THE ALGERIAN DOMESTIC STRATEGY
OF COUNTER-TERRORISM FROM CONFRONTATION
TO NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

LOTFI SOUR[*]

Abstract. *Algeria has seen the evolution of terrorism since becoming a state independent of France in the 1960's. While terrorism has been around since Algeria's post-occupation inception, it was in the 1990's when the terrorist groups within Algeria affiliated with the main body of al-Qaeda and as a result stepped up their game resulting in more dynamic and destructive attacks primarily through the addition of explosives. This article seeks to explain the Algerian domestic strategy of counter-terrorism, so, in order to frame Algeria's counter-terrorism efforts effectively, it is important to look at how Algeria has gradually shifted from a 'statism-centric' towards a 'population-centric' strategy. This paper suggests that Algeria's attempt to combine both 'hard' and 'soft' approaches in countering radicalism and terrorism has emerged as the best approach in the long run. In dealing with terrorism and radicalism, the 'hard' approach is defined as measures that are employed by the state that focus on the function and role of the security apparatus (primarily the Algerian army and elite forces) and their use of force, which includes, among other things, tactical raids, arrests, infiltration and killings. The 'soft' approach, on the other hand, is seen as the function, role and activities of the non-security state apparatus (such as the ministry of education, as well as non-state actors – such as civil society, and zawiyyas), which do not resort to force. This article will subsequently show that such a strategy also follows several best practices in handling radicalism and terrorism that have been developed throughout Algeria's history.*

Keywords: *Terrorism, Algeria, strategy, hard approach, soft approach, national reconciliation.*

"Fear must change sides"

(Former Algerian Prime Minister Redha Malek 1994)

"I call on all Algerian men and women to learn again how to live together and join forces to improve their condition and achieve prosperity for their loved ones"

(The Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika 2005)

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 [*] Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, University of Mascara; lotfitlem87 @yahoo.fr

Introduction

As a result of a number of historical developments during the 1990s, such as post-colonial power structures and the rise of Islamic radicalism, Algeria witnessed a national tragedy that was characterized by tremendous brutality and in which an estimated 200,000 people lost their lives. Algerians have strived to fight this ogre by resorting not only to counter-violence but also to reconciliation and forgiveness. Algerians adopted a proactive strategy that aims at preserving human life and dignity while terrorists aim at destroying life and aspirations and hope.

Terrorism has grown into an international phenomenon that threatens individuals and states alike. It has spread the world over by using multitude referential arguments whether ideological, ecological, political, economic or religious. It is, however, difficult to ascertain with certainty and with objective clarity the causal dynamics or the motivational structures that generate such pathological acts.

What make it even more complicated and complex is the internal-external imbrications since at its onset terrorism stems from an ideational structure that is never confined to a territorial space. Moreover, with the impressionate growth in international travel and mass communication, especially with the internet revolution, space delimitations and time zones have lost their meanings. State's ability to control the flow of information or to filter ideas or to censor thinking is no longer potent. Freedom of action has been further facilitated by the emergence of networked communities whether virtual or real (terrorist groups are such an example).

It has become, thereafter, totally incorrect to isolate terrorism from its international sources or from its international ramifications. It is by nature an international phenomenon that knows no borders and no consensual definition. It is a dynamic pathogenous phenomenon that takes different forms and shapes, different modes of organization and expression, and different doctrinal inclination or *modus vivendi*. This is what makes it a challenging phenomenon to study.

Algerian terrorism is not different or really specific, it is just bloodier and much more destructive, at times very intensive and over a long span. However, it can be studied by using the same analytical prism and like any similar phenomenon.

This paper aims to deconstruct the terrorist dynamics in Algeria, This framework will allow for a better understanding of the current form of violent Islamism and about how Algeria's counter-terrorism approach grew into its current form, and what can be said about its effectiveness, and discuss Algeria's potential future and the consequences that the recent developments could have for its counter-terrorism strategy.

The Terrorist Threat in Algeria: A Historical Overview

The Development of Islamic Movement in Algeria

Islamism has a long history in Algeria, the link between Islam and politics is not a new phenomenon in contemporary Algeria. The various resistance movements against the French Colonization gained justification not only in the name of Algeria but also of Islam. They were Jihads against infidels invaders. They were

defined as acts obligatory for all Muslims. The French further consolidated this conception of colonial relationships by distinguishing Algerians from the settlers first by religion (not by race, ethnic origin or nationality), and only secondly by geo-ethnicity. Algerians were called Muslims and the others were called Europeans. This, and other policies of selective assimilation aimed at stripping the Algerians of their Islamic identity[1], have not only further engrained the feeling of religious identity but have also strengthened the belief in the sole righteousness of the Islamic model. Islam was, thereafter, a source of identity and a motive for liberation. It was this identity that the Islamic Reformist Movement (The Association of Algerian Ulema) was trying to establish and it was this motive that was later used by the FLN (national Liberation Front) to rally people around the nationalist agenda[2].

In Algeria, Islamism is a phenomenon that was from the beginning, influenced by various external intellectual and religious-educational currents. Such influence goes back to World War I (1914-1918) when the youth who refused to be drafted into the French Army emigrated eastwards and attended Tunisian and middle eastern universities (al-Zeitouna in Tunisia, al Azhar in Egypt and other religious institutions in the Levant and the Arab Peninsula)[3]. These self-exiled students returned after the Great War influenced by the neo-reformism of Mohammed Abduh and Jamal-Din Al-Afghani. It was these students who established the Association of Algerian Ulema and planted the first seeds of Islamism in Algeria.

The Islamic movement reflects not only the social and cultural fabric of society but also the very dynamics that shape, change and lead to either stability or instability. The development of this movement is also affected by the socio-economic conditions of the country, the type of political system and its political culture and also the different cultural and intellectual currents that wade through society. However, it was the interaction with the east that created such doctrinal inclinations and this was due two essential causes: the lack of a strong indigenous scholarly tradition in Algeria, and the non-existence of reputable Islamic institutions (like al-Azhar in Egypt or al-Zaitouna in Tunisia, for example). Both reasons have created a vacuum that can only be filled by external inputs[4].

One can deconstruct external influence on Algerian Islamism by classifying this influence into three typologies. The first category is intellectual in essence.

Several Algerian islamists have been influenced by the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and Syria. This is particularly true for some Algerian students who studies in both states, or those taught by Egyptian or Syrian teachers working in Algeria up to the late 1980s. An analysis of three islamist parties belonging to this intellectual and political breed in Algeria (HMS, An_nahda and al-Islah) reveals the extent of this influence[5], as do the organic links that tie the HMS party to the International Movement of the Muslim Brotherhood.

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[1] David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône*, *1870-1920*, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 224.

[2] Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*, USA, Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 45-46.

[3] Mustapha al-Ahnaf et autres, *L'Algerie par ses Islamistes*, Paris, Karthala, 1991, p. 22.

[4] Graham E. Fuller, *Algeria The next fundamentalist state?*, United States, Arroyo Center & RAND, 1996, pp. 37-38.

[5] Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield: Algeria 1988-2002*, London, Verso, 2003, p. 65.

The second category could be termed "spiritual influence". A large fraction of the Algerian youth has been deeply influenced by the Salafi doctrine. This influence was also noticeable in the eighties when the Chadli regime lifted age restrictions on people going for Umrah or Hajj. Quite a number of pilgrims (and many students studying in the Arabian Peninsula) returned to Algeria enriched by this spiritual experience and deeply touched by the intensity of religious discourse in the Holy land of Islam[6]. They came back spreading their newly acquired doctrinal convictions and ideas. They further strengthened Salafi presence in Algeria. Ali Belhadj is perceived in Algeria as one of the prominent figures of this Salafist movement and the late Jordanian scholar al_Albani as its spiritual guide.

The final category could be termed methodical influence. More than 1400 Algerians served in the Afghan war[7] and returned back indoctrinated with the kind of thinking that led them to refuse anything but their own concept of the Khilafat and Islamic state. They perceived the existing political system as a legitimate target for their conception of Jihad.

These afghan veterans constituted the hard core of terrorist groups in the country which subscribe to an internationalist agenda (from the GIA to the GSPC). In fact, a careful and comparative reading of the discourses and methodologies adopted by these groups with book written by one of the leaders of the International Jihadi Movement Omar Abdelhakim alias Abu Mussab demonstrates the striking resemblance between them[8].

The Rise of Political Islam in Algeria

By using a historical perspective, Islamist groups fall into three broad categories, which are listed below, depending on the strategy for *islamization* adopted by each category:

1. *Religio-political movements:* These are composed of Islamic Welfare and religious groups, associations and individuals that reject the state's monopoly on Islamic discourse and strive to recapture the initiative in this area from the authorities by promoting charitable, cultural, educational and social activities. This is how all the politically-oriented Islamic movements started in the sixties and the seventies. The associations, groups and individuals that belong to this category want to re-islamize society through education, welfare and the spread of the moral code. In the case of Algeria, one can mention the association of al-Qiyam (values) in the sixties or al-Irshad wal islah (an association belonging to the HMS party) and the former Islamic League (al-rabita al-Islamiya) presided over by the late Sheikh Sahnoun, which served as an umbrella organization for all the currents of the Islamic movement between 1988 and 1991[9].

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[6] Martin Evans and John Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-145.
[7] Camille Tawil, *Brothers in Arms: The Story of Al-Qa'ida and the Arab Jihadists*, London, Saqi, 2010, p. 70.
[8] *Ibid*, pp. 86-73.
[9] Emad Eldin Shahin, *Political Ascent: Contemporary Islamic Movements in North Africa*, Boulder, CO, Westview, 1998, pp. 166-168.

2. *Politico-Religious movements:* This category is composed mainly of political parties (HMS, Nahda, al-Islah) that base their strategy on political participation in national politics through socialization, mobilisation of the masses and by taking part in electoral contests. These parties and organizations subscribe to Algerian constitutional and organic rules of engagement listed in the 1996 constitution and the 1997 Law on Political Parties. Moreover, the HMS has been in government for over 08 years as part of a broad political alliance[10].

3. *Radical Islamist Movements:* This category is composed of a nebula of militant and hardline groups seeking the immediate transformation of both state and society through a terrorist modus *operandi*. These include the Armed Islamic Movement or MIA, the Armed Islamic Groups or GIA, the Islamic Salvation Army or AIS which was the armed wing of the disbanded FIS, the GSPC and of late al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb which subscribes to the global terrorist network's agenda and ideas[11].

Thus, it will be misleading to conceive of Algerian terrorism as only an internal phenomenon that was generated by internal dynamics. It is also a mistake to look at it as being uniform or to attempt at its comprehension by using a linear approach.

The rise of Algerian Islamism cannot only be explained by the growth of social inequality under Benjedid's rule[12]. Other factors, such as the introduction of radical Islamic ideas into Algeria and international developments certainly played a role. However, at the end of Boumédienne's regime of 'development', which certainly brought about a rate of economic growth, Algeria had grown into a profoundly inegalitarian society. In the late 1970s, unemployment began to grow dramatically, accompanied by increasing urbanization. In 1985, 72 per cent of the unemployed were under the age of 25 an age group that was estimated to make up 65 per cent of the population[13].

The deteriorating socio-economic circumstances cumulated in the 'bread riots' of 4-10 October 1988, when protesters attacked government symbols, government offices and the FLN headquarters. Protesters called for an end to the one-party political system and demanded wider democratic freedoms. The protest was violently repressed by the regime, causing about 500 deaths with many more injured. However, the government concluded that repression alone would not stabilize Algeria and that political change was necessary[14].

Moreover, Benjedid believed that the crisis could be used to eliminate finally the left wing of the FLN. On 10 October 1988, President Benjedid announced a referendum to revise the 1976 Constitution[15], followed by the introduction of

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[10] Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War*, *1990-1998*, London, Hurst & Co., 1998, pp. 21.

[11] Hugh Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[12] Martin Evans and John Phillips, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-121.

[13] Emad Eldin Shahin, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-129.

[14] Rachid Tlemcani, "Algeria under Bouteflika: Civil Strife and National Reconciliation", *Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Middle East Center, Number 7, February 2008, p. 3.

[15] Article 40 of the Constitution permitted the creation of 'associations of a political character'. The article stipulated that 'this right cannot be used to violate the fundamental liberties, the fundamental values and components of the national identity, national unity, or the security and integrity of the national territory. Political parties cannot be founded on religious, linguistic, racial, gender, corporatist or regional bases'. Despite these safeguards, the government licensed all parties that applied.

political reforms that were designed 'to open up the political system and prevent further unrest'[16].

The reforms were based on three principles:

– the separation of power between the state and the FLN, which would function as an independent political party.

– free participation in municipal and legislative elections,

– and more room for associations and social movements to express their ideas.

The Islamic Salvation Front (*Front Islamique du Salut*, FIS) was founded shortly after the constitutional amendment on 18 February 1989 in Algiers. It was headed by Sheikh Abbasi Madani, a former independence fighter, and Ali Belhadj, a young charismatic preacher. The FIS called for a return to the values of equal opportunity, justice and accountability, campaigning under the ambiguous slogan 'Neither National Charter nor Constitution: Islam is the Solution'[17]. Using its network of mosques and welfare and social services, especially in urban areas, the FIS effectively spread its message. As a result, the FIS performed unexpectedly well in municipal elections in 1990 and won 188 of the 231 seats in the first round of the general elections held in December 1991[18], compared with only eighteen seats won by the governing party, the FLN. As it became apparent that Benjedid's game had back-fired, the military declared a state of emergency to 'protect stability and public order'. In January 1992, high-ranking military officers forced President Benjedid to resign and took over power. A five-member Higher State Council, chaired by Mohamed Boudiaf, assumed control over Algeria. The elections were cancelled, the FIS was dissolved, and the military launched a harsh crackdown on former FIS members, detaining some 18,000 suspected Islamic sympathizers without trial in concentration camps in the Sahara. Supporters of the military intervention justified this measure on the grounds that the FIS could not be trusted to uphold democratic principles because the 'FIS, Islam and democracy are incompatible'.

The sudden end to the political opening immediately resulted in clashes between Islamists and the security forces. The intense repression by the government only demonstrated the regime's apostasy in the eyes of the Islamists.

From Hard to Soft Approaches

Hard Approach

In response to the increasing violence and in line with its 'eradicator'* strategy, the government decided in 1993 to task the Directorate-General for National

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[16] Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, Lebanon, NY, Ithaca, 1996, pp. 112-113.

[17] Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb: The Transnationalization of Domestic Terrorism*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2008, p. 26.

[18] Noorhaidi Hasan & al., "*Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Indonesia, Algeria and Saudi Arabia*", The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", 2012, in: http://www.google.dz/url? wodc-report-counter-terrorism-strategies-in-indonesia-algeria-and-saudi-arabia_tcm126-452607.pdf&ei= &bvm=bv.82001339,d.bGQ (accessed on December 22, 2014).

* Although the distinction between 'eradicators' and 'conciliators' is easily made, the policies and political attitudes of army generals were not fixed and evolved throughout the war. For instance, General Smain Lamari

Security (Direction Générale de la Sureté Nationale, DGSN) with waging 'total war' against the armed groups[19].

At the same time, the Department of Intelligence and Security (Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité, DRS), the military intelligence service, was formed, as well as an interdepartmental special force that was tasked with the suppression of terrorism, headed by General Mohamed Lamari. The ultimate goal of the DGSN was to eradicate the armed groups by both infiltrating them and crushing them militarily[20].

In 1994, the state's financial bankruptcy forced it to start negotiations with the IMF to launch a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) including staged trade liberalization, ending state subsidies on consumer goods, devaluation of the dinar, and privatization of state enterprises[21]. Thanks to the SAP, and the rise of oil prices during the late 1990s, the regime's financial situation improved considerably[22].

This made it possible to build up a repressive apparatus that specialized in anti-terrorist operations, to expand the state's patronage network and to respond to demands from the private sector that was potentially susceptible to FIS propaganda. As a result, while the Algerian war increased in intensity, more jobs were created (especially in the security and arms sector), and new investments were made in the gas and oil sector. Between 1994 and 1997, the regime applied a security strategy that was based on the slogan '*making fear change sides*', thus launching a policy of mass repression[23]. The army also resorted to arming civilians and actively encouraging the organization of self-defense militias* that were made up of civilians who were fed up with living under a district emir. The regime was willing to tolerate these militias and even pay their running costs because the militias freed the army from the need to control every district.

Many of the repressive and violent measures were legalized under the framework of the state of emergency that was imposed in 1992. Since then, specific emergency laws have been incorporated in the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure[24]. They include the extension of the period of pre-arraignment detention (garde à vue), the lowering of the age of criminal responsibility to sixteen, and the increase in scope of applicability of the death penalty. In September 1992 the government produced a broad and vague definition of terrorism as 'subversive activities'. According to the Algerian Penal Code, terrorism is regarded as 'any offence targeting state security, territorial integrity or the stability or normal functioning

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was seen as 'eradicator' but was the one who engineered a deal with the AIS (see below). Hence the terms 'eradicator' and 'conciliator' can better be applied to policies than to individuals.

[19] Hugh Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

[20] Michael J. Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2012, p. 118.

[21] James Ciment, *Algeria. The Fundamentalist Challenge*, New York, Facts on File, Inc, 1997, pp. 95-96.

[22] Luis Martinez, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

[23] *Ibid*, p. 117.

* Executive Decree 87-04 established Legitimate Defence Groups (Groupes de Légitime Défense, GLD), also known as the 'Patriots', to defend themselves and their families against the GIA.

[24] See *Amnesty International*, "A Legacy of Impunity: A Threat to Algeria's Future", March 2009, p. 39. at: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE28/001/2009, accessed April 25, 2014.

of institutions' by not only 'spreading panic or creating a climate of insecurity', but also by means of 'impeding the activities of public authorities'. The Penal Code also equates with terrorism 'the establishment of associations, bodies, groupings or organizations for the purpose of subversive activities'[25].

Soft Approach

Parallel to its military strategy, the regime developed its 'soft' approach by encouraging 'repentant' guerrillas to speak out publicly. Their testimonies were broadcast on television at peak hours, and instead of a source of dignity and pride, the former guerrillas described (or were forced to describe) the guerrilla campaign as 'hell'. In their testimonies the repentant Islamists also claimed that the guerrillas 'wrongly' aroused fear of the security forces among their members. In short, the Algerian state media went to great lengths to dramatize the Islamist case and life within the armed groups[26].

Confessions of the 'terrorists' were televised as if they were criminals, representing their battle as induced by money rather than establishing an Islamic state[27]. By drawing a distinction between those who fought for ideology, and those who were motivated by economic and social reasons, the authorities focused on the fighters' sensitivity to persuasive methods.

The young, a potential reservoir for guerrilla fighters, became the centre of the regime's economic policy. The regime offered them jobs in the public sector[28], bonuses and assistance in building a house, but also contracts with the Ministry of Defence. Instead of risking death in the *maquis*, the regime thus offered young men the certainty of housing and income, a persuasive method that led many to join the army. By establishing this 'social net' or network of clientelism, the regime helped ordinary Algerians to escape from material inducements to join an armed Islamist group.

From 1994 onwards, the regime tried to satisfy the demands of the FIS electorate by undertaking a series of reforms in government departments and local government to restore the citizens' confidence in its institutions. Despite the violence, the Algerian leadership also deliberately maintained a façade of democracy by holding regular elections. According to its Constitution, Algeria has a multi-party system, and during the war political parties were free to compete in elections. In practice, however, only 'moderate' parties* were allowed to campaign and the results of the elections never seriously challenged the position of the country's political leadership[29]. The regime even allowed Islamic parties to

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[25] It included this provision in the Penal Code through Legislative Decree no. 92-03. This was later amended by Legislative Decree no. 93-05 of April 1993.

[26] Noorhaidi Hasan & al., *op. cit.*, p. 81.

[27] Luis Martinez, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

[28] *Ibid*, p. 161.

* Included the National and Democratic Rally (*Rassemblement National pour la Démocratie*, RND), the FLN, the Movement of Society for Peace (*Mouvement de la Société pour la Paix*, MSP) and the moderate Islamic party *Annahda*.

[29] Graham Fuller, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

participate in elections, as long as they respected the prevailing political norms. 'We tried to promote the integration of the non-violent Islamism of the Muslim Brotherhood variety into the institutional game; those who reject *salafiyya jihadiyya* [jihadist Salafism]'. Facilitating the entry of modest Islamic parties into the political system symbolized the process of 'freezing the Islamist passion'[30].

National Reconciliation and Civil Society Role

The presidential election campaign of April 1999 offered the prospect of real reconciliation between the Islamists and the military authorities, and was even called 'the real start of a political solution' by FIS leaders in exile. Abdelaziz Bouteflika was one of seven candidates, but the only one with military backing*. Eventually, the other six candidates denounced the administration's support of Bouteflika and boycotted the election to deny Bouteflika the legitimacy of a genuinely elected presidency. The 'predicted president' announced that his electoral campaign would be 'free and transparent', but was eventually elected by default[31].

To make up for this lack of legitimacy, President Bouteflika immediately announced his intention to make frequent use of public referenda, and to limit the powers of army generals[32].

Bouteflika's ultimate objective was to end the civil war by initiating a policy of national reconciliation and defining acceptable conditions for the reintegration of Islamists who were willing to lay down their arms: 'I am determined to make peace, and I am prepared to die for it'[33]. In his speeches, Bouteflika carefully referred to the 'wrong' and the 'violence' done to the FIS in the early 1990s. Symbolically, Bouteflika opened up a new perspective for Algeria, and he impressed many Algerians who were willing to believe that the policy of the new Head of State had a sincere basis. As far as the Military High Command was concerned, the objective of Bouteflika's election was to restore lustre to the army, which was a success.

In July 1999 Bouteflika introduced the Civil Harmony Law in the People's Assembly.

The peace plan was submitted to a referendum on 16 September 1999. It was overwhelmingly endorsed by the voters, providing the population with the hope that Algeria would recover stability and peace after a decade of war. The Civil Harmony Law granted conditional amnesty to radical Islamists who surrendered and renounced violence before 13 January 2000. Islamist insurgents were eligible for amnesty if they had not caused death, committed rape, or used explosives in

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[30] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatonomy of the Salafi Movement," (2006), retrieved from CÉRIUM website, www.cerium.ca/.../pdf/WIKTOROWICZ_2006_Anat. (accessed on September 7, 2014).

* Abdelaziz Bouteflika has long been a well-established figure in Algerian politics. He was Minister of Foreign Affairs under President Boumédienne and a member of the FLN's Central Committee.

[31] *International Crisis Group*, "The Civil Concord: A Peace Initiative Wasted", *Africa Report*, no. 31, 9 July 2001, p. 1.

[32] Rachid Tlemcani, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

[33] *Ibidem*.

public places. Insurgents who had committed such crimes would receive reduced prison sentences but not full amnesty*.

In theory, the decree was directed at the AIS, although the release of certain GIA emirs implied that Islamists who were legally subjected to terms of imprisonment benefited from the amnesty as well. The probation committees that were established to determine who was eligible for amnesty were not transparent, nor were they held publicly accountable, which deepened suspicions even further that in practice amnesty was granted indiscriminately[34].

A turning point came when Abdelaziz Bouteflika was voted Algeria's president in1999 with backing from the army. Building on previous efforts to replace the 'eradicator' strategy with a more 'conciliatory' approach, Bouteflika immediately expressed his commitment to a policy of peace and 'civil concord' (or civil harmony) in an effort to regain and retain stability[35]. In 1999, a legal framework was established that would bring the war to an end and promised Algerians a return to 'normal life'. Basically, the Law of Civil Harmony pardoned all Islamist fighters who voluntarily laid down their arms, and provided regulations to reintegrate them into society. In 2006, Bouteflika introduced *The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation*, which contained the same provisions as the Law of Civil Harmony, but explicitly exempted security agents, the military, pro-regime militias, and everyone else who had a role in the civil war, from prosecution. *The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation* enjoyed broad support in general, but critics claim that it also created an atmosphere of impunity, not only for terrorist crimes, but also by shielding the Algerian army and security services from any inquiry into their possible involvement in the violence[36].

Bouteflika remained convinced that he could promote national reconciliation without holding the perpetrators of serious human rights abuses accountable both Islamists and the military. Bouteflika focused his policy on convincing Algerians to move on without looking back. On 14 August 2005 he gave a speech, calling Algerians to vote in favor of the new *Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation.* The speech is an example of the continuous public portrayal of the authorities as 'blameless' in the conflict, yet successful in their effort to achieve national reconciliation:

It is due to the sacrifices of our security forces, led by the National Popular Army, worthy inheritor of the National Liberation Army, supported by all the

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* Article 41 of law 99-08 of 13 July 1999 stipulated that 'people belonging to organizations who voluntarily and spontaneously decided to stop acts of violence and who placed themselves completely at the disposal of the State […] shall be entitled to all their civic rights and have been granted immunity from prosecution'.

[34] Presidential decree no. 2000-03 dated January 10, 2000, which collectively amnestied the members of two militant groups that had agreed to lay down their arms and disband. The so-called *grâce amnistiante* (grace conferring amnesty) decree was based on the Civil Harmony Law's Article 41, which exempted from its terms the members of armed groups that agreed without reservation or condition to disband and disarm. Thus, members of the Islamic Salvation Army (*Armée Islamique du Salut*, AIS) and the Islamic League for Preaching and Holy War (*Ligue Islamique pour le Da'wa et le Djihad*, LIDD) benefited from a total amnesty. The decree stated that appended to it was a list of the names of the beneficiaries of this amnesty, but no such list was ever made public.

[35] Noorhaidi Hasan & al., *op. cit.*, p. 109.

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 109.

patriots, that Algeria was able to push aside the scourge of terrorism […]. We have together opened the way for Civil Harmony that you have supported massively and that has provided us with priceless fruit in [in the form of] the re-establishment of security […]. The project of national reconciliation, submitted to your free choice is destined to hurry the definitive return of security and peace in our country, and also destined to bring us towards national reconciliation and towards the consolidation of our national cohesion[37].

Despite popular skepticism, according to government figures the charter was supported by 97 per cent of the voters in a popular referendum with a turnout of 82 per cent[38].

Central to the *Charter* was the idea that there should be no winners or losers. The *Charter* exempted all individuals, whether Islamists, civilian militiamen, or security forces, from prosecution for crimes committed during the war. It was also meant to clear the military from speculations and attempts to discredit it. The *Charter* also absolved security forces and state-armed militias from responsibility in committing human rights violations during the war by stating that they had acted in the interest of the country:

No legal proceedings may be initiated against an individual or collective entity, belonging to any component whatsoever of the defense and security forces of the Republic, for actions conducted for the purpose of protecting persons and property, safeguarding the nation or preserving the institutions of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria. The competent judicial authorities are to summarily dismiss all accusations or complaints[39].

The decree allows the imprisonment of anyone who openly criticizes the conduct of the security forces during the years of conflict, in art. 46:

Anyone who, by speech, writing, or any other act, uses or exploits the wounds of the national tragedy to harm the institutions of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria, to weaken the state, or to undermine the good reputation of its agents who honorably served it, or to tarnish the image of Algeria internationally, shall be punished[40].

Furthermore, art. 26 of the *Charter* exclude from political life anyone who committed acts of terrorism or manipulated Islam for political purposes. Citing this article, the government can lawfully refuse to register any new political parties by former FIS members[41].

Furthermore, the *Charter* includes a provision that makes it a criminal offence to speak about sensitive topics in a manner that 'undermines the good reputation of [state] agents who honorably served the country or to tarnish the image of Algeria internationally'[42].

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37 *Amnesty International*, "A Legacy of Impunity," p. 12.
38 Noorhaidi Hasan & al., *op. cit.*, p. 86.
39 *Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire*, no. 11, 28 February 2006, at: www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/2006/F2006011.pdf
40 *Amnesty International*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
41 *Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire*, *op. cit.* (accessed on October 7, 2014).
42 *Amnesty International*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Algeria's fight against terrorism was, from its onset, based on a community approach. This involvement was of paramount importance as it was necessary not only for intelligence gathering purposes but also for de-legitimating an extremist project that was instrumentalising shared religious values as a normative shield and as a justifying discourse[43].

In fact, it was clear from the beginning that Algerians were rejecting this agenda as they mobilized against the gloomy prospect of an extremist party taking over government in January 1992. This was a vivid expression of a people yarning for democracy and modernity.

The community was active in integrating the more overarching national strategy of combating terrorism. This was its involvement in a security deployment based on proximity by the enrollment of tens of thousands of local citizens in the municipal police which was incremental in this strategy. Moreover, more than 100,000 Algerians served as voluntary resistant to face this ogre in what was called the Patriots or the GLDs (Groupes de Legitime Defense). These groups demonstrated their efficient contribution on the ground through intelligence gathering, early warnings and prompt actions against terrorist groups trying to commit criminal acts in their area or only transiting or wishing to deploy…. History will record the added-value of these citizens who gave their life and property for the sake of a stable and modern Algeria[44].

Conclusion

The Algerian experience in fighting terrorism has become a model that inspires many the world over. This is motivated by the fact that terrorism as a movement, as an agenda or as an ideology, has been defeated. This success has been realized amidst western insensitivity to Algerian sufferings and indifference to Algeria's calls for international cooperation in curtailing the development of this pathological phenomenon worldwide.

The terrorist attacks against American soil in September 2001 granted credibility to Algeria's plight and strife. The West became very much interested in Algeria as an expert that was acquired against a transnational movement that needs to be dealt with through a concerted international process and on the basis of a consensual legal definition of terrorism given by an international legal instrument that is clear and devoid of any religious or cultural stereotypes.

To this day, the amnesty regulations that characterize Algeria's national reconciliation effort form the backbone of Algeria's counter-terrorism strategy. The terrorist threat that is currently facing the regime is in reality a remnant of the civil war. AQIM is the most active jihadi-Salafist group present in Algeria,

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[43] George Joffé, "National Reconciliation and General Amnesty in Algeria", *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 13, no. 2, July 2008, p. 221.
[44] Mohamed Gharib, "The Algerian Islamist movement, Algeria, Revolution revisited", *Islamic World Report*, 1997, p. 77.

but is referred to as 'residual terrorism' by the Algerian authorities. AQIM has evolved into a transnational terrorist group, with the ideological aim of removing Algeria's 'infidel' regime, and fighting 'infidel' countries worldwide. To reach this goal, AQIM is increasingly turning to criminal methods and local criminal groups for assistance.

The Algerian authorities have proven themselves aware of the role of the public as one of the primary role-players in its counter-terrorism strategy, hence their efforts to support the local 'patriots' and loyalists during the war. Nowadays, the government turns to local *zawiyyas* to detect radicalism at an early stage, and to spread a non-violent version of Islam.

Algeria has provided direct financial and welfare support to the victims of violent extremism, including the siblings and progeny of incarcerated or killed violent extremists in order to prevent the emergence of a new generation of extremists from related social networks. This means that to be truly effective, efforts to counter radicalisation and violent extremism that lead to terrorism must also have global application.

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