

ISLAM, IDENTITY AND THE ALGERIAN CRISIS

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Abstract

Within the framework of a select chronology, the article argues that fundamentalism and terrorism alone do not explain the crisis in Algeria. Factors such as the colonial heritage, the structure of society, the political and economic failures of the single-party government and the involvement of the military contribute in equal measure. The article concludes that, although violence and terrorism may in some cases be legitimised by Islam, they are not inherent in Islam. Fundamentalism can be understood as a reaction to repressive politics and as one of many ways to articulate the desire for authentic values based on the cultural and religious traditions of Algerian society.

Abbreviations

AIS	Armée Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Army)
FIS	Front Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Front)
FFS	Front des Forces Socialistes (Front of Socialist Forces)
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front)
GIA	Groupes Islamiques Armés (Armed Islamic Groups)
HCE	Haut Comité d'Etat (High Comity of State)
LADDH	Ligue Algérien pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (Algerian Human Rights League)
MDA	Mouvement pour la Démocratie en Algérie (Movement for Democracy in Algeria)
MIA	Mouvement Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Movement)
RCD	Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (Assembly for Culture and Democracy)
RND	Rassemblement National Démocratique (National Democratic Assembly)

1. Introduction

Islamist terrorism and civil war are considered as major features of contemporary Algeria in the eyes of the international community. The Algerian crisis is perceived as a conflict between the defenders of the secular, Western-orientated values of democracy and plurality, and the defenders of the conservative, even reactionary, values of Islam. The defenders of Islam, i.e. the fundamentalists, seem to be 'monsters' that need to be eradicated in order to stop the cruel acts of terrorism ascribed to them and in order to establish peace and justice in Algerian society. Recent investigations and the revelations of former members of the army, governmental organisations and several human rights organisations have provided deeper insights into the Algerian crisis.¹ They corroborate the widely held opinion that Islamic fundamentalism has not been the only cause of Algeria's crisis during the last ten years – a crisis that has often been reduced to an identity crisis that emerged after the economic crisis and its social impact in the mid-1980s. Identity,

1. Cf. Klemm (1998: 156-7); Burgat (1998: 21); Algeria Watch (1998).

respective the search for a genuine Algerian identity for the different societal factions in Algeria has given a rather special character to the crisis.

In April 1992, after 100 days of having chaired the HCE, Mohammed Boudiaf described the crisis facing Algeria as follows:

'[...] Algeria is suffering from three crises: a moral crisis; a spiritual crisis; and an identity crisis. For 30 years our people have been torn between East and West, between the French and Arabic languages, between Arabism and Berberism and between traditionalism and international values ... After long years during which a single party and the dictatorship of a single language prevailed, democratisation has become a necessary stage... The exploitation of Islam for political and partisan aims, and also the resorting to democracy and lies found, for a specific period, listening ears among the deprived and marginalised sections of the population.'²

The economic crisis produced by the failures of the FLN policy, the oil price crash and the demands of the IMF and the consequences of this for society brought existing societal differences and inconsistencies to light and even aggravated the situation – not to even mention corruption, mismanagement, and abuses of power and privileges in which the ruling elite was involved.

2. The colonial heritage

For a better understanding of Algeria's actual situation it is necessary to look beyond the last two decades in which the crisis became obvious and to consider the young independent state with the FLN as the only legal representative of the Algerian people.³ This will make it clear that the crisis of the mid-1990s is only the tip of the iceberg, because a number of serious issues have not been resolved after the war of independence. The failures of the past and the inability of the FLN to integrate and to satisfy the different factions of society finally led to the dilemma of the late 1980s and the 1990s.

From this perspective, rising Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria can no longer be considered as an isolated phenomenon, but has to be regarded in a certain sense as a result or consequences of the FLN's policies and its nationalist project launched in the 1950s. Some observers even go further and claim that the FIS is the fruit of the FLN.⁴

After 134 years of foreign occupation and eight years of an extremely bloody war of independence under the umbrella of the FLN, Algerian society was faced with the challenge of becoming one Algerian nation. The building of this nation continued after the war of independence⁵. The French seizure of Algeria in 1830 amounted in effect to the

2. Quoted in Stone (1997: 105).

3. A detailed analysis of Algeria's post-colonial history is beyond the scope of this article. For detailed information see the select chronology at the end of this article. This chronology represents the framework of the analysis in order to avoid a historical description of the sequence of events leading to and strengthening the crisis.

4. Stone (1997: 147), referring on the French play on words *le FIS est le fils du FLN*, i.e. the FIS is the son of the FLN. This is in line with the explanation of the phenomenon of fundamentalism as a product of and/or a reaction to modernity.

5. Concerning the description of the war of independence, Stone emphasises parallels with South Africa: '... as the conflict was principally between the *pieds noirs* (Algerians of French descent) who wanted to remain in their native land under French protection, and the indigenous Muslims, who demanded initially an end to their second class status but ultimately full statehood and complete control over the reins of power' Stone (1997: 37). A more detailed comparison of the transition processes of both countries could be an interesting contribution to a deeper understanding of transformation processes and nation building within factional societies.

expropriation and incorporation of the country into France, i.e. Algeria became a French Overseas-Department. Indigenous culture and identity were systematically discriminated against and suppressed, and French culture was substituted in its place.⁶

Algeria's societal plurality with its multilingual and multicultural aspects was not taken into account during the colonial or the post-colonial periods.

After independence the authoritarian state, represented by the single party of the FLN and headed by a small Westernized elite, repressed debates about the cultural, religious, social and linguistic identities of the different societal factions and minorities in order to build up 'the' Algerian nation, instead of integrating the various groups. The population was supposed to consider itself as a purely Arab nation, despite the Berber minority consisting of more than 20% of all Algerians.⁷

Until the late 1970s the country profited greatly from economic spin-offs generated by the extension of the oil and gas sectors, rapid large-scale industrialisation and the petrol-boom. This became clearly visible from the rise in living standards.⁸

After the Berber unrest in 1980 general social unrest increased from 1985 onwards as an expression of protest against the military repression and the failed economic policies of the government, which became increasingly obvious.⁹ The failures were connected with Boumedienne's neglect of the agrarian sector and the fact that he was forced to increase the importation rate of agricultural products. This was financed with export revenues from petrol and gas. The dependence on these revenues for basic staple food led to an economic disaster after the oil price crash, which occurred just before the advice of the IMF to drop the subsidies of bread and cereals. Both events triggered the rapid succession of incidents ending in the *coup d'état* in 1992 that finally led to the upsurge of terrorism and eventually civil war.

3. The three pillars of Algeria: The army, the party and the state

The major characteristics of the society's structure were regionalism, factionalism and clientelism. The most important and most powerful faction since independence has been the military. Algeria's political realm was based on the dual-structure of the army and the single-party FLN, i.e. the government. The government held formal power, but without any real political authority. It was the army that held the reins, but without an institutional background; the generals had to exercise their power through the army's influence on the FLN. In other words the military used the democratic façade of the government to legitimate its own power. Both the military and the FLN relied on their involvement in the war of independence as a source of legitimacy.¹⁰ This guaranteed them the support of the population during the first two decades of independence. With the rapidly expanding society¹¹, particularly in the 1980s, the myth of the war of independence lost its potency

6. E.g. France imposed French as the national language and the French education system etc; it was inevitable that this would have an impact on the identity of the indigenous population, especially if one takes into consideration that the French regime was imposed for more than 130 years.

7. The Berber minority is divided into different groups or communities, according to their origin. The different Berber groups and the role they play in society are dealt with explicitly in Stone (1997: 8-11, 198-214), cf. also Tilmatine (1998).

8. For more detailed information on Boumedienne's economic policy cf. Stone (1997: 86-94).

9. The Berber minority was seriously affected by the programme of arabisation and the suppression of the Berber language and culture connected to this programme. On the other hand, this unrest, although having been suppressed, stimulated the liberalisation of the mid-1980s. Cf. Stone (1997: 61, 62).

10. The mythologisation of the war of independence was part of the regime's propaganda as well as of the education system. Cf. Stone (1997: 94-95).

11. Between 1962 and 1989 the population grew from 10 to 23 million. Cf. Krieger (1993: 17).

among younger Algerians. This post-war generation was no longer influenced by the myth of the war. The army lost a great deal of public support, particularly as a result of the harsh suppression of the uprising in October 1988 in which they killed between 500 and 1000 people. In addition to this loss of confidence among the population, the borderlines between the army and the regime became more and more blurred.

Observers state that since the 1970s the heads of the military established a state within the state, especially for the military caste and high bureaucratic personnel : they became economically advantaged because, among other things, they used government and military control from the revenues of the hydrocarbon industry for private enrichment.¹²

The list of the military's involvement in politics is extensive, but a few examples should be sufficient to illustrate the extent of its grip on power in order to protect the interests and privileges of the military elite:

- Despite the redefinition of the army's position as a protector of national independence and its announcement that it would withdraw from the political arena in terms of the new Constitution of 1989, the military forced Bendjedid to dismiss his reform-oriented government. Numerous officials feared that their privileges were jeopardized. In June 1991 the president was compelled to leave the control of internal security to the army.
- The second victory of the FIS during the first part of the parliamentary elections aggravated the military's fear of losing power and influence, not to mention its economic privileges. This led to the *coup d'état* and the canceling of the elections in 1992, marking the end of the process of liberalisation and democratisation and the end of the state's credibility and ability to drive forward this process. Algeria was plunged deeper into social and political disaster, triggered by economic mismanagement and growing corruption in the 1980s. This in turn led to social unrest in 1988, culminating in the rejection of the state at the elections of 1990 and 1991. The military imposed its policy through the collective presidency of the HCE, whose most powerful member was General Khaled Nezzar, the Minister of Defense.¹³ Boudiaf, who chaired the HCE, was renowned for his political work during the war of independence and he had not been involved in recent Algerian politics since he went into exile from 1963/64 onwards. However, his commitment to putting an end to corruption within the government cost him his life.¹⁴

The categorical rejection of the National Contract proved that the regime, rather than the political parties, should be considered as the cause of the crisis¹⁵. On the one hand, this rejection reflects the conflict between the *conciliators*, the *dialogists*, i.e. the signatories of the communiqué, and the *eradicators*, i.e. the military and the RCD, who were not prepared to compromise or negotiate with the FIS. The split within the military and other parts of society between the radical wing of eradicators and the moderate wing of conciliators¹⁶ is linked to the crucial question of sense and the limits of a dialogue with the Islamists, and in particular the FIS. On the other hand, this rejection was an obvious sign that the military

12. Cf. Ruf (1998: 27) and Stone (1997: 130).

13. The HCE consisted of three civilians, General Nezzar and Mohammed Boudiaf.

14. Cf. Stone (1997: 108). It is even within the bounds of probability that the military was behind his assassination. Cf. e.g. Addi's and Benramdane's analyses in *Le monde diplomatique*, March 1999 and Ruf (1998), p. 26.

15. This remarkable communiqué signed by all participants, i.e. En-nahda, FIS, FFL, FLN, LADDH, MDA, PTA, was the result of a round table, initiated by the Catholic community of Sant' Egidio, who had already mediated in the Mozambique civil war. They were supposed to work out a peaceful solution to the Algerian crisis. All the members agreed on the following points: non-aggression, pluralism, democratic change of power (*Machtwechsel*), legalisation of the FIS, new elections after a transition period. Cf. Sträter (1998: 58).

16. Translated from the French *eradicateurs* and *conciliateurs*.

wanted to maintain sole control of the FIS and to continue its policy of eradication, i.e. the conquest of the FIS by adopting military measures. In addition to this, the loss of power and privileges linked to a democratic change of power was unacceptable to the ruling elite.

Increased terrorism has forced the state to pass its responsibility and task of guaranteeing public security to the army. This brought an end to the separation of power and strengthened the army's influence on politics even more. In addition, the regime distributed weapons among the population and expected them to defend themselves. More than 200 000 militiamen founded committees to defend the villages. It is evident that the arming of the population would create and strengthen structures resembling those of the Mafia. In times of economic crises, when staple food is barely sufficient, weapons will not only be used for self-defense against terror attacks, but also to get hold of essential goods.¹⁷ This aggravated the civil war.

4. Rising fundamentalism as a melting pot for popular opposition against an authoritarian regime

Observers of the situation in Algeria share the opinion that, apart from similarities to the phenomenon of fundamentalism in general and Islamic fundamentalism in particular,¹⁸ the rise of the FIS reveals special features linked to Algeria's distinctive colonial and post-colonial history. For this reason any approach to explaining Algerian fundamentalism has to take into consideration the particular Algerian societal framework and the political landscape of the country.

First and foremost the FIS should be perceived as a political movement of protest and opposition against the machinations of an ineffective, oppressive and corrupt regime, i.e. it is a political and national movement that seeks legitimacy in religion.¹⁹ In the late 1980s and the early 1990s large parts of the population considered the FIS as a revolutionary and corrective movement, one of the major reasons for its enormous support among the Algerian people.

'... Islamism is the most authentic and effective channel for the articulation of opposition, particularly at the discrediting of Western ideologies such as Marxism and socialism in the 1980s. Although the FIS is an authentic Islamist party in the sense that it takes Islamic law and custom as the source of its political program, during the 1990s elections it was primarily a vehicle to express popular opposition to an unpopular regime.'²⁰

The search for an indigenous alternative to the failed models of capitalism and socialism in view of the socio-political and economic situation of Algerian society, and the necessity for a counterbalance to the 'achievements' of modernity and their perceived negative impact on Algerian society are characteristic of rising fundamentalism and motivations to join such a movement. Modernity and its effects on society are perceived as the equivalent to Western cultural imperialism and Western domination of the so-called third world and

17. Cf. e.g. Ruf (1998), p. 27 and Algeria Watch. This had a serious impact on tribal structures and existing conflicts between different groups. Unfortunately it is very difficult to gain deeper insights into this consequence of the failures of the government, because of the state's rejection of international and/or independent commissions of inquiry.

18. It is not possible within the framework of this article to discuss the phenomenon of fundamentalism and the different scientific approaches to it in further detail. There are numerous studies dealing with the issue, cf. Yazbeck / Voll / Esposito (1991), Stowasser (1987) and Meyer (1991).

19. Cf. e.g. Ruf (1998: 26) and Stone (1997: 73), he emphasises the supporters of the revolutionary issues of the FIS, cf. pp. 75, 251, 252.

20. Stone (1997: 73).

they are therefore rejected in Islamic Algeria. (Islamic) Fundamentalism offers the possibility of indigenous resistance and opposition to the regime, especially in authoritarian states suppressing any kind of opposition²¹.

Disappointment and disillusion about the failures of Arabic nationalism and the FLN's socialist policy created an ideological vacuum in the 1980s. This situation, in combination with a conservative, dissatisfied and unemployed but well-educated urban youth, formed the foundation for the wave of social unrest in the mid-1980s. The FIS's radical critique, the public denouncement of the regime and its machinations, and the demand for social justice and equality found open ears, as it was the only opposition and presented itself as the purveyor of national authenticity and the defender of the rights of the economically suppressed.

The slogan *Islam is the solution* offered an indigenous answer to the social and political crisis. Islam is supposed to resolve all societal problems. It is believed that as soon as the principles of Islam are properly implemented, it will re-actualise the ideal society as it was in the time of the prophet Mohammed, thanks to its social, economic, political and legal institutions that are supposed to ensure wealth, peace and justice for all members of the community.

It might seem strange, but the political agenda of the FIS did not play such a major role in gaining popular support during the 1990 and 1991 elections. In fact, the FIS even eschewed a detailed expansion of its political agenda and refrained from mentioning any proposed economic policies.²² Apart from the explicit critique of the government, it was actually the social welfare programme consisting of financial aid for hospital treatment and medicine, and the distribution of clothes that contributed to the growth of wide support among the poor urban population.²³ This underscores the view that the FIS was a movement of resistance against the government articulating its ideas in the context of Islam, and focusing on the Arab language as a symbol of authentic Algerian culture and heritage.²⁴

If one takes into consideration the low turnout during the elections in June 1990 and December 1991 (65% and 61%, i.e. 1,2 million voters less in 1991 than in 1990) the crucial point is to decide whether the results reflect a defeat for the government, namely the FLN, or a sincere victory for the FIS or a combination of both possibilities. One thing is certain, the results reflect a popular refusal of the government and the frustration of the Algerian people. The low turnout figures may be attributed to voter apathy and/or non-participation in order to protest, because the non-voters felt they were not represented by either the FIS or other opposition parties.

21. This is also true of fundamentalist movements in other countries.

22. The campaign for the elections in June 1990 consisted of the following demands: dissolution of the assembly, free elections to choose a replacement, effective measures to curb inflation and unemployment, establishment of an anti-corruption police force. Cf. Stone (1997: 166).

23. Particularly so after the earthquake in October 1989, because the FIS reacted more rapidly and more effectively than the government, which was not able to fulfil its task. The financial support for the social welfare programme came from Saudi-Arabia, Iran and some rich Algerians. Cf. Stone (1997: 165).

24. The fact that the FIS articulated its ideas in Arabic contributed to its enormous success among the young, urban, Arabic-speaking generation that became the major supporters of the movement. The Arabic-speaking youth were extremely affected by the economic crisis, complaining about the better opportunities of French-speaking youth in the labour market. The stress on Arabic and Islam as the common heritage of the Algerian people reflects also the nationalist character of the FIS. Islam was the common point of reference for the state and the population during the war of independence and the first two decades of independent Algeria, and it is the state religion.

5. Terrorism: cause and effects

The *coup d'état*, the prohibition of the FIS, the wave of arrests of more than 10 000 members of the FIS as well as the trial of the major leaders that had been sentenced to several years in prison marked a turning point in the party's history. The reaction to the arrests made the already existing split within the FIS public. Although the FIS has never been a homogenous movement, there was a tendency in the formative period to present itself as a homogeneous group. However, the strongest factions within the FIS are only now articulating their different strategies of how the new situation should be handled. The radical, extremist wing went underground and formed the MIA, which later became the AIS.²⁵ This group used violence to force the government to re-incorporate the FIS into the political process and to unban the party. After the first waves of terrorism, another armed group with a religious impetus emerged, called the GIA. Both groups were rather heterogeneous, the GIA even more so than the AIS, consisting of former groups of resistance fighters against the government, relatives of victims of governmental violence, young unemployed people, desperados and only a small number of religious fanatics. Later local groups pursuing their own interests joined/amalgamated under the umbrella of the GIA.

According to the reports of the LADDH there are at least four different sources of violence and terrorism:²⁶

- Islamist groups
- armed groups that cannot be identified
- the state and radical wings of the military²⁷
- militias provided with weapons by the state²⁸.

One has to differentiate between terrorism on the one hand and civilian massacres on the other. Official explanations stress that the massacres have to be interpreted as the GIA's revenge and as acts of desperation due to loss of supporters. However, recent revelations of former officers who fled Algeria, former members of the security and police forces as well as statements by the former deputy-ambassador to Libya, harden the suspicion that sections of the military are involved in the massacres.²⁹ The GIA thus became an instrument of the 'eradicator wing' of the regime and the military in order to destabilise the FIS and isolate it from the population and also to eliminate suspect witnesses.

'Many believe, moreover, that the SM (i.e. the military security service, UG) actually organized the formation of certain GIA *katibat* (cells) and helped carry out some of the more spectacular terrorist incidents, the aim being to generate public revulsion against

25. For more detailed information on the evolution of the different armed groups like AIS and GIA and their members, cf. Stone (1997: 177-197). Financial support was received from Saudi-Arabia and Sudan, but these groups extorted protection money from the population.

26. Cf. Algeria Watch (1998).

27. As already mentioned, there is a deep split within the military. On the one hand, the *conciliators*, who are prepared to engage in dialogue with the fundamentalists and on the other hand, the *eradicators*, who reject any dialogue and advocate the complete destruction of the FIS and its supporters. That is why the HCE pursued an anti-terrorist campaign with very severe measures. Cf. Stone (1997: 112-113).

28. The creation of these militias aggravated the civil war. While terrorist attacks decreased, the massacres aimed at the civil population increased. The army tried to silence the fact that the GIA attacked the militias and families that had been armed by the state. Cf. Addi (1999), Elyas (1999).

29. Cf. e.g. Klemm (1998: 156-157) and Algeria Watch (1998).

the GIA, and by extension the entire legal Islamist movement, and thus rally popular support for the state.³⁰

In addition, the regime expected the international community to support its hard-line stance and the harsh action against terrorists.³¹ The regime's pressure on the media and accompanying propaganda was likely to stir up the impression abroad that only repressive measures would be able to resolve the crisis. According to the government's official version, international opinion ascribed Algerian terrorism entirely to fundamentalist groups because this interpretation fitted the new image of the enemy that arose in the West after the fall of the Iron Curtain. For the West Islam was, and still is, equivalent to the new enemy inasmuch as it is perceived as fundamentalist and a religion that supports violence in order to establish its power all over the world.

There are still a number of mysteries concerning the massacres and terrorist attacks, like for instance:

- The government did not elucidate these incidents; on the contrary, it even frustrated attempted investigations;
- The so-called 'useful' Algeria, i.e. the South with its mineral wealth and industrial plants, was never affected by terrorist attacks. It is true that, on the one hand, the state was not able to protect the population, especially regarding those massacres that took place next to military barracks without the army defending or protecting the victims. But, on the other hand, the state was able to protect the pipelines and the oil fields. Not a single incident took place in these areas;
- The GIA called a boycott of the elections, but abstained from attacks during the elections;
- The GIA never attacked institutions of strategic importance.

All these 'mysteries' contribute towards strengthening the suspicion that there are several links between the GIA, the military and the regime, especially if one takes into consideration who reaped the benefits of the civil war and the terrorist attacks.

6. Conclusion

The military's reaction to the victory of the FIS after the elections at first resembles the perception of politically articulated Islam as an anti-democratic movement similar to the perception of the Western public. The military, a Westernised elite, who made large profits that were not necessarily acquired in a legal way, used the famous slogan 'No democracy for the enemies of democracy' to justify its anti-democratic grip on power. Under the pretext of protecting the society against the fundamentalists, democracy was suspended while the military could protect its sinecures.

The western perception of the conflict as primarily a conflict between democratic and Islamic values, implying in turn that Islam is equivalent to anti-democratic tendencies³², does not take into account that religion is both a cultural and spiritual force with an

30. Stone (1997: 136). The so-called death squads in late 1993 were also supposed to have been infiltrated by the security forces to execute Islamist leaders and criminals. It is more than probable that members of the regime were also involved. Cf. Stone (1997: 113).

31. Torture re-emerged, and the state refused categorically to engage in any discussion or investigation concerning human rights.

32. This supposition is linked to the limited focus on Islam as fundamentalism, an image of Islam created by the Western media, strengthened after 1989, when communism could no longer be considered as the 'enemy' and the Western world needed a new force to defend its values against. There are numerous investigations on this image and the contribution of the media, c.f. e.g. Hörner (1993) and Kappel / Kuske (1995).

important impact on identity. Especially in times of economic and social crises, or during transition processes after governmental failures, which sometimes lead to a sense of lack of national identity, people rely on religious values for the authentication of identity and meaning.

The defenders of democratic values in the Western hemisphere hold on to their limited focus on the fundamentalist threat in Algeria promulgated by official Algerian propaganda. The undemocratic measures of the regime after 1992 played only a secondary role in their relations with Algeria; the international community preferred a stable authoritarian regime to the supposedly irrational fundamentalists. For the Algerian population the heritage of Islam – not only in the strict sense of religion but also in the sense of a cultural heritage – has always been one of the pillars of their identity. Islamic fundamentalism is but one way to express the need for authentic values in Algerian society, especially after the failures of the authoritarian and single-party state.

The crisis in Algeria is not due to something inherent in Islam or Muslim societies. On the contrary, it has to be emphasized that the radicalisation of parts of the FIS and the growing violence are the result of the reaction to repressive political measures. Violence or tendencies to violence and terrorism are not characteristic of Islam, although violence may be used in the name of and legitimised with reference to Islam.

The major challenges for the West concerning Algeria are, on the one hand, the necessity to change the one-sided portrayal and perception of Islam in order to broaden the perspective on the issue and, on the other hand the necessity to think about ways to integrate non-Western cultural values into the concept of democracy and plurality so that democracy can be perceived as really universal and true for any society and capable of integrating not only the so-called western values.

The major challenges for Algeria are political and economic reforms and a democratic change of power on the condition of obtaining a consensus on the integration of moderate Islamist wings into politics. This is linked to a general discussion about the role of Islam in society among all societal groups.³³ The fundamental requirement is the army's consent to these kinds of reforms and transformation. One of the major indicators to prove that the army is prepared to give up its grip on political power will be the extent to which it relinquishes control of further elections and accepts a re-definition of its tasks.

Algeria's future depends to a high degree on the re-definition of the army's role and its ability to contribute to a real process of democratisation in a society with the considerable human potential of a well-educated young population, mineral wealth and a fertile countryside.

33. One should emphasise that the major part of the Algerian population are passive Muslims rather than orthodox believers. This reflects the impact of Islam as a cultural contribution to identity.

ALGERIA – SELECT CHRONOLOGY

- 1830 Seizure of Algeria by France beginning of the French occupation
- 1954-62 Algerian war of independence and liberation
- 1962 Evian Accords
Independence and recognition of the FLN as the legal representative of the Algerian people
- 1962-65 Presidency of Ahmed Ben Bella
Presidency of Houari Boumedienne (until his death) after a *coup d'état* plotted by him and his supporters
Boumedienne was simultaneously president, prime minister and Minister of Defense until he established a new National Charter in 1976
Presidency of Chadli Benjedid
- 1980-88 Gradual decline of the FLN's influence except in economic policy
- 1984 Chadli adopted elements of the Islamists' agenda
The government published a new family code with conservative and fundamentalist characteristics and founded Islamic cultural centres throughout the country
Inauguration of the Emir Abdelkader University of Islamic Studies in Constantine (played an important role in the development of the Islamist movement)
- From 85 onwards - Increasing social unrest*
- 1986 Falling prices of petrol / oil price crash after the OPEC meeting and the decision to discontinue low production quotas
Less export revenues, cuts in the state budget, staple food is barely sufficient
- 1988 First revolts, after the advice of the IMF to drop the subsidies of bread and cereals, the so-called *Black October*, a turning point in Algeria's history
The population protested against the machinations of the regime and claimed social justice and political participation
Suppressed by the army, 500-1000 persons died
Popular respect for the army destroyed
Opposition groups of all hues claimed political reforms
Establishment of a multi-party system
- 1988-90 Collapse of the FLN
- 1989-91 Political liberalisation, reforms in the economic sector
- 1989 Re-election of Chadli Benjedid
New constitution with a multi-party system and legalisation of associations of a political character,
Foundation and legalisation of the FIS
Political slogan of the FIS: '*Islam is the solution*'
Very successful party, with growing popularity
- 1989-92 Formation of almost 60 different political parties, many of them with only a few supporters
- June 1990 Municipal elections with an unexpected victory of the FIS, (55%, in cities and in the coastal regions even more than 80%), many protest votes against the FLN

- Turnout of 65%
- The army, namely the generals, feared to lose their influence and power
- July 1990 The FIS calls a general strike
- June 1991 Confrontation between the militant wings of the FIS and the government, battles between Islamists and the military
- Return of the military to the centre of politics, Bendjedid was forced to dismiss his reform-orientated government and to leave the control of internal security to the military
- December 1991 First part of the parliamentary elections, turnout of 61%
- The FIS gained the majority (188 seats, the socialists won 25, the FLN 15), the army feared that they would gain a 2/3 majority in the second part of the elections in January, i.e. the possibility of a constitutional amendment
- January 1992 The generals gave Bendjedid an ultimatum to resign, thus created a constitutional crisis
- 11.1.1992 *Coup d'état* of the generals, cancellation of the elections, deposition of the president, dispersal of the National Assembly, declaration of a year-long state of emergency, curfews
- HCE as a collective presidency took over the tasks of the government, chaired by Mohammed Boudiaf
- Prohibition of the FIS and declaration of war against the FIS
- Wave of arrests of leaders and members of the FIS (more than 10 000 arrests)
- Split within the FIS
- Beginning of terror by armed Islamist groups
- 29.6.1992 Public assassination of Boudiaf, details still unclear; it is supposed that members of the military ordered his assassination
- 1992 Beginning of the civil war
- 1993-1994 Increasing number of assassinations, ascribed to Islamist groups
- Revocation of economic liberalization
- Attempt to regain former structures of power
- Non-Islamist opposition marginalised
- Summer 1993 Emergence of the GIA, and intensification of terrorist attacks
- Liamine Zéroual (ex-general and Minister of Defense) nominated president, chosen by the military
- Nov. 1994/Jan. 95 'Platform' of Rome with FIS, FFS, FLN, FIS, LADDH, MDA, En-nahda³⁴, to work out a programme to resolve the crisis
- 16.11.1995 First free presidential elections, confirm Zéroual as president
- Some electoral irregularities, elections suspected of having been rigged
- Referendum for a new constitution
- Strengthening the power of the president, weakening the power of the parliament
- 1997 Founding of the RND, instigated by Zéroual and his supporters
- 5.6.1997 First-ever multi-party parliamentary elections, turnout of 65,5%
- Some degree of fraud
- Won by the new governmental party RND

34 Legal Islamist party.

- October 1997 Agreement of armistice between the AIS and the regime
- 1998 Zéroual resigns
- April 1999 Presidential elections, all candidates withdrew from their candidacy the day before the election in order to protest against fraud, except Abdelaziz Bouteflika
- Elections suspected of having been rigged; the army, the police forces and the gendarmery voted one day before the rest of the population
- Turnout of 60%, 73% voted Bouteflika

Since the late 80s - Algeria has to import 80% of the staple foods

- The heads of the bureaucracy received about 26 Milliard US Dollars as bribes; this is not coincidentally equivalent to the amount of Algeria's foreign debt in the late 80s
- From 1970 onwards doubling of the population; in 1988 65% were under 25 years of age
- Since 1990 No wage increase
- Decreasing subsidies
- Increasing inflation rate ⇒ decreasing standard of living
- 1998 Algeria's economy is determined by more than 90% of petrol revenues
- 10 millions Algerians, i.e. 40% of the population, live in poverty
- 2,8 million, i.e. 30% of the population, are unemployed
- Unemployment currently reaches the level of that in 1966
- 75 % of the population is under 30 years of age
- At least 120 000 – 200 000 persons died as a result of cruelty on both sides, i.e. extremist Islamic movements and an informal guerrilla army, and the army and security forces
- 12 000 persons regarded as 'disappeared'
- More than 30 000 persons in prison
- More than 200 000 persons are organized within militias, officially armed by the army and the government
- More than 5 000 self-defense groups
- Currently there are more than 140 generals in the army; 20 years ago they were fewer than 20

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