The struggle for democracy in Algeria a study in civil-ideological war

Mohammad Bani Salameh
Clark Atlanta University

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THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN ALGERIA

A STUDY IN CIVIL-IDEOLOGICAL WAR

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BY
MOHAMMAD BANI SALAMEH

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

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THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN ALGERIA: A STUDY IN A CIVIL-IDEOLOGICAL WAR

Advisor: Fatemeh Shafiei

Thesis dated: May, 1998

This study examines the rise of the Islamic movement in Algeria, the failure of the democratization process and the bloody civil war. The writer was able to establish that both the military leaders and the Islamic fundamentalists are responsible for the turmoil and the bloodshed in Algeria.

This study is significant because with the rise of the Islamic movement in the Arab world, Algeria became the primary test case for the compatibility of Islam with democracy and the prospects for democracy in the Arab world.

The study was done through the use of primary and secondary sources. The study examines Algeria's current crisis, its political, economic and social challenges. The study suggests that the feasible alternative to end the crisis exists only in Algeria and only the Algerian people have the key to their problem. The external involvement is not accepted by the Algerian people and will have a negative impact on the crisis.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICIENT, THE MERCIFUL

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIS</td>
<td>Islamic Salvation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>AL-NAHDA</td>
<td>The Movement for Islamic Renaissance</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFS</td>
<td>Socialist Forces Front</td>
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<td>FIS</td>
<td>Islamic Salvation Front</td>
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<td>FLN</td>
<td>National Liberation Front</td>
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<td>GIA</td>
<td>Armed Islamist Group</td>
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<td>HAMAS</td>
<td>Movement for an Islamic Society</td>
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<td>HCE</td>
<td>High Council of State</td>
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<td>IMC</td>
<td>Contemporary Muslim Youth</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>LADD</td>
<td>Algerian League for Defense of Human Rights</td>
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<td>MIA</td>
<td>Armed Islamic Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLA</td>
<td>National Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTC</td>
<td>National Transitional Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>OJAL</td>
<td>Organization of Young Free Algerians</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Workers Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCE</td>
<td>Rally for Culture and Democracy</td>
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<td>National Democratic Rally</td>
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<td>SAPs</td>
<td>Structural Adjustments Programs</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>WB</td>
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CHAPTER I
THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

During the decades of the 1970s and 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, the Islamic world has experienced one of the most significant developments of the 20th century: The decline of secularism and the rise of the Islamic movement. Under the pressure of the Islamic movement, countries previously governed by secular authoritarian regimes were steering towards Islamic rule. This development began in Iran in 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini led an Islamic revolution to end 25 years of monarchial dictatorship and established the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran had set out to challenge the West and suppress human rights. They continued to support and encourage violent terrorism and the Islamic movement in a number of Muslim countries in order to export the Islamic Revolution to these countries.

In the 1980s, the Islamic movement that was suppressed by the authoritarian regimes got a chance to show its influence and when those countries made their transition towards democracy. The Islamic movement won a majority in the Sudan in 1986 and in Jordan in 1989. In the 1990s, the Islamic movement achieved another success in the Sudan: it became the second Islamic country to apply Islamic law (Shariah).

Algeria was about to become the third Islamic country in 1990. When the Algerian government held free elections, the first in the country’s history, they resulted in
the surprising success of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The Algerian Armed Forces intervened to protect democracy and the elections were canceled with the start of a brutal war against the Islamic movement. The civil war has entered its seventh year and neither of the conflicting parties is able to defeat the other and achieve peace and stability.

This study will focus on the fundamental causes that led to the escalation of this war; it will detail the primary actors in this conflict and examine the role of the external actors that blocked all the attempts towards national reconciliation. It will also study the impact of the war on Algeria. This study will conclude with an evaluation for the prospect of the struggle for power in Algeria and attempts to answer such questions as to whether Algeria's future is like Iran's or the Sudan's present.

**The Statement of the Problem**

The rise of the Islamic Movement in the last two decades attracted the interest of statesmen, journalists, and scholars concerning the future of the relationship between the Islamic world and the rest of the world. This interest resulted in the publication of articles, books and theories that portrayed Islamic fundamentalism as the new threat after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "The world of politics is entering a new phase in which the fundamental source of conflict will be cultural and the clash of civilization will dominate global politics," argued Samuel Huntington.1

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1 Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, No.3 (Summer 1993): 22.
However, much of the discourse in studies of Islamic fundamentalism focused on the threat to the West and ignored the internal or domestic threat. Moreover, the literature is silent on the real motivation for the rise of the Islamic movement and the role of the West and their local agents in that rise.

Islam has been the religion of Algeria for more than thirteen hundred years. It is rooted in the hearts of Algerians who played a historic role in defending the frontiers of Islam against the dangers of colonial Europe as well as providing a gate for its exploits and conquests. Thus, Islam is a tradition and a legacy that dwells in their hearts and lives. The current conflict started with Europe’s imperial ambitions, which caused pain and agony to other nations among them, Algeria. Accordingly, Algerians’ ordeal started from the first day of French colonization. Algerians saw people different from them in tongue, spirit, religion, and even color trying to govern their bodies, spirits, and exploit their land.

While France was under the effect of enlightenment, Algerians were experiencing the effects of Islamic traditions and values. Thus, it could be said that, the secular overpowered the religious. Nevertheless, Islam provided the driving force for national resistance. It sounded the clarion call for ‘Jihad’ against the Westernization of Algerian society.

From a fundamental point of view, one can say that the current clash or conflict in Algeria is the outcome of a long antagonism between secularism and theocracy. After
independence, Algeria was governed by a group of revolutionaries and militants who had helped to liberate Algeria from France. Despite their anti-colonial stance, they steered Algeria toward the European model; namely, separating the church from the state, believing that the authority of the time had little or nothing to do with the Divine.

During that period, Algerians were not satisfied with the regime, as it remained economically underdeveloped and too much dependent on the West and namely, France in particular. Politically, during this period of transition from colonial to post-colonial status, the political influence and interference of France remained. Furthermore, the leaders of the revolution adopted the single party system which, no doubt made for authoritarianism. Thus, Algeria was in the midst of economic, social and political gloom. This was compounded by the frustrations of the emerging generation and the rise of the Islamic movement. The Islamic movement stands for affirming Islamic identity and adopting Islam as an alternative path. It aims at the reconstruction of Algerian society and state in such a manner that the Algerian people would come to express the true ideas, values and traditions of Islam.

However, neither the Algerian secularists nor the Western World had come to accept the desire of some to re-establish an Islamic state and society. Both proponents of Westernization seemed to ignore the will of the Algerian people. They supported their local agents who are represented by the government and the Armed Forces. These do everything to protect their interests under the guise of democracy. The intervention of the Armed Forces was welcomed by the United States and Western countries that are used to
putting democracy on the list of good things they support such as peace, stability, modernization, and economic development.

Western involvement in the war that took place after the cancellation of the elections, gave the Algerian people the impression that the war was against Islam and the Muslims of Algeria. The result was its escalation and an open door for external involvement.

Western countries faced the difficult task of balancing between their principles and interest support for free and fair elections. The particular interest they have in the Islamic world. However, democracy is not just the holding of elections – although that is a good first step. It also requires in addition to regular free and fair elections, pre-conditions that are associated with democracy such as; social harmony and economic prosperity. These conditions advance or may promote democratic politics, consensus or agreement on fundamental values and on the rules of the game. These are assumed to be necessary conditions for the functioning of a stable democracy. In addition, there are other pre-conditions that are part of a functioning democracy. These include a strong and independent parliament, a strong and independent court system, strong political parties, active interest groups and a free press. By keeping these pre-conditions or requirements in mind, one might conclude that free elections or democracy in a society whose environment is incompatible with democracy might lead to disaster. The Germans in 1933 held elections and voted for the fascist party under the leadership of Hitler and for
which they paid a very heavy price. The Algerians voted for the Islamists in 1990, and if events had been allowed to run their course, they might have learned a better lesson. There is no way of knowing now what might have happened.

**Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this work is that the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in Algeria and the struggle it unleashed was motivated by the corruption of the Westernized elite, the decadence they exhibited and excessive foreign involvement in the internal affairs of the nation.

Algeria is one of the richest countries in Africa - rich in material as well as human sources. The majority of its people live in grinding poverty exacerbated by the privileges reserved for the elite. Economic decline forced Algeria to reschedule its external debts through the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Like other similar agreements, Algeria’s deal with the IMF called for the implementation of a structural adjustment policy that required the government to remove subsidies on basic products such as bread, rice, and medicine. The result was rioting. Under these conditions, disillusionment, underlying bitterness and a sense of powerlessness grew. As a result, many sought sanctuary in religious ideas and religious groups. Poverty is always a fertile soil to the teachings of fundamentalist religious ideas. Historically, the first people to adhere to the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad were the poor, while the rich and
powerful people in Mecca rejected his ideas. The Algerian people became more and
more enthusiastic towards the Islamic agenda. On the other hand, the political elite
realized that these sentiments at the mass level created a climate in which the system
either had to reform itself from within or collapse. The regime's response was immediate
political reform, which was a transition towards democracy. As the Islamists won the
first free elections in the country’s history, the government was forced to make
concessions. This meant that the basis of the elite patronage and hence their power would
be curtailed. Indeed, such reform measures would not set well with the elite.

The West, on the other hand, felt that such reform was not wanted. There is little
wonder that Islamic parties in the Arab World do not hide their opposition to the West
deploping the economic, political and cultural influence they exerted in their countries.
Therefore, a coalition between the local elite and the Western powers began cooperating
to suffocate the Islamic movements. States such as Libya, Iran and the Sudan in search
for allies gave support to the Islamic movement in Algeria. The result is a brutal war and
the Algerian people are its victims.

The Research Questions

This study seeks to provide significant answers to the following questions:

1. What are the fundamental reasons for the war in Algeria?
2. Who are the primary actors in the struggle for power in Algeria?
3. What role have foreign powers played in the escalation of the war and what are their objectives?

4. How the people of Algeria express their discontent with both the Islamic movement and the Armed Forces?

5. What is the impact of the war on Algeria and which part of the society is paying the heaviest price?

6. Is there any possibility for reconciliation in Algeria and if not, why not?

7. What are the prospects of success for the Islamic movement in Algeria? What effects will this have on human rights, democracy, and on Algeria’s relations with other states?

**Conceptual Framework**

The parameters of this study are largely set by the previous hypothesis. To avoid obfuscation, two main concepts in the hypothesis require clarification so that the reader will appreciate their conceptual meaning. The two concepts are "Islamic fundamentalism" and "elite". The concept of Islamic fundamentalism in this study refers to the Islamic movement that aims to construct an Islamic society independent of the state. In other words, to re-Islamize the society as an alternative to the secular way of life that has been adopted, which in their perspective has proved a failure. This new phenomenon is not only found in Algeria, but in all Muslim societies that had adopted secularism which, is perceived not to have lived up to its promises of political freedom, economic
prosperity, and social justice. There was the belief among Muslims that they were being betrayed and so many accepted Islamic fundamentalism as an alternative to secular ideas. The fundamentalist dream of the future, by engaging in a glorious past, they aim to build a new “Mecca” in the Islamic societies. To achieve this glorious objective, they wanted to replace democracy with theocracy and impose old theocratic laws, (Shariah) instead of modern secular laws on the members of their respective societies and by using force of arms, if necessary.

The concept “elite” in this study refers to the ruling classes that have controlled power in Algeria since independence. A group of military officers, had legitimized their right to rule by having liberated Algeria from French occupation. With the passage of time and failure to achieve real independence, development, and freedom, their legitimacy eroded. When the ruling elite sought to open the system for all political parties it reversed the process. When the Islamists won the elections, this ruling class was faced with the prospect of having to relinquish power. Regardless of how dissatisfied people were with their rule, they are not ready to be replaced.

The Key Concepts

To study the struggle for power in Algeria, a few important concepts need to be defined. In this chapter, I will define the basis concepts used in this study.

Civil War: A war fought between different geographical areas, political divisions or
ideological factions within the same country.² The concept of civil war in this study means the struggle for power between the established Algerian government and the anti-governmental forces represented by the Islamic movement, which contests for power and legitimacy. Although this is a civil war within Algeria, other states have intervened in it. Since the struggle is ideological and religious.

Islamic Fundamentalism:

Islamic fundamentalism may be defined as a modern mode of protest against the erosion of traditional ways of life. Islamic fundamentalists are characterized by charismatic leaders, a disciplined inner core of adherents, missionary fervor and institutions dedicated to comprehensive reconstruction of corrupt society.³ In this study, the fundamentalists are the Islamic groups in Algeria who advocate the establishment of an Islamic republic as in Iran in which they proclaim “Islam is the solution”.

Secularism: It is an ethical system founded on principles of natural morality and independent of revealed religion or supernaturalism. According to secular thought everyone has the right to discuss and debate all vital questions even the existence of God.


Legitimacy: The concept of legitimacy is often employed to identify the type of regime in place. Legitimate are those that can successfully assert their own authenticity, legality, and validity. Therefore, legitimate regimes can induce a measure of compliance from most people, without resorting to the use of physical force.⁴

Elite: Elite is a minority of the population, which makes the major decisions in the society. It shares a disproportionate measure of the valued resources in society. The minority gains its dominating position by means beyond ordinary elections. But, when there are elections the elite are always in a position to manipulate the electoral process to its own ends by a means of a range of measures from sheer coercion of voters, through bribery or the skilled use of propaganda, to the selection of the candidates.⁵

Democracy: Democracy is defined as an institutionalized system to that is aimed at providing political equality. More specifically, we define democracy as a political system in which all effective governmental positions are filled through meaningful and fair elections, and where sufficient civil liberties exist.⁶


⁶Yong-Chuan Liu, Patterns and Results of the Third Democratization Wave (New York: University Press of America, 1993).
Transition: Transition is a period in which the rules of the political game are undergoing change. During transition, the rules are in flux because those who are in power are too weak to protect the old pattern. Those who are pushing to open the closed system are not strong enough to impose new rules.7

Literature Review

A tremendous body of literature has been written on Islamic resurgence. The gigantic task of sifting through this vast and sophisticated amount of literature for relevant data is further sophisticated by the differing views presented and by the biases of the authors. Therefore, we cannot hope to survey it in detail here. To keep the review to a manageable proportion, we will review some of the most important works, which highlight the basic trend in the literature. Also, we will divide the literature into several categories, as the subject is vast and sophisticated. Thus, there is the material dealing with the whole issue of Islamic resurgence in the Muslim and the Arab World in general. It is important to review some of these studies to present a full summary of the viewpoints that have been advanced as a background to the subject. Then, we will review with the literature that deals with Algeria, the focus of this study.

7 Ibid., 26.
Literature on Islamic Resurgence

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Islamic fundamentalism or political Islam became the contemporary debate. Islamic Resurgence was portrayed as the next global threat. One of the earliest works that examines the encounters and the confrontations between the Muslim people and the West is Bernard Lewis' work, *Islam and the West*. Lewis focuses on the encounters between Islamic states and Europe. He considers the victory of one over the other as a triumph of one religion over the other. Lewis considers colonialism over Muslim countries as a triumph of Christianity over Islam. He asserted that:

> By 1920, it seemed that the triumph of Europe over Islam was total and final. The vast territories and countless millions of the Muslim peoples of Asia and Africa were firmly under the control of the European empires. Some of them under a variety of native princes, most under direct colonial administration.

Lewis focuses only on the times of rivalry, competition, and confrontation. Thus, he considers the relationship as an everlasting war, fear, and enmity. Co-existence is, therefore, impossible between both and one has to submit to the other. Lewis concludes his work by addressing the most current confrontation within the Muslim World, the

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9 Ibid., 29.
struggle between secularists and the Islamists. He argues that secularism was a Western attempt to resolve the conflict between the state and the church. He calls the Muslim World to submit to this Western ideology as a remedy to the Muslims' crisis.

The author was silent about the periods of peace, cooperation and co-existence between the Muslim World and Europe. During these periods, Muslims and Christians shared close links and exchanged both ideas and goods.

Writing with the same perspective, Samuel Huntington came to a more radical conclusion. In his well-known article published in, Foreign Affairs, “The Clash of Civilizations,” he argues that the clash of civilization will dominate global politics in the foreseeable future. The fault lines between civilization will be the battle lines of the future. Huntington made a list of eight civilizations among them, Islamic and the Western civilizations. He argues that the conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1,300 years. At present, the interaction between the West and Islam is taking a violent form:

In Eurasia, the great historic fault lines between civilizations are once more aflame. This is particularly true along the boundaries of the crescent-shaped Islamic bloc of nations from the bulge of Africa to Central Asia. Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma, and Catholics in the Philippines. Islam has bloody borders.10

10 Huntington, 34,35.
Huntington concludes that the West's next confrontation after the end of the Cold War will come from the Muslim World. Thus, he encourages the United States not to reduce its military capability and to be well prepared for the next confrontation.

While Huntington, Lewis and other Western scholars fear Islam, John L. Esposito, Leon T. Hadar and other scholars came to a different conclusion. Esposito's work, The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality\textsuperscript{11} is a brilliant work directed toward lessening America's fear of Islam. Esposito's book could be considered a reminder that the Cold War is not necessarily destined to be replaced by a conflict between the Muslim World and the West. Esposito examined the Islamic movements from Pakistan to North Africa in the first part of the book. The second part of the book provides a historical summary of the contacts between the West and the Muslim World in both times of war and peace. Then, the author presented descriptions of state sanctioned Islam in Libya, the Sudan, and Iran. The conclusion focuses on the policy implications of misreading the Islamic resurgence.

Leon T. Hadar shared Esposito's view. In an article published in Foreign Affairs under the title, "What Green Peril?"\textsuperscript{12} Hadar believed that Islam is neither unified nor a threat to the West. On the contrary, the author argued that Islam is currently on the


\textsuperscript{12} Leon T. Hadar, "What Green Peril?," Foreign Affairs, vol. 74, No. 3 (June, 1993).
defensive against militant anti-fundamentalists in Bosnia, Russia, France, Germany, India and the West Bank. The author called the United States to maintain friendly relations with the new Islamic movements. He believed that if these movements were come to power, it is difficult to believe that they will be hostile to the United States.

While the previous literature focuses on the impact of the Islamic resurgence on International relations, it is necessary to review the internal impact on the Muslim societies. One of the very popular books on this topic is, The Failure of Political Islam,\textsuperscript{13} authored by the French scholar, Oliver Roy. The author studied the recent religious movements in the Islamic World such as: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Al-Nahda in Tunisia, the FIS in Algeria and other religious and political movements. Focusing on the movements, which view Islam as a political ideology "Islam is the solution" and "The Quran is the Constitution." Roy came to the conclusion that Islamic movements have been unable to improve the societies conditions for the majority of the Muslims, he concluded that political Islam is a failure.

Writing with the same approach, Martin Kramer in his article, "Islam vs. Democracy"\textsuperscript{14} declared that Islam is by its very nature intolerant and, therefore, unable to accept the notion of liberal democracy. To support his argument, the author cited many

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Oliver Roy, \textit{The Failure of Political Islam} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).
\item \textsuperscript{14} Martin Kramer, "Islam Vs. Democracy," \textit{Commentary}, Vol. 95, No.1(January, 1993).
\end{itemize}
examples of the activities of many Islamic movements in the Middle East. The author believed that all the Islamic movements have the same ideology of establishing Islamic states, but they differ in their tactics to achieve their goal. They enjoy the advantages of the first stages of democratization as a short run strategy to seize power. Then, they hope to establish Islamic states. They believe that democracy is one man, one vote, and is therefore, a one-time affair. Once they seize power, it is impossible to give it up.

The previous literature represents the Western view toward Islamic resurgence in the Muslim World, the Arab and Muslim scholars' work is of a vital necessity to balance the discussion. One of the main characteristics of the Arab literature is its focus on the real forces and motives behind the rise of the Islamic movement. One of the very popular books on this topic is, Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence into the Modern Arab World,\textsuperscript{15} authored by Ibrahim Abu Rabi. The author traced the early rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab World during colonialism. Then, he examined the Islamic resurgence in the post-independence period. The author focused on the works of thinkers who played a pivotal role in the formation of the first Islamic movement in the Arab World. (The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928.)\textsuperscript{16} The author highlighted the works and thoughts of Hassan Al-Banna and Sayid Qutb.


\textsuperscript{16} The importance of this movement comes from the fact that it has been expanded beyond its physical center in Egypt. Today, the movement branches in most of the Arab countries. As a socio-religious movement, it plays a significant role in the politics and societies of the Arab World.
According to the author, Al-Banna (the founding father of the movement) had lived in an anti-Islamic environment during the British rule of Egypt. As Al-Banna moved from his conservative village to Cairo, he was shocked by the decline of religion in Egyptian society. After a period of searching and wondering, he came to think that the salvation of society lay on the establishment of an Islamic movement. Such a movement will counter the Westernization of society and call for the return to Islam. Al-Banna wanted to re-Islamize Egyptian society by peaceful means. Then, the author examined the radicalization of the movement by the contributions of Sayid Qutb. The author believed that the movement took on a new intellectual shape with the ideas of Qutb. Qutb provided its radical and counter ideology. He urged the organization to use force as a means of change. Thus, he provided it with a manifesto of terrorism. This author agrees with Qutb on the fact that the rise of the Islamic movement in Egypt was a response to the strong Westernization of Egyptian society and the decline in the practices of the Islamic way of life. This author also shares Qutb’s views pertaining to his ideas, and how they played an important role in the radicalization of the movement. However, this does not mean that radicalization was the natural outcome of the excessive oppression coerced by the state. Qutb grew more radical after years in prison under Nasir. Moreover, he was executed in 1966.
One of the sources of the radicalization on the Islamic movement in Egypt was a book entitled, *The Absent Duty*, written by Mohammed Abdal Salam Faraj. The book consists of an introduction and three parts. Part One deals with the definition of the enemy and tries to demonstrate that the present rulers of Egypt are unbelievers. According to the author, “The rulers of this age are in apostasy from Islam. They are raised at the tables of imperialism, be it crusaderism, or communism, or zionism. They carry nothing from Islam but their names, even though they pray and fast and claim to be Muslims.”

The next step in the line of the argument that the author provides is the discussion of the question, “Do we live in an Islamic state?” The answer is negative. Then the author moved to the essential question, which is “What to be done?” The answer that the author gives to this question is Jihad. He stressed that Jihad is the method with which to establish an Islamic government:

Islam spread by the sword, and under the very eyes of these leaders of unbelievers who conceal it from mankind. After the removal of their leaders, no body has an aversion to Islam. It is obligatory for the Muslims to raise their swords under the very eyes of the leaders who hide the truth and spread false heads.

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18 Faraj was executed after the assassination of Sadat, the book was classified as a Charter “Constitution” of terrorism. It exerted strong influence on the actual assassinations.

19 Faraj, 169.

20 Ibid., 193.
In part two, a number of positions that represent the points of view of the whole spectrum of Islamic organizations and groups, are systematically refuted. These include: the foundation of a political party, non-violent propaganda and immigration. These peaceful means of bringing about an Islamic government according to the author are of no avail. Rather an Islamic state can only be established by violence. He stressed the role of power as a means of change.

The differences among the Islamic movements over the best strategy for change and the challenges that confront these movements in the Middle East were best manifested during the Gulf Crisis. The internal problems of the contemporary Islamic movement in the Arab World made it difficult to generalize about their positions towards the Gulf Crisis, Saddam Hussein’s appeal to Islam, and the presence of the Western forces in the holy lands of Islam. Writing under the title: The Future of Islam in Middle East: Fundamentalism in Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia, Mahmod A. Faksh introduced a comprehensive study for the rise of Islamic movement in three key countries in the Middle East: Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia. The book can be divided into three parts: in Part one, the author traced the roots of the appeal of Islamic fundamentalism in

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the Middle East. He believed that the rise and the strength of the Islamic movement lie in the dramatic failure of the post-independence elites that ruled the Arab World. This failure is best manifested in Algeria where the FLN became a symbol of failure. In the words of Faksh:

The FLN’s gross mismanagement of a statist economy, its increasingly corrupt and inefficient, and the vast enrichment of a favored political class have finally caught up with the party, generating an explosion of grievances against a so-called politico-financial controlling the country and milking its resources.22

In the second part, the author presented the different positions the Islamic movement had adopted toward the Gulf Crisis in the three countries: The Islamic movement in Egypt had an uncertain response, it condemned the invasion of Kuwait and asked for Iraqi withdrawal, at the same time, it objected America’s aggression against Iraq. Similarly, the Saudi’s Islamic movement expressed a strong opposition to both the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the elitism and corruption of the Saudi government. In Algeria, the Islamic movement lionized Saddam for standing his ground in defiance of America and for honoring his word of attacking Israel. In the final part of the study, the author argued that the Islamic fundamentalists do not represent a major threat to the status quo in the Middle East. He believed that the Islamic fundamentalist’s vision of state and society is too radical alternative for the existing conditions. Thus, the Islamic seize of power in the Middle East does not have a high probability.

22 Faksh, 29-30.
Literature on Algeria

Algeria achieved independence in 1962, after seven bloody years of insurrection. No country in Africa or the Arab World had experienced an independence struggle so traumatic and violent as much as the movement for independence of Algeria. Algeria became one of the main pillars of the African revolution for independence. Algeria gained an international reputation for the contributions it made on the issue. As witnessed by Frantz Fanon's work, A Dying Colonialism, the Algerian revolution was seen as involving the whole society not simply the colonial government on the one hand, and the revolutionaries on the other. Fanon is regarded as one of the most articulate champions of the Algerian revolution. His work was written out of his experience and observation as a participant in the revolution. In his description of the revolution, Fanon stated that it was not merely a political revolution, it was a psychological and social transformation affecting the family, the status of women, and above all the political identity of the Algerian people. Fanon concluded that the originality and the richness of the revolution are now and forever the greatest victories the Algerian people have won.

The events in Algeria after independence were detailed in David Ottaway’s work:

24 Ibid., 179.
Algeria: The Politics of a Socialist Revolution. The book is a study of the Algerian Socialist Revolution, of those who made it and those who gained by it. The primary focus is on political behavior, on those aspects of the struggle among Algerian leaders which affected the character of the new order. This internal political struggle led to failure of the regime to evolve regular institution. The political system, the author felt was based mainly on personal relations. He discussed the contradictions of the so-called socialist state, especially in foreign policy. Algeria as a socialist state was committed to the anti-imperialist struggle, but maintained close ties with the former colonial power, France. The author pointed out how the first Algerian President, Ahmed Ben Bella was silent about France’s dominant position in Algeria and its imperialist policy:

In the history of Algeria’s foreign policy relations with France stand apart as a separate chapter. France was never attacked by Ben Bella as an imperialist and neo-colonialist power. The Algerian leader vehemently denounced the United States bases in Cuba and Vietnam, but seldom mentioned French bases in Algeria. He castigated the intervention of the United States in the Congo, but he remained silent when France sent paratroops to Gabon.

Less than thirty years after independence, the dream collapsed and the Algerian people had to fight a second war, but this time, the war Algerians against Algerians. On the current turmoil in Algeria, John P. Entelis’ essay, “Algeria in Turmoil: Islam,


26 Ibid., 148.
Democracy and the State,” is insightful. The author believed that the root of the problem refers to the failure of the system to achieve a legitimate political order: “For the majority of Algerians, what counted was not the one million martyrs of a generation ago, but the object poverty brought by a generation of FLN rule.” Enteli concluded that the greatest obstacle to democracy in Algeria does not lie in the threat of Islamists aggression, but in the commitment to an authoritarian regime.

As the West fears a regional spillover of Algerian crisis, it decides to watch it carefully without taking actual action to end the ongoing civil war. Writing under the title: The Algerian Crisis: Policy Options for the West, Andrew J. Pierre and William B. Quandt offered a penetrating study of the complex roots of the crisis and on its continuing impact on North Africa and Europe as well as urging the West to exert its influence to stop the bloodshed in Algeria. The authors shared Enteli’s argument that the root causes of the conflict lie in conditions of political, social and economic exclusion. Thirty years of a single party system paved the way for the extent of political corruption and the socio-economic crisis. With thirty percent unemployment, there are thousands of people who are socially marginalized and easily mobilized by the Islamic movement. These unemployed people are known as “hittistes” or wall people for their habit of leaning


28 Ibid., 25.

against the wall as they have nothing to do. The Islamic movement recruit thousands of these young people. They are the engine of the ongoing Savage War.

The authors also discussed the regional and international impact of an Islamic takeover in Algeria. They attempt to persuade the United States and its allies in Europe to stop being on the sidelines and to take sides by helping the regime in its struggle against extremists. The authors urged the West to support democratization and economic reform as peaceful options to solve a conflict that cannot be resolved by the force of arms.

Finally, the authors discussed the Platform of Rome as an attempt offered by the opposition to solve the conflict. The authors joined the Algerian government in criticizing the document and showing its shortcomings. While we agree with the authors on their analysis of the roots of the conflict and on the fact that the United States can exert pressure on the various protagonists of the conflict and influence them to stop war. We disagree with them in their evaluation for the Platform of Rome. We believe that the document was a serious attempt to solve the conflict. We believe that the document represents the majority of the Algerian people, and that the Algerian government decided to miss a golden opportunity.

Unlike the previous scholars who urged the United States to influence the course of events in Algerian and help in bringing to power a popularly elected government. Edward Shirley came to a different conclusion, writing under the title: "Is Iran’s Present
Algeria’s Future?.” Shirley criticized the United States’ contacts with the FIS. Shirley believed that there are no moderates to negotiate with them, and that if the Islamists seize power in Algeria they will follow in the footsteps of the Iranian clerks. Thus, the failure of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in fulfilling the great expectations of the Iranian people will occur in Algeria. The author went on to say that the decline of the Islamic movement in Algeria will be worse than in Iran, “A similar degeneration will happen in Algeria if the FIS comes to power. Indeed, the agony of fundamentalists decline will probably be worse in Algeria than in Iran. Less isolated than the Persians, less cohesive in culture and revolutionary spirit, Algerians will offer more resistance to universal ‘Islamic ideals’.”

Finally, he concluded with advice to the Clinton’s administration to stop making any contacts with the fundamentalists and to let the Algerian people destroy themselves. Shirley limited the choices for the Algerian people between a corrupt military rule or a fundamentalist theocracy. To the Algerians it is like the choice between the devil and the deep blue sea. Both choices are non-options for the Algerian people.

Writing nearly under the same title, “Is Algeria About to Become the Next Iran?” Stewart Toy argued that a concern for the West and its Arab allies is that the

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31 Ibid., 39.

bitter conflict between the military regime and Muslim militants in Algeria seems to be pushing the country inexorably toward an Islamic government. Toy believed that an Islamic regime in Algeria would have great influence on Tunisia, Egypt, and beyond, perhaps threatening the promising Arab-Israeli Peace Process.

This literature misreads the Islamic resurgence. Also it is almost silent about the real motivations behind Islamic resurgence. Most scholars argued that the source of Islamic fundamentalism is poverty and in believing so, they ignored the real issue which is the dissatisfaction of the people with their leadership. Another characteristic of this literature is the lack of objectivity in classifying Algeria, Iran and the Sudan as fundamentalist states, leaving such states as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria out. No doubt Saudi Arabia which is applying Shariah is no less fundamentalist than the Sudan, Iran or Algeria. Moreover, countries like Egypt and Syria which are ruled by friendly tyrants are suppressing their people more than the Islamists in Iran or the Sudan. The lack of objectivity is also clear in the double standard policy that the West adopts toward democracy in the Middle East. The transition towards democracy that produced an Islamist victory is not accepted. The West fears this kind of democracy and support democracy only if they like the winner.

The existing literature about Islamic resurgence focuses only on one part of the issue, which is the confrontation with the outside world. It is only a matter of time before Algeria’s “trouble washes up on Europe’s shores,” so the West must keep an open eye to
protect its interests. This literature pays no attention to the other aspects like the impact of the victory of Islamists on the local people. Also, it is silent about the role of the West especially the United States in breeding the Islamic elements who were created to fight against what was seen as Communist proxies. The United States is also known to have played a role in the struggle between the Islamic movements and their governments in Egypt, Algeria, Turkey and Tunisia. Therefore, this study attempts to cover all the aspects of this subject so as to fill a gap in the existing literature. This study is a possible source of important research into the options for Algeria as well as other Arab countries. Western readers may profit from great understanding of one of the most extraordinary issues at work in the Arab World today.

The Research Method

This is an historical and analytical study. The study uses an institutional and sociological model. It will be based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources includes the original government and other documents and statements, such as: the annual reports of international organizations, the Algerian constitution, the declarations of both the Algerian government and the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), etc.

33 The West welcomed the military intervention in Turkey and Algeria, however, it condemned it in the Sudan. Ironically, the nature of the military is the same in all these countries, what differs is the different ties with the West the military has in these countries.
However, a tentative checklist is kept to establish the objectives of the study. The secondary sources will include newspapers, periodicals, books and other forms of reference.

**The Significance of the Study**

Several studies have examined the rise of the Islamic fundamentalist movements in the Arab and Islamic world, but hardly any of them have provided in-depth analysis. There is no mention of the role of the corrupt political elite in the rise of those movements, nor of the role of the foreign actors in the breeding process of such movements. There is no mention made of the role played by such actors in preventing dialogue or reconciliation between the conflicting parties. Thus, there is no mention of the role of foreign governments in uncotingly in promoting the escalation of the conflict into open warfare.

The failure of such powerful forces as nationalism and socialism to address the economic and social needs of the people in most Islamic countries, paved the way for the rise of the Islamic fundamentalism. Because they never had a chance to exercise political power, they were itching for a chance to clean up the mess that the secular rulers had created.

While all the Islamic countries are ruled by authoritarian regimes that had lost their legitimacy, the trend towards the Islamists shows signs of change in the Islamic
world. An examination of the forces and factors that are contributing to change and the obstacles that confront change will provide valuable insight into the problem. It is hoped that it will provide policy makers with some knowledge of the factors underlying the problem and how to approach a solution. Any useful new ideas generated in the process of the study might help change the course of events and offer an opportunity for tolerance, stability, and peace to prevail.

Outline of the Study

This study will be organized into seven chapters. Chapter one provides the framework for this effort. Chapter two seeks to provide a historical background to the settlement of Algeria in the seventh century A.D. and the Islamization of the society prior to colonial conquest. It also covers the struggle against French colonization and the coming of independence after 132 years of colonialism. Chapter three seeks to provide an analysis for the causes of the struggle waived by the fundamentalist forces. It addresses the loss of legitimacy of an authoritarian regime. It then moves into a discussion of economic forces – The Bread Revolution and the social and cultural revival of Algerian society. The post independence period represents the breeding ground for the current crisis. Chapter four provides a discussion of the primary and secondary actors of the conflict. These are divided into external and internal parties. This chapter includes a discussion of the role of France, the United States, and Iran as foreign actors in the
conflict. The fifth chapter examines the dynamics of the conflict and its impact on Algeria. Chapter six provides an analysis for the process of reconciliation and focuses on the dialogue between the government and its opponents.

Finally, chapter seven gives a summary and conclusion of the study. The objective here is to assess the reliability and validity of the data presented to convey a picture of true causes of the war and its impact on Algeria as well as other Arab countries.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Islamic Conquest

The advent of Islam in the seventh century does not only represent the rise of a religious movement or a spiritual community, rather it also took the form of a state. Islam was and still viewed as a total way of life and admits to no division between religion and state. Islam is a religion that is comprehensive enough to include all walks of life and all fields of human activity whether social, economic or political.

The first Islamic state was built under the prophet Mohammed’s guidance in Medina in the Arab peninsula (known today as Saudi Arabia). The expansion of Islamic rule by the Prophet’s successors led to the establishment of an Islamic empire whose boundaries extended from China in the Far East, to the boundaries of France in the West. This empire stretched across Asia, Africa, and Europe. In that gigantic empire or what came to be called, “The Muslim World”. Islam was the driving force in creating unity or a sense of community and attitudes among those Muslims, regardless of the striking differences in those regions inhabited by Arabs, Turks, Persians, Berbers, Africans, and countless other nationalities.

In fact the great revealed religion played a fundamental role in building that gigantic empire. The narrow tribal association in pre-Islamic Arabian society was
replaced by a religious affiliation. Thus, transferring the weak, isolated, and scattered Arab tribes (which were struggling against each other) into one huge and united power that changed the course of events in the history of mankind.

Ibn Khaldoune, the great Arab historian and sociologist, described the role of Islam in this regard. He wrote:

Arab pride, touchiness and intense jealousy of power render it impossible for them to agree. Only when their nature has been permeated by a religious impulse are they transformed, so that, the tendency to anarchy is replaced by a spirit of mutual defense. Consider the moment when religion dominated their policy and led them to observe a religious law design to promote the moral and materials interests of civilization. Under a series of successors to the Prophet (Mohammed), how vast their empire became and how strongly was it established.¹

The impact of religion on human behavior is not only associated with Islam. All religions directly influence behavior, and have a fundamental impact on the individual and the society. Emil Durkheim noted the empowering function of religion and wrote, “The believer who has communicated with his God is not merely a man who sees new truths of which the unbeliever is ignorant, he is a man who is stronger. He feels with him more force either to endure the trials of existence or to conquer them.”²


The previous marks of Ibn Khaldoune and Durkheim are proofs of the vital role religion plays in all societies and in different civilizations. In the case of Islam the essential role of ideology in the developmental process will be explained and detailed in the following pages.

As mentioned earlier, the Arabs carried the banner of Islam, East and West, and so North Africa was invaded by Islamic troops in the 8th century. Not surprisingly, the Berbers who were the original inhabitants of Algeria provided resistance to the new invasion. The Berbers mounted the fiercest and most prolonged opposition to the Arab conquerors of the 8th century met anywhere in the world. The Arabs – armed with Islam finally conquered the area and infused it with their culture, above all with Islam. Nevertheless, the Berbers were Islamicized, but not Arabized as they maintained their language and retained their customs. Islam has spread by the sword, this relationship between Islam and power was uprooted in the memory and personality of the Algerian people. Co-existence between the Arabs and Berbers was based on a shared religion. This co-existence flourished with the presence of an un-Muslim enemy, but that relationship weakened without that enemy. Moreover, Islamic teachings minimized the cultural distinction between the Arabs and the Berbers. In other words, despite the dissimilarity of the Arab and Berber language, there is no evidence of any Berber-Arab dichotomy. Consequently, "the Berber sees himself as a member of this or that tribe
within an Islamically – conceived and permeated world - and not as a linguistically defined ethnic group.” ³

The integration of Algeria into the Islamic community promoted Islamic power in North Africa. Algeria became a gate for Islamic exploits and conquests. Muslim armies took over most of Portugal and Spain then called, “Andalusia”, and they advanced deep into Europe to the boundaries of France. Islamic history is full of names of Algerian people – both Arabs and Berbers - who played heroic and indispensable roles in those Islamic triumphs during the golden age of the Islamic State in North Africa.

By the time Islamic power declined, things had changed greatly. The Muslims were expelled from Spain, as it was re-conquered by the Christians. Many displaced Muslims had found a safe haven in Algeria in the 15th century. Since that time, Algerian Muslims as well as other Muslims in North Africa have played a historical role in defending the frontiers of Islam against the dangers of imperial Europe.⁴

With the rise of the Ottoman Islamic empire, Algeria as well as other North African countries came under the control of the Turkish empire. The Algerian people accepted the Ottoman regency due to the fact that, that powerful Islamic state was


⁴ Aruj and Khayr Al-Din who came to North Africa were the major participants in the historic struggle between Ottoman and the Spaniards and Hapsburgs for control of the West Mediterranean. See Abun Nas.Jamil, A History of Maghrib (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
struggling against the European states. Political instability became the characteristic feature of Algerian history for the next three hundred years.

The French Colonization

The year 1830 marked a watershed in the history of Algeria, and in the history of the whole continent of Africa. Algeria was invaded by French troops on June, 1830. The pretext used for the occupation was a diplomatic dispute. King Charles X of France refused to honor an old debt owed to Algeria. Furthermore, the behavior of the French counsel offended Dey Hussein – the ruler of Algeria – by stating that, "His most Christian Majesty could not lower himself to correspond with the Dey". The Dey reacted by slapping him with a "fly whisk" and ordered him to get out. This led to war, however, two main reasons were the motives for the French government’s scramble for Algeria and Africa as a whole. The economic factor was the primary motive. Overproduction, surplus capital and under consumption in industrialized nations in Western Europe led them to supplement their economic resources with larger and larger portions of resources from outside. So Africa and other territories in general, became the market of produce surplus commodities and the place for the investment of surplus capital as well as outlet for settlers.


The second motive refers to the internal situation in France, Charles' domestic power had begun to erode and so in turn. He sought to divert his subjects' attention from his unpopular domestic policies to policies of colonial expansion.

**The French Policy and National Resistance**

However, the Algerians did not give in easily to the French invaders, they stood against them from their first landing in Algeria. The French faced determined resistance from the indigenous population. Reference has already been made to the significant function of religion in providing a conceptual and normative framework for Algerian society. Underpinning that framework institutionally, helping to bridge gaps between different lifestyles and among competing clan and tribal units, were the "Tariqas" and maraboutism. From those holy institutions, most of the national resistance leaders graduated. The first national resistance movement in Algeria was under the leadership of Abdel Kader, who was a marabout and was recognized as the Commander of the Faithful. Abdel Kader who claimed to have a divine mission proclaimed a holy war, "Jihad", against the French infidels. Abdel Kader used religious legitimacy to get the support of the Algerian people and fought the French in the name of God. While preparing his troops for the clash with the French, Abdel Kader, assembled the chiefs of tribes in one of the Mosques and delivered this call for Jihad:

*God said in the Quran, "O Believers! Fight the infidels who are near you..." What prevents us from opposing and resisting them? We have*
been promised that we will prevail over our enemies. So come, O Muslims to the Jihad! Any one of you, who die, will die a martyr; those who survive will gain glory and live happily.7

Abdel Kader made similar calls for Jihad in numerous other Mosques. “The French were infidels, enemies of Allah and his religion. They had invaded a land of Islam, and the Quran and Sunna made it a Muslim’s duty to meet their aggression with Jihad.”8 He said that he would pursue the war relentlessly and refuse to surrender, insisting that he would fight the Christians as long as there was “life in his body and a rifle in his hand.”9 The enduring struggle of Abdel Kader made him Algeria’s greatest national hero. The national resistance continued, and France adopted a policy of limited colonization. It, therefore, took four decades before all of Algeria came under French control.

Settler rule over Algeria was secured with the establishment of the Third Republic in France. Colonization policies transferred land and property from Algerians to settlers. The severity and brutality of French policy during that period was described by Karl Marx who wrote in 1857:

From the first occupation of Algeria by the French to the present time the unhappy country has been the arena of unceasing bloodshed, rapine and


9Ibid., 156.
violence. Each town, large and small, has been conquered in detail to an immense sacrifice of life. The Arabs and Kabyle “Berber” tribes, to whom independence is precious, and hatred of foreign domination a principle of dearer than life itself, have been crushed and broken by the terrible razzias, in which dwellings and property are burnt and destroyed, standing crops cut down, and the miserable wretches, who remain massacred, are subjected to all the horrors of lust and brutality. This barbarous system of warfare has been persisted in by the French against all the dictates of humanity and civilization.10

Approximately three million people lived in Algeria in 1830. By 1870, warfare, disease, and famine had reduced the native population to about one-third. However, the population of European settlers grew from “7,812 in 1833 to 984,031 in 1954.”11

At the end of the first fifty years of French occupation, Muslims in Algeria had lost their freedom and their land. Algeria’s political status had become tied even more closely to metropolitan France. In 1865, France declared a law that required:

Native Muslims were to be considered as Frenchmen but they would have to follow French civil law. Therefore, for an Algerian to become a French citizen he has to disavow his personal status, which in the Muslim context was tantamount to abandoning the Sharia code and renouncing one’s Muslim identity.12

As the colonists targeted Islam and the Arabic language, the more fortunate Muslims were sent to school, and received French education, which impressed another culture upon them. Arabic was taught as a foreign language. National resistance against


the French was pursued at the educational level. Islam was a stimulator of educational advance during the colonial period. As Walter Rodney wrote:

In North Africa, Muslims found it necessary to channel their efforts into schools other than those built by the colonists. The society of reformists, Ulema in Algeria started a large primary school program in 1936. By 1955, its primary school catered to 45,000 Algerian children. The society also ran a large secondary school.\textsuperscript{13}

With the end of the World War I, Algerian nationalism began, but was not revolutionary. The early young Algerian nationalists were educated in French schools and had assimilated French culture. They called for an extension of French citizenship and assimilation and integration with France. This group was not looking for independence, but for a different goal. They wanted a fusion of the Arab-Berber population with French society. The leader of this movement was the French educated Algerian intellectual, Ferhat Abbas, who declared his position by stating:

\begin{quote}
I will not die for the Algerian fatherland because this fatherland doesn’t exist. I have not found it. I questioned history. I questioned the living and the dead. I visited the cemeteries; no one spoke to me of it… One can’t build on the wind. No outsider believes seriously in our nationalism. What we really seek behind this world is our economic and political emancipation. Without the emancipation of the indigenous inhabitants there can be no lasting French Algeria.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}


The leader of the Islamic movement in Algeria, Bin Badis who came to a different conclusion, challenged this statement:

We have searched in history and in the present and we have undeniably established that the Algerian Muslim nation is formed and exists as other nations of the world. We say that this Algerian nation is not France, cannot be France, and doesn’t wish to be with France. It is impossible that it be France, even if it wished assimilation.15

A world lay between those two Algerian schools of thought. The first school represented by Ferhat Abbas, which might be classified as a secularist or intergrationist, advocated the notion that Algeria was a part of France and that it should adopt the Western way of life. The second school represented by Bin Badis called for a return to Islam, Arab nationalism and complete independence from France. Bin Badis summarized his ideas in this slogan, “Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my country.” The clash between those two schools of thought began then, and has not ended. Both schools remained strongly influential in Algerian society after independence. The twenty-eight years of stability from 1962 to 1990 could be considered a truce between those schools. Therefore, the present conflict in Algeria is partly the legacy of the clash of views. The only motive for minimizing the clash or the tension between those schools was the existence of an external enemy, at that time, the brutality of the French Colonists. The absence of such an enemy after independence makes it very difficult for them to co-exist peacefully.

15 Ibid., 34.
Messali Hadj, a member of the French Communist Party, headed the third National Resistance Movement. Messali believed Muslim workers should adopt working class virtues to fight colonialism. Messali established the North African Star Revolutionary Party, which was the first secular party to be established in Algeria in 1924. This party was created to mobilize the workers at home and in France to improve material conditions through political action. However, Messali’s Communist Party was not able to gain Algerians’ trust or to build a real sense of class-consciousness among the workers. In fact, the struggle was not between the proletarian and the bourgeois, but rather between the oppressed and the oppressor, the conqueror and the conquered.  

Frantz Fanon, who is considered the Prophet of the Algerian revolution is a good witness to the role of the Algerian Communist Party, he wrote:

> The Algerian people have not forgotten that the French Communist Party, at the beginning of the armed revolution in Algeria, denounced it as a nationalist and reactionary movement. The party continued to insist that Algeria was part of France.... Nor they have forgotten those who give lip service to the revolution while in practice supporting Messali Hadj, an instrument of French imperialism who called himself a socialist."

However, to give the Algerian Party its credit, one should admit that the importance of the party lies in the fact, that members of one of its organizations were eventually responsible for launching the war in Algeria later on.

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16 As in other Arab countries, the Communist Parties failed to get the popular support as they used to follow the line of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union.

17 Fanon Frantz, *A Dying Colonialism*, 10.
The three previous nationalist movements kept on struggling with different tactics in accordance with their ideologies. However, when political means seemed ineffective, they decided to adopt violence, since in a world where oppression is maintained by violence from above, it is only possible to terminate it with violence from below.\(^\text{18}\)

**The War of Independence (1956-1962)**

The Algerian people adopted a new tactic, which was an armed insurrection. The French authorities suppressed it, but this time it was a revolution led by an organized group called, The National Liberation Front (FLN).

In 1954, a Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action was organized by nine major figures, Mohammed Boudiaf, Moustapha Boulaïd, Mourad Didouche, Belkacem Krim, Rabah Bitat, Larbi Ben Mahdi, Ahmed Ben Bella, Hocine Aït Ahmed, and Mohammed Khider. They had certain things in common. All came from poor families, all were in their late twenties or early thirties. All were ex-French army soldiers and most of them had served time in French prisons. The most important common characteristic was that they lived in small towns or villages, which put most of them in closer touch with the interests and attitudes of the rural people, than with the typical big city politician. So, it is not surprising that after independence they adopted socialism as a way of life.\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 5

\(^{19}\) Ruedy, 157.
After several months of preparation during 1954, a military organization was established. On November 1st, the National Liberation Front, with its fighting arm, the National Liberation Army (NLA) replaced the Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action, and issued a proclamation calling on all Algerians to rise and fight for freedom. The revolution had begun. Their goal was to achieve, "National independence, through the restoration of the sovereign, democratic, and social Algerian state with the framework of Islamic principles. The respect of basic liberties without distinction as to race or religion." 20

To establish a social Algerian State within the framework of Islamic principles was a difficult goal. It was like a marriage between Islam and Communism. However, the leaders of the revolution, in order to achieve such goals, urged the Algerian people to continue to struggle by all means until their goals were achieved.

War is the friend of revolution. As the revolution had begun, all the means of war became legal, including terrorism. All the members of the Algerian society became involved in the revolution. It is worth mentioning that the Algerian women played an indispensable role in that revolution. Frantz Fanon described part of the role that they played:

The Algerian woman became wholly and deliberately immersed in the revolutionary action. It was she who would carry in her bag the grenades and the revolvers that a fidai would take from her at the last moment.

20 Ibid., 159-160.
before the bar, or as a designated criminal passed. During this period, Algerians caught in the European City (in Algeria) were pitilessly challenged, arrested, and searched.21

Women played an important role in the liberation war, serving as couriers, in intelligence work, in underground combat and in many other aspects of the struggle. The demand was full independence as a step in the direction of equality for the sexes. They demanded elimination of the veil, a symbol of inferiority and backwardness. Unfortunately, after independence, women found it even more difficult than before to get jobs, to receive education, and they found themselves up against a wall of male prejudice at every turn.

The period from 1954 to 1962 marked the Algerian Revolution, with violence and brutality on both sides. It was a holy war according to the Algerian side. That is why the Algerian warriors were called “Mujahideen”. Jihad became an individual obligation for the warriors, because the enemy had invaded Islamic territory. The word “Jihad” is capable of evoking intense emotions and so as the war broke out, those Algerian Mujahideen received much support from all over the Arab and Islamic world.22 Moreover, the independence of Algeria’s neighboring countries, Morocco and Tunisia helped the Algerian revolution as a source of both weapons and rebel forces.

21 Faraj, 169.

22 Egypt was among the Arab countries that supported the Algerian Revolution and so France joined Britain and Israel in invading Egypt in 1956, as France had a score to settle with Nassir for his assistance to the Algerian rebels.
Though the French used the full weight of their modern army against the liberation movement, only they were able to control much of the country by day. The rebels controlled half of it by night. Despite the military impotence of the revolutionaries in comparison to the French, they were able to challenge France, and inflict a high political cost. Because of its resort to torture, the war was intentionally publicized. The Algerian revolution later became a model for most revolutions in the third world.

Under such pressures and the threat of the National Liberation Army, the French authorities under De Gaulle’s leadership decided in 1960 to offer Algeria self-government, but it took another two years of struggle to implement that decision due to the opposition of the military in France. The conflict and violence did not end until the declaration of formal independence in July 1962. Algeria was declared independent following 132 years of French colonial rule after a bitter eight-years of war, in which more than one million Algerian Muslims lost their lives.

Unfortunately, generations later, even before the Algerian people have forgotten the memories of this war, they have had to fight a second war. Ironically, some of those who inspire and lead the current war are the same loyal fighters who served the FLN. The repressive military actions of the government against the Islamists in the current war could be seen as reminiscent of the military force used by the French colonial authorities against the nationalists during the war of independence, as it will be discussed in detail in chapters four and five of this study.
CHAPTER III

THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

The Post Independence Period

The period from 1962-1988 represents the breeding ground for the current crisis in Algeria. The dramatic failure of the countries successive leaders since 1962 will be detailed in the first part of this chapter. The Algerian people gained independence, but it was incomplete. France continued maintaining an influential presence in Algeria. France created a group of pro-France natives (Francophiles) whose interests and privileges were connected with the French presence in Algeria. After independence, they advocated that Algeria maintains special ties and relations with France. When these Francophiles came to power after independence, they steered the country as if it was still a French colony. This phenomenon is not only in Algeria, but it can be observed in all the former Arab French colonies including Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon. In all of these countries, there were forces pulling the people in different directions at the same time. There are those that believed to establish their own identity the links with the East must be strengthened and that they should connect themselves with the Arab world and its religion, language, culture, and future. There are others who feel that the ties with Paris are stronger than those with Cairo and Damascus, and they considered the efforts towards
the Arabization or Islamization of the society as a step back into a dead past.¹ However, the clash, which started with French occupation, was not the only clash after independence. Another clash, which is more visible and more dangerous, is, the clash between the institution of the military and the rest of the society. It was a struggle for power between the military juntas and the civilians. Factionalism and deep-seated antagonism between those two groups started shortly after independence and has continued up to the present. The struggle for power began between Ben Bella and Colonel Houari Boumdien. In September 1962, elections for the National Assembly were held, the assembly elected Ben Bella president and empowered him to form a government in which Boumdien became defense minister. Others were chosen from the Algerian Army and the National Liberation Front.²

The government devised a political and economic program based on socialist ideology. This was a national plan for the transformation from a colonial to a socialist economy. The results of the huge differences between the modern and traditional elite, the latter supported by the mass of people who continued to identify unswervingly with Islam and its religious symbols, in addition to the severe shortage of qualified personnel and the inability to comprehend the principles of self management. The problems


² Entelis, 86-87.
generated by experimental socialism were many and later led to economic decline. In fact, the eight-year war and the exodus of the French workers produced severe economic strains in an already weakened country. In Ben Bella’s words:

Everyone remembers the situation we inherited. Everything was deserted; communications centers, prefectures, and even the administration so vital to the country. When I entered the prefecture of Oran, I personally found just seven employees instead of the 500 who had previously worked there. The departure of the French attained a proportion of 80 percent even 90 to 98 percent in some technical services such as the highway departments. And to that you must add the loss of all statistical records bumped or stolen.  

The constitution created a presidential regime with the FLN as the sole political party. Ben Bella assumed the title of Military Commander in Chief while becoming Head of State, Head of Government and the Secretary General of the FLN. The relationship between the competing groups of the state, the party and the army was not defined. The consolidation of personnel power and the apparent move towards a dictatorial government aroused suspicion and opposition as expressed in factionalism.

In 1964, the long awaited Congress was held to sort out the ideological differences among different groups within the ruling establishment. The congress precipitated the feud between Ben Bella and Boumedien. Ben Bella lost, once the army turned against him, he was left powerless, vulnerable and was then ousted from power.

3 Ottoway, 10.

Boumedien relied on the veterans of the war of independence for support, and there was little attempt to resuscitate national political life. The Algerian National Assembly remained buoyant while the FLN was moribund. In fact, the belief in a continuing revolution, as stated in the constitution, did not create any place or time to talk about issues like democracy, development and human rights. The lack of political representation and popular participation in Boumedien's rule helped create a stable political regime, but at the expense of public participation in the political process. In 1976, a new constitution was adopted and approved by the National Popular Assembly. According to the constitution, Boumedien as president became head of state, head of government, commander in chief of the armed forces, head of national defense and head of the FLN, which enhanced institutional power. The government consisted of the president's men who were loyal and obedient.5

Boumedien’s sudden illness and death in 1978 left the country without a designated successor. A special congress of the FLN convened to select a candidate. The congress chose Colonel Chadli Benjedid, a senior military officer as presidential candidate. This choice reflected the pre-eminence of the military office corps as a predominant political force in Algerian political life.

The new president came to power with considerable popular support, but soon he lost it by his failure to control the armed forces and its intervention in political life. His failure in making the FLN an efficient mass party alienated the regime from its supporters and its people. From 1979-1988, the political system turned the country’s instruments of modernization (schools, universities, media, communication, etc.) into agencies of dictatorship.\(^6\)

Since independence in 1962 to 1988, the three regimes that ruled Algeria shared the following characteristics, which are traits of totalitarianism and authoritarianism:

1. A single elite party (FLN) led by the president, and the mobilization of all political parties.
2. A technological monopoly under the control of all means of mass communication and all means of armed combat.
3. A policing system of terrorism that employs modern torture. Also, a holding of suspicions that behind every door are plotters.
4. A control and direction of the economy through bureaucratic coordination between the military juntas and the political elite.
5. Sets of suffuse ideas rather than a full-blown ideology that covers various aspects of existence and ensures order, discipline, loyalty, and obedience.\(^7\)

However, the dictatorial regime did not prevent the mass from resisting injustice, corruption and authoritarianism as it happened in 1988.

In general, it can be said that later, after the rise of the FLN and during the years of independence, it failed in making the dreams of Algerian people come true. Therefore,

\(^6\) Ruedy, 207-210.

\(^7\) Howard, Wiarda J., Introduction to Comparative Politics (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 104-105.
its legitimacy was buried in the sands of inefficiency, disorganization, and corruption.

This failure of the FLN was clear from its very loose structure and organization.

Membership was based as much on alliances and friendship as on political qualifications.

David and Marian Ottaway described the FLN’s weak control of the party units in the following words:

The typical small town official was a young man dressed in a French cut suit and Italian pointed shoes, hiding behind dark glasses and posing as an intellectual. Such officials were more interested in playing politics than in stimulating local initiative or mobilizing the people. As a consequence, they were generally not respected by the people and were often at odds with the local administrators, whose activities they usually tried to control.8

Therefore, it was not surprising for the Algerian mass to discredit such a party. The longer the FLN stayed in power the more it was seen as dishonest and inefficient. By 1988, it had been completely discredited and had run out of gas. These are the main internal reasons for the failure of the FLN. To be objective, the external reasons are also significant. The situation, in Algeria, might be explained as part of the general failure of most Third World national movements. They were destroyed by the affects of imperialism, capitalism, and neo-colonialism. However, domestic factors also contributed in their failure.

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8 Ottaway, 116.
Islamic Fundamentals vs. Military Juntas' Extremism:

Algeria is one of the richest countries in Africa, in natural resources (oil, gas reserves, and other materials) in addition to agricultural wealth and most importantly human resources. Politically speaking it has the richest revolutionary heritage, as its revolution became a model for Third World revolutions against colonialism. After independence, the political system adopted nationalism and socialism as a legitimizer for some rather authoritarian, even miserable regimes.

During the struggle, there was little agreement on policy beyond the goal of independence. There were differences between the urban radicals, the bourgeois nationalists, the leaders of the tribes and the religious Arab intellectuals who wanted to maintain the old Islamic traditions. Even those leaders who considered themselves socialists, spoke of socialism only in a broad general sense. For example, the ideas of the first Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella were summed up in his statements, “I am a believer in socialism, short of Marxism” and “No socialism without Arabization.”

Economically, the political system had done so poorly that the country had come under the control of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The WB and IMF became omnipotent, imposing new imperialist powers on the country through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The total external debt in 1984 was

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9 Gorden, 105.
$14,766,000,000 and the debt service ratio was an onerous 32.8. This number almost doubled in five years as it stood at $25,041,000,000 in 1988. Unemployment grew to an estimated 25 percent.\textsuperscript{10}

The military juntas did not only spoil the country’s economy, but also this oppressive regime abused human rights and failed to make a transition towards democracy or even show any signs of wanting to do so. Instead, they used the power of the state to dominate and terrorize people. They exploited the resources of the country to fulfill their interests. At the end of each month, they collected their salaries and enjoyed other privileges, while the masses were deprived of their basic needs. The elite was enjoying the fruits of the country while the masses suffered from the thorns.

In general, the leadership was Islamically uncommitted as they turned to the West for guidance in politics, economics, law and education. Nationally, indigenous and domestic colonizers were responsible for the backwardness, exploitation and Westernization of the Muslim society. This phenomenon prevailed in the Islamic world. Princeton historian Bernard Lewis wrote:

\begin{quote}
As the Muslim fundamentalists see it, the community of Islam has been led into error by foreign infidels and Muslim apostates, the latter being more dangerous and destructive. Under their guidance or constraint Muslims abandoned the laws and principles of their faith and instead adopted secular that is to say, pagan laws and values. All these foreign
\end{quote}

ideologies – liberalism, socialism, and even nationalism – that set Muslim against Muslim are evil, and the Muslim world is now suffering the inevitable consequences of forsaking the God-given law and way of life that were vouchsafed to it.\textsuperscript{11}

Therefore, Algerian Muslims as well as other Muslims all over the world were subjugated and underdeveloped as they had cut themselves off from their principle source of strength. The answer to those problems is to return to the roots, to re-Islamize the society, Islam is the solution and Muslims must resume the greater role of Islam:

If Muslims want to get out of all the situation they are in, what they must do, is, join forces, believe sincerely in God (He is exalted), act in accordance with God’s book and the teachings of his Messenger, take their matters firmly in hand as a preparation for fighting, mobilize themselves for struggle and offer themselves as a sacrifice for their religion and their land.\textsuperscript{12}

The answer to this crisis is to go back to the roots, to the glorious past of Islam, and so to apply Islamic law and re-Islamize the society. Islam is not just a religion, but it is a total way of life. This totalistic character of the faith made many academics, commentators and policy analysts in Western circles argue that democracy is not compatible with Islam as it promoted political submission. Bernard Lewis, one of the brilliant American Middle East experts wrote:

Islamic law knows no corporate legal persons; Islamic history shows no council or communes, no synods or parliaments, nor any other kind of


elective or representative assembly. It is interesting that the jurists never accepted the principle of majority decision — there was no point, since the need for a procedure of corporate collective decision never arose.\(^{13}\)

So many intellectuals in the Arab and Islamic World share this Western attitude. The Moroccan socialist Fatima Memissi has devoted a whole book to the relationship between Islam and democracy. In it she shows that in Islam there is a fear of democracy, a fear of freedom of thought, a fear of individualism, a fear of the West, and a fear of all components of modernity. Fatima Memissi considered Islam the only religion in which reason has no place. “Islam is probably the only monotheistic religion in which scholarly exploration is systematically discouraged, if not forbidden, since rational analysis wouldn’t serve the purposes of the despots.”\(^{14}\)

In fact, the Islamists have a different approach to democracy, human rights, international relations, etc... from the so-called modern approach. There is no concept of democracy in Islam, but there is a similar concept called, “Shora”, which means consultation. According to this principle, the ruler or “Imam” that acts as a shadow of God upon earth should not make arbitrary decision by himself. On the contrary, he should act only after consulting with “Ahel Al-hal Wal Ouked”, the suitably qualified

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advisors. These differences between Islamic concepts and the Western approach are not
the main source of the so-called conflict between the West and the Islamic world:
Muslims in general feel, that the West has little understanding of the aspirations of the
Muslim world. There is a divergence or even conflict between the wishes of the Muslim
people and the ideas and policies of their political regimes. Regimes which try to project
themselves as secular and liberal. These regimes all have the support of the West, even
though they suppress their people and have a scandalous record on human rights. The
support of Western countries for such domestically unpopular regimes further alienates
the people, not only from their domestic despotic regimes, but also from the West whom
they regard as the mentors and protectors of such regimes. Therefore, the violence that
has tainted the behavior of Islamic movements (in Algeria, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Saudi
Arabia, etc.) is a reaction to the structural violence and terror unleashed by Western
supported secular regimes against their own people.

Moreover, there are certain links among various components of the Islamic
movements. The Islamic Republic of Iran inspired and promoted a network of shia
activists in Lebanon. The establishment of the Hizb Allah or Party of God was the first
step towards an Islamic republic in Lebanon. Hizb Allah received much political support
from Iran because this party is in line with the Iranian strategy of exporting Islamic
revolution and establishing Islamic republics wherever possible. The Muslim
brotherhood and several Islamic groups in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria were
organizationally and intellectually linked to the Islamic movements in Iraq, Saudi-Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia, and Algeria.\textsuperscript{15}

The Algerian conflict resulted from the Algerian people attempting to return to an Islamic way of running their political and economic affairs. The victory of the Islamic Salvation Front was presented as fundamental and fanatical. It showed that a rejection of Western powers and ideals that the West seeks to impose on all societies. To the Muslims, the Western attitude is against Islam and Muslims. Ironically, the promotion of democracy is emphasized as one of the political policy objectives of Western countries particularly, America, Britain, and France. The denial of democracy and the reversal of electoral process in Algeria is accepted as a “defense of liberalism”.

Countries in the Muslim world whose system of government is dictatorial and tyrannical, but who pursues Western political lines are “friends” as has been the case with Syria which was a terrorist state before the Gulf War. The former Defense Secretary and CIA Chief James Schlesinger spoke openly when he was asked about the case:

Whether we seriously desire to prescribe democracy as the proper form of government for other societies. Perhaps the issue is most clearly posed in the Islamic world. Do we seriously want to change the institutions in Saudi Arabia? The brief answer is no, over the years we have sought to preserve those institutions, sometimes in preference to more democratic forces coursing throughout the region.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Joel Benin and Joe Stock, Political Islam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 136-143.

The West and the United States in particular, with its media and congress constantly denouncing human rights violations in countries like China, but do not express the similar sense of horror when the regime of Algeria represses its own people. This double standard fails to prick the conscience of the advocates of democracy in the West.

Thus, the fundamental reason for the present conflict in Algeria is the contradiction between a corrupt police state governed by the Western agents and an Islamic group that voices the aspirations of the masses. The Islamic groups promise to sever the foreign, bourgeois ideological fetters that aim to the people of Algeria in the state of repression and natural oppression.

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) promised to help people of Algeria to escape the pains of their corrupt, exploitative, and repressive world and enter a world of justice and happiness. Unlike the National Liberation Front party which failed to mobilize people, the newly established party FIS was able to reach the people in Algeria: in schools, hospitals, unions, neighborhood grocery stores, and most importantly, in the Mosques. The Mosque as a religious institution served as a sanctuary for the FIS.

Poverty provides a fertile ground and a warm climate for all radical thought. It is a common denominator in the Middle East. So is profound faith, a general sense of inferiority towards the West or the North, and a historical understanding that once upon a time during the golden age of Islam, the positions were reversed. Millions of poor people in Algeria who had dreamed of wealth, equality, education, and liberty were targeted by
the FIS, which promised a new, more prosperous, stable and egalitarian system. In fact, not only in Algeria, but also in most Islamic societies, the least economically privileged appear more religious than the most privileged. The religious institutions, especially the mosque, used to serve as a succor for the most deprived. As it is mentioned before, the mosque became the fortified position of the FIS, it was used to mobilize and recruit the poor who had nothing to lose. The FIS became their voice in a corrupt state where the fortunes of a few came from the exploitation of many.

The FIS used religious rhetoric to translate social discontent into political terms. The FIS as a political party has an Islamic agenda that will be implemented upon their arrival to power. Its success or failure will be decided by its ability to deliver the goods, mainly meaning economic opportunity. As King Hassan of Morocco once said:

Religion is not enough to run a country, Iran’s clerics, facing public discontent, including food riots, over their handling of the economy have had to move toward major changes in domestic and foreign policy aimed at stimulating the economy. Had the Algerian elections been allowed to proceed, we would have seen the FIS at work. Their failure could have led to the emergence of new secular opposition groups.17

The military juntas did not accept the suggestion of the Moroccan king. They put the cart before the horse and canceled the election. The FIS was not given a chance to work. If it was given that chance, it might have had the same outcome of the Iranian revolution in which, the mullah failed to create the new society of the perfect Muslim

17 Leon T. Hadar, 38.
man. If the FIS would have taken power and failed, the dream would collapse and that failure might have discredited the Islamic groups in other parts of the Islamic world. Instead, the cancellation of the elections in Algeria and violent political repression has only enhanced the popularity of the FIS. Also, the situation has helped to radicalize the FIS, leading to more confrontation and violence.

Thus, the conflict is between a popular Islamic group armed with its Islamic ideology or agenda (to deal with the mundane social and economic problems of Algeria) and a group of military juntas with a vision, but not an ideology. Their goal is to continue the same policies at any price even at the expense of the society that would lead to their destruction. It is not by any means a war between religious fundamentalist and freedom protectors as freedom and democracy is only pretexts for these false issues.

Finally, in a time of increasing economic distress, poverty, social dislocation, and political humiliation, the response will be violence, terror, and the struggle for justice, equality and dignity. These issues will be detailed in the following part, which explains the proximate cause for the struggle.

The Proximate Causes

After discussing the fundamental cause for the Algerian conflict, the focus will shift to the secondary causes. The secondary causes are actually the natural outcome of the fundamental cause. The three secondary causes overlap together with the primary cause: 1. Political, 2. Social, and 3. Economic.
Political Crisis

The National Liberation Front in Algeria lost its legitimacy and at the same time, lost everyone that believed in it. The revolution and the liberation were the major sources of political legitimacy since the time of independence. The rising popularity of the Islamic Salvation Front was at the expense of the declining FLN. Also, the degree of discontent increased along with protestations, and also, the increased protestations and discontent as a result of the failure of the state in running all the sectors of the economy. Moreover, corruption had spread in the bureaucracies of the state and chances for reform looked grim. The prestige had evaporated. The failure of the single party system was brought into public view. Unhappy days came after the independence:

The FLN no longer attracted a large following as new citadels of power arose in the army, labor unions and civil bureaucracy. The overwhelming majority of Algerians gave evidence or disillusionment, retreating often into sheer apathy, concerning themselves primarily with the pressing needs of food and work. The countries younger generations, unable to compete with the war veterans for preferred positions within the FLN, sought escape to France or other forms of detachment from the schismatic politics of their elders.\(^\text{18}\)

The FLN declined soon after independence as no agreement was reached between the leaders of the organization on policy beyond the goal of independence. After achieving independence, special privileges were reserved for the political elite. On one hand, the elite were unwilling to sacrifice or even work for the system. On the other hand,

\(^{18}\) Lewis, "The Decline of Algeria’s FLN," 168.
the bitter Algerian people had a sense of powerlessness. This created two societies in the same state and civil war was an inevitable result. The FIS soon became the savior of the wretched of Algeria.

After twenty-five years of being in power as the sole ruling party, the liberators of Algeria failed to meet the ambitions and aspirations of the Algerian people in the fields of development, unity, solidarity, and democracy. Moreover, the Algerian people saw them as their enslavers. Accordingly, their popularity declined and they were pressed to give way to reform.

By allowing for political plurality, they lost their legitimacy, and since they were not apt to abandon their privileges and interests, they clasped to power with their teeth and nails, refusing free and fair elections. Moreover, they claimed that they moved to protect democracy from violent Islamic fundamentalists. In fact, the military junta showed no signs of relinquishing its grip on power, as they wanted to continue living in ease and luxury.

**Economic Crisis**

While the government was wallowing in corruption, repression, and economic stagnation: oil prices declined in 1985. A period of belt tightening and hard work lay ahead for everyone. With the Algerian economy highly dependent on exporting oil, time was running out. The price of crude oil had fallen below $10 for a barrel, so the economic crisis had begun. The basic items rose and the standard of living declined. At
the same time, the political elite enjoyed the privileges and gained more power and wealth instead of working towards reform. The result was:

1. The increase of the external debt to $25 billion.  
2. The increase of unemployment which rose to 25 percent, especially among the youth.  
3. The ignorance and inefficiency in the agricultural field.  

Social discontent and sense of injustice that encouraged disobedience and led to riots and demonstrations.

Accordingly, to meet the economic demands of Algeria, the regime took refuge with the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Those financial organizations conditioned their loans in the Structural Adjustments Programs (SAPs). Those conditions called for an opening of the country for foreign investments to privatize the economy and to cancel the governmental support for basic needs and many other conditions.

The implementation of such recommendations resulted in economic pressure on the lower class, which constitutes 75% of the Algerian people and so led to mass revolt. This revolution, which was called “The events of October 1988”, was the direct consequence of dissatisfaction with the regime and its policies. The Islamic movement had exploited those events and was capable of mobilizing thousands of supporters after those events. Before “the events of October 1988”, the Islamic movement had been

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largely confined to the fringe of Algerian public life. In the 1990 elections, the FIS proved to be the largest popular political organization in Algeria and won 54% of the popular vote, compared to 28% of the FLN. This victory of the FIS was not only a rejection of Western values imported by colonialism and its collaborators, it was a return to religion to re-appropriate modernity. Also, it was a penalty and revenge of the FLN after its years of power.22

The Social Crisis

The social changes Algeria was going through in the 1980s were immense. Increasingly, its ideology and political system were unable to keep pace. The authoritarian regime banned Islamic parties, while it acknowledged Islam in its constitution. Algeria was basically regarded as a hard line socialist state, firmly controlled by a secular leadership. There was a generation gap between the old ruling elite (veterans) still in power and the younger generation, who wanted to inherit their cushy government positions. Those who had a sense of powerlessness sought escape to their second home in France. There was a second, even greater gap between the callers for secularism, modernity, democracy, and greater freedom. These callers are considered to be the descendants of Ferhat Abbas. The called for Islamization, Arabization, and

Reformation, and are classified as the sons of Bin Badis. The first stream is represented by two different political powers, which are the military juntas and ethnic groups in Algeria known as Berbers. The military juntas claimed to be against Islamic fundamentalism and they justified their intervention by claiming that they moved to protect the newly born democracy. However, they intervened to protect their privileges and to avoid being trailed for their past corruption and their human rights abuse. While the second group in the same stream which is represented by the ethnic group (Berber) who are African Muslims, but not Arabs. They supported the transition toward democracy, but resisted policies of Arabization. They called for using their own ethnic language as an official language as Arabic and French.

The second stream is represented by the Islamists who explain the decline of the society and the state by adopting false secular policies and deviating from the right path which is Islam, not the religion of Lenin in socialist Algeria. The Islamists plan to seize power and re-Islamicize the society and the state by implementing Islamic law (Sharia). The Islamists promised the people paradise, but events proved that they offered hell, as it will be detailed in the impact of the war in chapter five of this study.

In closing, it is clear that the rise of the Islamic movement in Algeria as well as in other Arab countries is a reactionary response to the deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions. The tyranny of the state over civil society is a central cause of the
widespread sense of deep despair and alienation in the Arab world. Halim Barakat wrote:

The vacuum created by the failure of Arab nationalism and Arab socialism seems to have encouraged certain segments of the middle class and the lower middle class to resort to an old political weapon. Other conditions have contributed to the revival of Arab religious fundamentalism as a political movement: enduring economic crises, social economic, distorted modernization, deliberate manipulation and even sponsorship of religious movements by some governments, and tyranny of the state over civil society.²⁴

As the days went by, the situation in Algeria became more and more complicated and rebellious. And so it is a challenge for any politician to identify the key issues of the crisis. The government is capable of terrorizing, oppressing, and attacking the Islamic movements, but at the same time, the government is unable to insure stability and order in the country. Moreover, the governmental terror and repression have intimidated Algerians of varying political persuasions from becoming politically involved. With regard to the Islamic movements: they are capable of escalating violence. They show the weakness of the state, but at the same time, they are unable to seize power and control of the country. Therefore, the violence and the ability of both parts to keep fighting is more than to negotiate, to compromise and to settle the situation to put an end to the war or to end the political stalemate. Violence becoming epidemic has diminished legitimacy in the eyes of many Algerians, of those who govern them. The continued violence has proven that no one can hold or remain in power by force.

With regard to the parts of the conflict, there are primary actors that are divided into internal and international parts. The secondary actors or participants are only internal. Concerning the major internal actors, the lights are focused on three, including
the Armed Forces, the National Liberation Front, and the Islamic Salvation Front. France, the United States and Iran are classified as major international actors.

The situation is more complicated when it comes to the secondary actors. For example, the number of political parties in Algeria number more than forty with different powers and deployment in Algeria. There are also organizations that play a part in the political life of Algeria. However, the well-known internal actors in Algeria are the following: The movement for an Islamic society, the movement of Islamic Renaissance, the Social Front, the Democratic Movement, and the Presidency. The following pages will detail the role of each actor in the crisis.

The Internal Primary Actors:

1. The Armed Forces:

The military institution plays a major role in Algeria due to its role in the nationalist movement and the revolution. So it has a major influence on the political life in Algeria. However, military intervention in politics is not a phenomenon unique to Algeria, but is an epidemic in the whole continent of Africa. Claude Welch analyzed the significant factors that helped to promote military intervention, which can be applied in the case of Algeria, such factors include:

- Declining prestige of the major political parties.
- Corruption and inefficiency of government and party officials, corruption especially noticeable under conditions of economic decline.
- Heightened awareness within the army of its power to influence or displace political leaders.¹

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the National Liberation Front as the sole party in Algeria lost its prestige and legitimacy, while the economic crisis was the natural outcome of corruption.

In the Algerian crisis, the armed forces were the dominant group and the role of the government was not more than a reaction to the Armed Forces' actions. In this crisis, the Armed Forces do not only support the government, but also form the source of its legitimacy. The growing role of the Armed Forces came at the expense of the civil authority (the government) to a degree that there is a military government in a civil uniform. The Armed Forces can be classified as the anti-democratic elements in Algeria. After the declaration of the state of emergency, the Armed Forces became involved in open direct confrontation with the Islamic Movement.

In other words, the war turned out to be between military fundamentalists and Islamic fundamentalists. The pretext or justification for the military intervention was to protect democracy. That protection is achieved by the exclusion of the Islamic movement from participation in political life: "Since the creation of the FIS, it had been perceived by the army as a particularly dangerous political challenger, which if it gained power would put an end to the army's reign, and in doing that, would also end its privileges." 2

Actually, the Armed Forces in Algeria since the independence has been controlled by secular pro-finance (Francophile) elements, and has received its training and assistance from France and is very connected with it. Therefore, they will lose their

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privileges and interests if they allow anti-France authorities in power. This relationship between the imperialist powers and the old colonies is not associated only with Algeria, but with all the third world countries. It is called, "Neo-Colonialism" in the third world literature, which is maintaining the control and dominance of the imperialist powers over the newly independent countries through economic, social and cultural instruments that replace the traditional instruments of direct colonization by military powers.³

The pro-France (Francophile) elements are not only in the Armed Forces, they are everywhere as the list contains doctors, barristers, traders, general agents and transport agents who step into the shoes of France. This elite is the collaborating class in Neo-Colonialism. Frantz Fanon put it this way, “the historic mission of this elite is to put on the mask of Neo-Colonialism and play their role as Western agents.”⁴

In the Algerian situation, the Armed Forces and France are the only ones who oppose dialogue with the Islamists. The position of the Armed Forces might also be explained by their fear of being trailed for their past corruption and crimes against the Algerian people.

2. The National Liberation Front (FLN)

The National Liberation Front (FLN) was the sole party in Algeria since independence and so it became the source of political leadership in Algeria. Its legitimacy came from its historical role in revolution and liberation. However, the FLN


⁴ Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1963), 121-149.
of 1962 is not the same as that of 1990, in that, the FLN after independence was unified, congenial consisting of historical leadership that struggles for independence. The current FLN suffered from a lot of troubles such as: A huge gap between the leadership and the mass members, failure in running the different aspects of political and economic life in Algeria and most importantly, massive corruption at the level of leadership:

On one famous occasion, a former prime minister accused his predecessors of having stolen $26 billion, the belief took place hold that Algeria would have been spared most of its economic hardship if only corrupt politicians had not robbed the country over the years. It did not help much when the incumbent Prime Minister denied the accusation, saying that the true figure was closer to $1 billion.\(^5\)

The FLN's monopoly of power was at the expense of the participation of other political groups in society that might check and account so as to prevent or lessen the massive corruption. The FLN lost its credibility and legitimacy, politically speaking the procedures of seizing power after independence were unconstitutional, but it was a kind of general consensus that the members of the FLN would be the legal leaders of Algeria after independence. With its poor achievements as a ruling party, the Algerian people began to remember that they have no choice but to have their own ruling party. In the first parliamentary elections in the history of the country in 1990, the FLN won only 28 percent of the votes. Such failure cannot be explained only as victory of the FIS with 54 percent of the votes, but rather it was a penalty for the FLN.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Ruedy, 253.
After the defeat of the FLN, its members began to realize that they are no longer members of a desired party or legitimate group, so they began to resign and withdraw from the FLN. Even the Algerian president Chadili Bendjedid resigned from the FLN and presented himself as an independent who has no political affiliation. His successor, the Secretary General of the FLN, Mr. Abdul-Hamid Mahri led a new policy in the FLN by presenting the party as a pillar of opposition to the government. Moreover, Al-Mahri signed the “Document of Rome” which is considered an Islamic document imposed by the FIS as it called for the resignation of the government and the formation of a new constitutional government which is based on pluralistic power shared between the Islamic movement and other streams.\(^7\)

With the failure of the FLN to challenge the FIS, the military regime decided to create a new FLN, the National Democratic Rally (RND). The RND is the military junta’s favorite party that won the elections in 1997.\(^8\) The creation of the RND by the military junta meant issuing a death certificate to the FLN, though it still plays a marginalized role in Algerian political life.

3. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS)

The birth of the FIS came after a series of secret meetings held by a small circle of sympathizers in 1989, after the adoption of a new constitution. The new constitution


opened the way to a multi-party state thus, authorizing associations with political character. The idea of creating a religious political party occurred in the mind of Sheikh Al-Hachemi Sahnoumi (a very popular blind preacher) who communicated it to Ali Belhaj and Medani Abbassi whom applauded the idea.⁹

A few months later, the FIS was founded and was legalized in September 1989. Algeria became the first country in North Africa to open the gate for the Islamists if they accepted the rules of the political game as stated by president Chadili:

The activities of the Islamist party are submitted to precise rules. If they respect them, we cannot forbid them. We are Muslims and it is important for us to encourage Islam in its just conception, not the pseudo Islam of myths and extremism.... For our part, it is not conceivable to apply democracy to communists and to deprive the current, which preaches spiritual belonging. Democracy cannot be selective.¹⁰

The FIS quickly emerged as a major force capable of mobilizing large number of supporters. The secret of the success and popularity of the newly established political party can be summarized in such a manner:

1. The FIS’s vision of the Islamic model is an alternative to the FLN’s vision, which produced failure and destruction. The FIS’s slogan in the election was “Islam is the Solution”. The strength of this slogan comes from their moral stance, not from the realism of their plans for the future.

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⁹ Dowell, 273.

¹⁰ Ibid., 274.
2. Its ability to manipulate Islamic symbols for political propaganda. In this case, the address on Fridays, and other religions occasions were used successfully for political purposes. The Mosques became the vehicles of the FIS. In a country, which has more than 9,000 Mosques, it is not surprising that the FIS became a very effective and well-organized political party.\footnote{Ruedy, 53.} In the Mosque, the preachers no longer deal with how to pray or fast, but they searched for a method by which they could establish an Islamic state. The Mosque became an important center in expressing the discontent of the unemployed, disenfranchised people, who felt that they were at the bottom of the social structure and on the receiving end of some terrible things.\footnote{Newsweek, (March 15, 1993): 34.}

3. Its charismatic leadership and the nomination of the FIS to young leaders between 20-35, who received a higher education. The two main leaders of the FIS are Abbassi Madni and Ali Belhaj. Madni joined the FLN in the 1950s and he spent most of the war in prison. He was released after the independence, he is a highly education person as he received a Ph.D. from London University. He was arrested in 1982 after participating in an Islamist demonstration. Abbassi was released in 1984 and Madni became the president of the FIS.\footnote{Piscatori, James, Ed., Islamic Fundamentalism and the Gulf Crisis (Chicago, Illinois: The Fundamentalist Project American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991) 135.} The second leader, Ali Belhaj, was born an orphan in 1956. Belhaj is a well-known preacher with a very theatrical eloquence that Madni
lacks. Belhaj represents the younger generation of the FIS. The second level of leadership in the FIS is filled with educated professionals like lawyers, doctors, and academics that run modern institutions such as schools, hospitals, and businesses. In these institutions, the FIS members offered distinguished services that respond to the needs of the Algerian people. However, the previous conditions alone could not ensure the success of the FIS without the weakness and failure of its encounter, the FLN.

The confrontation with the governmental Armed Forces started after the cancellation of the elections and with the arrest of its leaders, Madni and Belhaj. The FIS was about to come into power through democratic elections. The long arm of the FIS that countered the governmental Armed Forces is the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS). Some leaders of the army are Algerian people that participated in the previous war in Afghanistan. Those fighters were called, "The Afghanist holy warriors." The returned from Afghanistan armed with guerrilla experience (against the Soviets) and with more importantly a very solid Islamic ideology.

When the FIS's leadership was in jail and isolated from its membership, the FIS suffered from weakness that led to clashes among its leaders. These clashes led to fragmentation in the FIS that resulted in the resignation of some members and the

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14 Dowell, 276.

15 Ibid., 290.
physical liquidation against each other. Most reports show that some of the violent activities of the armed group of the FIS are without agreement of FIS leadership. Even when the government released the leadership, the struggle goes on. The leadership had no influence on the armed group after five years in jail. The time of the old leadership has gone by. The control, by the FIS, over the violent groups grows weaker as the fighting grows bloodier.

The Primary International Actors

1. France

France's colonization of Algeria existed for more than 130 years, after independence, the bilateral relations between the two countries remained very strong. The Algerian leaders did not want to break ties with France; for fear that it could result in both economic and political disadvantages. Since independence up-to-date, France was the main supporter of the political system and the Francophile elements in the army. In fact, such links between Algeria and its former master are the inevitable outcome of the French policy during the colonization. On the French legacy in North Africa, Michael Wall wrote:

The French leave a more indelible mark than other colonizers. In the Maghreb it has gone right down to the roots. In each country, the French set out to educate a Muslim elite. A few Muslims were taken into French schools, attended French universities and trained in French methods of administration. The young radicals were more influenced by the left wing in Paris than in Cairo. When independence came, many educated Muslims spoke French better than Arabic; even today French prevails as a diplomatic and commercial language.\(^\text{16}\)

The French ties with Algeria after the war of independence is described as a continuation of peace by other means - foreign aid, cultural exchange, teachers, technicians performing national services in Algeria. The economic interaction of the two countries in the early sixties shows the strength of their ties where 75 percent of Algeria’s exports went to France while 81 percent of its imports came from there.17

At this time, the Algerian regime could not stand in the war without French support. France provided the military government with helicopters and other armies to suppress the Islamists. France backed Algerian military government not to re-negotiate with the Islamist groups. France is also pouring billions of dollars of aid into Algeria, hoping that a stronger economy will defuse unrest.18 As France is being sucked deeper in the Algerian war, it is not surprising that the French interests and citizens became the prime target for the Islamic groups as they declared that “The war against France has become a legal obligation.”19 Transportation of the war to France was the second declaration by the Islamist groups. History repeats itself as during the war of independence. The FLN adopted this strategy against colonial rule.20


18 Toy, 45.


20 Martha Crenshaw Hutchinson, Revolutionary Terrorism (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1978).
France is seen supporting a military junta that is perceived as corrupt, repressive, out of touch with its people and willing to go to any lengths to retain power. She should, therefore, not be shocked by the death of its citizens on an Air France jetliner hijacked by Islamic terrorists, or the bombing of public transportation and other forms of terrorism on French soil.\(^{21}\) This strategy which was used by the FLN had resulted in independence. The FIS is using it now to force France to stop supporting the government and the it hopes that the result will be an Islamic state.

The critical question in this regard might be; Why does France fear an Islamic group coming to power in Algeria? The danger that France fears from the Islamists seizing power in Algeria might be summarized into three main reasons:

First: France would be worse hit than any other European country if the Islamist seized power. Around three million people of Algerian origin already live in France, many of them with dual nationalities. France would also be the first port of call for a mass exodus of Algerian refugees who would drain the government’s treasury in a country with 123 percent rate of unemployment.\(^{22}\)


\(^{22}\) Quandt, 139.
Second: The Muslim faith has become the second largest religion in France. Many of those Muslims live in conditions inferior to those of the French citizens who surround them. Many are housed in segregated ghettos and working in the lowest paid job that no one else wants. Moreover, there are seven million Muslims living in Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and Britain. These Muslims look to Islam as the only savior to their severe situation. A call for Jihad from the Islamic Republic of Algeria or Iran might result in terrorist accidents and instability in Western Europe. These fears not only exist in Europe, but they are shared with most North African countries.

Across North Africa and especially in Tunisia and Morocco, leaders are anxiously waiting for further shockwaves in the politicization of Islam, where banned fundamentalist movements threaten the status quo. There are similar fears in France, Belgium, Italy and Spain....

Three: Therefore, France’s fear of Islamists seizing power in Algeria might result in similar changes in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. There are active Islamist movements in those countries which were former colonies of France. Paris has strong relations with its former colonies and the loss of Algeria would automatically influence the situation in Tunisia and Morocco and would set off an immediate domino effect. This reminds France of the collapse of its colonial empire in Africa in the 1960s. As Algeria goes on so does North Africa, then the Middle East, then the Gulf, then...the world. These fears

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23 Ibid., 21.


25 Quandt, 17.
or interests are not shared by other nations in Western Europe or their strategic ally, the United States. It, therefore, led to indirect conflict between the United States and France. The latter supported dialogue with the Islamists, however, France advocates a security solution. These contradictions were very clear in more than one summit of the seven industrial countries. France criticized the United States contacts with the Islamists and its call for dialogue with them.²⁶

The French engagement in Algeria is rooted in the degree that the Algerian crisis became a French crisis. Therefore, France continued to be the important source of support for the regime. The decision to continue the war or to pursue peace will ultimately be made in Paris rather than in the Algerian capital Algiers. Since the resignation of the Algerian president Benjedid in 1990 until now, the powers that rule Algeria despite the changes in names are the pro-France elements and formal presidents are pliant tools in the hands of the military juntas who receive instructions and support from France.

2. The United States

Algeria as a socialist state, it had shared ideological views with the communist countries and so its relationship with the United States was very cool. America’s support for Israel against the Palestinians and other Arabs was regarded as an example of imperialistic aggression. These tensions and hostilities were best tested in Algeria’s

decision to break diplomatic relations with the United States after the Arab-Israeli War in June of 1967. Algeria had chosen a pro-Eastern line in its foreign policy, so the United States was a symbol of imperialism. While a socialist country, such as Cuba, was a symbol of freedom. However, political conflict never seemed to hamper economic relations, which were vastly expanded. The total size of the American economic interests in Algeria is among the highest in Africa.

The American role in the present conflict can be summed up in the statement: “The United States has a successful experiment in cooperating with the Islamists”. Its experience in Afghanistan with the Mujahideen is a good example of this case. In the Algerian crisis, the United States started its contacts with the Islamists and was able to create some pro-American elements. The United States encourages dialogue with those “modern Islamists” especially when they guarantee its interests. The United States engaged in low-level talks with representatives of the Islamists. France interpreted this as if Washington wanting to see the Islamist succeed in toppling the regime in Algeria. This position explains the fact that no Americans have been killed by Islamists whereas the French citizens are the primary target for the Islamists. Moreover, some Americans believe that American support for corrupt and repressive regimes will intensify anti-Americanism, as events in the Shah’s Iran, Lebanon and the West Bank have

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27 Ottaway, 155.

28 Quandt, 145.
demonstrated.\textsuperscript{29} Therefore, it is in the interest of the United States to have good ties with the future regime. On the other hand, there are other Americans who believe it is not in the interests of the United States to engage in a dialogue with the Islamists of Algeria. As there are not moderates to engage in a dialogue with them. Those and many others believe that all Islamists are extremists and that they differ only in tactics. All Islamists from Iran to Algeria are anti-democratic, anti-Semitic and anti-Western. Therefore, the U.S. position is very close to being neutral or compromised. To support military junta’s means, the United States will be portrayed again as the implacable enemy of Islam. To side with the Islamists will risk its relations with its allies in Europe.

America’s support for dialogue and its sympathy with the Islamists cannot be interpreted in accordance with its national mission to encourage transition toward democracy in the world. On the contrary, the United States supports the most totalitarian regimes in countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iraq (before the Gulf Crisis). As Michael Ledeen stated, “such regimes should be put on trial. The records kept by tyrants could then have documented the people’s case against their oppressors.”\textsuperscript{30}

In fact, the United States plays a major role in the crisis as a Super Power, but this role is less influential than the French role. America’s influence is more economic rather than political due to its role in the WB and IMF. The United States has a veto in those

\textsuperscript{29} Esposito, 207.

huge financial organizations, thus, it is difficult, if not impossible for the Algerian
government to gain any loans or financial assistance from these international
organizations without America's approval.

The U.S. military support of the Islamists is indirect. It is one of the legacies of
the Cold War. The return of the Afghan veterans to their homelands in the Middle East
was a major point in the radicalization of the movements and in the escalation of
violence. These veterans were originally trained by the United States to fight communist
forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Upon returning home, they used this experience to
overthrow the secular governments and to establish an Islamic state. The United States
did not realize that those volunteers will not stop their Jihad after the victory in
Afghanistan. Other volunteers are coming back from Bosnia after participating in the
holy war against the Serbs. Some reports point out that the United States provided
military assistance to Muslims there through an Iranian channel despite the overt or
declared animosity between the U.S. and Iran.

3. Iran

The year 1979 marked a watershed in the modern history of the Islamic world.
This year marked the fall of the Shah in Iran and Khomeini's rise to power concentrated,
for the first time in centuries, religious and political power in the hands of one person.

The ruling Mullahs in Tehran considered the exportation of the revolution beyond
the borders of Iran as a divine mission. Such a mission is a primary foreign policy
objective that should be achieved by all means and Islam must spread everywhere as
Khomeini said:

Iran’s Islamic revolution has awakened all the Islamic countries. Islam recognizes no borders. We cannot put off establishing Islamic governments and administrating the divine laws. The objective of the Islamic Republic and its officials is none other than to establish global Islamic rule.31

The expansion of the rule of the Islamic Republic, and the establishment of an Islamic Republics similar to the Iranian one and controlled from Tehran, became the primary objective of the Mullah’s foreign policy. Iran became the mother of all Islamic lands. There are three primary tools to implement such policy:

1. The Iranian revolution banner was carried beyond the border, through death squads to deal with the enemies of revolution. The death squads assassinated many Iranian opposition leaders.32

2. Economic and military aid to all Islamic movements in the Middle East, including pensions for the families of martyrs.33

3. The Iranian revolution has become a source of inspiration and motivation for all the Islamic movements, which want to establish Islamic governments modeled after the Islamic Republic of Iran.


33 Ibid., 70.
Due to the strong bilateral relations between Iran and Algeria during the Shah’s regime, it was easy for the Mullah to establish ties with the Islamic elements in Algeria since the 1980s. The ministry of intelligence and the ministry of foreign affairs through its embassy in Algeria coordinate support for the Islamic movement in Algeria and to strengthen the links with Tehran. Moreover, many Algerian Islamic elements traveled to Iran where they received para-military training by the Iranian revolutionary guards. Iran holds strong links with the Islamic movement in Tunisia - the closest neighbor to Algeria through the borders of Tunisia weapons and Islamists can be smuggled to Algeria.

Ali Khamenei, the Iranian spiritual leader, emphasized the role of the Iranian government in the crisis of Algeria when he declared that, “We believe that the people of Algeria will finally attain their desired Islam and the rule of Islam.” 34 Moreover, the Iranian influence in North Africa, in general, forced the North African officials to complain about Iranian foreign involvement in the rise of Islamic militancy in their countries. They have accused Iran of working with the Sudan to spread the Islamic revolution in North Africa and providing sanctuaries, training and logistical assistance to radical religious groups. The Iranian interference in the Algerian crisis led Algeria to recall its ambassador to Tehran in 1992. Finally, it must be said that Iranian influence is often exaggerated by both disproportionate media coverage and by the tendency of North African governments which use the Iranian threat as a pretext to oppress domestic Islamic elements and at the same time to receive aid from the West.

34 Mohaddessin, 88.
The Secondary Actors: The Third Force

Between these armed poles and their respective supporters stood an endangered and heterogeneous third force in search of an opening in the direction of genuinely democratic policies and institutions. The Third Force consists of three major parts: The presidency, the moderate Islamists, and the democrats. Unfortunately, this force had few means with which to influence the struggle for power between the military and the Islamists. The prospects for the Third Force grew dim. Ordinary Algerians are caught between fundamentalists who will slit their throats for a secular thought and military avengers who will shoot them dead on a suspicion of sheltering an Islamist.35

1. The Presidency

The president is always a key actor in any political system. However, in Algeria, the military is the real power center of the state and the sole kingmaker of presidents since independence. The military was the deceiving force in the selection of Ahmed Ben Bella in 1962, the ascendancy of Houri Boumediene in 1965 and the selector of Chadli Benjedid in 1979 who was forced to resign in 1992. Therefore, presidents of Algeria are weak, vulnerable, changeable, and one of them had earned his assassination (Mohammed Boudiaf).

Such vulnerability and opposition, which comes from the military, made for two presidents in every administration: the president of the state as one and the defense

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minister as president in shadow. The president never threatened by the political opposition if it exists at all. But the military coups led by one of the military juntas. In other words, the president is owed obedience with all the people with the exclusion of the military juntas.

In the current conflict, President Benjedid opened the political system and showed a willingness to deal with the Islamists. The military juntas, refused to share power with the Islamists, and so it forced the president to resign, cancelled the elections and took lead in the fight against the Islamists.36

The successor of Benjedid was President Mohammed Boudiaf, a founder of the FLN after independence became a dissident and then exiled. Boudiaf came to office in circumstances that caused his grip on authority to be extremely fragile. Boudiaf criticized the corruption, which characterized the Benjedid years and tried to compromise with both the Islamists and the juntas. His efforts were cut short by his assassination in 1992, in which a soldier temporarily assigned to be his personal security guard shot him. This murder gives the Algerian people the impression that the government rather than the FIS is beyond the assassination.37

Boudiaf's successor Ali Kafi was seen as a more pliant tool in the army's hand. During President Kafi's term, General Khalid Nizar was the dominant figure of the


military hierarchy. As minister of defense, he has the power to either back the president or topple him. Before General Nizar decided to retire for reasons of health, he selected his own successor, General Alamin Zeroual. General Zeroual became the president of Algeria in 1994.

Like other presidents, Zeroual was under the pressure of the armed forces. Zeroual had associated himself with the arguments of the conciliators by asserting that military means alone would not suffice to restore civil order. Therefore, Zeroual tried to negotiate with the Islamists, but his attempts failed due to the extreme positions taken by both the Islamist and the army. In general, it can be said that the presidency as an actor in the conflict is the weakest, though it should play a different role.\textsuperscript{38} History taught us that when strong men ruled and flexed their muscles in defense of the legitimate rights of their communities, and watched over the downtrodden, the poor and the needy, violence and hooliganism did not exist during those “good old days.”

2. The Moderate Islamists

Two Islamic movements in Algeria represent the Moderate Islamists as an actor: The Islamic Society Movements (HAMAS) and the Movement for Islamic Renaissance (Al-Nahda). The reason for considering such Islamic Movements as moderates due to their acceptance of the rules of the pluralist political game, unlike the FIS, which called

\textsuperscript{38} Mortimer, 33.
its members to boycott them. The moderates condemned the restoration of violence, as

democracy requires a strong and stable state.

Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah founded HAMAS in 1990, and it functions as a political

party. Unlike the FIS, HAMAS believed that the need to reform society through Islamic

missionary activity before it would be possible to reform the state on Islamic lines.39 As a

marginal political party, HAMAS received less than 3 percent in the 1990 elections.40

HAMAS accepted to change its name in order to be legalized according to the

new constitution of 1997 and so it became the movement for peaceful Algeria. HAMAS

participated in the 1997 elections and became the second largest party in parliament.

HAMAS earned 18 percent of the votes. HAMAS’s participation lent credibility to the

electoral force. This success refers to the absence of the FIS and its believed that the FIS

members transferred their votes to HAMAS. HAMAS’s slogan in those elections was,

“peace is the solution.”41

Sheikh Abdullah Djaballah founded the Movement for Islamic Renaissance (Al-

Nahda) in 1990. Al-Nahda is close in spirit and outlook to HAMAS. As a secondary

actor, it won only 1.13 percent in the 1990 elections.42 However, in 1997, it won 10


39 Piscatori, 136.

40 Mohand Salah Tahi, “The Arduous Democratization Process in Algeria,” The


41 Al-Ahram Al-Arabi, No. 10 (May, 1997): 19.

42 Tahi, 18.
percent of the votes. Its slogan in those elections was, “No for grievance, yes for justice.”\textsuperscript{43}

However, the elections of 1997 cannot give an accurate picture of the influence of the Islamic movements in Algeria. The military junta’s favorite party, the National Democratic Rally (RND) won the desired results, 57 percent. The RND is the legitimate inheritor of the FLN, while the moderate Islamists fail to be the inheritor of the FIS.\textsuperscript{44}

However, many Algerians as acceptable alternatives to the FIS view HAMAS and Al-Nahda.

3. The Democrats

There are more than 50 political parties in Algeria with different degrees of mobilization and influence in the society. However, all these parties claim their petition to democracy as a solution to the Algerian crisis. In this study, the focus will be on the two largest of these parties which are the Democratic Movement and the Socialist Front.

The Democratic Movement is a political party under the leadership of the first Algerian President Ben Bella. The former president is trying to restore his glorious past by the unification of the secular Algerian political parties. The political program of the party included reformation of the political and economic situation by focusing on democracy, accountability and private economy. Ben Bella’s party is also based on

\textsuperscript{43} Al-Ahram Al-Arabi, 18.

\textsuperscript{44} Al-Waten Al-Arabi, No. 1058 (June 13, 1997): 27.
Arabism and Islamism. After the 1990 elections, the party organized a demonstration in which one million Algerian people participated to defend democracy, and at the same time to resist both military and Islamic fundamentalism.45

In the 1997 elections, Ben Bella’s party joined the FIS to boycott the elections. The party refused to change its political agenda to comply with the new constitution that prevents the exploitation of religion or ethnicity in the participation of propaganda. Ben Bella commented on those elections and said:

These are not elections; what is happening is sheer fabrication. The only thing that will happen is that the current regime will become stronger as it continues to mobilize all the political forces. But this is a dangerous game, because what is happening in Algeria is a continuous cycle of killings, which is blamed on the Islamists while it’s the responsibility of the government.46

What Ben Bella said became true, the ballot did not beat the bullets, the elections failed to restore peace to the country at least in the short run.

The second group is the Socialist Front, which is a group of political parties that represent the Berbers, an ethnic group in Algeria. The leader of the front is Hocine Aiyat Ahmed a founder of the FLN. France supports the Front and it is against policies of Arabization and Islamization. The Berbers were tolerant with this policy during the early years of independence due to two main reasons: First, was the recognition of Arabic as a


national language was a symbol of independence and second, the Berbers had the option of learning French. The process of Arabization was gradual.47

In the 1990 elections, the Socialist Front won only 4 percent of the votes. A percentage that does not reflect the actual demographic representation of the Berbers in Algerian society. The Berbers represent more than 10 percent of Algeria. Their ethnic affiliation was quite clear in the 1997 elections, when the Socialist Front and the Rally for culture and democracy. Another Berber party – won 10 percent of the votes.48

Finally, it is clear that the role of the third force in the crisis is very partial. However, this force can play an influential role in any genuine dialogue that means to bring peace to Algeria. Otherwise, the crisis could go on for much longer as the use of force did not allow any of the protagonists to solve the problem to their advantage. With regard to the role of external intervention (France, the United States and Iran), Africa’s record of civil wars prove that foreign involvement has always escalated the war rather than promote conflict resolution. Algeria’s conflict is not far different from that experience.49 The Algerians have to realize such facts, then, sit together and solve their problems by themselves.


CHAPTER V

THE WAR AND ITS IMPACT

1. The Process of the War

Has war become an endemic phenomenon in the Algerian society? In the middle of this century, the Algerian people had eight years of bloody war. It was the war of independence, which cost one million lives. Independence is a noble object regardless of its expensive price. This time, the second Algerian war is war for the sake of war, the tragedy is that, now, Algerian is fighting Algerian, and there is no clear aim.

In June 1990, local free elections, the first in the country’s history, resulted in the surprising success of the FIS, before the second round took place, the Algerian armed forces forced President Chadli Benjedid to resign, canceled the elections, and declared a state of emergency. Once in power, the new army backed regime, headed by the High State Council banned the FIS and arrested thousands of its members. The army justified its intervention on the grounds that it was defending the country from the threat of Islamic Fundamentalism. The Islamists on the other hand, felt that they had been robbed of their electoral victory. Chadli’s resignation was a ploy to enable the elections to be called off and the events which followed were a coup de’tat against the Algerian people. The FIS declared its position by asking the Algerian people to fight against such oppression: “We call on veteran fighters, thinkers, religious leaders, senior army officers,
and soldiers, and all those who love Algeria to take a stand against this giant of power.”

The FIS had won 54 percent of the vote, and so its leaders thought such support by the Algerian people was a green light for the FIS to start establishing an Islamic state. The days of the military regime might be numbered and so call for “Jihad” was declared. In fact, the Algerian people chose the FIS as a protest vote against the FLN, rather than because they wanted an Islamic state to be built upon ideas that emerged in the Arabian Peninsula before thirteen centuries. Islam alone could not solve the country’s deep social and economic problems. Therefore, both the military juntas and the Islamic movement have miscalculated accounts and the civil war became the inevitable outcome. Since, then the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) have waged a violent campaign intended to overthrow the government. In the first ten days of the open confrontation between the Islamic group and the armed forces more than 500 security personnel were killed. The armed forces response was so severe. It involved killing, jailing and firing and driving to exile thousands of members of the FIS which acted as the umbrella organization of the Muslim opposition. This confrontation culminated in the arrest of Abbasi Madani and Ali Belhadj, the leaders of the FIS. The government announced that they would stand trial on charges of armed conspiracy against the security of the state. The military juntas decided to use a state of siege and the security option to settle accounts with the FIS.

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The crackdown on the FIS and the decision to arrest its leaders was the straw that broke the camel’s back as the natural reaction to such repression and violence was more radical violence. In fact, the current conflict has developed into three different stages, each has its significant characteristics:

1. Islamists vs. Armed Forces, 1988-1992
2. Islamist vs. the Rest, 1992-1994
3. Islamists vs. Islamists and the Rest, 1994-present

The First Stage: Islamist vs. Armed Forces, 1988-1992

Most scholars when writing about the Algerian crises ignored, intentionally or unintentionally, the fact that the conflict had started in 1988 rather than in 1991 when the FIS had won a landslide victory over the FLN. The series of events go back to the 1988 riots, which were a protest against a corrupt and inefficient government. In October 1988, the masses took to the streets and Algeria witnessed the most violent public demonstration since independence. Such demonstrations represent a public call for change and reform, but this call was ignored and violently suppressed by the armed forces, which acted as the protector of the revolution and the state. Political reformation was the remedy and the political arena was opened to all opposition parties including the Islamists.

The month of October 1988 is known to most Algerians as the “Black October.” In October, 1988, the citizens took the initiative from the state and asked for reformation. The army showed no tolerance for opposition – such response was like the hot bed for the decline of the FLN and the rise of the FIS.
In 1990, local and regional elections took place in Algeria. The result of these elections, Algeria’s first free multi-party elections since independence. It was an overwhelming victory for the FIS. The armed forces portrayed such victory as a fundamentalist threat to the secular orientation of the nation and the security of the state. The armed forces canceled the elections and so inflamed the strike for one of the Arab world’s boldest experiments in political pluralism and democratization.

The confrontations had started only after the armed forces intervention, which resulted in the arrest of more than 10,000 members of the FIS in the first month after the cancellation of the elections. Thousands of members and sympathizers of the FIS were detained in desert camps. Moreover, the top leaders of the FIS, Abbasi Madani and his top lieutenant, Ali Belhadj were arrested. Then, the Islamists waged a violent campaign intended to overthrow the corrupted government and to establish an Islamic state. Therefore, the Islamists targeted only the armed forces and security services. Few civilians were killed in this stage as most of the victims were among the previous two opponents. The Islamists proclaimed a holy war against the government and so senior government officials, army and security officers and political figures were the target. On the other hand, the armed forces imposed a martial law and declared a state of emergency to restore order.4

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In less than three years, the armed forces moved back to the front line in Algerian politics for two times: in the 1988 riots when more than one thousand demonstrators were killed by the army and in 1990 after the FIS’s defeat of the FLN. However, in the 1990 conflicts the state had not yet acknowledged the real figure of death.\(^5\)

**The Second Stage: Islamists vs. the Rest, 1992-1994**

In this stage, the FIS had declared a comprehensive war against the armed forces, the government, the civil society and the citizens of the foreign powers that supported the government. In order to weaken the state, the FIS adopted a new strategy in which the infrastructure of the state became the target. Main routes, bridges, factories, airports, schools, and forests were set ablaze and blown up by the Islamists in their campaign to undermine the government. Oil and gas reserves and companies that worked in those fields became targets of the attacks of the Islamists. In fact, such a new strategy is very well known in most unstable countries in Africa, and so, Boahen considered it a legacy of colonialism. As it created a mentality among the citizens that, the government and all the public property belonged not to the people, but rather to colonial rulers or their agents and could and should be taken advantage of at the least opportunity.\(^6\) The governmental

\(^5\) The government admits of the death of 5,000 up to 1991...such figures are impossible to check and a reliable one does not exist.

response to such actions was similar in that the government burned all wheat fields, grapes, and other agricultural farms in areas, which are either controlled by the Islamists, or its inhabitants are supporters or sympathizers with the Islamists.

The second target for the Islamists were the citizens of foreign countries settled in Algeria and their countries support the government. The campaign against foreigners began after a warning issued by the FIS: “All foreigners must leave Algeria before the end of November 1993. 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.”

The first foreigners to be killed in Algeria were two French surveyors working in West of Algeria were found with their throats slashed. Their deaths resulted in the exodus of more than three thousand of the 24,000 French nationals that worked in Algeria. The attacks on French personnel in Algeria continued and caused President Mitterrand to say he was considering evacuating French nationals from Algeria. France recalled its ambassador from Algeria in January 1994 and reduced the size of its diplomatic mission there. Such actions encourage other embassies and consulates not to reduce their staff, but to shut up shop. The radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA) which is a splinter group that broke away from the FIS and became a separate organization carried on most of those attacks. The campaign of assassination against foreigners continued and only the American citizens were safe from the death list!

7 Hermida, The Battle of Algeria, 43.
8 O’Ballance, 190.
The decision to target foreigners had a very serious impact on the government as they play a vital role in the country’s oil and gas industry. This is the government’s main source of income, which is the sole chance of reviving its deteriorating economy.

The third target of the Islamists was the civilian society including women, students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, singers, writers, and doctors educated as Francophiles and considered by the Islamists as being infidels and supporters of the army, the police, and the government.

Women were among the targets of both opponents especially the fundamentalist. However, the fundamentalists assault on the women’s rights started early, before the current struggle. In fact, it started in 1984, when the government implemented the “Family Code” denying women most of their rights. The memory of Algerian society was weak, forgetting the heroic role that the Algerian women had played in the war of independence. Frantz Fanon characterized her as, “she who hides behind the veil” realized that the veil became the bone of contention in a battle between the colonizer and colonized and the subjects of colonialism.9

The fundamentalists insist that a woman’s place is in the home, and that the rules concerning clothing must be followed. She must wear a veil. Therefore, working women, unveiled women, and women active in social and political associations are targets for fundamentalists. A woman wearing makeup and Western dress or working to support her

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9 Fanon, A Dying Colonialism, 36.
family or lives alone for various reasons, such as a widow or divorcee who did not
remarry — fits the fundamentalist definition of "prostitute" and so must be murdered.
Examples of vicious attacks on women are numerous.\textsuperscript{10} It became a crime for woman to
be a mother or wife of a soldier or a policeman, especially if she was unveiled and has a
religious personality that preaches tolerance and moderation.

In 1994, the fundamentalist declared that the women on the streets without the
veil could be assassinated and they had implemented their warnings: a 17-year-old girl
was murdered in cold blood shortly after the declaration. It was a public example of what
would happen to those who refused to wear the veil.\textsuperscript{11} When the school year started in
the same year, the fundamentalists threatened to kill seven million primary and high
school students and their teachers unless the norms of Islamic education were followed —
the maintenance of sexual segregation and the rules of clothing "the veil."\textsuperscript{12}

Operating as a mirror image of the fundamentalists attacks on women and
intellectuals, are the activities of the mysterious Organization of Young Free Algerians or
OJAL (l’Organisation des jeunes Algeriens libres). Sworn to carry out the law of an eye
for an eye, a tooth for a tooth on terrorists, kidnappers and murderers of veiled women,
relatives or friends of known members of the fundamentalists. The OJAL claimed

\textsuperscript{10} Karima Bennoune, “Algerian Women Confront Fundamentalism,” \textit{Monthly
Review}, Vol. 46 (September, 1994).

(August, 1994), 22.

\textsuperscript{12} Stork, 215.
responsibility for counter killings of 20 veiled women and 20 bared fundamentalists for every unveiled woman murdered.\(^{13}\) Therefore, women veiled or unveiled die for the interpretations that fundamentalist or secularists attach to their presence and appearance.

An Algerian woman who finds out that women have become prisoners in their homes, their crime is that they are defenseless women has best described the tragedy of the Algerian women:

As for use, we have become accustomed to this situation; here a death announcement, and there, the fear. We have all become anguished, sick and neurotic. Faces are gray, conversations morbid...we lead a dull life, with nothing extra because one must be shut inside one’s home. In fact, everything is ruined in Algeria: political life, social life, and even family life. Terrorism has installed itself at every level, even in the family unit. We head toward barbarism.\(^{14}\)

As the fundamentalist declared the war against the rest of the society, women were not the only victims living in fear, the list contains other defenseless victims living in a waking nightmare. Anguish and fear exist in everyone’s eyes, this is the result of blind terrorism.

The last group placed on the fundamentalist death list consisted of the best brains of Algerian society. They are classified as anti-Islamists and their crime is that they were educated as Francophiles. According to recent reports, tens of hundreds of Algerians, many of them doctors, teachers, journalists, writers, lawyers, etc., were murdered by the

\(^{13}\) Goytisolo, 23.

\(^{14}\) Stork, 216.
fundamentalists. Moreover, thousands of intellectuals have sought political asylum in Europe and the United States. The wave of attacks on intellectuals was described by the Spanish novelist, Juan Goytisolo, as a “program of selective genocide, a plot pot strategy to finish off the intellectuals who have been infected by the West.” 15

The intolerance toward the intellectuals is reflected in the fundamentalist’s pamphlet stating “those who criticize us with their pen must die by the sword.”16 Hundreds of intellectuals were killed in their homes and in front of their families. Honor her can only be washed with blood, witnesses must be present at the “sacrifice.” Top officials of the Islamic movement in Algeria advocated violence against the intellectuals. Anwar Haddam, who represents the FIS in Washington, commentating about the murder of intellectuals said:

Who are these so-called intellectuals? Among them are members of the National Consultative Council, which has usurped the place of the people’s elected representatives, persons who wrote murderous editorials, and those, who through psychiatry, advised tortures on how to obtain confessions. The Algerian people have chosen as targets only those individuals upon whom the military – security system in Algeria relies. We know them one by one, and they are not innocent people.17

In closing, it is clear that such intolerance mirrors the intolerance so long displayed by the Algerian state and the party which, from independence in 1962 until the

15 Goytisolo, 23.


riots of October 1988, held a monopoly of power. The escalation of war and violence in the current conflict is a direct outcome of the ruthless suppression of the state. As the dramatic war continues the number of victims has increased, the end of this stage reported more than 30,000 Algerians dead.

The Third Stage: Islamists vs. Islamists and the Rest, 1994-Present

The third stage of the conflict is the worst. In this stage, the war, as Arabs would put it, had eaten the green and the dry: the Islamists had a second declaration of war but this time it was against themselves, the violence has transferred to the Mosque which became a battlefield. The state failed to protect its citizens and so they decided to take the law into their own hands to defend themselves. More tragically, the state itself carried on atrocities against its civilian citizens so as to discredit the Islamists. The state denied such claims and it is hard to know who or what to believe; however, the only certainty is that all sides have much blood on their hands.

After the cancellation of the elections, the second deadly mistake the government made was the arrest of the top FIS leaders. Several leaders were either arrested or executed. The leadership of the organization lost its influence and control over its members. Moreover, the intensity of the crackdown, the harsh prison experience and the prolonged underground existence radicalized the FIS and gave rise to militant splinter
groups. Thus, a new breed of extremist Islamic groups was created when the leadership was jailed. This has occurred before in many other Arab states.18

The most important group to be formed from the FIS is the Islamic Armed Group (GIA). The GIA consists mainly of veterans from the war in Afghanistan, and were provided with military training by the CIA. This movement has a hard line, 'no compromise' platform. It objects to the FIS's policies and political activities. It objects to the idea of dialogue and reconciliation, it also warned the FIS officials against seeking on accommodation with the authorities. The GIA denounced the release of the FIS leaders as a Western inspired conspiracy to prepare the way for the sort of a moderate Islamic regime that the West can live with. The GIA rejects any dialogue with the regime, any truck with moderation, and for good. When the FIS and other opposition parties in Algeria held dialogue in Rome under the auspices of the Italian Roman Catholic, the GIA was not only absent, it declared its divorce with the FIS, and started a process of physical liquidation against the moderate members of the FIS and other Islamic movements that agree on peace or dialogue with the government to stop the bloodshed.19

18 Many Arab scholars believe that radical groups have resorted to violence as a result of intense suppression and coercion by the most authoritarian regimes in the Arab world such as Asad's Syria, Egypt under Sadat and Mubart and the occupied lands in Palestine. For more information, see for example, Rafat Said Ahmed, Why they killed Sadat (Cairo: Al-Dar al al-Sharqiyya, 1989).

19 Hermida, “The Battle of Algeria,” 44.
In reaction to the GIA’s attacks on the moderates, the Islamic Salvation Army (ASI), the armed wing of the FIS, began its counter violence against the GIA. The contradiction between the two armed movements became very sharp when the GIA started its attacks on moderate Islamists. The FIS and its armed wing have denounced such assaults, which should be only on soldiers, policemen, and senior officials according to the FIS’s ideology. Therefore, the fundamentalists continued the war against both the secularists and their former allies the moderate Islamists.

The rise of tension between those rival Islamic groups helped the government to achieve two objectives at the same time. First, the government exploited such tension to penetrate the FIS and was able to create some elements that denounce the violence, advocate dialogue and peace and finally break with the FIS. Moreover, they join the government after it declared a general amnesty to those who fought the government. Second, the governmental security forces have taken on new forms on their attacks against the Islamists. The Mosque, the most sacred place to the Muslims, lost its sanctuary as the governmental forces found their targets there. Reports point out that so many emmams, koranic experts and prayers were killed while practicing their religious duties in the Mosque. The governmental security forces have destroyed many Mosques by rockets, and claim responsibility of such attacks on the Islamist's former allies so as to discredit the Islamists. The Islamists claim that it is becoming a crime to be a Muslim


\[21\] The Associated Press.
and to practice religious duties at the Mosque. Those who took refuge in the Mosque thought that it will be their savior, but in vain.\(^{22}\)

The violation of the religious rules continued as the war escalates during Ramadan, the Islamists holiest month, became “Ramadan of blood.” In the course of this month, the bombing of cars in strategical places in the capital of Algeria had resulted in the destruction of many important institutions: city halls, hospitals, schools, newspaper offices, and many other infrastructures. More important is the death of many innocent civilians. By some accounts more than 500 people a week were being killed by the end of Ramadan.\(^{23}\)

The FIS denounced the murder of civilians and claimed that many of the civilian murders are the work of the death squads linked to the government or the work of the government itself or the work of the GIA, which had split from the FIS. The government adopts such a tragic strategy to discredit and undermine the people’s support of the Islamists and to portray them as “bands of criminals, traitors, and mercenaries, who are using savagery to serve foreign interest.”\(^{24}\) Thus, they are not Muslims and don’t reflect the reality of the principles of Islam. The previous strategy of the government had

\(^{22}\) The killings and detentions were based on the fact that the suspects wear a beard or Islamic uniform which became marks of fundamentalism.


\(^{24}\) Ibid., 234.
resulted in two negative impacts, first, the government became a symbol of violence and repression for its native people to fulfill the interests of its leaders and so the mood of its soldiers began to change, especially after so many human rights abuse. This situation helped the FIS to penetrate the armed forces. A good example of such penetration is the attack that the FIS’s armed wing made on one of the prisons in Algeria and its success in releasing more than 1,000 prisoners. Such an adventure cannot succeed without the cooperation of the prison guards.\textsuperscript{25} Second, as the government failed to protect its citizens and became involved in their bloodshed, many citizens took the law by their hands to protect themselves from the atrocities of both the Islamists and the government. In many rural areas away from the capital, frightened civilians have started forming self-defense groups to try to prevent increasingly bloodshed. However, such tactics were not adequate to defend the civilians. The deadliest massacre in Algeria’s six-year-old war took place in September 1997. The town of Sidi Ruis, in an area south of the capital and known as the ‘zone of death’, had witnessed the bloodiest attack since 1992. The massacre took place in an area, which is not far from the military forces. The events of the carnage come as the following:

\begin{quote}
The killers arrived in a convoy of trucks and cars. The trucks had driven past military checkpoints into the besieged village. The attackers were armed with axes and knives, they spent four hours decapitating their victims, and in some cases burning their houses. Three hundred men, women, and children and even babies died in a horrific way. Without the military, within hearing distance, doing anything about it. The soldiers entered the village the next day when the attackers had already fled.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{25} O’Ballance, 195.

\textsuperscript{26} Al-Ahram Weekly, No. 341 (September 4-10, 1997): 5.
In the aftermath of this horrific massacre, the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said, "Words of condemnation are no longer enough...it is extremely difficult for us to pretend that nothing is happening, that we know nothing, and that we should abandon the Algerian people to their fate. What is necessary is discreet action to promote peace."\(^{27}\)

Annan’s call for tolerance and peace angered the Algerian authorities. Annan was accused of exceeding his role as the head of an organization based on respect of the sovereignty of the states. His call for peace was interpreted as interference in the country’s internal affairs, that was considered a violation to Article II of the United Nations charter.

The violence that claimed tens of thousands of lives since 1992 raises so many questions about the crisis: What are the motives and objectives behind these series of killings? There is no benefit whatsoever to the Islamists movement in such acts since this antagonizes the very people on whose support they rely. On the other hand, the regime had nothing to gain by blaming such crimes on the Islamists and at the same time refuse to re-negotiate or compromise with them. In such an atmosphere, it is not easy to identify whether the victims are the scapegoats of the the state terror or the Islamists as both practiced the murder. The Algerian people paid the price themselves. Also, one must question the silence of the international community towards the Algerian catastrophe.

While Princess Diana's death has found its way to the front pages of the Western newspapers and magazines. The media gave comprehensive coverage to her funeral, the law of silence sells all lips with regard to the Algerian misfortune.

2. The Impact of the War

The forgotten war in Algeria has been raging for six years, and its getting worse. Both sides (the government and the Islamic fundamentalists) have changed Algeria to a vast prison if not a cemetery. The second Algerian was has had devastating effects on all walks of life (political, economic, and social problems). Just as did colonialism and the war of independence (1954-1962), the second Algerian war will sprout of other challenges for the Algerian leaders (both civilians and military leaders) for a very long time. As the post independence period (1962-1988) was considered a truce, the post war period – after the end of the current struggle – is going to be a brief honeymoon unless the Algerian leaders will learn the lesson this time.

As mentioned before the scars of war are on all walks of life. On the political level, Algerian people had missed the historic opportunity, with the return to authoritarianism, to embark on the construction of a genuine democratic transition. The return of the army to the front line had created an anti-democratic atmosphere, which will cripple any other attempt towards democratization. The old political configuration of army, party and state has re-emerged but in favor of the military. The army will pose substantial challenges for Algeria's future development. The failure of the first
democratic experiment opened the way for the armies’ return as the dominant political force by greatly undermining the other sides of the political triangle.

The liberalization process that President Chadli Benjedid adopted after the riots in October 1988 had two main objectives: First, the regime realized that it could not count on “performance legitimacy”, that is the support of the people in return for welfare benefits. It therefore sought a new form of legitimacy through democracy. Second, Benjedid’s democratization efforts were aimed at bringing the military under the formal control of the civilian government. The army, for its part, refused such reformations, it canceled the elections, forced the president to resign, and started confrontations with the FIS. In doing so, the army overturned Algeria’s brief experiment in liberal democracy and plunged the nation into an environment of deep anxiety, fear, anger and disillusionment. As a 20-year old Algerian man declared to a reporter:

> When I saw the tanks rolling through the city streets, I began crying. Not because I was fearful of the army nor afraid of the Islamic Salvation Front, but because I suddenly saw disappear in a matter of moments the liberty that we had struggled so hard to achieve these last three years.28

This poignant admission captures in human terms the attitudes of many ordinary people toward the re-entry of the army into Algerian civilian life. The unwillingness of the army to allow the process of democratization to continue demonstrates the anti-democratic attitude of the army and the residual strength of authoritarianism in Algerian politics. Following the coup of 1992 that ousted Benjedid and created a military

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dictatorship, the future of democratization – in Algeria – is doubtful. As long as the army rules the country, democracy in Algeria has a dark future, especially with the absence of basic governmental bodies such as elected assemblies.

As the army runs the country, it adopted a policy of terror designed to intimidate and eliminate the Islamists. As a consequence of such “wrong choice”, the tide of blood has continued to rise unabated in Algeria, bringing the state to its knees and causing severe deterioration in human rights conditions. The human rights organization’s reports highlight four areas of abuses by both opponents but most by the government:

1. **Unfair trials before special and military courts.**
2. **Deliberate killings of civilians.**
3. **An assault on freedom of press and speech.**
4. **Torture and other cruel inhuman, or degrading treatment in prisons.**

1. **Unfair trials before special and military courts**

One of the governments’ main instruments of repression has been the system of special courts to try cases involving what the state considered terrorism. As human rights international organizations reported, those courts have tried thousands of suspected Islamists militant, many in mass trials, and imposed penalties of death sentences, or life in prison, in cases most of them in absentia. Defendants were denied fair public trials. As government doesn’t respect the legal provisions regarding defendants’ rights, defendants were presumed guilty until proved innocent.

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2. The deliberate killings of civilians

The government-backed militants killed thousands of civilian people. Political violence reached a level unprecedented in the years of 1994-1997 (the third state of the conflict). The government targeted not only those suspected of armed attacks but also opponents of the regime with no links to violence. There is little doubt that Islamists groups were responsible for some of the killings, but the involvement of the state in murdering citizens made it difficult to determine who bears responsibility for a given act of violence and terror.

3. An assault on freedom of press and speech

Algeria’s press was one of the liveliest in the world. Since 1992, the press has been under siege from two directions, heavy-handed government restrictions and violence by the Islamic groups. As the press is under the pressure of both sides, journalists and writers are scared of writing anything that might upset either side. Since 1992, more than seventy journalists were killed.

As the government controlled the media, it prevented it from providing independent coverage of the political violence wrecking the country. Moreover, the media was prevented from providing any sense of the brutality of the state’s campaign against the Islamists, during this campaign the government used napalm against the Islamists. In doing so, the media have reverted to serving as government mouthpieces. It became a primary target for the Islamists.
4. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in prison

Torture and ill treatment of detainees continued to be widespread, and hundreds of detainees were dead as a result. Prisoners of conscience were arrested and charge with security offenses and since 1992, continued to be held without a trial. Prison conditions are poor and prisoners are very overcrowded. The government does not permit independent monitoring of prisons by human rights organizations such as the Red Cross or Amnesty International.

The government justified the previous violations and abuses of human rights by claiming that it was safeguarding the country’s democratic prospects from Islamic extremists who, they said, would trample rights and abandoned democracy once in power. Tragically, the government has done little in the field of human rights to distinguish itself from the Islamic movement – led human rights disasters it claimed to be preventing.

Another important political impact of the war is at both the international and regional level. On the international level, the war has opened the door for international involvement in the Algerian crisis. Both non-governmental organization and direct governmental involvement carry on this involvement. The World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Paris Club exercise pressures over the Algerian government in order to receive loans or reschedule its external debt which exceeded U.S.$30 billion. The direct governmental involvement of France, its rival the U.S., and other countries such as Iran and the Sudan, has weakened the independence of the state.
Also, it made the political decision out of the control of the national government. History repeats itself. Just as French influence had continued after independence, the impact of the external involvement will continue for a long time even if the crisis comes to an end.

On the regional level, Algeria historically had played an innovative leadership role in the realm of Third World politics (The policies of nonalignment), a support of Arab unity and the Palestinian Arab cause. The war had isolated Algeria from the Arab world and limited its regional influence. Algeria became the sick man of the Arab world.

On the other side, the failure of the democratic experiment has its negative impact on the Islamic movement as well. The FIS issued many declarations that sowed serious doubts about the long-term intention of the movement and its respect for the rules of the political game. Its’ most prominent leader, Abbasi Madani said that the FIS was not a politician party but an all-embracing expression of the popular will. His deputy, Ali Belhadj declared that Algeria was not a nation that thinks in terms of majority and minority. Mohammed Said, one of the FIS leaders said, “The people must be prepared to change their clothing and eating habits.” These positions portrayed the FIS as an anti-democratic and anti-modern movement. Moreover, the Algerian case became the primary test case for the compatibility of Islam and democracy. The FIS declared war against the civil society. Its record of violations and abuses of human rights are not better than those of the government. The Islamic movement attacked civilians whom they regard as

instruments of the state or whose lifestyles they consider conflict with Islamic values.

After the first round of the elections in which the FIS had a landslide victory, the leaders declared that the Algerian people have to prepare themselves for the new way of life. So many questions are raised in this regard concerning the new way of life. Not only unveiled women and intellectuals were classified as disbelievers and must be wiped out, but all segments of society who disagree with the Islamists on their methods, policies and agendas. Karima Bennounce – an Algerian sociologist – argued that the systematic attacks on women and women’s rights carried out by the Islamists in Algeria are good predictors of what will happen if the fundamentalists come to power.31 The radicalization of the FIS shows that it was anti-democratic and anti-modern movement. It has led Martin Kramer to describe the attitudes of such movements toward political pluralism, in the following words:

Fundamentalists insist that they have not demanded free elections in order to promote democracy or the individual freedoms or the individual freedoms that underpin it, but to promote Islam. Indeed, when leading fundamentalist thinkers do address the broader question of democracy, it is not to argue its compatibility with Islam but to demonstrate democracy’s inferiority to Islamic government. Such a virtuous government, they affirm, can rest only on obedience to the divine given law of Islam, the Sharia.32

In fact, Islam as a religion has a strong democratic tradition and so democracy can co-exist with Islam. Democracy has derailed in Algeria as a result of intolerance of both the secularist (who considered the best Muslim, the dead one) and the Islamists (who want to

31 Bennounce, 36.
32 Kramer, 38.
purify the society from all the secularists). Thus, the failure of the experiment should not be attributed to Islam, but to those opponents.

On the economic level, when the French left Algeria in 1962, they had destroyed more than 70 percent of the country's infrastructure. They also took with them most of the trained European cadre and left behind an economy in a state of chaos. Similarly, the second Algerian war had devastating effects on a crippling economy. The war is more an effect than a primary cause of the nation's current economic woes. These include an infrastructure that had suffered from destruction, negligence and lack of maintenance. Mass exodus of well trained people and foreign experts, an unemployment rate of 33 percent, and a total external debt of U.S.$30 billion that will absorb the country's oil revenues for a very long time.33

Algeria, one of the richest countries in Africa, has come back to be one of the countries, which fell in the clasp of heavy debts. The 30 billion foreign debts will continue to be a drain for the country's oil revenue for a very long time. Oil and gas industries are the government's main source of revenue and the key of reviving the ailing economy. Algeria will lack such sources of revenue and will stay underdeveloped for many years to come. In addition to this, the country will be open to the dictates of those financial organizations, which tend to force countries to adopt their recommendations. In fact, the IMF and WB recommend their Structural Adjustments Programs to all countries

that have economic crisis. The programs tend to produce more failure and create more problems than they solve.

With 33 percent unemployment, there are thousands of educated and semi-educated people who became unemployed, as the spattering economy, the government cannot provide enough employment. Thus, it became easy for the Islamic movement to recruit new militants from the endless reserves of unemployed youth to replace those dead or in prison. Tragically, frustrated youth are offered justification for their frustration as the economic, social and political realms are challenged only in words, by stating that Islam has an answer to everything. The troubles from which the Algerian society is suffering are due to non-believers who run the country.34

On the social level, the war caused panic among people who have no sense of security. As mentioned before, many of the terrorist acts, up to and including assassinations of police officers, are the work of the security forces themselves, these acts are obviously designed to instill fear and revulsion in the population against the Islamic militants. The Islamic militants, on their part, had practiced murder, kidnapping, rape and burglary. Thus, we find a society living with fear and divided system of affiliations and loyalty. Both Islamic groups and government regarding their loyalties accuse citizens of Algeria, each part considers those people who try to be neutral.

34 Roy, 56-85.
Words from Salima Ghazali vividly sum up the feelings of many Algerian people:

In this vast cemetery that is, Algeria, were our steps now take as from a closed tomb to one that is open, first we buried ideas, dreams and words, and then we entered the executed bodies of men, women, and children who lived with nothing and died with nothing.\(^{35}\)

As mentioned before, the social crisis in Algerian society was before the transition towards democracy. The war has worsened the situation and so the social pathologies have increased living conditions have deteriorated for virtually every class, except the very wealthy. Housing is in such short supply that few young persons can hope to find housing and establish their own. Unemployment rate of 33 percent and the atmosphere of anguish, fear and bewilderment have made Algeria, indeed, a vast cemetery. Thus, a profound sense of hopelessness about the war, the economy and the country’s political future engulf the population. People, who could not stand those agencies dream of emigration, so more than one million people, most well trained and educated, have left the country since 1992. Most of those emigrants have left forever, they were afraid of meeting the same fate of those who stayed and were murdered.

Since 1992, more than 200,000 people have been killed in this civil war in genocide and massacres, as well as thousands of refugees, orphans and displace persons who fled the rural areas to the capital and major cities looking for security.\(^{36}\)

\(^{35}\) Goytisolo, 24.

\(^{36}\) Al-Hawadeth, No. 2114 (May, 1997).
In closing, it is clear that the war and the return to military rule have crippled social, economic, and political development. It also has widened the gap between the elite and the masses.

Finally, it has created innumerable opportunities for corruption and mismanagement. The Algerian people face all the disadvantages of the economic, political, and social policies of the government and none of the advantages.
CHAPTER VI

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: COERCION, DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

In this chapter, I identify issues from the literature on coercion, dialogue and reconciliation as major approaches usually applied to the resolution of the conflicts.¹ This discussion is organized in terms of a framework consisting of four parts, the structure of the conflict, the structure of dialogue and reconciliation, the attempts of dialogue and reconciliation in Algeria during the crisis, and the outcome of such approaches.

The Structure of the Conflict

As an initial statement, conflict may be defined as the opposition between individuals and groups on the basis of competing interests, different identities, and differing attitudes.² Thus, the fundamental characteristic of the conflict is the existence of differences or dissimilarities between the participants. The structure of the conflict refers

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¹ There are numerous approaches for conflict resolution such as: coercion, negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. Due to the nature of the conflict, as civil war and internal affair, methods of inquiry, arbitration and mediation which request the involvement of a third party were not used. The Algerian government refused any international involvement to end the conflict.

to the sources of such differences among the adversaries. The sources of conflict are as
diverse as the forms of the conflict. Therefore, it may appear hopeless to generalize about
the sources of the conflict. Nevertheless, we can identify a set of sources that include
interests, needs, goals, understanding, cultural values, ideologies, and beliefs. The more
the conflict has sources, the more difficult it is to resolve. In the Algerian case, the
conflict is linked to two main sources: conflict of interests and conflict of ideologies
depending on the perspective of the participants.

Conflict of Interests

Conflict of interests are a discrepancy in preferred outcomes to self and others. It is
often manifest in a competition for tangible resources and rewards. In Algeria, the
military leaders enjoy the fruits of power. They were fearful of the Islamists’ victory, as
any gains for the Islamists’ are directly proportional to their loss. This amounts to a zero
sum game. The military leaders affirmed their unwillingness to share power or watch it
being transferred to a political party they regard as a threat to their reserved privileges and
interests.

The military leaders have suspicion that the Islamists participation in semi-pluralist
politics is merely a short-term device. It is designed as a front for their real program of
destroying the secular government, suffocating the privileges of the military leaders and

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3 Dennis J.D. Sandol, Hugo Van der Merwe, Editors, Conflict Resolution: Theory
at the end imposing a theocratic Islamic state. The Islamists statements, such as, “democracy is blasphemy” and “no charter or constitution, just the word of Allah” convinced the military leaders that the Islamists, once in power, would not respect the rules of the political game. This was apparent, especially with the alternation of power.

As the military leaders were intolerant of such radical change and threat to their interests, they adopted the security option and refused any kind of compromise or reconciliation with the Islamists. In fact, real power has always been in the hands of the military leaders. They were in a position to choose and implement such strategies. By doing so, they demonstrated that they alone would determine the course of Algerian politics. The government and all other parties, which were ready to share power with the Islamists, have had little space to maneuver or deal with crisis. The decisive force was those eradicators who believed that the solution to Algeria’s civil war was to be found in the elimination of the Islamists.

Conflict of Ideologies

From the perspective of the Islamists, it is an ideological conflict with the government. To the Islamists, the government is elitist, corrupt, distant from the people, unwilling to reform or change and more importantly, un-Islamic. As the government is uncommitted to Sharia, it is illegitimate and must be replaced by an Islamic state

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governed by Islamic laws and principles. Because a peaceful means of change through
democracy was insufficient, violent methods became legal. The Islamists used religion as
a mechanism of instigation against the secular government, “Holy War” or “Jihad” was
declared. The Islamists believed that they had to battle the secular state, if they hoped to
overcome the sickness that afflicted Algerian society. They sought to return to the “old
weapon”, the original sources of Islam. The perspective of the past, rather than that of the
future shape such an ideology.\footnote{Barakat, 146.}

The Algerian people saw that Islam alone could not solve
the country’s deep social and economic problems.

The Islamists considered the government as illegitimate, not only for its lack of
commitment to Islam, but also for its failure to live up to the people’s aspirations and
ideals. The Islamists goal of taking power is to re-Islamize the society by returning it to
the nation’s spiritual roots as a remedy for social ills. By implementing the Sharia and
purifying mores, the Islamists would overcome the political, economic, and social
problems. As democracy was derailed and they lost the means to gain power, revolution
became the only available alternative toward such a divine mission.

The dual nature of the conflict (conflict of interests linked to contrasting ideologies)
made it an unresolvable conflict. The increasing discrepancies between the opponents,
transferred Algeria’s political environment into a violent confrontation between
government and radicalized Islamists dedicated to force as the instrument of change.
Extremism on one side leads to extremism on the other side. The Algerian people became victims of democracy rather than winners. Democracy became a curse rather than a blessing. They were under the pressure of a hard choice between a police state and a fundamentalist state. While the secularists justified their actions in the name of democracy, the Islamists did in the name of religion.

The Structure of Coercion, Dialogue and Reconciliation

Using the power of the state and its legal system to provide an authoritative conclusion was the approach usually used to solve conflict in authoritative states. In democratic states, it is only used when it is a necessity, rather than a choice and usually for noble objectives such as, maintaining the unity of the country. In the Algerian case, coercion was the major approach used to solve the conflict. The military leaders were unified over what strategy to adopt toward the Islamists. It was the eradication of the Islamists. The eradicators were against any kind of compromise or dialogue with the Islamists. They advocated violence regardless of its' failure to resolve the conflict. The eradicators confronted the Four Algerian presidents who tried to compromise with the Islamists.6

6 The eradicators forced President Benjedid to resign, assassinated President Boudiaf when he made gestures of reconciliation with the Islamists. Confronted his successor, Ali Kafi when he imitated Boudiaf and replaced him with Minister of Defense Zeroual. Zeroual who was appointed by the eradicators has little space to move or negotiate with the Islamists without their approval.
As coercion proved ineffective, there were some attempts of dialogue and reconciliation. Those attempts failed as they were political maneuverings and lacked the necessary requirements of successful genuine dialogue and reconciliation.

Dialogue is the process of negotiation between parties that admit and respect each other in a dispute. It seeks to bring them into a voluntary agreement. The term "dialogue" as it is used in this context, implies a willingness to co-exist and compromise in mutual respect with others.

The Algerian government has held only fake dialogues, which were used as a cover for unilateral decisions and the policy of imposing a fait accompli. The FIS was a major participant in the conflict, but was excluded from most of the governmental attempts of dialogue. These attempts were with the secondary participants of the conflict and so they were without a future. The major participants of the conflict insisted on the inclusion of the FIS in any national dialogue but the government ignored such demands.

While dialogue requires the admission and respect of all the adversary sides without exception, reconciliation needs the understanding of both sides. Reconciliation as defined by Nhat Hanh: "Is to go to one side and describe the suffering being endured by the other side, and then to the other side, and describe the suffering being endured by the first side."  

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7 Dennis J., 115.
Both sides regardless of their increased figures of victims did not share such a disposition. The culture of peace, tolerance, forgiveness, and contrition has not developed yet in the Algerian society. It considers revenge one of its ritual values and the color of blood is never forgotten. Both sides believed in their final decisive victory, both refused to put down arms and return to normal political life and look for peaceful methods to end their tragic situation.

The Attempts of Dialogue and Reconciliation

After President Chadli was forced to resign, the military established the High Security Council (HSC), and recalled Boudiaf from exile in Morocco to serve on the HSC and as head of state. Boudiaf was viewed as a voice of reconciliation, while he was in Morocco, he declared in an interview that it would be a good thing if the FIS came to power and ended the FLN's long hold on the Algerian political system.8

As a voice of reconciliation, Boudiaf tried to chart out a third path between a theocratic state and a militarized version of the old regime. He made modest gestures of political reconciliation by closing some of the detention camps where Islamists were being held. At the same time, he criticized the past corruption and abuses. Boudiaf had crossed the red line; his course of action was threatening to the military leaders who brought him to power. Boudiaf was assassinated after six months of his return. It is

believed that he broke the taboo by making gestures of reconciliation and it is believed that elements in power had a hand in his death.  

After the assassination, the military named Ali Kafi as head of the HSC. Kafi recognized the need for compromise and so removed some of the “eradicators” so as to facilitate talks with the opposition. Kafi initiated “Platform for Democracy” which called for the convocation of a national conference. The conference was open to all political parties with the exception of the Islamists. As the Islamists were not included in the proposed dialogue, most political parties considered it meaningless and boycotted it. Kafi realized that a dialogue without the Islamists had little hope, and believed that the violence would continue. Thus he tried to initiate talks with the Islamists but was constrained by the eradicators. Kafi did not have the independence from the military leaders that he need to make a difference. He was seen as a poor imitation of Boudiaf. He was unable to restore political stability, and before the end of his term, was replaced by Defense Minister Zeroual.

Zeroual came to power with a clear record. As a military commander of the city of Constantine, he had refused orders from the presidency to shoot at the crowds of demonstrations in October 1988. In 1989, he retired his Commission after a policy

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10 Francis, 16.
dispute with Benjedid over the organization of the armed forces and had not taken part in the 1992 coup.\textsuperscript{11}

As a defense minister in 1993, he started negotiation with the Islamists. Zeroual took the initiative of holding secret meeting with leaders of the FIS in order to see whether they would accept three conditions set by the army for their release and inclusion in the dialogue with the government. The renunciation of violence, and a declaration of respect for a secular form of government, and the respect of the principle of alternation of power were the conditions. The leaders of the FIS refused such offers and insisted upon their unconditional release, and this the army was unwilling to do. Zeroual was unable to make further concessions without the permission of the army.\textsuperscript{12} When Zeroual became president in 1994, he believed that military means alone would not suffice to restore civil order. In his address as president he declared, “It is imperative to combine efforts in the domain of security with efforts in political domain. Security policy alone is insufficient to rescue the country from the crisis. The solution lies in a dialogue and the participation of all national political forces without exception.”\textsuperscript{13}

In this declaration, Zeroual committed himself to working with the opposition

\textsuperscript{11} The leaders of the takeover were Khaled Nezzar (Minister of Defense) and Larbi Belkheir (Minister of Interior), Mohammed Lamari (Chief of Staff), Mohammad Toufik (Minister of Military Intelligence) and Prime Minister General Nizzar was the strongman of the group.

\textsuperscript{12} Mortimer. “Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats,” 32.

\textsuperscript{13} Ciment., 23.
including the FIS. His strategy was a combination of violence, negotiation and political maneuvering. It includes the following approaches:

1. National Dialogue
2. Institution Building
3. Electoral Diplomacy
4. Reconciliatory Gestures
5. Coercion

1. National Dialogue

Zeroual called for a national dialogue. He held several meetings with representatives of political parties and civic associations to discuss Algeria’s future. Zeroual asked the FIS leaders for the renunciation of violence, as an obligatory condition for their participation in dialogue. The FIS leaders refused such conditional invitation. They claimed that, it was necessary first, to recognize them as a major force in Algerian Society and to release their prisoners. By doing so, both the Islamists and the government were refusing to soften their hard line policies. They conditioned their participation and so they put the cart before the horse. Zeroual’s second initiative failed. As the FIS was not included in the second dialogue, most political parties recognized that it was meaningless and they boycotted it.

2. Institution Building

Realizing the failure of a dialogue and the ineffectiveness of the old regime, Zeroual began the process of building a new institution. He started with the constitution. He engineered a new constitution, which concentrates greater power in the office of the presidency. He created a second House of Parliament called the Council of the Nation.
A third of its members were to be appointed by the President. The new constitution prohibits the organization of parties based on religion or regionalism. The government appointed a National Transitional Council (NTC) to discuss the law for the formation of political parties. The appointed Council recommends the new law, while most of the political parties criticized it. They claimed that it was the authority of an elected parliament to adjust the amendments to the constitution.

Zeroual also realized that the FLN is no longer desired as a ruling party. He therefore, formed the National Democratic Rally (RND). The new presidential party functions as a vehicle to channel popular support behind the president. The RND won the highest number of votes in the 1997 elections.

3. Electoral Diplomacy

Zeroual was determined to ensure that there was no repeat of an Islamist victory at the ballots. Thus, a new electoral law was adopted. The new law was based on the percentage list system designed to ensure that no party wins a decisive majority of parliamentary seats. Elections became the governmental answer to ending the country’s political crisis. The government described the vote as an opportunity for the Algerian

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15 All the political parties that participated in those elections accused the government of inflating turnout figures and interfering with their final results. Thus, the elections were rigged, lacked transparency and so failed to put an end to the crisis. For more details about the elections, see Al-Hawadeth, No. 2120 (20-26 June 1997).
people to freely express their will.16 The government held presidential and parliamentary elections. Elections, as most Algerian people believed, did not change the situation. It was a mistake to think that the vote will by itself end the violence. Neither the presidential nor the parliamentary elections helped to solve Algeria's problem.

4. Reconciliatory Gestures

Zeroual took other positive measures towards political reconciliation. After coming to power, Zeroual undertook a large scale reorganizing of the top of military leadership. He introduced young officers, more willing to consider compromise with the Islamists. Moreover, Zeroual dropped Prime Minister Rheda Malik and Interior Minister Salim Saad. Both were considered leading eradicators and opponents to reconcilers willing to include moderate Islamists in government as the price for ending the violence.17 As the violence continued, Zeroual made further in concession and took a courageous conciliatory gesture toward the FIS. It was his decision to release the FIS leaders from prison. The objective of such positive step as explained by the government was to explore every possibility of putting an end to the violence and bloodshed and of restoring security and stability. Zeroual expected the released leaders to take similar positive steps to reduce the violence as a mark of their willingness to engage in negotiating with the authority. The government hoped that those leaders would call for a truce in the armed

17 The Washington Post, (June 6, 1994).
hostility. Contrary to these hopes, nothing of this sort occurred.¹⁸

The reconciliatory gestures were not sufficient to end the crisis. Thereafter, Zeroual found himself unable to make further concessions to the Islamists. He was constrained by “eradicators” within the military hierarchy. Zeroual had little room to maneuver, especially as intensity of the hostilities served the argument of the eradicators.

5. Coercion

While working on the one hand to promote dialogue, Zeroual on the other hand instituted sharp repressive measures against the Islamists. What crimes the Islamic militants have not committed in the name of religion, the security forces have committed in the name of democracy and restoring order. The security forces were pushing relentless campaigns to crush the Islamic insurgency. Tales of execution, torture, arbitrary arrest, and abused detainees and people disappearing by the thousands into dungeons and graves became common in Algeria.¹⁹

Repression alone was incapable of ending the violence. The use of force, the recourse to violence did not allow any of the protagonists to solve the problem to their advantage. It proved that the solution had to be a political one. Neither the Islamists nor the government seemed to realize this fact. At the end, it is clear that Zeroual’s strategy (combination of dialogue and violence) has failed to get at the root of the problem to end the violence.


¹⁹ The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, (November 9, 1997).
The governmental initiatives and reconciliatory gestures failed to bring the protagonists to the negotiation table, the reconciliatory camp of the Islamists took two main initiatives to solve the problem peacefully: the platform of Rome 1995 and the cease fire declaration 1997.

The Platform of Rome

The community of Sant Egidio had distinguished itself in 1992 by playing a key mediator role in the Mozambian Civil War. In 1995, it offered a setting for the Algerian political parties and civic organizations to seek an end to the conflict. The participants of these talks included: Abdennour Yahia (Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights), (LADDH), Abdelhamid Mehri (FLN), Hocein Aiyat Ahmed (FFS), Anwar Haddam (FIS), Ahmed Ben Bella (MDA), Louisa Handune (Worker’s Party) (PT), Abdallah Jaballah (Ennahda Party), and Ahmed Ben Mohammed (Contemporary Muslim Youth (IMC). The participants together won over 85 percent of the vote in the 1991 elections.20

After two weeks of talks, the participants signed an interesting document entitled, “Platform for a Political and Peaceful Solution to the Algerian Crisis”. This document was intended to serve as a basis for negotiating with the government to end the conflict. The document included the following main points:

1. Rejection of violence as a means of exceeding or maintaining power.

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2. Rejection of any dictatorship, whatever it's nature or form.
4. Respect for the alternation of power through universal suffrage.
5. The non-intervention of the army in political affairs, and its return to its constitutional duties of safeguarding national unity.\(^{21}\)

Prior to negotiations, the signatories called on the government to take the following steps:

1. The effective freeing of FIS leaders and all political prisoners.
2. Lifting of banning and suspension measures taken under exceptional powers against newspapers, publications, and books.
3. Immediate, effective and verifiable cessation of the practice of torture.
4. Condemnation of and calling for the cessation of executions and attacks against civilians and foreigners and the destruction of public property.
5. The formation of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate violent excesses and grave violations of human rights.\(^{22}\)

The Platform of Rome was an important document, due to the fact that the FIS, the major political party in Algeria, made very significant concessions. The FIS rejected violence as a means of gaining or retaining power, it repudiated dictatorship regardless of its' form, including both military and theological dictatorship. More importantly, it is the first time the FIS committed itself to respecting multi-party system and the alternation of power. The military leaders refused such demands and were afraid of sharing or transferring power to Islamists. They claimed that the FIS committed itself only on paper or theory. The FIS has not broken fundamentally with the application of the Sharia. The FIS leaders declared that "in accordance with Sharia law, we will not accept anything less

\(^{21}\) MidEast Mirror, (January 16, 1995).

\(^{22}\) MidEast Mirror, (January 16, 1995).
than an Islamic state." In addition to those doubts about the FIS's real faith, the FIS could no longer influence or control all Islamic movements, especially the GIA. The GIA was absent in Rome and it rejected the idea of talks and warned the FIS officials against seeking an accommodation with the authorities.

The government, constrained by the military leaders, condemned the Rome meeting as an intervention in the country's internal affairs. The main grievance cited was that it had been organized outside Algeria. The government made a big issue of the fact that it was not being held in Algeria. Also, the government considered the demands in the document, demanding that the government surrender its sovereignty before its opponents agree to negotiate, as blackmailed.

Regardless of the loopholes the document had, it was an important event and a positive beginning in the search for a political solution and the process of national dialogue. The founder and president of the Sant Egdio society commented on the conference and said, "The proposals could very well make a historic change in Algeria." Ben Bella, one of the signatories on the document said that, "the document shows real maturity on the part of the political opposition and provides an opening for the solution of

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23 Hermida, "The Battle of Algiers," 44.


similar problems in the Arab and Islamic world." The government and the military leaders rejected the document and refused to show any kind of flexibility in dealing with it. In doing so, they lost an important chance to end the struggle. The government eschewed peaceful initiative in favor of a strategy of violence to restore stability.

Cease-fire in October 1997

In mid-September 1997, a call for a cease-fire initiated by the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) military wing so as to end the six years of bloody civil strife. The commander of the AIS, Madani Mezerag ordered his men to lay down their weapons so as to expose the rival militant group, the Armed Islamic Group and unnamed forces manipulating them:

In order to foil the plans of those who are waiting for the opportunity to harm Algeria... the national commander of the Islamic Salvation Army orders all chiefs of combat companies under his command to stop combat operations from October 1, 1997. The AIS Commander called upon other groups caring for the interests of religion and of the nation to rally to this appeal in order to expose the enemy behind the horrible massacres and isolate the criminal remnants of preserve GIS extremists, and those who hide behind them.27

The cease-fire declaration was the outcome of long secret negotiations between the AIS and key officials in the army. Thus, the AIS Commander rather than the FIS leader, Abhassi Madani who did not oppose it, signed it. In other words, the cease-fire


27 Reuters, (September 24, 1997).
came as an outcome of dialogue between the armed forces and the AIS rather than between the government and the FIS. President Zeroual denied any dialogue with the FIS or their leaders. He insisted that the FIS was a closed file that belonged to the past, raising a question over whom has the real power in both camps. In the Islamic side, the armed wing of the Islamic movement took the initiative rather than the FIS, the organized body of the Islamic movement. On the other side, it was the military establishment rather than the government, which negotiated the Islamist.

The Algerian government hoped that the cease-fire will eliminate the violence and so the Algerian controlled state television and radio gave the proposal extensive coverage. The cease-fire, though it did not bear fruit, came as a shock to enemies of reconciliation who exist on both sides. These are the military leaders who believed, that the only answer was to wipe out the Muslim rebels on the one hand, and the radical Islamic group, the GIA, on the other hand, which responded with a counter statement admitting responsibility for the horrific massacres of innocent Algerian civilians. The GIA warned of more bloodshed in response to the cease-fire initiative. This threat was realized when the GIA killed more than fifty civilians over the weekend of October 1997.28 In doing so, the GIA closed the door to the last opportunity to end the conflict peacefully and encourage the eradicators to insist on their security solutions.

The Outcome of Reconciliatory Attempts

Since the early beginning of the reconciliation, the military leaders, the enemies of

28 Al-Ahram Weekly. (October 9-15, 1997).
reconciliation, showed their unwillingness to accept the risks connected with dialogue and compromise. Their refusal to negotiate was based on their judgment that the radical elements of the Islamic movement could be combated at an acceptable cost. In this way, they were mistaken and their error had a devastating effect. All the governmental efforts towards negotiations failed due to the absence of real powers in Algeria; the armed forces and the FIS. The first Algerian president, Ben Bella went further and stated that the genuine dialogue should be with the armed forces rather than the government.

We want to hold a real dialogue, this dialogue should be held with the army in particular. To be very frank, the real ruling power in Algeria is the army. This kind of situation has to be reconsidered because the army is not capable to running political matters. The army has to return to its’ original place, the barracks.29

Ben Bella’s demand of returning the army to its’ original place, the barracks is a sign of misunderstanding the power and influence of the army in Algeria. Such influence is fully understood by the Algerian historian Mohammad Harbi, who remarked that “In all country’s the state has its’ army, but in Algeria the army has its’ state.”30

As reconciliation was not on the army’s agenda, the attempted negotiation aimed at reinforcing its’ power, winning more time to win the security option, and fragmenting the Islamic movement.

On the Islamic side, enemies of reconciliation exist, as do its’ supporters. The six years of bloodshed proved, that enemies of reconciliation have the upper hand in Islamic movements. Thus, they ignored the numerous opportunities for dialogue with the

29 An interview with Ben Bella made by Al-Ahram Weekly, (June 5-11, 1997).
governments as they conditional their participation in any dialogue with the government. The six year war and its devastating consequences fail to convince them that only unconditional dialogue can get at the root of the problem. They saw that the conditions are implying no genuine dialogue. As both parties refused to soften their hard line positions, it was difficult to create a middle path that could bridge the gap between them. Both parties crippled the efforts at dialogue and opened the door for the continuation of violence.

In closing, it is clear that there has never been any genuine dialogue between the authorities and the Islamists. The authorities (the military leaders and the government) were interested in playing off one part against the other. The result was the fragmentation of the Islamic movement and the emergence of the radical Islamic group, GIA. The GIA rejected any kind of reconciliation and escalated the violence. In the end, the political climate remains tense and ambiguous.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter addresses the fundamental issues that have emerged repeatedly in the preceding analysis of the Algerian crisis. The dramatic failures of the political system to deliver on its exaggerated promises. The rise of Islamic movement, the failure to bring about a transition to democracy, the escalation of a bloody civil war and finally the call for cease-fire makes this summation even more relevant.

The essence of the Algerian crisis revolves around the question of legitimacy. Legitimacy is fundamental to political life, because it reflects the degree to which those who seek to rule are accepted by the ruled. As Jackman pointed out, "Regimes are legitimate to the extent that their citizens regard them as proper and deserving of support." In democratic countries, legitimacy is said to adhere to the process by which officials achieve power, which is manifested in elections. The refusal of any government to employ the electoral test is itself taken as evidence against its legitimacy. However, elections are not the only source of legitimacy, in some cases, legitimacy can emanate from the outcomes of the political system. The achievement of economic growth, the elimination of poverty and illiteracy, and the maintaining of stability and unity of the

\[1\] Jackman, 97.
state are great deeds. They can be used to legitimize the political system regardless of the means by which power is achieved.

In the Algerian case, neither form of legitimacy was available. The legitimacy of the political system stems from the personal legitimacy of the elite. This personal legitimacy emanates from only one major accomplishment, which is the political heritage of the liberation war. Islam played a fundamental role in the previous outcome, but the postcolonial state ignored such facts. The ruling elite adopted Western values and way of life, which contradict the principles of Islam. Moreover, the elite, after more than three decades in power lost such little legitimacy through its failure to run the newly independent state. To the post independence generation, the accomplishment of independence in 1962 is like the "Tales of the Arabian Nights", before more than 2000 years. The elite was perceived by this generation as inept at resolving economic problems, politically corrupt and more important, un-Islamic. Thus, they are illegitimate as they remained uncommitted to Sharia. An illegitimate government that is not responding to the needs of its people, loses its authority over them. As the democratic means failed to bring about the desired reform, violence became the only available alternative for the Algerian people. The war was the inevitable outcome and unhappy times visit Algeria.

A number of major points emerge from the previous argument. First, the present conflict is the natural outcome of the dramatic failures of the country’s successive leaders since independence in 1962. To establish a national identity and to offer political and
economic models of development, which most Algerians could support. After more than
three decades of the FLN’s rule over Algeria, the result was an increasing discrepancy
between the standard of living of the elite and that of the populace. The FLN claims of
pursuing equity and economic justice for all Algerians were increasingly becoming
tarnished. Vandwell wrote, “The growing gap between those who had no access to FLN
patronage and the elite of the public sector managers, party apparatchiks, and allied ALN
officers, exposed the true nature of the party. It was no longer considered neutral.”

That is to say, a party that claimed to represent all Algerians and had created a
one-party state based on that claim, really represented the few, and the majority knew it.
In other words, the FLN’s monopoly of power had led to a situation when the fortunes of
the few came from the exploitation of the many. People became frustrated and angry
because they had no voice in their own affairs, had few or no prospects for change and
reform, and had a deteriorating standard of living. In addition, the poor and the
unemployed grew outraged over the privileges enjoyed by the party members and the
military officers.

These circumstances were the breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalism. The
Islamic movement exploited such environments. Their basic criticism focused on the
very unequal distribution of wealth and power in Algeria. What the Islamists saw was the
oppression of the weak and the poor. As Islam is the voice of the poor, the FIS appealed

to those disenfranchised and marginalized people and it became their mouthpiece.

Instead of using religion to rationalize poverty, the FIS used it as a weapon against such social inequality, which contradicts their understanding of Islam. The Islamists interpreted the teachings of Islam from the perspective of their positions in the social class structure and in accordance with their relationship with the ruling classes.\(^3\) As the ruling class was not legitimate, its wealth became the target of the Islamists. This interpretation satisfies the wretched poor and makes them pliant tools in the hands of the Islamists.

Second, the centrality of Islam for Algerian politics has remained unchanged for the past 1300 years, and it is not likely to change in the near future.\(^4\) The position of Islamists in general, and the FIS in particular in contemporary Algerian Society reflects the role of Islam in Algeria. Historically, in Algeria as well as in other Islamic countries, religion has been used by the colonized and the oppressed as a mechanism of instigation against their colonizers and oppressors. The stress on the Islamic-Arab character of Algeria served as a powerful counter-measure against the French insistence of total domination of political, economic and cultural life. The Islamic movement has played a fundamental role in the crystallization of Algerian nationalism by insisting upon the historical and cultural specificity of the Algerian society. This critical role was at a time

\(^3\) Barakat, 133.

when many liberals seemed to favor a process of progressive gallicization. The Islamic movement resisted the secular influence of the French culture. This resistance is best manifested by the movement slogan, “Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my fatherland.”

Therefore, the contemporary efforts of the Islamic movement to restore such glorious heritage can be seen not only as a religious and cultural phenomenon, but also as part of a nationalist resurgence to restore old weapons. The return of Islam is meant to revive a way of life that was discouraged by a colonial power until 1962 and by its collaborators, after independence. The Islamists have raised the question of independence. It is they believe, has not yet been achieved. Then a new war has to be fought against the proxies of colonization- the Westernization elite.

Third, the rise of secularism (the separation of church and state) in the Arab world was associated with European colonization. In struggling for independence, the resistant movements made nationalism the new religion, the failure of the nationalist movements after independence caused the decline of secularism which began to lose its glitter.\(^5\) The doctrine of secularism is most likely to be discarded by all Muslims all over the world.\(^6\) Secularism is generally perceived as un-Islamic, if not, anti-Islamic. Opinion is almost


\(^6\) Turkey is the only Islamic country that abolished Sharia law even in personal status matters. The rise of the Islamic movement in Turkey is confronted by the military leaders who insist on keeping Attaturk’s Legacy of Secularism.
unanimous that Islam is opposed to secularism by its' nature. Islam is a total way of life. It is religion and state (Deen Wa Dawlah). What works in the West, i.e., separation of church and state is not likely to work in Algeria or other Islamic states. As Esposito analyzed the refusal of secular ideas by all the Islamic movements, he wrote, "Islam is a total and comprehensive way of life. Religion is integral to politics, law and society. The failure of Muslim Societies is due to their departure from the straight path of Islam and their following a Western secular path, with its' secular materialistic ideologies and values."  

Secularism does not only involve the separation of religion from the state, it also includes the process of urbanization, modernization, and most important democratization. Needless to say that, the separation of religion from the state is not an end by itself, but a means to achieve modernization and democratization. The tragedy with the Algerian as well as other Arab secular states is that they adopt the separation of the religion from the state and ignore the most fundamental component of secularism, which is democracy. Arab states pass as secular states because of the separation of religion to state and due to their uncommitment to Islam, but they are not democratic. Democracy is threatening to those secular states.

Fourth, the Algerian derailed democracy had devastating consequences on that country as well as other Arab nations. The failure to bring about a peaceful transition of

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power proved a tragic fact that democracy has a dark future in the Arab world in general.\textsuperscript{8} In fact, the preconditions or requirements for democratization are not yet available in that part of the world.

Democracy is a happy by-product of social economic and cultural development. It is believed that an advanced economy will result in the establishment of a strong civil society. In such an environment, successful transition toward democracy could take its place.\textsuperscript{9} The Algerian, as well as other Arab crippled economies and their underdeveloped societies extinguish any glimpse of hope for such an opportunity. Such circumstances insure that the existence of authoritarian regimes in the Arab will continue for a very long time to come. While the Arab countries are under the pressures of the WB and IMF for their heavy debts, they are still the largest purchasers of arms. Reports point out that Arab countries brought more than 40 percent of all arms sold throughout the world in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{10} The Arab countries spend on defense more than they spend on research and development. The tragedy is that most of these arms are never used to defend their sovereignty, but to torture citizens and to function as a source of legitimacy for the regimes.

In the authoritarian Arab world, political reform has never delved beyond the level of rhetorical promises. Tactical maneuvers intended to control rather than to

\textsuperscript{8} Lebanon is the only Arab democratic country, and even there, the path to freedom has been best by many obstacles.

\textsuperscript{9} Chuan Liu, 12.

enfranchise have done little to change the structure of the regime. Mustapha K. Al Sayid argues, “For most Arab leaders, it would never enter their minds that democracy might also mean the possibility of a peaceful transfer of power to an opposition group.”

In Algeria, the transition toward democracy and the alternation of power were not on the agenda of the country’s military leaders. As they failed to manipulate the electoral rules and control who wins the game, they reiterated the promises of democratic reform. In doing so, the military leaders had committed a historical mistake. They confiscated the choice of the people and blocked the door for political participation. By voiding the elections, imposing a state of emergency, and resorting to brutal and repressive measures, the military leaders proved that they are more extremists than the Islamic fundamentalists. They justified their actions in the name of the people while in fact, they intended to protect their own special interests. The military leaders ignored the fact that their place is in the barracks and their essential role is to protect the state and its citizens from external threats and force. Instead, they became involved in executing their citizens.

The Islamists, on the other side, have blood on their hands and participate in the crisis, too. The Islamists committed a tragic mistake by ignoring the historical fact that Algeria is a country with a dual identity. There are two Algerians in the same society, the secularist and the Islamist. In fact, the 132 years of French rule have left a definite imprint on the people. At the same time, the vast majority of Algerians are Muslim and

identify deeply with the teachings of Islam. One side of that identity is classified as Francophiles. This side longs for an Algeria that is culturally, socially, economically and politically modern and Western. Where Islam is important, but it is firmly separated from the affairs of the state. The other side is classified as Arabphiles. It seeks an Algeria where faith governs all activities of the state and refuses the Westernization of the society. The Islamic movement is grouped with the second side as it intends to re-Islamize the society. The Islamic movement denied the existence of the first side. In doing so, it refused to admit the dual identity and so it failed to reconcile between these two far extremes.

The Islamic movement was as extreme as it is adversary. The radical members of the movement opened the door for military intervention by their extreme statements about their hidden agenda. Ali Bel Hadj, the second man in the FIS, did not hesitate to show his anti-democratic attitude when he declared, “Among all reasons for which we reject the democratic dogma, there is the fact that democracy relies on the opinion of majority....As for us the people of Sunna, we believe that justice only comes from decisive proofs of the Sharia and not from multitude actors and voices.”¹²

Similar statements declared by fundamentalists did not only reveal their anti-democratic attitudes, but also portrayed Islam itself as anti-modern, anti-democratic and

¹² Ciment, 145.
anti-Western. Thus, opening the door for voices to consider Islam the new global threat after the death of Communism. Many Western commentators, scholars and policy makers viewed the relationships of Islam to the West in terms of rage, violence, terrorism, and hatred. They grouped Islamic fundamentalist with Nazi and Communists. Huntington said, "Islam has bloody borders," giving the implication that Muslims are responsible for the spilling of blood. However, in many current conflicts in Palestine, Bosnia, Somalia, Philippines, India, etc., the Muslims are the victims who have been bullied and butchered. In fact, Islamic fundamentalists were never a global threat, but are a serious threat to the Muslim societies. The experiment in the two Islamic fundamentalist states (Iran and The Sudan) is not blooming. Anyone who has an elementary knowledge of the current situation in those countries will readily admit this. Therefore, the majority of the Algerian people refuse to make their country the second Iran.

While both the Islamists and the secularists insist on their intolerance, the majority of the Algerian people refuse to take sides. They refuse the difficult choice between a corrupt system and an extremist one. As an Algerian retired officer said:

The overwhelming majority of Algerians reject the regime because they want to see new faces after more than 30 years of the same people in power. Equally overwhelming, Algerians reject an Islamic republic because they are convinced the Islamic resistance is nihilist and incapable of running the country. They want a system to accommodate both political Islam and communists because both are part of our society whether we like it or not.13

The previous statement implies the requirement for the solution of the Algerian crisis, it lies in commitment to tolerance as principle and practice. The Francophiles and the Arabphiles, the secularists and the Islamists, the civilians and the military must admit that they are all Algerians. Regardless of their ideological affiliations as Algerians, they must co-exist with each other. This mentality is the key to the Algerian crisis. The internationalization of the crisis will not end the crisis. The cease-fire of October 1997 proved the fact that the solution to the crisis can only be found inside Algeria and only by Algerians.

In all societies, there is to be found both harmony and disharmony. But to bound all the individuals of such societies together (secularist and Islamists), we must link them up to what unifies not by what divides. Islam has unified the Arabs with many non-Arab nations. As a religion, it advocates ways and means to such end. The Islamic movement failed to show any kind of tolerance to those who differ with its views. The secularists, on the other hand, were not less intolerant than the Islamists. Thus, it is not easy to be sure about the future of the crisis. The secularists and the Islamists are not talking to each other. Indeed, they do not appear to be speaking the same language. The secularists prefer to minimize the role of religion in the Algerian society. Also, they fear that the Islamists consider democracy a means rather than end. If they come to power they will never relinquish it voluntarily. The Islamists say that religion comes first, they want to re-Islamize the society by confronting secularism and replace it with the Sharia. To the Islamists, secularism is an imperialistic conspiracy, the West has sold this idea to
the newly independent countries so that it could dominate the region by proxy. This war of words or conflict of ideologies is fueled by the war of knives and bullets. Algeria’s future depends on both adversaries’ abilities to bridge this gap between Islam and secularism. This is a very difficult task and it cannot be solved neither by polls nor by bullets, but by tolerance, dialogue and reconciliation. Until Algerians realize such ideas, Algeria is going to have to live with this conflict.

Another important obstacle is the deteriorating economic situation, it adds more gas to the fire. Estimates of the Algerian unemployment rate for 1996 and 1997 were between 33 and 35 percent. The total foreign debts exceed 30 billion dollars. More than 70 percent of Algeria’s industries are idle after six years of bloody war. The funds that the government had to allocate for development were spent on security. Without restructuring the economy, the government (civilian or military leaders) will never get at the root of the problem.

The final obstacle in solving the Algerian crisis is civil military relation. Since the military leaders will not give up power voluntarily and allow for civilian control to exist over them, the result is be a corrupt authoritarian regime. Without restructuring civilian - military relations. It is difficult for a transition toward democracy to succeed. Until Algeria overcomes all these obstacles, the crisis will continue. Algeria will have to live the time of indecision and the flow of blood will continue. Algerians might live in hell for several years.
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