsequent clamp down by the regime sharpened the debate in later meetings. There, the various representatives felt impelled to move on from emphasising their own strength and importance vis à vis the others to more serious discussions of how the armed factions could arm themselves and how they could form some form of unified national structure. A meeting held during Ramadan again in Zbarbar attracted a still-widening range of radical figures representing the increasing number of independent armed groups. There was a concerted attempt to give the burgeoning guerrilla resistance to the regime some unity of organisation with operational sectors comprised of armed cells. At the national level the leadership of the new organisation was to include a variety of posts which would be shared out between the various groups. In recognition of the central role being played by the MIA in the maquis, due to their organisation, experience and use of hideouts and arms caches surviving from the 1980s, the post of 'national emir' was offered to the most prominent and powerful figure in the MIA: Abdelkader Chebouti.[26]

However, the decisions taken at this meeting and the posts allocated did not represent the conclusion of an organised and fully-co-ordinated common front amongst all the armed groups against the regime. Several factors worked to

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[26] Dévoluy & Duteil pp.147-149 & pp.172-173

ensure that despite the growing overall level of violence against the regime there remained only minimal operational co-operation and co-ordination between the various groups. The increasing effectiveness of security force operations against the guerrilla groups in the rural maquis during the Spring and Summer of 1992 clearly hampered attempts at communication between the different, often geographically isolated groups. In addition these operations succeeded in damaging and splintering many of the organised groups, creating new groups and cells and thus further complicating the process of co-ordination. A second and ultimately more important factor inhibiting unity was the reluctance of many of the groups to submit themselves to central authority. This did not just apply to the growing number of small isolated bands which had emerged and which did not align themselves to the major groupings represented at the meetings, but equally to several individuals, even within the MIA, who attended the meetings but still wished to retain the independence of their own groups.

Another meeting of the major groups was convened on 1 September at Tamesguida, in a final effort to unite their efforts. Chebouti, in particular, was concerned that attacks, notably a bloody bomb attack on Algiers airport on 26 August, had been carried out without his agreement. This could alienate ordinary Algerians and create schisms between the groups. In response to these fears, Nourredine Seddiki, the representative of the Afghans and Takfir wa-Hijra formally agreed to unite under the banner of the MIA. The groups he represented had been decimated by the security forces during the Summer offensive and he thus saw little practical point in remaining technically independent. One influential independent group leader, Allal Mohammed (also known as Moh Leveilley), having rejected an offer of a post in the organisational structure drawn-up at the Ramadan meeting (because of suspected ambitions to lead the entire organisation) proposed the creation of a *majlis shura*. However, these promising indications of greater unity were swiftly shattered with an attack during the

meeting by the security services who had learned of the location of the meeting from a prominent activist captured just a few days earlier. Although both Chebouti and Seddiki were able to escape the attack, Allal Mohammed and his senior lieutenant were killed by the security services.[27] More importantly, the confusion and suspicion which the attack provoked amongst all the armed groups meant that the Tamesguida meeting would be the last of its type for the foreseeable future. Thereafter the various armed factions continued to operate largely independently of each other.

IV. The Role of the FIS

The precise role and attitude of the FIS itself towards the armed struggle being conducted by other elements within the wider Islamist movement was initially uncertain, given the confusion and disruption inflicted on the party in the opening months of 1992. The arrest of so many of its senior figures, and the forcing of the remainder of its leadership and membership underground following the formal official dissolution of the party at the beginning of March, meant that authoritative statements from the party became more difficult to identify. Of the group that had formed the provisional leadership of the party following Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj's imprisonment in June 1991, Abdelkader Hachani, Rabah Kebir and Othmane Aissani were all arrested by the authorities, whilst Abderrazak Redjam and Mohammed Said went into hiding.

Both Said and Redjam, however, continued to be active in clandestinity. In concert with Ikhlef Cherrati, a former assistant to Aissani and an expert in propaganda techniques, they became involved in the work of various clandestine media which sought to put the Islamist message across and to condemn the regime. Newspapers such as *Minbar El-Djoumma* and *Ennafir* were established and a radio station, *Idaat El-Wafa*, began transmitting at the beginning of August

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[27] *Algérie Actualité* 18.5.93; Dévoluy & Duteil p.174 & p.238

1992. It soon became apparent, not least by the detailed information that they had access to, that these media had established close links with elements of the armed resistance. 'Radio Wafa', as it became known, transmitted, in addition to sermons and communiqués, reports on the "activities of the MIA", and at times it appeared to be actually transmitting in the name of the MIA itself.[28] However, whilst both the newspapers and the radio listed and justified the killings of members of the security forces, neither Said, Redjam, who continued to sign both El-Minbar and official FIS communiqués, nor Cherrati explicitly called for further attacks on the regime and its servants either through these media or personally.[29] Despite allegations that all three had joined the MIA, there seemed to be a marked reluctance on the part of all three to depart from the established FIS line that the party was neither perpetrating nor demanding violence against the state.[30]

Other figures outside the central core of the leadership of the party, however, departed from this plank of FIS policy with far greater ease and several became quickly involved in the armed groups. Benazouz Zebda, the former vice-president of the FIS and Hachemi Sahnouni accompanied Said Mekhloufi in his initial meetings with members of the MIA and Takfir wa-Hijra in January and February 1992.[31] Various other FIS figures including former APC presidents and National Assembly candidates elected in December 1991 became involved with the armed groups acting as links between the FIS and the armed groups.

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[28] *Algérie Actualité* 16.2.92 & 2.3.93

[29] *Algérie Actualité* 16.2.92 & 23.7.92 An example of this stance of justifying but not actually calling for attacks on the security services was provided in a statement by Redjam on 13 March 1992: "The FIS held out the hand of dialogue, but the authorities responded with state violence. It was this which drove the children of the people to resort to means other than that of dialogue. *Jeune Afrique* 23.12.93

[30] *El Watan* 28.2.94; *Algérie Actualité* 2.3.93 & 12.10.93

[31] Dévoluy & Duteil p.148 & p.172

The unclear and ambiguous position and message of the FIS, resulting from its official dissolution, was both eased and complicated by the emergence of a number of FIS exiles abroad who began to be active and to speak on behalf of the party in the later part of 1992. Two figures rapidly came to prominence: Anwar Haddam, who had been elected as a deputy for the FIS in the December elections, and Rabah Kebir, acknowledged deputy to Abdelkader Hachani, who had miraculously escaped house arrest and fled the country in September 1992. Establishing themselves in the USA and Germany respectively, Haddam and Kebir both set about the task of lobbying popular and official opinion in the West for the FIS's cause, drawing attention to the iniquities of the Algerian regime: primarily its cancelling of the elections and, as its campaign against the armed groups intensified, its increasingly dubious human rights record.[32] The fact that both figures sported 'official' titles, Haddam as head of the FIS Parliamentary Delegation to the USA and Europe thus representing the FIS 'parliamentarians' (elected in December 1991) and Kebir as official representative of the FIS abroad, led many to conclude that far from being in confusion and disarray, the FIS was rapidly reconstructing itself. As one observer saw it, Mohammed Said had become the recognised leader of the FIS in the wake of the events of early 1992, Abderrazak Redjam had become his deputy and Kebir and Haddam had assumed important positions abroad.[33] The fact that all four of these figures came from the young, technocratic group, often associated with the Djazaira, that had assumed leadership of the party at the Batna conference of July 1991 further reinforced this impression. However, it seems unlikely that such close co-operation existed between the various elements, given both the clandestinity Said and Redjam worked under and the remoteness of the representatives abroad.

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[32] *Jeune Afrique* 30.9.93

[33] *Libération* 14.3.94 There was also the dubious assertion that Kherbane, Mekhloufi, Anas and Chebouti had also formally joined this structure.

Indeed, the idea that a formal hierarchy or structure existed was called into question by Anwar Haddam's description of *Minbar El-Djoumma* (with which Said and particularly Redjam were involved) as being "linked to us...but it does not represent our policy."[34] This statement represented primarily a desire on the part of Haddam to distance himself from the rather equivocal stance taken by the various media connected to Said and Redjam on the issue of violence against the regime - a position shared by Kebir who was similarly involved in promoting as attractive and innocent an image of the FIS abroad as possible. However, it also indicated that Haddam, for one, did not recognise the leadership of Said and Redjam.

Consequently, confusion and division emerged over who spoke officially for the FIS, with differing lines being taken on key issues such as the armed struggle. This apparent crisis of legitimacy seemed to be resolved by the intervention of the figure who was formally recognised by both factions, inside and outside Algeria, as the legitimate leader of the party: Abassi Madáni. In a statement smuggled out of the prison at Blida, Madani declared that henceforth Rabah Kebir should be "the sole authorised spokesman of the FIS abroad." Moreover, he ordered that the issuing and signing of official FIS communiqués and statements should be the exclusive right of Kebir, and specifically instructed that Redjam, who had continued to sign such communiqués, should no longer do so.[35] This decision was largely due to the senior position Kebir had held in the party over the period of the legislative elections but was probably influenced by the fact that Madani's two sons were close allies of Kebir as fellow exiles in Germany. The official endorsement of Kebir did not, though, ease the divisions and rivalries within the segmented Islamist movement. Despite having come from

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[34] *The Independent* 13.5.92

[35] *Algérie Actualité* 23.3.93 Communications between the imprisoned leadership and Kebir usually came via individuals who visited the prison in Blida. Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95

the same group that took on the leadership of the FIS in the summer of 1991, Said and Redjam clearly balked at the new exclusive authority vested in Kebir and continued to use the clandestine newspapers and radio within Algeria to assert their authority.[36] Anwar Haddam was also clearly unhappy with Kebir's new status. Statements issued from his base in Chicago, where he worked with an estimated 40 exiled Algerian Islamists, became increasingly critical of Kebir and his allies in Germany, accusing Madani's sons of trying to establish a family hegemony over the FIS and Kebir himself of being sympathetic towards some form of compromise with the regime.[37] Like Said, Redjam and Cherrati, Haddam adopted an increasingly ambiguous and equivocal line on the issue of violence in a departure from his previous statements which whilst expressing understanding of the violence had argued that this was not a path endorsed by the FIS.[38] In making this shift Haddam was clearly seeking to bolster his own popular legitimacy with the armed groups inside Algeria whilst simultaneously undermining the legitimacy bestowed on Rabah Kebir who stuck to the line originally held by Haddam.

Despite the endorsement of Madani, Kebir inevitably found himself politically isolated both inside the FIS and within the wider Islamist movement. His differences with Mohammed Said, Redjam and Haddam represented ruptures with close political associates, and it was clear that he was unlikely to find fresh allies outside this grouping. Kebir's new authority was explicitly rejected by more traditionalist figures in the FIS such as the 83 year-old sheikh Abdelbaki Sahraoui who declared from France that "Kebir is illegitimate...He is not mandated to speak

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[36] *Algérie Actualité* 23.3.93

[37] Ibid. 16.11.93

[38] In May 1992 Haddam had declared: "The armed groups support the free choice of the people. They have chosen a certain way. We in the FIS don't want that. We don't want violence. But more and more people are calling for that. They (the armed groups) are our brothers in Islam. We understand their feelings." (*The Independent* 13.5.92) A few months later he remarked that "We have no interest in inheriting a country torn apart by civil war." *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92

in the name of our organisation."[39] This lack of recognition by members of the FIS for the official endorsement of the party's leader, Abassi Madani, indicated that Kebir stood little chance of gaining the support of those Islamists who had never been a part of the FIS and thus felt no need to recognise Madani's authority. This was particularly true of many of the armed groups. Ikhlef Cherrati frequently came into conflict with his fellows in the MIA over the issue of legitimacy: Cherrati explicitly drawing his authority from Abassi and the original leadership of the FIS whilst Chebouti, Azzedine Baa and other senior figures who had never joined the FIS looked further back to their association with Mustapha Bouyali for their legitimacy.[40]

The issue of legitimacy came to the fore again in January 1993 when a statement emerged from the prison at Blida, this time from Ali Belhadj, who declared:

> "If I was outside the walls of this prison. I would be a fighter in the ranks of the army of brother Abdelkader Chebouti."[41]

This statement signified two important points. Firstly, it represented a clear endorsement of the armed struggle by the FIS's original deputy leader. Secondly, it indicated the FIS's recognition of and unity of purpose with Chebouti's MIA. Whether Abassi Madani fully subscribed to his deputy's position, given his recent endorsement of a figure reluctant to applaud the armed struggle, was unclear. Perhaps, as before, Madani was acting to ensure that the FIS displayed a

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[39] *Jeune Afrique* 30.9.93 Sahraoui also appeared equally hostile towards Redjam and Said, possibly also because of their Djazarist connections, condemning the French version of El Minbar, *La Critère* as "a rag." (*Le Monde* 18.11.92). There were even some suggestions that Sahraoui and Kamreddine Kherbane, who enjoyed close relations as fellow exiles in France, had 're-grouped' the salafist tendency of the FIS in France and had even supplanted allies of the Djazarist there. Dévoluy and Duteil p.287; *Jeune Afrique* 11.11.93

[40] *Algérie Actualité* 2.3.93

[41] *Jeune Afrique* 21.1.93

moderate, pragmatic face to the outside world in particular (Kebir being charged with winning support for the party's cause in the West) whilst Belhadj busied himself with securing robust rank-and-file support for the party with his more hard-line and uncompromising rhetoric. Nevertheless, whilst in 1989-91 uncertainty had persisted over which line represented the real nature of the FIS, Rabah Kebir, bereft of allies was steadily pulled towards adopting a less moderate stance. Initially attempting to suppress Ali Belhadj's expression of solidarity with Chebouti and the MIA by failing to make Belhadj's letter public (copies of it were, nevertheless, distributed in Paris by Kameredine Kherbane), Kebir relented by the time a second similar letter reached him and fully publicised it.[42] A further step was taken in February 1993 following an assassination attempt against Defence Minister Khaled Nezzar when Kebir, whilst not claiming FIS responsibility for the attack, remarked that:

> "This can be considered a clear warning from the mujahedin to the tyrants who openly fight God and his Prophet."[43]

This closening of links between the FIS and elements of the armed resistance presaged further attempts to unite the entire Islamist movement, politically and militarily, in the struggle against the regime. In March 1993 a unified military command was established for a number of the armed groups headed by a troika of Chebouti, who became the supreme commander, Said Mekhloufi, who had been operating his own independent group and became head of operations, and Azzedine Baa of the MIA who became the command's deputy leader. In the political field Mohammed Said was nominated as head of the interior political leadership. The efforts at unification came to full fruition six months later with the announcement of the formation of an 'Executive Authority of

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[42] Ibid.
[43] *The Economist* 20.2.93

the FIS Abroad,' which appeared to establish a unified political structure for the hitherto fractious individuals active abroad. A four man leadership was unveiled headed, significantly, by Rabah Kebir as president, Kameredine Kherbane was vice-president, while Abdallah Anas (a prominent Afghan) and Anwar Haddam assumed unspecified responsibilities. The creation of these bodies appeared to represent the final unification of the three important strands of the Islamist movement that had emerged in the wake of the January coup and now shared the senior posts in the new bodies: the MIA, the Afghans and the FIS itself.[44]

3. The Emergence of the GIA

The creation of bodies such as the Executive Authority of the FIS and the unified military command of the MIA did not, however, fully represent the unification of all of the major elements of the Islamist movement. They incorporated most of the major ones that had been in existence in the early months of 1992, but by 1993 there had emerged a powerful and influential tendency that remained firmly outside of these new bodies.

The GIA (*Groupes Islamiques Armés*), which became the main embodiment of this tendency, represented a faction of opinion that espoused a far more radical response to the crisis that beset the Islamist movement in the wake of the January coup and accordingly gathered to it those Islamists who shared such radical convictions.

I. Origins

In essence the GIA drew its inspiration, as well as its members, from that part of the Islamist movement that rejected the idea that an Islamic state could be installed by constitutional and legal means, believing that force of arms was both morally and practically the right way to achieve this aim. As has been shown,

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[44] *Jeune Afrique* 30.9.93 & 23.9.93

many elements that held this conviction joined the FIS in 1989 despite its explicitly constitutionalist and electoral strategy. The blocking of the constitutionalist path by the regime in January 1992 caused most of these elements to break their tactical alliance with the party and join those seeking armed confrontation with the government. Despite the effective renewal of this alliance in 1993, with advocates of armed resistance such as Chebouti and Mekhloufi willing to come together with 'political' figures such as Kebir and Redjam on a new agenda of political unity and limited armed struggle, there remained those for whom armed struggle of an increasingly unlimited nature had become a political and ideological imperative which prevented them from joining the new structures.

This radicalism and commitment to armed struggle inevitably led to suggestions that groups such as Takfir wa-Hijra and Bouyali's original MIA were the forerunners of the GIA. However, although there were links of ideology and personnel the more concrete origins of the organisation did not emerge until after the coup of January 1992.

The fragmented nature of early armed resistance to the regime inevitably led to the formation of groups espousing varying ideologies and headed by individual figures eager to establish their own leadership and ideology over the other groups. Personal ambition and ideological differences played a significant part in the formation of the dissident grouping that first set itself up as a radical alternative and which was the first to formally employ the term GIA. This initial GIA was formed by Mansour Meliani, the former Bouyalist, who used the name for the three small groups he had gradually drawn together under his leadership by July 1992. Meliani had been a close associate of Abdelkader Chebouti, the two having fought alongside Bouyali and been imprisoned together. However, following bitter rivalry between the two for leadership of the reformed MIA, Meliani broke with Chebouti in January 1992, and withdrew his cells from the overall

leadership that Chebouti was establishing over the armed movement. Meliani's GIA, however, lasted barely a few weeks before Meliani himself was arrested by the security forces on 28 July 1992 and his groups dispersed.[45]

The idea of the GIA did not die with the arrest of Meliani. The name did continue to appear in small clandestine newspapers and was formally revived in January 1993 by another radical and independent figure: Abdelhak Layada.[46] A lieutenant of Allal Mohammed, Layada had assumed control of Mohammed's group following the death of its leader in the security force ambush of the armed groups' summit at Tamesguida in September 1992. Like Allal Mohammed, Layada sought to become the supreme commander of all the armed groups, and kept his distance from attempts to draw him and his supporters into a Chebouti-headed unified command. Layada brought in two further groups and having been encouraged by military setbacks Chebouti's MIA had suffered in the Autumn of 1992, officially declared his independence from Chebouti and announced that his new GIA would no longer obey orders issued by him.[47]

II. Ideology

The secession of Layada, despite being provoked by personal rivalries and ambitions, swiftly developed into something of far greater substance both in terms of ideology and strategy. Encouraged by the prominent role enjoyed by Omar El-Eulmi, a radical ideologue who became the GIA's 'spiritual guide' on its creation, the new GIA exhibited an extremely radical ideology from the outset. Central to its ideology was a fundamental and unequivocal rejection not only of constitutional Islamism but of the whole idea of democracy itself. El-Eulmi had joined the FIS and had at one stage been a member of the party's Majlis Shura

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[45] Dévoluy & Duteil pp.224-225
[46] *Algérie Actualité* 13.8.92 & 2.11.93 Layada, however, denied authorship of several tracts that appeared in the name of the GIA during this time.
[47] Dévoluy & Duteil p.250; *Jeune Afrique* 30.9.93; *Algérie Actualité* 23.3.93

and a senior figure in the Islamist trade union, the SIT. He had disappeared from the ranks of the FIS in mid-1991, marginalized and alienated by the rise in influence of the Djazairists. He appeared briefly again before the legislative elections of December 1991 to declare publicly that an Islamic state could not be achieved other than through force of arms.[48] Such sentiments were re-iterated a year later in December 1992, shortly before the formal re-creation of the GIA, by Layada who asserted that:

> "We reject the religion of democracy. We affirm that political pluralism is equal to sedition. It has never been our intention to participate in elections or enter parliament. Besides, the right to legislate belongs solely to God."[49]

III. Methods and Campaigns: The Use of Terror and Assassination

What increasingly began to mark the GIA out from the other armed groups, as 1993 progressed, was a willingness to translate this extremist rhetoric into actual policy. The struggle against the regime by the various armed groups during the first year following the imposition of the HCE was characterised predominantly by guerrilla warfare against the security services and by sabotage and bomb attacks against state-run and related institutions.[50] The GIA demonstrated that it was willing to expand the armed struggle in much more extreme and sinister directions.

March 1993 witnessed a series of assassinations of junior government ministers and members of the National Consultative Council (CCN).

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[48] *MEI* 30.4.93; *Algérie Actualité* 27.4.93; *El Watan* 28.2.94. El-Eulmi had also been the main spokesman for the FIS/SIT during the general strike of May-June 1991.

[49] *Jeune Afrique* 27.1.94

[50] Such attacks against post offices, financial institutions, telephone exchanges (with the notable exception of the airport bombing of 26 August 1992 where it was argued that their warning had not been acted upon quickly enough by the authorities) usually took place outside working hours to avoid casualties. *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92; Dévoluy and Duteil p.239

Assassination had become an established instrument of the armed groups by 1993, but it had been used almost exclusively against members of the security services and those government members directly involved in the anti-terrorist struggle. The assassinations of March 1993 marked an effective expansion in the definition of those apparently seen as 'legitimate' targets to include anybody more generally a part of or representing the regime. Writers, journalists and those involved in the media became increasingly the targets of assassination attempts: a television reporter and a journalist on a state-run newspaper being killed in August 1993.[51] Figures who were neither involved with nor supportive of the regime but who were seen as opposed to Islamism, particularly the secularist press, also became subject to attack.

That it was the GIA which was primarily responsible for these attacks and the escalation and expansion of the armed struggle seemed fairly clear. The early months of 1993 had seen the circulation of cassettes in various mosques containing calls for no mercy to be shown to anyone collaborating with the regime and the authorities. The suspected author of these calls was Omar El-Eulmi, who also issued more explicit fatwas authorising the killing of not only members of the security services and the government but also of individual intellectuals and journalists in the name of the GIA; most notably Taher Djaout, a poet and journalist who had been a strong critic of the Islamists and who was shot dead by gunmen in May.[52]

The reasons for these attacks were mixed. Whilst the killing of all of those perceived to be opposed to the idea of an Islamic state had obvious roots in the GIA's radical ideology and was reminiscent of the stance taken by several extremist Islamist groups elsewhere in the Muslim World, notably in Egypt, there

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[51] *MEI* 28.8.93

[52] *MEI* 2.4.93; *Jeune Afrique* 11.11.93; *Algérie Actualité* 27.4.93; Dévoluy & Duteil pp.266-267

were other tactical and strategic reasons for these campaigns. For some observers the shift away from attacks on the security services represented an attempt to enforce public support for the armed groups (and undercut support for the regime) through the simple use of terror.[53] However, it seems more likely that the campaign of assassinations was part of an endeavour on the part of the GIA to accrue notoriety and support through the killing of high-profile individuals who clearly represented 'softer' and more accessible targets than members of the security forces.[54] Through this the GIA appeared to be making an attempt to seize both the political and operational initiative from the other armed groups.

A further expansion of the conflict came with the targeting by the GIA of foreign nationals living in Algeria. Hitherto physically untouched by the escalating conflict in the country, Algeria's estimated 70,000 foreign residents first became involved in the struggle when two French surveyors were kidnapped and killed on 20-21 September 1993 near Sidi Bel Abbès. These deaths were followed in October by the deaths of two Russian military advisers and three foreign contract workers employed by the state oil company SONATRACH. The responsibility for these killings became known at the end of October when three kidnapped French nationals were released by the Algerian security forces following the storming of a prayer hall on 30 October.[55] A note given by the kidnappers to one of the freed captives (who were to be released with the note[56]), signed by the GIA and addressed to the country's foreigners, explained the new strategy of targeting foreigners:

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[53] *Jeune Afrique* 1.7.93
[54] *Jeune Afrique* 1.7.93; Dévoluy & Duteil p.251
[55] *MEI* 8.10.93 & 5.11.93
[56] Ibid. 5.11.93

> "Leave the country. We are giving you one month. Anyone who exceeds that period will be responsible for his own sudden death. There will be no kidnappings and it will be more violent than in Egypt."[57]

This assault on the expatriate community living in Algeria as with that against prominent Algerians, had both ideological and strategic motivations. Like their radical counterparts in Egypt, 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 so heavily to improve economic and social conditions and so undercut support for the armed groups. The fact that an estimated 3,000 foreign nationals left the country within days of the release of the note warning them to quit Algeria by the end of November, and continued to leave as killings of foreigners began and continued following the expiry of the deadline, indicated that the strategy's initial intention was succeeding.[58]

IV. Structure

In June 1993 *Echahada*, a clandestine newspaper which first appeared in January 1993 and which was clearly controlled by the GIA, set out the structure of the organisation. Abdelhak Layada was listed as the party's leader and co-ordinator as well as a member of the groups' four-strong Majlis Shura. Other issues of *Echahada* claimed that the GIA contained an 'Islamic Legislative Committee' led by an Islamic scholar, which was charged with pronouncing fatwas in conjunction with the actions of the armed cells of the organisation.[59]

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[57] *The Times* 20.11.93 Foreigners, particularly tourists, had been targeted by Egypt's radical Islamist groups since the summer of 1992 with predictably catastrophic effects on the country's lucrative tourist trade.
[58] *MEI* 5.11.93 & 17.12.93 The GIA explicitly claimed responsibility for these attacks, vowing that it would continue to pursue the "enemies of Allah" - thus emphasising the religious dimension of the campaign.
[59] *Algérie Actualité* 7.12.93

It is doubtful that the organisation was in fact structured and ordered to such a high degree. One observer concluded that the GIA was in reality a flexible federation of at least four ideologically similar but distinct groups operating in different regions.[60] Nevertheless, the organisation, such as it was, did appear to display a significant degree of cohesion and resilience surviving both the death of El-Eulmi at the hands of the security forces in April 1993 and the arrest of Layada by the authorities in Morocco the following July. Despite the removal of the group's two most important and charismatic figures, the GIA was still able to continue its campaign of assassinations and, moreover, to launch its offensive against Algeria's foreign community. The absence of both Layada and El-Eulmi did not lead to the GIA reducing the radical tone of its pronouncements or activities. Sid Ahmed Mourad (also known as Djaffar Afghani and a former lieutenant of Meliani[61]), who assumed the acknowledged leadership of the GIA following Layada's arrest, made plain his commitment to the extremist line established by Layada and El-Eulmi. He declared in an underground newspaper in November 1993:

> "Our jihad consists of killing and dispersing all those who fight against God and his Prophet."[62]

More specifically he added that:

> "The journalists who fight against Islamism through the pen will perish by the sword."[63]

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[60] *Jeune Afrique* 27.1.94
[61] Ibid. This emphasises the continuity of personnel between Meliani's initial GIA and Layada's later organisation.
[62] *Jeune Afrique* 27.1.94
[63] Ibid.

Abdelkader Hattab, who became the effective number two in the GIA, expressed similar sentiments in a leaflet gruesomely entitled "Throat-slitting and murder until the power is God's."[64]

As the GIA rose to increasing prominence there were accusations from a variety of quarters that the group was simply a front and a puppet for other interests and groups. A persistent charge, particularly from Islamists, was that the GIA had become a cover for units of the security forces to perform two tasks. Firstly, the discrediting of the Islamist movement in general and the FIS in particular through the brutality of their attacks on usually unarmed individuals. Secondly, and more sinisterly, it allowed the security forces to eradicate prominent critics of the regime, particularly journalists and intellectuals, whilst blaming it on the Islamist opposition. However, although it was increasingly apparent that the security forces were involved with the GIA, this involvement overwhelmingly took the form of infiltration by the security forces. Such infiltration was facilitated by the recruitment strategy of the GIA which drew its members predominantly from the young unemployed. This made it relatively easy to introduce informers into the groups and explains the repeated successes the authorities had in eliminating the senior figures of the group.[65]

The almost inevitable counter charge by the Algerian regime was that the GIA was simply a convenient cover for the worst excesses of the FIS itself and its allies and was in reality an integral part of the FIS.[66] However, this accusation too had only a passing element of truth to it. Whilst there was some evidence of links between the two factions, mainly abroad, the central reality within Algeria was that the GIA had become a substantial threat and rival to the FIS.

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[64] *Jeune Afrique* 11.11.93

[65] *Libération* 14.3.94; *Jeune Afrique* 25.8.94 Layada had been particularly keen to recruit young members as they were less likely to contest his authority. *Algérie Actualité* 28.9.93

[66] *Jeune Afrique* 27.1.94 The regime naturally accused the FIS of being behind each attack and assassination.

V. Relations with the FIS

The original leadership of the GIA aimed through its activities to seize both the political and operational initiative of the struggle from the FIS and its allies in the armed groups. Personal ambition and extremist ideological purity both played their part in this and increasingly pushed the GIA into a growing conflict with the more mainstream elements of the Islamist movement.

Politically, the GIA, from its revival in January 1993, sought to distinguish itself from the FIS. Unlike all the other armed groups which either explicitly or implicitly drew their legitimacy from or deferred politically to the FIS, the leadership of the GIA made clear its rejection of the FIS. This may have been encouraged by Ali Belhadj's endorsement of Chebouti, Layada's rival, in December 1992. Omar El-Eulmi's expressed antipathy, though, to former members of the FIS's BEP such as Redjam, Said, Kebir and Cherrati contained clear elements of hostility towards the pragmatic tendencies of the Djazaira to which all of these figures were linked. In addition to accusations of un-Islamic compromise and moderation, El-Eulmi also charged these figures with having joined the FIS "for love of power" and accused Rabah Kebir and other leaders of the FIS abroad of being responsible for the alleged disappearance of funds gathered abroad to support the armed struggle.[67]

As with the terror campaigns, the stance of the GIA towards the FIS did not essentially change with the removal of Layada and El-Eulmi from its head. Sid Ahmed Mourad continued to denounce senior figures in the party and furthermore began to heap scorn on both Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj.[68] The formation of unified military and political structures by the FIS, the MIA and various individual Afghans in 1993 increased the political stakes for the GIA which saw the initiative

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[67] *Algérie Actualité* 27.4.93
[68] *Jeune Afrique* 23.12.93

slipping away from itself. This perhaps explains the timing of its decision to launch the campaign against foreigners which was begun just a week after the announcement of the formation of the Executive Authority of the FIS Abroad on 14 September.

Up until the formation of the Executive Authority it had been the FIS that felt it was losing the initiative to the GIA. The leadership of the party, already riven by its own splits between moderates and hard-liners, even endorsed many of the GIA's assassinations out of fear of being sidelined in the struggle against the regime.[69] Anwar Haddam commented on the killing in June of Mohammed Boukhobza, an academic and a member of the CCN, that: "It is not a question of it being a crime, but a sentence of death carried out by the mujahedin."[70]

The opening of the campaign against foreigners living in Algeria was, however, met with condemnation by several FIS figures. Influenced by the disastrous impact this development had on the Islamist case they were pleading in the West (and also by the effect this might have on their own status and welcome in the West) senior figures abroad, such as Haddam and Abdelbaki Sahraoui, demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the three French hostages kidnapped in October.[71] Nevertheless, and despite the formation of a common political front in September, members of the new Executive Authority of the FIS Abroad and the leadership of the party inside Algeria itself continued to justify the killings of minor officials, journalists and intellectuals. Both Haddam and even Rabah Kebir began to argue that these categories of people had become 'combatants' and thus legitimate targets by supposedly siding with the regime. Members of the CCN and local administrators

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[69] Omar El-Eulmi had explicitly referred to these fears by claiming that the leaders of the FIS had been "eclipsed" by the calls for jihad he had issued through recordings on cassettes distributed in Algiers. *Algérie Actualité* 27.4.93

[70] *Jeune Afrique* 1.7.93

[71] *Algérie Actualité* 2.11.93

appointed in the place of sacked and imprisoned elected FIS officials had similarly become liable to assassination because they had "usurped" the rightful and elected authority of the FIS.[72]

This endorsement of the killings represented not only a desire to avoid being outflanked by the GIA but also a need to justify the operations of the FIS's own armed groups which had also begun to target individuals not directly involved in the anti-terrorist campaign.[73] Figures such as Haddam and Kebir were anxious to show they were not out of touch with the armed groups, but they were more concerned to show that the FIS itself was not responsible for much of the violence. In condemning the attacks against foreigners, Kebir stated that: "The popular movement is very difficult to control."[74] and in an implicit reference to the GIA, he indicated that the FIS did not control all the armed groups:

> "Among those who responded to state violence there were undoubtedly members of the FIS....(But) the organisations and groups (that) came into being to defend the will of the people and resist the violence of the state....cannot be said to be the FIS."[75]

For its part the GIA was considerably more forthright in its disavowal of links with the FIS. A communique issued in its name on 20 November 1993

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[72] Middle East Watch, *Human Rights Abuses in Algeria: No One is Spared* (January 1994) pp.56-59

[73] Rabah Kebir, for example, had detailed procedures that were operated before assassinations of individuals were carried out, including the convening of committees of Islamic scholars to decide guilt, the ascertaining of facts about the case and the issuing of warnings. "We can say that these (procedures) are really akin to courts" he asserted. (Middle East Watch p.54n, p.55 and p.59). However, whilst such knowledge of these procedures suggested complicity of the FIS, it seems probable that Kebir was attempting to give a legalistic facade to what were almost certainly fairly arbitrary killings, whilst at the same time attempting to claim that they were under the direction of the FIS, a claim that was at best dubious

[74] *Financial Times* 25.10.93

[75] Middle East Watch p.54n

declared that it "did not represent the armed wing of the FIS" and affirmed that it was an "independent group."[76]

Conflict between the GIA and those close to or part of the FIS also took more direct forms than simple political and strategic manoeuvrings. In addition to denouncing individuals such as Redjam, Kebir, Chebouti and Cherrati, Layada and El-Eulmi had also issued death threats against these and other figures on the grounds of treason.[77] These menaces were never actually carried out, but the first indications that the leaders of the GIA were serious in their antipathy and rivalry towards the leaders of the FIS came with the arrest by the authorities of Ikhlef Cherrati on 26 February 1993. It was widely believed that Cherrati had been betrayed to the security forces by either Layada himself or one of his lieutenants. The death of Sid Ahmed Lahrani, a leader of one of the GIA groups, in a prepared police ambush just a week later sparked a series of betrayals to the authorities between the two sides.[78] As the tension increased, Radio Wafa stopped transmitting following death threats from Sid Ahmed Mourad and his deputy Abdelkader Hattab, and by the end of the year it had begun to appear that the dispute between the two sides had spilled over into armed conflict. Armed clashes between units of the GIA and the MIA in an area to the south-east of Algiers in late November resulted in the deaths of nearly thirty Islamists.[79]

4. : The Regime and the Anti-Terrorist Struggle 1992-1993

The death of Mohammed Boudiaf at the end of June 1992, albeit welcomed in various shadowy parts of Algeria's ruling elite, clearly deprived the regime installed in January of the vision the assassinated president had had for

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[76] *AFP* 20.11.93 quoted in Middle East Watch p.54
[77] *Algérie Actualité* 23.3.93 In his communique No.5, Layada also specifically included figures not associated with Djazarist ideas such as Mekhloufi, Azzedine Baa, Benazouz Zebda and Hachemi Sahnouni in his death threats.
[78] *Algérie Actualité* 23.3.93; *MEI* 30.4.93
[79] *El Watan* 22.11.93

extricating Algeria from the crisis that had enveloped it. However, whilst no comparable political strategy was either continued or drawn up in the wake of his death, and no attempt was made to find another charismatic outsider to become president (one of the other members of the HCE, Ali Kafi, was simply appointed to the presidency), Boudiaf's commitment to eliminating violent resistance to the regime was continued and became the main plank of the government's policy.

In military terms the 'anti-terrorist struggle' by the regime met with considerable initial success. Having successfully repressed the FIS and Islamist opposition in the early months of 1992 the authorities carried out a largely successful campaign against the armed Islamists who had fled to the maquis. Aided by good intelligence the security forces broke up many of the armed groups and killed and arrested many of the senior figures in the armed resistance.

These significant victories by the security services proved unable, however, to stem the activities of the armed groups which continued to grow and spread despite the setbacks of the summer. The break-up of larger groups led to the formation of smaller more numerous and more secretive independent groups which proved far more difficult to gather intelligence on. The reverses the armed resistance had suffered during the summer of 1992 had led to a gradual flow of guerrillas back to the urban areas of Algeria where recruitment, support and anonymity were far easier to achieve.[80] The passage of time since the dramatic events of the opening months of the year had allowed Islamist and more general opposition to the regime to coalesce and organise itself, fuelled by continued and growing popular disgust at the failure of the new regime to deliver any significant improvement in social or economic conditions.

The regime introduced a number of further measures aimed at eliminating the armed opposition. These included increases in the authorities' legal powers of

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[80] *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.93 & 28.8.93

trial and detention and the re-introduction of the death penalty. Large-scale security sweeps began again in urban areas, where curfews were imposed and in February 1993 the state of emergency that had been declared a year earlier was formally extended for another twelve months. The last remaining institutional bases of Islamism and the FIS were shut down, including various private companies, labour organisations (notably the SIT), and cultural and charitable organisations which the government saw as providing a network of support for the FIS.[81] In addition the last remaining local councils controlled by people elected under the FIS's banner in June 1990 were dissolved by the government on the grounds cited by the Interior Minister Mohammed Hardi that "these assemblies had been transformed into logistical bases for subversion."[82]

The regime's determination to defeat the Islamist groups militarily, was reflected in both its increasingly robust statements to this effect and by the promotion of figures who were resolutely committed to the anti-terrorist struggle. Mohammed Lamari, a notorious anti-Islamist, was appointed to head the special anti-terrorist unit at the Defence Ministry in September 1992 and in July 1993 he was promoted to the head of the armed forces as a whole.[83]

One of the doubts and concerns held by many in the senior echelons of the Algerian regime was about the continued cohesion and integrity of the military in the face of what was clearly becoming a long-running struggle. The loyalty and stability of the army was obviously vital to the regime's survival in the face of Islamist assault.

Initially, there appeared to be very limited grounds for concern. The army, which had stayed loyal throughout the period of the January coup and its

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[81] Ibid. 4.12.92

[82] *El Moudjahid* 16.3.93 There were accusations, for example, that the president of the FIS-controlled APC in Jijel had used the mayoral budget to buy arms. *Algérie Actualité* 2.12.92

[83] *Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU): Algeria* 3rd Quarter 1993; *MEI* 23.7.93

aftermath, witnessed few or no desertions or defections to the armed groups. A more potent potential hazard to the army was of rebels remaining within the ranks of the military and providing both intelligence and a destabilising influence for the Islamist resistance. Several high profile terrorist operations such as the airport bombing in August 1992 and particularly the assassination attempt against Khaled Nezzar in February 1993 were of sufficient complexity and planning as to indicate the use of specialised information from within the military itself.[84] This fear was underlined by seventy members of the armed forces being put on trial at the end of 1992 charged with plotting against the state. [85]

At the same time reports emerged indicating that as many as 200 lower-ranking officers had been dismissed from the military for allegedly having Islamist leanings.[86] This preventative action on the part of the regime reflected a growing concern that a split could develop within the military itself and occur between the senior and junior officer corps. Such fears were based on observations about the backgrounds of the two corps. A large proportion of Algeria's senior officers had experienced the nationalism of the liberation struggle and its aftermath and been imbued with its ideals of modernisation, which were reinforced by having spent time training abroad in the Soviet Union and the West. In contrast, most junior officers had been educated under Algeria's Arabisation programme of the 1960s and 1970s and thus often emerged with a more Islamic and traditional outlook.[87] There were also fears that many junior officers with little political or financial stake in the regime (unlike the senior officers) might feel that they had little to lose by siding with the Islamist opposition.[88] As 1993 progressed there were increasing reports of defections of junior officers to the maquis itself and by mid-

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[84] *MEED* 16.10.92; *The Guardian* 14.3.93
[85] *MEI* 8.1.93 Two of these were reported to be officers with Islamist sympathies.
[86] Ibid.
[87] *Jeune Afrique* 21.4.94; *Le Figaro* 4.6.93
[88] *Jeune Afrique* 22.7.93

1993 it was estimated that a total of 500-800 officers, subalterns and junior officers had deserted to the maquis over the preceding twelve months.[89] This suggested that the number of 'other ranks' which were likely to have deserted (no reliable estimates exist) was likely to run into four figures.

B: THE SEARCH FOR PEACE: THE PURSUIT OF DIALOGUE AND CONSENSUS 1993 - 1994

1. Regime Initiatives

The ongoing failure of the government to control the security situation and defeat the threat posed by the armed Islamist groups meant that the regime was forced to think increasingly in terms of adopting a political strategy towards the crisis in addition to the simple military/security one they had pursued since the death of Mohammed Boudiaf.

Efforts were made throughout 1992 to appeal to Islamist opinion by showing relative leniency to many of those held in detention by the authorities. Eight thousand of the estimated nine thousand activists detained by the authorities in the camps in the Sahara were released by the beginning of 1993. Many were released under new security laws introduced in October 1992 which granted amnesties to those prisoners convicted of non-violent offences or those deemed to have quit terrorist groups.[90] More importantly, the trial of Abassi Madani, Ali Belhadj and the other leaders of the FIS arrested in 1991, which finally took place in July 1992 resulted in much lighter sentences that might have been expected. Madani and Belhadj received twelve years each with the other defendants getting between four and six years each. Despite being convicted of conspiring against the state, the FIS leaders were cleared of the more serious

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[89] *Le Figaro* 4.6.93

[90] *MEI* 23.10.92; Amnesty International MDE 28/04/93 March 1993

charge of plotting an armed insurrection.[91] The sentences were interpreted as a gesture to the Islamists as were other sentences that were given out by the courts. This included the special anti-terrorist courts, which mixed death sentences with light sentences and occasional acquittals to achieve an impression of fairness.[92] No identifiable political concessions, though, were offered or made to the Islamists or the FIS - Mohammed Boudiaf having already ruled out the return of any political party based on Islamism.

A further attempt to create some form of consensus and legitimacy for the regime involved official efforts from the beginning of 1993 to enter into dialogue with the legal opposition parties. These efforts which purported to foreshadow a return to some form of elections signally failed to make any progress. The majority of the political parties had condemned the coup of January 1992 and most of them withdrew from the dialogue sessions when it became clear to them that the regime had no meaningful plans to return to the electoral process. Dissent over the participation of HAMAS and the MNI in the discussions with the government also provoked a boycott from anti-Islamist parties such as the RCD and for a while led to the exclusion of the two Islamist parties themselves.[93]

Attempts at dialogue continued on into the Autumn of 1993, formally being revived and restarted with the creation of a National Dialogue Commission on 13 October which set itself the specific task of achieving a consensus with the opposition parties on the nature of the new governing body that the HCE had pledged itself to cede power to when its own two year 'mandate' expired at the end of the year. However, efforts to produce a consensus continued to founder

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[91] *Le Jeudi d'Algérie* 16.7.92

[92] *MEI* 5.3.93; Dévoluy & Duteil p.225

[93] Although officially distant from the conflict neither HAMAS or the MNI had been entirely immune from the regime's offensive against the Islamist movement and the FIS and activists from both parties had been arrested and their newspapers suppressed. *Jeune Afrique* 2.4.92

over demands for an election timetable to be set and on the issue of the participation of Islamists in the dialogue.

The impasse in the dialogue process appeared to be broken at the end of November, when a statement from the Presidency declared that the regime would be willing to talk to movements hitherto excluded from the multi-party talks. Clearly referring to the FIS, the statement made the single qualification that only individuals who had not broken the law could be invited to participate in the dialogue.[94] As one of the Generals who sat on the Commission declared:

> "...there are leading figures of the dissolved FIS, who respect the law, and who would like to express themselves on behalf of this tendency, the way will be open for them to take part in the dialogue."[95]

This concession, accompanied by hints that curfews and house arrests might be reduced[96], appeared to have born few fruit, however, by the time of the convening of the National Reconciliation Conference of January 1994 which met to formally endorse the successor authority to the HCE. The Conference failed to attract any of the major parties which had boycotted the event chiefly on the grounds that it was a disingenuous and pointless function without the participation of the FIS. Most of the parties, including the FFS and the FLN, had become convinced that only the inclusion of the most popular party in the country could begin to solve Algeria's worsening and increasingly bloody crisis. The regime then abandoned any pretence that the Conference would somehow play a role in producing a new political consensus and simply announced the formation of a new three-year transitionary regime. This would be overseen by a new state presidency until elections could be held at the end of the three year period. The fact that this 'new' regime was simply installed by the 'outgoing' HCE and had at

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[94] Ibid.
[95] *SWB* ME/1869 MED/12 11.12.93
[96] *MEI* 3.12.93

its head the existing Defence Minister, General Lamine Zeroual underlined the true military nature of the regime that had been in place since 1992.[97]

The offer to widen the dialogue to include figures from the FIS was, however, reiterated by the new President. Within a week of being formally sworn in, Lamine Zeroual declared on 7 February that he was committed to "reverting to the path of democratic elections" and moreover stated that:

> "We realise that the political crisis cannot be solved except through dialogue and the participation of the national political and social forces *without exception*."[98] (Italics added)

2. The Response of the FIS

I. The Position of the FIS

The FIS's response to these public overtures was neither immediate nor clear. The period in the immediate wake of the cancellation of the elections in 1992 had seen the party joining with most other parties in denouncing the move and demanding the reinstatement and honouring of the results. Following its dissolution by the regime, the FIS's official policy inevitably became less clear and more ambiguous. As has been shown, the party had difficulty speaking with one voice, its leaders spread across foreign countries, Algeria's prisons and the various internal underground networks. The rise in importance of the armed struggle and of actors such as Chebouti, the MIA and the GIA further complicated matters and reduced the significance of the strictly political aspect of the FIS.

Nevertheless, the political demands of the movement continued to be restated by senior figures. Following his escape from house arrest and flight to Germany in August 1992, Rabah Kebir set out the party's conditions for dialogue

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[97] Ibid. 7.1.94 & 4.2.94
[98] *SWB* ME/1917 MED 9.2.94

with the regime.[99] The four conditions were: liberation of all detainees; an end to all arbitrary arrests; reparation for all injustices committed with the reinstallation of all FIS members who had been elected to official posts; and the organisation of the second round of the elections to the National Assembly.[100] The apparent continuing desire of the FIS to have dialogue with the regime was underlined by Kebir's formal response to a rather ambiguous statement in early September 1992 by the Interior Minister, Mohammed Hardi, promising "Islamist brothers of good faith" that the electoral process might be revived. Kebir responded by saying that he had a mandate from the party to participate in "sincere dialogue."[101]

II. The Emergence of Dissent

The openly expressed hostility on the part of the regime to any discussions with the FIS meant that the issue of participation in dialogue with the regime never came to the fore. However, the shift in the HCE's position on this in the Autumn of 1993 threw down a serious challenge to the FIS and its newly confirmed allies amongst the armed groups. The overtures by the National Dialogue Commission rapidly exposed the central fault line that existed between those who saw the armed struggle as a means of putting pressure on the regime to permit the FIS's re-entry into the political system and those who saw it as the

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[99] There were suggestions that Kebir's original mysterious 'escape' from house arrest and flight to Germany was actually permitted by the authorities as a possible "political investment for the future" in the shape of an articulate moderate figure able to counter-balance the hard-liners of the Islamist movement and more willing to compromise. (Dévoluy and Duteil pp.226-227) However, Kebir's subsequent conviction in absentia by an Algerian court for alleged terrorist offences and resultant attempts to secure his extradition from Germany cast doubt on this theory, or at least indicates a perceived miscalculation on the part of the authorities.

[100] *Le Monde* 18.9.92

[101] *MEED* 16.10.92

sole and proper means of establishing an Islamic State by militarily overthrowing the illegitimate authority of the HCE.

Foremost amongst this latter group was Said Mekhloufi, who had been ejected from the FIS in July 1991 over this very issue. Despite having supported the familiar conditions that Mohammed Said and others voiced, through Radio Wafa and other media, for dialogue with the authorities, the actual possibility of such a dialogue drew a strong reaction from Mekhloufi. He issued a communique on October 4 which denounced certain 'Djazairists' for having approached him to establish contacts with the emerging National Dialogue Commission.[102] In this and subsequent communiqués, he reprimanded figures such as Kebir and Benazouz Zebda for having supposedly responded to overtures from the regime and reaffirmed his belief in the "armed struggle" until the achievement of an "Islamic Republic." He also claimed that the Djazairists, at the initiative of Abderrazak Redjam, were planning a new conference at Batna to unite the movement and formulate a response to the regime.[103]

It rapidly appeared that the so-called 'Djazairists' were far from united on how to react to the National Dialogue Commission's initiative. In public, at least, a common front was initially maintained. Rabah Kebir declared on 1 November that:

> "The leaders of (the FIS) do not ask for a cease-fire..Neither slogans about dialogue nor repression are able to disunite us or discourage us."[104]

A similar response came from Abderrazak Redjam who issued a statement which declared that the FIS "rejects all dialogue and reconciliation" with the "putchist junta."[105] However, the tone of Redjam's assertion, in its rejection of reconciliation, was far harsher than that of Kebir and soon this difference in tone

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[102] *Algérie Actualité* 30.11.93
[103] Ibid. 7.12.93
[104] *Le Monde* 21.9.94
[105] Ibid.

developed into differences of substance. These differences threatened a resurrection of the old rivalries that had arisen between Kebir on the one hand and Redjam and Mohammed Said on the other. More specifically they represented Said and Redjam's closer involvement with the armed struggle inside Algeria which had perhaps influenced them to adopt a more uncompromising line towards the regime.

These differences became acute and undisguised by December when Kebir responded publicly to the National Dialogue Commission offering a negotiated end to the conflict and setting out the conditions for the attendance of representatives of the FIS at the National Reconciliation Conference. Whilst restating earlier demands that the leaders of the party be released, security measures be relaxed and reparation for abuses perpetrated against the party be made, the head of the Executive Body of the FIS Abroad significantly made no mention of the need to respect the election results of December 1991. This had hitherto been a primary demand and was intended to be seen as a concession to the regime.[106]

Rabah Kebir was not the only senior FIS figure who responded publicly and potentially positively to the approaches of the National Dialogue Commission. In early December six founding members of the FIS, including most notably Hachemi Sahnouni, published a communique stating that FIS participation in the forthcoming National Conference was conditional on the approval of the party's Majlis Shura which should be reconvened for that purpose. One of this group of six subsequently went further claiming that one of them had actually already met with Ali Belhadj and secured the deputy leader of the FIS's approval to enter into

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[106] *Daily Telegraph* 18.12.93; *MEI* 7.1.94; Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95. Kebir stated that the dropping of the demand for the 1991 results to be respected was to overcome the regime's public stance that the election had been rigged by the FIS and to show that the FIS was not afraid to submit itself to fresh elections.

dialogue with the authorities. However, whilst Sahnouni subsequently confirmed that he had been the member of the group which had met with Ali Belhadj on 17 October, he stated that Belhadj had not yet made clear his position on dialogue since the Commission had at that point only just started its deliberations.[107]

These receptive responses to the idea of dialogue were not shared by other elements within the FIS and its allies. Redjam, having already repudiated Kebir in November for calling for a modern set of 'Evian Accords' to end the conflict, issued a further statement in December calling for a continuation of the armed struggle and dismissing the National Dialogue Commission as a government manoeuvre to gain cross-party backing for its repression of the FIS.[108] Radio Wafa, controlled by Redjam and Mohammed Said, in its broadcasts rejected all dialogue and any truce with the regime unless the FIS was totally rehabilitated. This reference to an (albeit unrealistic) condition suggested some movement towards the position of Kebir and Sahnouni, but the fact that calls for 'jihad' against 'interlopers' who called for an end to the violence, were also broadcast, suggested otherwise.[109] Redjam warned those other parties already participating in the dialogue that they could be open to attack by militants. Said Mekhloufi made his threats more plain, and stated openly that he would not hesitate to kill both Abdallah Djaballah and Mahfoud Nahnah for the participation of the MNI and HAMAS in these and earlier talks.[110]

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[107] *Algérie Actualité* 14.12.93
[108] *El Watan* 22.11.93; *MEI* 7.1.94
[109] *Algérie Actualité* 28.12.93
[110] *MEI* 7.1.94; *El Watan* 22.11.93

3. The Zeroual Initiative: December 1993 - March 1994

I. Overtures and Releases

Throughout December and January the authorities appeared to work hard to try and secure some representation from the FIS at the National Reconciliation Conference. Several hundred Islamists detained without trial were released by the authorities in January in an effort to achieve participation by the FIS. Despite welcoming the releases, however, Rabah Kebir said that on their own they were not sufficient to get the FIS to join either the dialogue or the conference. "We must have the release of all political prisoners, first and foremost our leaders" he demanded.[111]

Although the National Reconciliation Conference, when it took place, was ridiculed by Kebir as the product of the "theatrics to seek legitimacy" the appointment of Lamine Zeroual received a cautious welcome from other FIS figures.[112] The party's representative in Sweden stated that Zeroual was a potential De Gaulle with the ability to push the army "out of the era of Chadli."[113] Those members of the FIS who hoped that Zeroual's appointment would signal a

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111 *Financial Times* 21.1.94

112 *The Guardian* 31.1.94

113 *El Watan* 3.2.94 The relative warmth with which some FIS figures received the news of Zeroual's appointment was related to the fact that the new President was perceived to have comparatively 'clean' hands, having resigned from the military in 1989 following differences with Chadli Benjedid. Furthermore, the fact that Zeroual had not been a member of the French army during the liberation struggle, unlike most of the other senior figures in the military who had defected to the FLN fairly late on in the conflict, meant that he was immune from Islamist charges that he was part of a conspiracy by the former French officers (Hizb-France) to run Algeria for the French. *L'Express* 10.2.94; Roberts: *Algeria Between Eradicators and Conciliators.* On FIS reactions to Zeroual's appointment, Rabah Kebir commented: "I did not know Zeroual personally, but those people who did know him spoke well of him and expected him to do some good." Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95

break with the previous policy of the HCE towards them, were further encouraged by the new President's commitment to have dialogue with all political forces "without exception" that Zeroual made on 7 February. This optimism appeared to be fully vindicated when on 22 February two of the seven leaders of the FIS held in prison since the summer of 1991, Ali Djeddi and Abdelkader Boukhamkham, were quietly released from Blida jail. It was subsequently revealed that this was the result of direct contacts between the regime and the prisoners at Blida. Zeroual himself had visited Blida in December, in his then capacity as Defence Minister.[114]

II. The Failure of the Initiative

Dialogue and possibly some form of truce then appeared to be in prospect. General Tayeb Deradji, widely believed to be in charge of discreet contacts with Ali Belhadj and Abassi Madani, remarked on suggestions that the two premier leaders of the FIS be released: "If it puts an end to the violence, then why not?"[115] However, optimism that an agreement could be struck faded with a presidential statement on 30 March which announced that the dialogue had failed and that the struggle against terrorism would now continue "without a break."[116]

In the aftermath of the collapse of this initiative both the FIS and the regime alleged that each other had reneged on commitments made when Zeroual had met with the FIS leaders at Blida. According to the government, Djeddi and Boukhamkham had failed on their release to call publicly for an end to the campaign of violence by the armed groups, having previously agreed to this as a condition for their release. For its part, the FIS claimed that Zeroual had gone back on commitments to free most of the party's leaders, to release Madani and

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114 *MEI* 15.4.94
115 *Jeune Afrique* 31.3.94
116 Ibid. 21.4.94

Belhadj to house arrest, to close down the detention camps in the Sahara by mid-March and to unban the FIS.[117]

4. Reactions to Failure: The Regime

The failure of the first attempt at dialogue with the FIS since the party's dissolution was a setback for Lamine Zeroual, who had made this initiative the centrepiece of his political strategy. The attempt at dealing with the FIS had inflicted damage not just on his plans for breaking the impasse and halting the escalating conflict, but had also exposed serious rifts inside the regime and amongst its supporters. Some saw Zeroual's initiative as a betrayal of those who had struggled against the terrorism of the armed groups. *El Watan*, a daily newspaper highly critical of Islamism and firmly opposed to dialogue with the FIS, argued on 1 March that the release of Ali Djeddi and Abdelkader Boukhamkham had struck a hard blow at the morale of "troops and other Algerians who believe in democracy in this country."[118] Opposition to Zeroual's initiative also came from more weighty sources within the regime itself. When official dialogue with HAMAS and the MNI had been suspended in early 1993, this had indicated that there were important elements within the military that were highly suspicious of any discussions with *any* Islamists. Secret meetings of army chiefs held in mid-March 1994 saw the growing strength of a dissident pole within the military, led by Mohammed Lamari, the Chief of Staff, which believed that the only solution to the Islamist threat to the regime was eradication, as opposed to the conciliation proposed by Zeroual and his supporters.[119]

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[117] *MEI* 15.4.94 It emerged that the government had actually planned to release four of the seven imprisoned leaders but two, Nourredine Chigera and Abdelkader Omar, had declined to be freed because of restrictions set by the authorities on their movements within Algeria once released. *El Watan* 1.3.94

[118] *El Watan* 1.3.94

[119] *Jeune Afrique* 31.3.94

The divisions within the upper echelons of the regime appeared to affect the prosecution of the campaign against the armed groups. The month of Ramadan (February-March) witnessed a significant retreat on the part of the security forces from areas of Islamist strength allowing in some areas the armed groups to effectively take control. The end of the Muslim holy month, however, saw a substantial 'counter-offensive' launched by the security services in both urban areas and the rural maquis. An estimated 350 suspected militants were killed in three weeks of operations.[120] These policy shifts were the result of dissent within the army over Zeroual's policy. The abandonment of areas to the armed groups could well have been part of a 'strike' tactic by the 'eradicator' faction in the military in protest at the softening line being taken by Zeroual. It also represented a faltering in the purpose and morale of the military whilst discussions with the FIS continued and the 'eradicator' and 'conciliator' factions within the military leadership argued their respective cases.[121] The subsequent counter-offensive by the security forces reflected either a clarifying of purpose with the failure of the dialogue or a triumph, within the military, by General Lamari and his supporters who favoured an iron-fist policy against the groups.

The failure of the initiative of early 1994 did not signify a full defeat for Zeroual and his policy of conciliation towards the FIS, nor a victory for Lamari and the 'eradicators.' The President reordered personnel in both the government and the military in April and May 1994 to replace many of the senior opponents of dialogue with figures more supportive of his policy of dialogue. Mohammed Lamari, however, retained his position and actually had his powers enhanced with Zeroual ceding several of his own powers as Minister of Defence to the Chief

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[120] *Libération* 14.3.94 & 28.4.94; *MEI* 15.4.94; *The Guardian* 7.4.94
[121] *Libération* 28.4.94 & 11.8.94; *The Middle East* 5.94

of Staff. The President clearly did not feel strong enough to take on his most robust opponent and felt the need to placate him with new powers.[122]

5. Reaction to Failure: The Islamist Camp

I. The GIA and Dialogue: Violence and Hostility

The most vehement Islamist opposition to the idea of dialogue with the government came from the GIA. From its creation the GIA had never hid its total hostility to any other means than armed jihad to achieve the goal of an Islamic state. The opening of its campaign of assassinations against intellectuals and members of the CCN in the Spring of 1993 coincided with the beginning of the HCE's first real attempts at multi-party dialogue and was clearly designed to halt this process.[123] The assassination of the former Prime Minister Kasdi Merbah in August 1993 was, despite other claims, almost certainly the work of the GIA and almost certainly because of covert attempts he had been making to bring both the government and the FIS to the negotiating table.[124] The GIA were particularly hostile to any group or individual who tried to speak on behalf of the Islamist movement. Mohammed Bousilimani, a founding member of HAMAS was kidnapped, tortured and killed by the GIA in December 1993 largely because of the central part his party had been playing in the ongoing dialogue with the regime and in attempts to involve the FIS.[125]

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[122] *The Middle East* 5.94

[123] *MEI* 2.4.93

[124] Other theories behind the assassination suggested that Merbah had been murdered by elements within the regime which, like the GIA, were totally opposed to the idea of dialogue with the FIS. Another prevalent theory suggested that the former prime minister had been killed, again by elements from within the regime, to prevent him revealing damaging information on individuals he had compiled and retained during his time as Chief of Military Security between 1979 and 1988. Dévoluy and Duteil pp.308-309.

[125] It was suggested that Bousilimani had been kidnapped in an attempt by the GIA to get a fatwa from an authoritative religious figure, such as Bousilimani, to

The first indications that some figures from within the FIS might be willing to talk to the regime were met with dark warnings and threats of violence from the GIA. A communique issued by the grouping on 21 November 1993 threatened to kill senior figures in the FIS over a supposed "manoeuvre destined to establish contacts with the authorities" naming Redjam, Mohammed Said and Said Mekhloufi in particular. For the two senior figures of the party abroad, Anwar Haddam and Rabah Kebir, the communique grimly prophesied that: "Even if they cling onto the walls of the Kaaba, they will suffer the worst of deaths."[126]

The prospect of a deal between the regime and the FIS heightened the rivalry between the FIS and its allies in the armed groups and the GIA. The advent of the National Reconciliation Conference saw an upsurge in violence from the GIA which was directed against the FIS as well as the regime.[127] This campaign continued into the new year as speculation grew over whether the FIS would deal with the authorities. The leader of the GIA, Mourad Sid Ahmed issued a communique on 6 February claiming that 70 MIA militants had been "executed" by the GIA.[128] Three weeks later, on 27 February, Sid Ahmed was himself killed when security forces stormed a house in the Bouzaréah district of Algiers where senior GIA figures had been meeting. The facts that the security forces were clearly well-informed about the location of the meeting and that the house belonged to a former member of the executive bureau of the FIS suggested that it

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support the groupings' argument for jihad and thus maintain unity within its ranks. Bousilimani's refusal to agree to this, even under torture, led to his eventual murder. (*El Watan* 2.2.94). HAMAS and its leader, Mahfoud Nahnah, in fact appeared to enjoy the closest links of all the major political parties with the regime, particularly in attempts to create a forum for national dialogue which would involve elements from the FIS. Indeed, they appeared to know about the negotiations that had taken place with the FIS before the other parties. *El Watan* 24.2.94

126 *El Watan* 22.11.93 & 28.2.94

127 *El Watan* 22.11.93; *Algérie Actualité* 7.12.93

128 *SWB* ME/1917 MED 9.2.94

was sources close to or within the FIS which had provided the security forces with their intelligence.[129]

II. Defections to the GIA

The collapse of the attempt at dialogue between the authorities and the FIS and President Zeroual's intention to resume the anti-terrorist struggle "without a break."[130] forced the FIS to reappraise its political strategy. The failure of the initiative confirmed the fears of many in the FIS who doubted that the regime would ever be prepared to make real concessions in negotiations. There was thus an increase in the number of defections to the GIA as members of the FIS became convinced that the GIA's strategy of militarily defeating the regime was the only way forward. [131]

These defections achieved greatest significance at the beginning of May, when Abderrazak Redjam and Mohammed Said announced that they were joining the GIA. They were soon joined by Said Mekhloufi. The scale and importance of the defections was further emphasised by a statement issued a few days later by Rabah Kebir and the leadership of the party abroad. It declared that Anwar Haddam and his close associate, Ahmed Zaoui, were no longer able to speak on behalf of the FIS because they had joined the GIA.[132] The defection of the maverick Mekhloufi, who had made known his opposition to the policy of dialogue, was of no great surprise. The adherence of Redjam, Said and Haddam was more unexpected. The precise reasons behind the defections were never clearly elucidated, but it seemed likely that these figures saw the base of popular support for Islamism shifting decisively away from the FIS and towards the GIA, and thus feared being sidelined. The release of Ali Djeddi and Abdelkader

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129 *El Watan* 28.2.94
130 *Jeune Afrique* 21.4.94
131 *El Watan* 1.3.94
132 *Nouvel Observateur* 11.8.94; *El Watan* 3.8.94

Boukhamkham from prison in February also posed a potential threat to the primacy of Said and Redjam's leadership of the FIS inside Algeria as Djeddi and Boukhamkham became the clear focus of government attempts at achieving a political settlement. It is also likely that Said, Redjam and Haddam judged that they could bring a significant degree of moderation and political leadership to the GIA - assets that the grouping lacked and seemed happy to accept.[133]

III. The FIS Counter-Offensive: the Formation of the AIS

These developments put the remainder of the FIS's leadership under pressure to respond. Rabah Kebir publicly responded with a degree of equanimity, stating that Said and Redjam were free as individuals to join the GIA if they wished but that this did not commit the FIS as a whole, but there was considerable anger at the nature of the defection. Of particular concern to Kebir and the rest of the FIS's leadership (notably those in the prison in Blida) was that the defections had been portrayed by those defecting as a unification of the FIS and other elements under the banner of the GIA. This seen as an unacceptable subsuming of the politically far more substantial FIS into what had been, until comparatively recently, a small extremist grouping. It also threatened to dispense with the name of the FIS, thus losing the valuable degree of popular legitimacy and symbolic associations that the party had accrued since 1989.[134]

The FIS leadership was aware that condemnation of the GIA and disassociation from it were insufficient responses to the challenge the GIA presented. Those in the FIS who continued to hope for a deal with the regime knew that the increasing strength of the GIA reduced the chances of such a deal being struck. Firstly, there was the fear that by negotiating the FIS could lose

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[133] *Libération* 22.7.94; Paul Schemm, *Hope for Algeria?* in *Middle East Insight* (September-October 1994)
[134] *Echoes of Truth* 8.94

more popular support to the GIA. Secondly, there was the concern that the hard-liners within the regime could point to the increasingly bloody and indiscriminate campaign being waged by the GIA as reason why no compromise with any Islamist group should be contemplated.[135]

The leadership of the FIS therefore perceived there to be a need to create an armed wing for itself to prevent the GIA dominating the armed struggle and thus threaten the credibility of any commitments the party might make in negotiations with the regime. The structures that had been set up by the FIS and the MIA in 1993 to control the armed struggle had operated only very loosely and had virtually disintegrated with the growing defections to the GIA, particularly that of Said Mekhloufi who had been head of operations under these arrangements. There was consequently a more concerted attempt by the FIS in 1994 to draw together various armed groups and unite them under the explicit banner of the FIS. The result of these efforts was revealed in July when the creation of an *Armé Islamiques du Salut* was announced. Increasingly known by its initials, AIS, this new grouping was made up of elements of the old MIA together with a number of other hitherto independent groups and groupings. Foremost of these was the *Mouvement pour l'Etat Islamique* (MEA) which joined the AIS after protracted negotiations and brought in the two regional 'Emirs' of the movement from the east (Madani Merzak) and the west (Ahmed Ben Aicha) of the country. Together with other smaller groups from the still very fragmented armed resistance the forces of the AIS were formally united under the leadership, once again, of Abdelkader Chebouti. Chebouti's title as 'general' and commander of the AIS was, however, largely symbolic due to his increasing ill-health and the desire for the two regional emirs of the old MEA to retain a significant degree of autonomy.[136]

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[135] *MEI* 5.8.94

[136] *Nouvel Observateur* 11.8.94; *Jeune Afrique* 4.8.94

The creation of the AIS differed from past attempts at uniting and unifying the Islamist struggle in that, for the first time, the armed struggle within Algeria was explicitly subordinated to the political leadership of the FIS. Madani Merzak and Ahmed Ben Aicha, despite their desire for autonomy, affirmed that supreme authority belonged to Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj. The choice of name for the AIS, with its inclusion of the word Salut, was intended to underscore the affinity and loyalty of the new grouping to the FIS. The declining influence of Chebouti aided this process since despite enjoying close relations with many of the party's senior figures, he had never been a member of the FIS and had always been opposed to its constitutionalist strategy.[137]

IV. The GIA Response: The Formation of the 'Caliphate'

Sensing that the political and military initiatives were beginning to shift back in the direction of the FIS with the creation of the AIS and the affirmation of the primacy of the two historic leaders of the party, the GIA looked for ways to raise their profile. Militarily, this was done by stepping-up their campaign against foreigners in Algeria. The most notable result of this was an assault on a residential block in the Algiers suburbs housing French Embassy staff on 3 August which resulted in the deaths of five Frenchmen.[138] In the political field, the GIA tried to consolidate the political capital it had gained through the defections of senior FIS figures in May.

At the beginning of August, Anwar Haddam appeared to formally announce his adherence to the GIA having hitherto only been accused by the leadership of the FIS of having joined the grouping. He declared that FIS party militants were joining forces with the GIA as a result of a decision taken by Islamist field commanders at a meeting held in April (thus probably explaining the timing of the

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[137] *Jeune Afrique* 4.8.94 & 25.8.94
[138] *Jeune Afrique* 15.9.94

other defections at the beginning of May). In response, Rabah Kebir publicly reiterated that the FIS would continue to exist as the FIS.[139] The political initiative of the GIA went one step further at the end of August when it announced, in a communique released on 26 August, the formation of an Islamic government or 'Caliphate.' The communique went on to list the personnel in this supposed 'Islamic government in-waiting.' In addition to the post of Commander of the Faithful, which went to the leader of the GIA, Cherif Gousmi (who had assumed the leadership following the death of Mourad Sid Ahmed in February), eleven ministries and their heads were detailed. Mohammed Said was named as head of government, Anwar Haddam was made responsible for foreign affairs and Said Mekhloufi became the provisional Interior Minister.[140]

The creation of a credible political leadership to rival that of the FIS threatened to greatly bolster the GIA in its struggle with the FIS-AIS. However, the potential impact of the announcement was sharply reduced by the haste with which many of the named ministers sought to disassociate themselves from the declaration. Several even attempted to rejoin the FIS. Anwar Haddam denied all knowledge of this 'Caliphate' and his inclusion in it, claiming it was a deliberate invention of the Algerian and French security services.[141] He refuted the claim that he was or ever had been a member of the GIA and asserted that he had only ever spoken in the name of the FIS. The FIS leadership seemed willing to accept the veracity of Haddam's renunciation of the GIA, but others, such as Mohammed Said, experienced more difficulty in their attempts to backtrack and mend fences with the FIS. Said's renunciation was clearly prompted by fears of being isolated by the rejuvenated FIS and condemned by the respected leadership in Blida prison. It was compromised, however, by the existence of an audio cassette

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[139] *MEI* 5.8.94; *El Watan* 3.8.94
[140] *Le Monde* 28/29.8.94
[141] Ibid.

recording of his original declaration of adherence to the GIA which had been widely circulated both in Algeria and abroad.[142] Said Mekhloufi simply announced his intention to quit the GIA following his nomination as Interior Minister.[143]

V. Continued Competition

The collapse of its attempt to mount a more political initiative pushed the GIA into looking for other means of advancing their struggle both against the regime and the FIS-AIS. More importantly, it sought to prevent these two adversaries talking to each other. Operationally, the GIA continued to be both robust and resilient, despite the regular loss of successive leaders (the grouping had survived the disastrous blow of the security forces raid on its February meeting in which it lost nine senior personnel in addition to Mourad Sid Ahmed). It had established itself as the dominant armed group within Algiers and the surrounding region. The adherence of the MEA, in particular, to the AIS had given the FIS's armed wing primacy in the eastern and western regions of the country, but the GIA still maintained a presence in these regions too.[144] The regime's post-Ramadan counter-offensive had pushed some of its units out of the capital and into the rural maquis which was largely controlled by the AIS. This inevitably led to clashes between the two groups, in spite of instructions from Madani and Belhadj to the AIS that this should be avoided. Although these clashes led to important casualties on the GIA's side (notably Abdelkader Hattab and nine of his lieutenants, according to both AIS and security services sources),

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142 Schemm: *Hope for Algeria?*
143 *MEI* 9.9.94
144 *Nouvel Observateur* 11.8.94; *Jeune Afrique* 25.8.94

the GIA remained able to prosecute well-planned attacks in the capital such as that against the French Embassy staff residence.[145]

The GIA's need to maintain a high profile and, more importantly, receive more substantial leadership was demonstrated in its kidnapping of two Arab diplomats, the Omani and Yemeni Ambassadors, in July. Released unharmed a few days after their capture, the diplomats carried a message to the authorities. It offered an end to the assassination campaign against foreigners in return for the release of the seminal leader of the GIA, Abdelhak Layada, who had been imprisoned since his successful extradition from Morocco the previous Autumn. The demand for Layada's release was a recognition by the GIA of its need for leadership. Layada's charismatic influence had been instrumental in uniting the GIA's constituent groups originally and could possibly galvanise once more the GIA's still fairly loose structures. The authorities' failure to respond to this offer led to the killing of sixteen foreigners over the following two weeks. This demonstrated that even if it lacked leadership and unity, the GIA was still able to carry out its threats.[146]

The increasingly extreme nature of the GIA's campaign appeared to serve the interests of the newly unified FIS-AIS. It made the latter seem a more moderate and pragmatic alternative to the GIA, both for ordinary people and the regime. In a communique released on 31 August the AIS explicitly distanced itself from a campaign recently launched by the GIA which threatened schools with arson unless they changed their curricula, organisation and pupil dress codes to comply with 'Islamic' requirements.[147] Rabah Kebir, in an interview with a western

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[145] *Jeune Afrique* 4.8.94; *El Watan* 1.8.94 There even appeared to be competition between the GIA and AIS in certain areas over the control of protection rackets and businesses. *Le Monde Diplomatique* 10.94

[146] *MEI* 5.8.94; *Jeune Afrique* 4.8.94; *Nouvel Observateur* 11.8.94

[147] *Libération* 7.9.94 These threats, which were carried through against some 500 schools between June and September alone, resulted from a failed attempt by the GIA to initiate a school strike in imitation of similar tactics used during the liberation struggle (*Jeune Afrique* 15.9.94). The precise demands of the GIA on

newspaper, made clear that the FIS differed from the GIA on the important issues of the killing of foreigners, which it opposed, and participation in elections which it remained in favour of.[148] He was also keen to distance himself from the GIA and deny accusations of co-operation:

> "We don't have any relations with the GIA because this group is only pursuing the military option. They alone are responsible for what they are doing inside Algeria."[149]

6. The Second Attempt at Dialogue: 1994

I. Political Initiatives: May-August 1994

Despite the collapse of the first attempt at dialogue with members of the FIS and the consequent stepping-up of the anti-terrorist campaign, President Zeroual remained intent on not excluding the possibility of further dialogue with the party. His replacement in April and May of hard-line figures opposed to dialogue with the FIS with pragmatic personnel who were personally loyal to him, was an indication of this. For the FIS, Rabah Kebir remained uncertain as to how genuine Zeroual's commitment to finding a solution was. He was unsure whether the President's policy of "talking peace, whilst waging war" was due to Zeroual being constrained by other forces within the regime or whether it was a deliberate policy of deceit.[150] Nevertheless, he cautiously welcomed Zeroual's dismissal of the anti-Islamist Prime Minister, Redha Malek, and described it as "a positive act

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schools were that they should end mixed classes and the teaching of music, and that girls should no longer participate in gym classes and should wear hedjab.

[148] *Le Monde* 6.8.94

[149] Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95

[150] Ibid.

in the context of the search for a negotiated settlement" and emphasised that the FIS was ready for such negotiations.[151]

Zeroual still faced considerable potential opposition to his plans for political development from figures in the military, particularly those officers close to Mohammed Lamari and who were supportive of his policy of eradication. At a stormy meeting in July with the chiefs of staff, the President announced his plans to relaunch attempts at national dialogue which would once again aim to include Islamists. In support of his proposals he pointed to the evident failure of the 'total security' policy launched at the end of Ramadan which had been the favoured approach of the 'eradicators.' This had failed to noticeably curtail the activities of the armed groups and had simply added to the violence and bloodshed which had increased dramatically since the beginning of the year.[152] On August 8 Mokdad Sifi, the new Prime Minister, announced that the government would, once again, be taking up dialogue with the political parties, although no mention was made, at this stage, of participation by the FIS.

II. Overtures from the FIS

Attempts to include the FIS in the dialogue had in fact begun in April, within weeks of President Zeroual's formal acknowledgement of the failure of the new year initiative with the release of Djeddi and Boukhamkham. The instigator this time, however, was the FIS. Persuaded perhaps by the initial effectiveness of the security forces' post-Ramadan offensive that military victory for the AIS was simply not possible, the leadership in Blida started to send letters to the Presidency indicating terms on which dialogue and an agreement could be reached. [153]

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151 *MEI* 29.4.94
152 *Le Point* 10.9.94
153 *Jeune Afrique* 4.8.94

The first letters came from Ali Belhadj, on 7 April and 22 July. They stressed primarily the importance of freeing the remaining leaders of the FIS before any progress could be made or meaningful dialogue take place. Zeroual and the authorities did not respond directly to these letters, but made it plain that the primary condition they attached to engaging in dialogue with members of the FIS was the latters' renunciation of violence.[154] Movement on the issue came with the sending of two further letters from Blida prison, this time from Abassi Madani. FIS figures abroad stressed the importance of these letters being signed by the leader of the FIS himself (rather than just his deputy) and they provoked far greater attention from the authorities than either of those sent by Belhadj.[155]

Both sent in the last week of August, the two letters resulted in government representatives being dispatched to Blida to attain clarification of various points following the receipt of each letter. Whilst awaiting this clarification the authorities made known the contents of the letters which listed general principles, proposals for a political solution and practical measures to be taken to achieve this solution. That the letters contained moderate and clearly serious proposals that did not fundamentally conflict with conditions set out by Zeroual for parties wishing to participate in elections (notably respect for the Constitution and for the irreversibility of democracy[156]) encouraged the President and the conciliators in

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[154] *Libération* 15.6.94; *Le Monde* 23.8.94; *MEI* 26.8.94 Apart from the central demand of his and the other leaders' release, Ali Belhadj called for a "return to legitimate laws" (the Sharia?) and greater public information. He even challenged the President to a televised debate.

[155] *Le Monde* 6.9.94

[156] Specifically, Madani in his letter had expressed his commitment "To abide by: party pluralism and to allow free opinion and to encourage diversity of programmes and forms of interpretation; the freedom of initiative and the acceptance of the changes of government through elections.." and to support the constitution which is "applicable in the way provided for in the constitution itself.." (*SWB* ME/2095 MED/2 8.9.94) Zeroual had previously set out his conditions for involvement in the political process as being: the end of violence as a precondition for the return to elections, and respect for both the Constitution and the irreversibility of democracy. *Le Monde* 23.8.94

the regime.[157] Stressing that the letters had been unsolicited by the authorities, Zeroual publicly described several elements of the letters as "positive" and said that they represented a significant "first step" by the FIS.[158] Abassi and Belhadj, together with the three remaining leaders in prison, made it clear to the Presidency's emissaries that no political initiative could be contemplated whilst they remained in prison. On the evening of 13 September Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj were released to house arrest whilst the other three detained leaders were simply allowed to go free.[159]

III. Opposition from Both Sides: The 'Eradicators' and the GIA

These releases were heralded as marking a possible beginning of an end to Algeria's bloody conflict, but they were far from welcomed by those on both sides who were resolutely opposed to the idea of dialogue. Opposition to the initiative from within the regime made use of figures outside the government to voice their own grave reservations. In collusion with Mohammed Lamari, Redha Malek the former Prime Minister, spoke out publicly about what he regarded as a "unilateral concession" on the part of the regime which "put in deadly danger the Republic." He criticised Zeroual for appearing to suspend his condition that Abassi Madani unambiguously condemn terrorism before being released.[160] The anti-Islamist press, notably *Le Matin*, highlighted the fact that the releases had not reduced the violence and argued that Abassi and Belhadj "no longer controlled the armed groups."[161] Criticism was also voiced from those political parties who were similarly hostile to any compromise with the Islamists of the FIS. Said Saadi the leader of the RCD, reacted to the releases of the FIS leaders by

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157 *SWB* ME/2095 MED/1-3 8.9.94
158 *SWB* ME/2096 MED/12-13 9.9.94
159 *Jeune Afrique* 22.9.94
160 Ibid.
161 *Le Matin* 15.9.94

observing that: "A part of the army is ready to go for a walk on the backs of the democrats."[162] Even the FFS, which had long stipulated inclusion of the FIS in dialogue as a condition for its own participation, maintained its distance from discussions because of fears that a "secret pact" had been concluded between the FIS and the government.[163]

The reaction of the GIA to the release of the FIS leaders was judged as being crucial. Efforts had been made in the official media over the preceding months to distinguish between extremists and pragmatic moderates in the Islamist movement and thus increase popular acceptance of dialogue with the FIS as representatives of the latter tendency.[164] However, the authorities still clearly hoped that the GIA could be persuaded by the FIS to halt their campaign. Rabah Kebir maintained that 80% of Islamist violence could be stopped by the FIS's leadership since current or former cadres of the FIS could be found at the heart of virtually every armed group (including, presumably, elements of the GIA).[165] In a communique following the releases the AIS formally reaffirmed their allegiance to the leadership of the FIS, stating that "The Chiefs of the FIS are the Chiefs of Jihad in Algeria" in a clear gesture of support for the leadership's negotiating position. However, the communique also called on the "brothers in the centre" to organise themselves "in order to design a national command and bar the way to manipulations by the junta and its services." This clear appeal to the GIA (who dominated the 'centre', the Algiers region, of Algeria) was, however, vigorously rebuffed by the GIA. On 14 September, the day after the releases, the GIA condemned all compromise with the "apostate regime" and restated their established credo of "Neither reconciliation, nor truce, nor dialogue."[166] As a more

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[162] *Jeune Afrique* 6.10.94
[163] *Le Monde* 16.9.94
[164] *Le Figaro* 15.9.94
[165] *Le Monde* 21.9.94
[166] *Jeune Afrique* 22.9.94

tangible indication of the GIA's attitude towards events, Islamist violence demonstrably increased in the aftermath of the releases, culminating in the detonation of a car bomb in Algiers on 12 October as dialogue began. [167]

IV. The Demands of the FIS

The FIS did not join the next round of multiparty talks scheduled for 20 September, despite hopes of early participation in formal dialogue. The FIS was concerned about the lifting of both the ban on the FIS and the state of emergency, and an amnesty for the substantial numbers of Islamists still in prison. However, the main blockage to further participation by the freed leaders in talks to break the impasse and end the conflict was the demand that they be allowed to freely consult with the wider leadership of the party.[168] It became evident that this implied direct consultations not only with the leadership of the party abroad and other individuals still imprisoned, but also with the leaders of the armed groups. As the freed leaders had declared in a letter:

> "Since we are asked the opinion of the leadership it is right that we reunite the leadership to give it....All the leadership: the military leadership imprisoned or at liberty, inside the country or outside."[169]

This demand which had been present in virtually all the FIS's previous conditions for dialogue, did not just represent a tactic on behalf of the party to wring more concessions from the Government. It also reflected a genuine need on the part of the party to unite its ranks behind it before beginning negotiations thus preventing the development of possible splits and schisms.[170] As Rabah Kebir explained: "A simple appeal for a truce, even if it comes from Abassi, will

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[167] Ibid. 13.10.94
[168] *Financial Times* 20.9.94
[169] *Jeune Afrique* 2.9.94
[170] *The Guardian* 15.9.94

not stop the bloodshed. We must gather together all our cadres in both political positions and in the armed groups."[171]

V. The Collapse of the Initiative

The demand that the FIS be permitted to reunite its leadership proved clearly unacceptable to a regime which was already under pressure from its hard-liners over excessive concessions to the FIS.[172] Three sets of meetings between the released leaders and government representatives on 15 and 29 September and 23 October failed to resolve the issue and at the end of October the regime formally announced the failure of the initiative. As with the collapse of the first attempt in the previous March, the Government's statements were full with recriminations and accusations of disengenuity on the part of the FIS. In sharply-worded statements President Zeroual alleged that Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj had "gone back on their undertakings" which had formed the basis for their release. They had also refused to issue a call to end the violence until they were released from house arrest.[173]

More seriously, the regime released the texts of two letters allegedly found on the body of the commander of the GIA, Cherif Gousmi, killed on 26 September by the security forces. Purportedly signed by Ali Belhadj the letters seemed to reveal the close nature of links between the GIA and the FIS's number two. They thanked Gousmi and the GIA for contributing to pressures on the regime which led to his and the other FIS leaders' release. They also urged Gousmi to "reach an agreement" with the AIS and proposed that: "Pressures must be brought to

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[171] *Le Matin* 25.9.94 The Government had helped attempts at co-ordination between Kebir and the imprisoned leadership by occasionally allowing direct telephone calls between them. Following the collapse of the initiative, though, the authorities tried to isolate Abassi and Belhadj and all contact was cut off. Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95

[172] This was despite rumours that the regime itself had been in contact with FIS leaders living abroad. See *Financial Times* 5.9.94 and *The Guardian* 6.9.94

[173] *SWB* ME/2140 MED/11-15, 30.11.94 & ME/2142 ME/17-20, 2.11.94

bear from outside by you through military operations and statements and by us...through information and guidance." These letters, Zeroual argued, clearly demonstrated that the FIS leadership was "trying to bolster extremism and encourage crime." Furthermore: "With such behaviour those concerned have demonstrated that they only have a dictatorial view of democracy" and thus should no longer be allowed to participate in dialogue with the regime and the other law-abiding forces.[174]

Whether both sets of allegations had any substance or were simply covers for the regime to justify their abandonment of the dialogue over the real issue of allowing the FIS to consult its wider leadership, is uncertain. Kamel Guemazi, one of the three FIS leaders completely freed on 13 September, had asserted on 20 September, well in advance of the collapse of the initiative, that the authorities had in fact set no preconditions for their release.[175] It seems likely that this was the case given Zeroual's avoidance of the issue of explicit renunciation of violence in the probable hope that the releases would prompt subsequent concessions on the part of the FIS. The veracity of the letters found on Cherif Gousmi's body is impossible to judge, but the texts of the letters revealed by the authorities (if accurate) did appear to indicate that these were not the first that had been sent from the deputy leader of the FIS to Gousmi ("This is my first contact with you from the prison of house arrest" one of the letters says). The extent to which these contacts may have been an individual initiative on the part of Belhadj (as opposed to one endorsed by the other leaders) is perhaps indicated by reference in the letters to some "dispute" within the Islamist camp.[176] Indeed, if, as Zeroual and the regime suggested, the FIS and the GIA were fully co-ordinating their actions, it does not explain the GIA's violently expressed

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174 Ibid.
175 *The Independent* 20.9.94
176 *SWB* ME/2140 MED/12-13, 31.10.94

opposition to the FIS leaders' attempt at dialogue with the regime. However, it would lend credence to the controversial view that some of the violence attributed to and apparently claimed by the GIA, was in reality the work of rejectionist elements within the regime itself.[177]

The collapse of this second initiative in the late Autumn of 1994 coincided not only with the rather muted celebrations marking the fourtieth anniverary of the beginning of the insurrection against the French, but also with drawing to an end of the third successive year of violent crisis in which Algeria had continued to be mired since the dramatic sequence of events which had begun with the legislative elections of December 1991.

C: DOMESTIC SUPPORT FOR ISLAMISM

1. Counting Islamists: The Initial Base

The official dissolution of the FIS in March 1992 and the subsequent suppression of Islamism made it difficult to assess the strength of support for the party and the Islamist movement generally. The three-and-a-quarter million votes the FIS had attracted in the first ballot of the legislative elections in December 1991 had given a very tangible indication of the level of support the Islamists enjoyed. However, a survey carried out by the Algerian national research centre argued that only half of those who had voted for the FIS in 1991 actually espoused its central objective: the achievement of an Islamic state. The rest had voted for the party as the best means of punishing and jettisoning the ruling order.[178] Although such findings are inevitably open to scepticism, it could not be denied that the depth of unpopularity of the regime and the FLN had contributed massively to the success of the FIS. Therefore, if one assumes this assessment

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[177] *Libération* 20.9.94
[178] *Financial Times* 30.1.92

to be broadly correct (it may in fact be over generous to the FIS), it appears that the Islamist goals of the FIS enjoyed the electoral support of just over one-and-a-half million Algerians - about 12% of the adult population.

2. The Armed Groups

Expressing support for the FIS at the ballot box or sharing the party's aim of the establishment of an Islamic state, did not, of course, indicate a belief in the efficacy of taking up arms to achieve this, much less a willingness to participate in such an action. Therefore it would be mistaken to assume that at the outset of the armed groups' campaign they could rely on the active support of the aforementioned and notional 12% of the population.

Given the fragmented and clandestine nature of the armed groups, any assessment of the numerical support of these groups, let alone the popular support they enjoyed, is difficult to gauge. Certainly in the early period of the Spring and Summer of 1992, the membership of the groups appeared relatively small scale. One Algerian newspaper estimated in the summer of 1992 that roughly twelve groups had emerged over the preceding few months, each consisting of up to a few dozen members, indicating an overall strength for the armed groups of a few hundred.[179] However, intelligence sources judged there to be at this time around 800-1,000 "hard-core terror fighters" in the Algiers area.[180] The remarkable resilience and even expansion of the armed groups, despite the successful campaigns of the security forces against them which frequently decimated their ranks clearly demonstrated that they were continually able to attract and involve new members.

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[179] *Algérie Actualité* 13.8.92
[180] *The Independent* 30.6.92

I. The Attraction of Youth: The Urban Male

The overwhelming majority of new recruits to the armed groups were young men. This was not simply a function of the military and operational needs of the armed groups, but also reflected the relative popular support Islamism enjoyed amongst this section of the Algerian population. As has been shown in earlier chapters, the lack of education and prospects enjoyed by the country's youth, who found themselves to be amongst the main victims of Algeria's continuing economic and social decline, meant that they were easy recruits for the FIS's populist message. The fact that conditions singularly failed to improve and demonstrably worsened after 1992, Algerians under the age of 30 making up 84% of the country's unemployed (estimated at around 30% of the working population) by the end of 1993[181], meant that whether through boredom, frustration or anger, they remained more susceptible than most Algerians to the propaganda and recruitment initiatives of the armed groups. The youthful profile of those captured or killed by the security forces in clashes with the Islamist groups bore testimony to this fact. [182]

The GIA, in particular, appeared to attract young recruits and most of its leaders were seldom older than 30. The two Arab diplomats kidnapped by the group in July 1994 testified, following their release, that most of the group members they had seen during their captivity and transportation had been teenagers.[183] The reasons for this apparent preference by the GIA for younger recruits are several fold and inter-linked. The concentration of the group's activities in the urban 'centre' region of the country around Algiers not only allowed it to carry out the type of operations it desired (mainly assassinations) but

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181 *MEI* 17.12.93

182 See *Jeune Afrique* 8.4.93

183 Schemm: *Hope for Algeria?* The relative youth of the GIA's leaders was mainly the result of the high mortality rate of most of the leaders of the group.

also kept in touch with the Islamists' most fertile base of support: the young urban unemployed. The sheer number of these jobless males (hittistes) on the streets of the urban centres meant that, besides formal recruitment, their numbers would allow a high degree of cover and anonymity for GIA operations. Perpetrators of attacks were able to 'melt' into similarly aged and dressed crowds. Many of these hittistes served 'apprenticeships' with the armed groups: watching, driving and storing for them before formally being admitted to a cell or a unit. An added advantage for the urban groups was that unlike their counterparts in the rural maquis, logistical problems were few - young members simply returning to their families for food and shelter.[184]

Economic and social deterioration were not the only motivating factors behind the steady flow of young unemployed recruits to groups such as the GIA. The bloody and remorseless tactics of the GIA, in particular, provoked an equally harsh response from the security forces against whom many of the attacks were directed. Young men became the natural targets for police raids on localities thought to have been responsible for a given attack. As the conflict progressed their treatment at the hands of the authorities regressed from simple detention without trial, through beatings, systematic torture and eventually arbitrary killings. By 1994, as the conflict escalated dramatically, collective punishments on neighbourhoods involving the killings of large numbers of local youths became common. It was thus unsurprising that young men who had either suffered themselves in detention or who had had friends and brothers tortured or murdered by the security services would hasten to the ranks of the GIA as a means of exacting their revenge.[185]

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[184] *Jeune Afrique* 22.7.93; *Algérie Actualité* 28.12.93
[185] *Jeune Afrique* 25.8.94

II. Other Social Bases

Support for the armed struggle was not confined to young jobless men in the cities. Whilst they clearly made up the greater part of it, other sections of the population lent their support to it. There was a more middle-class element to the Islamist campaign as indicated by the fact that of the several thousand Islamists still detained in the Saharan prison camps at the end of 1992, there were 1,186 civil servants and 1,219 teachers.[186] In April 1993 a group of nearly fifty Islamist were arrested by the authorities during an apparent attempt to sabotage a gas pipeline near the southern town of Laghouat. Working in co-operation with the MIA, this group consisted largely of professionals such as doctors and teachers.[187] The extensive use of fax machines to transmit messages and of computers to store the names of targeted victims by the groups also appeared to indicate that the groups enjoyed the expertise and advice of educated Algerians.[188]

Another area of society identified by the security services as being a hot-bed of Islamist activism was the black market.[189] Although identification of the Islamists with illegality was clearly in the interests of the authorities, the established links between the movement and the parallel economy have already been explained (see chapter 6). It appears that this clandestine section of the economy continued to be substantially controlled by the Islamists who drew funds from it. [190] Protection rackets, bank raids and general theft increased massively in Algeria from 1992. Many of these activities were carried out by Islamists trying to finance their campaigns but they were also frequently the result of the more

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186 *Algérie Actualité* 2.12.92
187 *The Middle East* 7.93
188 *Algérie Actualité* 2.12.92; *The Sunday Times* 30.10.94
189 *Algérie Actualité* 2.12.92
190 *Jeune Afrique* 22.7.93

general breakdown of law and order and government control that had been precipitated by the conflict. Collapsing living standards provided a further impetus for crime in this period.[191]

III. Geographic Bases

Geographically, the armed groups initially operated predominantly in the east and centre of the country, but gradually spread into the west as well. [192] Much of the presence of the armed groups in individual areas was determined by the activities of the security forces. The various shifts between the urban areas and the rural maquis, detailed earlier, were largely the result of the intensity of operations by the regime in each theatre.

The effective withdrawal of the security forces from large parts of the country during Ramadan of 1994 (leaving only the three main cities of Algiers, Constantine and Oran under the effective control of the authorities[193]) gave some indications of the regional strength of the armed groups. It was in the towns of the Mitidja plain around Algiers that the Islamists came most quickly to the fore following the pull-back by the forces of the state. The groups exercised, in the view of one observer, "real control" in places such as Baraki, Larbaa and especially Blida. There, the Islamists (of uncertain affiliation but most probably allied to the GIA) set about imposing their vision of society upon the residents of these areas. They dictated their own curfews and determined shop opening hours and even the prices of goods in those shops. Private bus companies were ordered to segregate their passengers, men from women (who were now required

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191 *Jeune Afrique* 23.12.93; *Algérie Actualité* 7.12.93
192 *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92
193 *MEI* 18.2.94

to wear the hedjab), and smoking and the selling of French language newspapers were effectively prohibited.[194]

Even after the counter offensive by the authorities after Ramadan and away from the area around Algiers, Islamist control continued to be evident. The two Arab ambassadors kidnapped by the GIA in July stated that their captors seemed to be able to cross large parts of the country (with them as captives) with impunity.[195] One witness from a village near the town of Tiaret claimed that the "entire population is under the boot of the terrorists."[196] One journalist argued that it was this "air of influence" that the Islamists were able to exercise over a locality which reliably indicated the strength of their support.[197] This influence even extended to the authorities, it being notable that no attempt had been made to revoke some of the new laws introduced by the FIS controlled councils after 1990 such as the ban on alcohol introduced in the Mitidja town of Médéa.[198]

One notable area of Algeria that remained largely outside the influence of the armed groups was Kabylia. The elections of both 1990 and 1991 had demonstrated the antipathy of the region to Islamism and despite the fact that the Kabyle had been the mountainous heartland of the original maquis against the French, the armed groups failed to establish a significant presence there. Attempts to do so had led to clashes between the groups and local villagers by the Autumn of 1994. [199]

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[194] *Financial Times* 22.2.94; *Libération* 14.3.94 & 28.4.94; *MEI* 4.3.94 & 1.4.94; *El Watan* 15.2.94
[195] Schemm: *Hope for Algeria?*
[196] *Le Matin* 7.7.94 quoted in *Libération* 13.7.94
[197] *Jeune Afrique* 21.4.94
[198] *Le Figaro* 2.6.93
[199] *Jeune Afrique* 6.10.94; *MEI* 7.10.94

3. The General Population: Abstention and Neutrality

The importance of winning the backing of the mass of the ordinary population to their side in order to defeat the regime clearly figured in the calculations of the armed groups. The example of the revolution in Iran in 1978-79, where Islamists came to power on the back of a genuinely popular revolution provided an unignorable precedent for them. However, despite the steady flow of recruits to the Islamic militias, there was little evidence of the Islamists being able to mobilise large numbers of people in street demonstrations in the way that had contributed so decisively to the fall of the Shah in Iran. Such a point was not missed by a senior officer in the Algerian military who suggested that:

> "If they had brought 500,000 of their supporters onto the streets, at the time, for example, of Zeroual becoming head of state, or the release of Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, the army would never have been able to open fire."[200]

He thus concluded that:

> "If they have not tried to mass their power on the streets, it is because they do not have the necessary troops behind them."[201]

The apparent reluctance or indeed unwillingness, of significant numbers of the Algerian populace, even those who must have voted for the FIS, to demonstrate their support for the Islamist opposition was a notable feature of the growing conflict. Despite the worsening economic and social conditions for most Algerians during this time, the attitude of ordinary people to the regime was one of "passive hostility rather than active support for the fundamentalists."[202] Instead,

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[200] *Le Figaro* 1.11.94
[201] Ibid.
[202] *The Middle East* 7.93

the majority of Algerians seemed to try to avoid involvement or association with either side in the conflict, realising that in the increasingly violent and bloody battle any expressed sympathies were liable to invite retribution from the other side.[203] As one Algerian journalist remarked one year into the conflict: "The street remains strangely impassive, as if this does not concern it."[204]

4. The Growth of the Conflict

The longevity of the conflict testified to the fact that it was no low-level, sporadic guerrilla war of the sort witnessed in Ulster or the Basque region.[205] The grim parade of statistics of casualties and deaths bore witness to the size and escalating intensification of the struggle. Deaths from the conflict rose from approximately 600 at the end of 1992 to 3,000 by December 1993.[206] The exponential growth of these horrific casualties, which included an increasing proportion of non-combatants, continued throughout 1994 and in October 1994 Amnesty International calculated that the overall death total had exceeded 10,000, with unofficial estimates, which became increasingly credible, suggesting that the real figure could be twice that.[207]

These figures reflected the growth in size and support for the armed groups, even if the mass of the population tried to stand back from the conflict. The regime claimed in May 1993 to be looking for just 1,100 fugitive guerrillas, but foreign diplomats estimated that the number was probably in the region of 10-

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[203] *Jeune Afrique* 25.2.93
[204] *Algérie Actualité* 23.2.93
[205] This was how the regime tried to portray the conflict. Author's interview with Algerian diplomat, Tunis, 24.5.94
[206] Amnesty International: *Political Killings in a Human Rights Crisis* (AI MDE 28/01/94) January 1994
[207] Amnesty International: *Repression and Violence Must End* (AI MDE 28/08/94) October 1994

15,000.[208] The further intensification of the conflict over the following eighteen months undoubtedly boosted this figure to the point that by September 1994 confidential government figures recorded that attacks by Islamist groups had risen to roughly 100 each day.[209]

D: FOREIGN SUPPORT FOR THE ISLAMIST CAUSE

1. Iran

Iran continued to be the target of most official Algerian suspicions and accusations over aid and support to the country's Islamists. The new HCE had recalled its Ambassador to Tehran in the immediate aftermath of the coup of January 1992 amid complaints that a "virulent press campaign" had been mounted by Iran against Algeria and allegations that Tehran had contributed $3 million to the FIS's recent election campaign. Although these charges were denied and dismissed by the Iranians, relations between the two countries declined throughout 1992 resulting in a complete severing of diplomatic ties with Iran by Algeria in March 1993.[210]

The Algerian authorities alleged that Iran had had a direct hand in training, funding and supplying the armed Islamist groups in their struggle against the regime. In November 1992 Qasim Naamani, an attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Algiers, was expelled along with nine others for allegedly co-ordinating efforts to send Algerian Islamists to Hezbollah training camps in Lebanon. One Algerian newspaper claimed that Naamani had been the official liaison between the majlis shura of the FIS and Mohammed Kasem Khansari, the mullah responsible for the

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[208] *The Guardian* 20.5.93 Figures for the different groups at this time are difficult to ascertain, although *Le Monde* estimated in August 1994 that the GIA had about 2,500 men in the central region of Algeria. *Le Monde* 28/29.8.94
[209] *Le Monde Diplomatique* 10.94
[210] *The Independent* 24.1.92; *MEI* 2.4.93

Maghreb states at the Iranian Foreign Ministry. There were also accusations that the Iranian Embassy had let Islamists use their facilities to print their clandestine newspapers and communiqués.[211]

The truth of these claims is difficult to judge, although it was clearly in the interests of the Algerian government to play up the foreign links of the Islamists in order to discredit them in the eyes of nationalistically minded Algerians and also to reassure people that the Islamist struggle had limited domestic support. In addition to the very small radical Shi'ite groups (see earlier chapters) which Iran had strong links with but which were inevitably rather marginal because of their size, there were links with more prominent Islamist groups. Takfir wa-Hijra had had links with the Islamic Republic since the 1980s and several of its senior figures had visited Tehran, including Kameredine Kherbane who travelled there on several occasions from 1992.[212] However, whilst Iran undoubtedly did help supply at least some weapons and material to the armed groups in Algeria after 1992, the ideological influence and leadership they perhaps hoped to exert was restricted, as before, by its Shi'ite theology which even Sid Ahmed Mourad of the GIA acknowledged as a brake on more extensive links.[213]

2. Egypt

The issue of links between Algeria and the influential Islamist movement in Egypt from 1992, revolved mainly around attempts by the two governments to co-ordinate efforts to prevent links being established between the two movements. Egypt had itself witnessed a resurgence of the Islamist challenge to the regime from the Summer of 1992. In November 1992, Sassi Lamouri, the Algerian Minister for Religious Affairs, led a delegation to Cairo where he met with his

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211 *MEI* 4.12.92; *Algérie Actualité* 30.3.93
212 *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92
213 Ibid. 27.1.94

Egyptian counterpart, Mohammed Ali Maghoub, to discuss ways of combating the Islamist threat. For Algeria, Lamouri secured an agreement from Egypt to re-open a mission bureau of Al-Ahzar (the esteemed Islamic university) in Algeria and to send around fifty professors and imam trainers to work, under the guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, against "Shi'ism and fundamentalism."[214] It was no coincidence that shortly after this meeting Algeria announced its expulsions from the Iranian Embassy and Egypt launched verbal attacks on alleged Iranian interference in its domestic politics.[215] Co-operation between the two countries' security services remained close and in March 1994, citing security reasons, Egypt announced that the number of Algerian pilgrims allowed to travel across Egypt to attend the Hajj in Mecca would be reduced by more than 90%.[216]

3. Tunisia and Morocco

Algeria's two Maghrebi neighbours, Morocco and Tunisia, were clearly likely to be affected by the growing crisis across their borders. Algéria had traditionally been the dominant state, politically and geographically, in the region. For Tunisia's President Abidine Ben Ali, developments had vindicated his unease over Chadli Benjedid's programme of political liberalisation. He robustly supported the Algerian regime's suppression of the Islamists which he had foreshadowed with his clamp down on Tunisia's own Nahda party. A more ambiguous stand was taken by the Moroccan Government. Several Algerian newspapers claimed that Algeria's western neighbour provided the main route for Islamist funds, materiel and personnel into Algeria. Although bribery of border officials was seen as the primary means of operating this route, *El Watan* argued that the Moroccan authorities themselves had "closed an eye" to the networks of

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214 Ahmed Rouadjia: *Le FIS: Est-il Enterré?* in *Espirit* (No.6, 1993) p.100
215 *Echoes of Truth* 6.93; *MEI* 4.12.92
216 *SWB* ME/1949 MED/15 18.3.94

supply on their territory.[217] Nevertheless, the Moroccan Government arrested the GIA's Abdelhak Layada in July 1993 and allowed the Algerian authorities to extradite him back to Algeria.[218]

4. Other Arab States

Other states that appeared to have links with the conflict in Algeria were Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. In Jordan these links took the form of contacts with the country's Muslim Brotherhood. Said Mekhloufi spent time there in the Summer of 1992 cementing links and the Jordanian Brotherhood offered to send a team of lawyers to Algeria to defend Abassi, Belhadj and the other FIS leaders during their trial in July 1992.[219] Saudi Arabia become once again, following the hiatus of the Gulf War and its aftermath (see chapter 5), a source of funds for the Islamists. Individual Saudis were approached by Algerian Islamists for support. This support was frequently given despite official assurances to the contrary that were given to the Algerian Defence Minister, Khaled Nezzar, when he visited Riyadh.[220] Sudan was regularly accused by the Algerian regime of supplying the armed groups inside Algeria, and although there was no real concrete evidence for this, Algeria recalled its Ambassador to Khartoum in March 1993.[221]

Overall, it appears that there was a concerted effort on the part of certain Islamists to set up international sources of support for the armed struggle. Figures such as Kameredine Kherbane accompanied by Abdallah Anas travelled from country to country seeking funds and training for the struggle.[222] In contrast to these efforts and the approaches made to individual Saudis, which came predominantly from those on the salafi wing of the Islamist movement, it was

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217 *Algérie Actualité* 16.11.93; *El Watan* 15.2.94; *Liberté* 16.6.94
218 *MEI* 25.6.93; *Algérie Actualité* 12.10.93
219 *Jeune Afrique* 13.8.92
220 Dévoluy & Duteil p.246; *Jeune Afrique* 22.7.93
221 *MEI* 2.4.93
222 *Jeune Afrique* 23.12.93

argued that Djazairist-aligned figures such as Rabah Kebir preferred to accept funds only from other Algerians and thus retain their nationalist credentials.[223] Indeed, it was argued that through domestic 'donations' and crime the FIS-AIS were more or less financially self-sufficient.[224] For his part, Kebir stated on relations with other foreign Islamist movements that:

> "There are some contacts, but only discussions, not close relations. Sometimes we meet some of them in Europe, by chance. Our members are under siege abroad, so we cannot move freely and contact other Islamic organisations."[225]

E: CONCLUSIONS

The period 1992 to 1994 witnessed the Islamist movement entering what could be described as its 'post-constitutionalist' period. This transition was not chosen of its own volition, however much some Islamists may have welcomed it, but was rather imposed on it by the regime through the cancellation of the elections and the dissolution of the FIS. There were two notable observations about the movement during this phase.

The effective exclusion of the FIS from Algeria's constitutional and electoral processes, with explicit assurances from the regime that it, or any similar successor party, would not be permitted to rejoin these processes at some future stage, vindicated those elements in the Islamist movement who had either explicitly rejected or otherwise tactically gone along with the electoralist strategy of the FIS. The cancellation of the elections and the dissolution of the FIS were signals to these elements that the movement should resort to the more fitting means of acquiring power through armed struggle. However despite the initial intransigence of the regime, what is remarkable was the persistence of that part

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[223] Dévoluy & Duteil pp.245-246
[224] *Jeune Afrique* 23.12.93
[225] Author's interview with Rabah Kebir, 27.9.95

of the Islamist movement which believed in both the efficacy and correctness of pursuing a constitutional strategy for the acquisition of power. This did not simply imply the leaders and members of parties such as HAMAS and the MNI, but more importantly applied to several senior figures within the FIS. There was a marked reluctance to either call for or endorse armed resistance to the regime, and even when figures such as Rabah Kebir eventually appeared to do so, it was with much qualification and occasional criticisms of the armed campaign. For some critical observers this reluctance was undoubtedly interpreted as the movement keeping its options open. The option of constitutionalism appeared increasingly attractive with the growing realisation that the armed struggle alone would not be enough to facilitate the accession of Islamists to power.

The second notable feature of the three year period following the events of early 1992 was that whilst support for the Islamist movement remained significant and resilient despite the pressures of the regime, the movement signally failed to mobilise the ordinary population against the regime. This was in spite of the manifest lack of popular legitimacy the various post-1992 regimes enjoyed and more importantly the steady and continuing decline of social and economic conditions experienced by the mass of ordinary Algerians during this period. Despite contempt for the regime and its inefficiency, corruption, illegitimacy and growing brutality, the vast majority of Algerians seemed unconvinced that their best course of action would be to throw their collective support behind the campaign of the armed groups. Whether this was because of fear of reprisals from the regime or because of an aversion to the prospect of the installation of an Islamic state is uncertain, but wariness of the consequences had not stopped mass defiance of the state authorities occurring in October 1988 or indeed in the years between 1954 and 1962. As had been the case in the elections of 1990 and 1991 the polarisation of the options had left little room for any third option, leaving Algerians to choose between two unpalatable options, their choice being

determined by the relative distaste they felt for one over the other. Whilst in December 1991 over a third of the adult population had decided to abstain from making any choice at all, an even greater percentage of Algerians chose this option with the onset of the post 1992 conflict.

CONCLUSION

The collapse of the second initiative for dialogue between the FIS and the Algerian regime at the end of October 1994, signalled that the Algerian crisis was to continue for some time to come. In the aftermath of the failure the two sides launched their own separate initiatives to try and break the bloody impasse. President Zeroual announced the regime's intention to hold presidential elections before the end of 1995, whereas the FIS entered into talks with most of the other major opposition parties to construct some kind of common front and platform. By the Autumn of 1995, neither of these initiatives appeared to have broken the deadlock. The FIS, represented by Rabah Kebir and Anwar Haddam, had participated in talks with six other political parties, notably the FLN, the FFS, the MDA and the Nahda party which had resulted in the drawing up of a joint platform and peace plan signed by all the participants. Launched in Rome in January 1995, the 'Platform for a Peaceful and Political Solution to the Algerian Crisis' declared the parties' commitment to political pluralism and free elections and called upon the regime to revoke the repressive measures it had introduced since 1992 and organise fresh legislative elections in as short a time as possible.[1] Despite the fact that the platform contained a commitment to renounce violence, the regime rejected the document out of hand and spoke of "foreign interference in Algeria's internal affairs."[2] In response the signatories of the Rome Accord denounced the regime's plans for presidential elections. Persisting with these plans, the regime failed to attract the participation of any major opposition party in the poll that became scheduled for 16 November 1995. Any credibility the plans may have had disintegrated with the announcement on 13 September that

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[1] *Platform for a Peaceful and Political Solution to the Algerian Crisis*, St. Egidio, Rome, 11.1.95

[2] *The Times* 11.1.95

Lamine Zeroual would stand as a candidate.[3] During this time Algeria's death toll continued to mount remorselessly.

This deadlock meant that Algeria's Islamist movement continued to remain in a state of fractured flux. Physically, its leadership was split between Algeria and abroad. Within Algeria it was divided between those figures in prison, those at liberty and those engaged in the armed struggle. Politically and ideologically it was divided between those willing to reach some form of agreement with the regime on the one hand, and those, on the other, who were committed to armed struggle as the sole legitimate means of achieving their ends.

Nevertheless, the Islamist movement remained, as it had done since 1990, the key element in all of Algeria's political equations. It had been the electoral success of the FIS which had precipitated the abandonment of the electoral process. Participation of the FIS remained the primary and most divisive issue in any attempt to relaunch the process and armed Islamist opposition to the regime was the cause of the colossal bloodshed that Algeria had witnessed since 1992. Social and economic decline, crime and official failures and corruption were all part of Algeria's ongoing travails, but it was the country's Islamists who remained at the hub of the whole crisis.

What remained remarkable was the swiftness of the Islamist movement's rise to prominence in Algeria. As has been shown, an Islamist tradition had been present in the country since the early part of the century with the creation of the Association of Algerian Ulama, but the two decades following independence had seen the movement virtually vanish from the Algerian stage. The 1980s had witnessed a noticeable re-emergence of the movement, but had it not been for the events of 1988-89, it would have simply remained a vocal but ultimately peripheral force. The events of this period allowed certain figures in the movement, notably Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, to construct a truly mass

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[3] *Libération* 14.9.95

popular base for the movement through, firstly, the upheaval of October 1988 and secondly through the formation of the *Front Islamique du Salut.* This project revolutionised Algerian Islamism and transformed it into something quite different from the sort of movement it had been since the 1920s.

In fact, it would be true to say that the FIS was essentially an offspring of the Islamist movement rather than an organic part of it. It is highly significant that so many senior Islamist figures (Sahnoun, Nahnah, Djaballah) did *not* participate in the creation of the party. The party was instead headed by the maverick Abassi, who had no organisational base of support and the young, inexperienced Belhadj. Other senior Islamist figures did join the party in 1989, but it was notable that it was these individuals who formed the bulwark of opposition to Abassi and his strategy in the Majlis Shura in early 1991 and who either left or were ejected from the party the following summer. The true, historic Algerian Islamist movement can be seen as surviving in the Rabitat Dawa and in the organisations and parties established by Mahfoud Nahnah and Abdallah Djaballah. Wary of politics and confrontation, and holding as a primary aim the 're-Islamisation' of the Algerian people through education and preaching, these organisations remained closer to the ideals of Abdelhamid Ben Badis than did the FIS.

In contrast the FIS had become simply a populist political movement. This was not to say that Abassi, Belhadj or any of their successors in the party's BEP were not committed to Islamist ideas and ultimate goals, but the FIS became a means for achieving political power and, through that, these goals. The FIS's populism successfully drew to its banner the swelling numbers of Algerians who saw the party as the best means of overthrowing the existing, deeply unpopular ruling order. A large proportion of such people believed in the party's millenialist promises of a FIS-run Algeria, but given the fact that the core of the party's support were the undereducated and unemployed urban young, it is unlikely that there was any widespread understanding of the FIS programme or Islamist ideas

generally. To get an idea of the true extent of real Islamist influence, support and ideas in Algeria in the 1990s, it is necessary to look harder at the votes HAMAS and the MNI attracted in the December 1991 ballots than those accrued by the FIS.

The armed struggle that developed from 1992 was a mutation of this phenomenon. For the vast majority of those in the armed groups, the ultimate stated goal of an 'Islamic State' is really only an icon representing other more basic desires - the overthrow of the regime and the end of official repression and economic and social deprivation. The armed struggle has not had the same populist appeal as the FIS had, drawing millions of Algerians to it, but has attracted the most militantly disillusioned section of the population. It is significant that the most militant of all the elements of the armed struggle, the GIA, is composed overwhelmingly of young unemployed youths.

The future course of Algeria and its Islamist movement, in both its populist and more traditional forms is impossible to accurately predict. The issue of Islamist and FIS participation will remain a constant feature of the Algerian political scene, irrespective of future shifts in its popular support and ideology, since it had played the predominant role in Algeria's first experiment with political pluralism and electoral democracy. After nearly four years of bloody conflict it is abundantly clear that a military 'solution' to the impasse is highly unlikely, the armed resistance being at the same time insufficiently powerful to defeat the significant resources of the Algerian military whilst remaining too strong and resilient to be decisively crushed by its adversary. Despite the substantial opposition to any agreement between the regime and the FIS by hard-line elements in both the regime and the armed groups, such a deal is the only viable way of breaking the impasse.

What sort of deal might emerge from agreement with the regime is difficult to judge. In the unlikely event of the regime accepting the proposals of the Rome

Accord, elections are set to occur. How the FIS and Islamism will fare in such contests can only be guessed at - the events of the past few years possibly having driven as many supporters away as attracted new ones. It seems more likely that the carnage of the last four years will, however, prevent anything approaching a return to the sort of *status quo ante bellum* envisaged in the Rome document. Too much blood has been spilled for this to realistically happen.

What lessons and implications have the experiences of Algeria and its Islamist movement had for the rest of North Africa and the Arab and Muslim Worlds?. Perspectives differ considerably. For most of Algeria's neighbouring governments in North Africa, Algeria's current predicament is testimony to the dire consequences of firstly, excessively fast political liberalisation, and secondly, permitting Islamism to compete in multi-party elections. Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have all have allowed some degree of multi-party participation in elections. All three, though, have ensured that firstly, such participation is controlled to a degree necessary to prevent a challenge to the ruling order, and secondly, that no explicitly Islamist political party is allowed to compete in elections under its own banner. It was notable that as events in Algeria unfolded in the 1990s both the Tunisian and later the Egyptian government clamped down on even the hitherto tolerated organisational manifestations of Islamism in their countries. Significant coverage of the horrors of the Algerian conflict is given in all the states' media, in the hope that this will discourage the significant, latent Islamist sympathies that are present across North Africa.

In contrast to this view are the lessons drawn from Algeria's experiences by Islamists internationally as well as a tranch of Western liberal opinion. For the first group Algeria has shown that when given open elections Islamism is shown to be a hugely popular political option, even in a country formerly thought of as being peripheral to the international Islamist movement. The armed conflict has demonstrated that even abandonment of elections and repression is not sufficient

to stifle Islamist demands and popularity. For those Western liberals who were not relieved by the apparent lifting of the perceived threat of an intolerant Islamist regime coming to power in January 1992, the aborting of elections could never be justified. The liberal democratic belief in popular electoral sovereignty could not be abandoned simply because a potentially illiberal force had triumphed at the ballot box.

Besides demonstrating the startling success Islamist movements can have in multiparty elections, Algerian Islamism, as a movement has had surprisingly little impact beyond its own borders. As has been shown, the movement was ideologically, largely the product of external influences. The founders of the Association of Algerian Ulama were all driven by ideas and experiences they had gained whilst studying outside the country. Imported Arabic teachers from the Eastern Arab World fed Islamist sentiment in Algeria's schools during the Arabisation programmes of the 1970s. Many of the main Islamist organisations that emerged in Algeria borrowed the names of other foreign Islamist groups - HAMAS, Nahda, Takfir wa Hijra. Algeria itself produced little that was ideologically new to the wider Islamist movement. The radical and violent statements and stance of some of the armed groups, particularly the GIA, were just crude and confused re-workings of the ideas of Sayyid Qutb. For its part the FIS, in its populist bid for political power, preferred vacuous propaganda to anything more precise or innovatory. The one Algerian Islamist thinker of any significance in independent Algeria, Malek Bennabi, was largely ignored by most other Islamists who elected to look beyond Algeria for their inspiration.

There are other wider lessons to be drawn from Algeria. Many observers both in the Muslim World and the West have argued that Algeria represents part of the ongoing re-assertion of the Islamic faith world-wide. Some in Europe have seen it as evidence of a coming conflict between the 'Christian' northern Mediterranean and the Muslim-dominated southern shore - immigration and trade

set to become the flash points. In Algeria's case this can be seen to be only partially true. Algeria's conversion to 'Islamism' is relatively patchy and superficial. As has been shown, the real driving force behind both the successes of the FIS and the ongoing armed struggle has not been a desire for an Islamic state, as such, but a wish to escape from the spiral of economic, social and political decline that Algeria has locked itself in since the late 1970s. Should the FIS ever attain political power, it would be the success it had in breaking this spiral of decline, rather than the ardency with which it applied 'Islamic values', which would determine its popular legitimacy. Should it fail, as must be likely, there is a potential opening for some other movement or ideology to launch a populist crusade against the ruling order, using the same methods that the FIS had used to such great effect.

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