

# Why did the Algerian civil war 1989-1999 descend into what has been called a “savage war”?

*Explaining the nature of the Algerian civil war*

Cato Stensland



Master thesis, (60sp, MØNA 4590) “Midtøsten og Nordafrikastudier”

Institutt for kulturstudier og orientalske språk

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2015

© Author Cato Stensland

Year 2015

Why did the Algerian civil war 1989-1999 descend into what has been called a “savage war”?

Author Cato Stensland

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

II

# Abstract

This paper tries to answer some perplexing questions surrounding the Algerian civil war of the 1990's. The country went through a civil war that descended into a bloody chaos that few can reconcile with. It is this "decent" that is explored in the paper. By relying on a set of categories and rules for these interactions set forth in the *selectorate theory* the negligence of the people at large by the government is sought to be explained. Particular actions like the massacres, assassinations, bombings, killings and sabotage are put into a context that however grisly it may be portrays a rationale making sense of the violence. It discusses the rationale behind the massacres that took place from 1995 and the inaction to prevent these. To find this rationale it is necessary to start the paper with a political analysis that can identify the key players and to link the political happenings as an extension of politics to acts of war. Therefore the first part of the paper is primarily concerned with the reasons behind the conflict, aligning the different parties of it and describing their primary motives. It then goes on discussing in what way their inherent structure manifested in strategies and methods applied throughout the war. What has been coined as the "Let them Rot" strategy is widely discussed in this framework that can explain a strategy that became detrimental to the regimes survival and to the misery of the population. The paper does the same for the insurgents, identifying their main strategies to clearer understand the results of the two. The main finding of the paper is that due to a weak link between the actual leadership - the army whose main concern is to stay in power - of the country and the institutional leadership - the president - of the country creates a dynamic that prompts the institutional leader whatever his intentions are to challenge the position of the actual leadership by strengthening his own position. In the case of the civil war in Algeria this happened twice, first with President Chadli and then with President Zeroual and this is unequivocally the main reason for Algeria's civil war and the political effects of the dynamic spurred by this weakness is the reason for the way in which the civil war was fought.

# Preface

This project has been hard work. The work has resulted in what you now have before you, but it has by no means been only my own. For the results herein I must thank my outstandingly patient, curly heard welsh friend *Robin Philips Jones* for his invaluable proof reading as well as his ever precise comments. My supervisor at the University of Oslo *Brynjar Lia* deserves special thanks as his comments and critiques no matter how harsh have done nothing but improve my work. I would also like to thank my good friend Lt. Rev. *Ola Aasland Vold* for sharing his own experiences of the writing process and how to traverse the obstacles in it, as well as his razor sharp mind. My wife *Rebecca T. Stensland* has been and still is the sexiest wife out there, something that has encouraged my writing every single day, thanks for all the support my love.

Beirut, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2015

*Cato Stensland*



# Content

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Choice of Theory .....	3
1.2	Review of sources .....	7
2	Where did it all begin? .....	12
2.1	Establishing a point of departure .....	12
2.2	The Algerian powerhouse .....	14
2.2.1	Identifying the winning coalition .....	15
2.2.2	Who were the leadership? .....	16
2.3	How did President Chadli Challenge the status quo? .....	18
3	In what way did the army respond, and why? .....	22
3.1	What was the leadership's initial reaction? .....	24
3.2	Why did the leadership feel threatened? .....	25
3.3	A point of no return? .....	28
4	War, the continuation of politics .....	36
4.1	Who sided with whom? .....	38
4.2	Who made up the new winning coalition? .....	41
4.3	The divide .....	44
4.3.1	What was the opposition's reaction to the coupe? .....	44
4.3.2	Contested selectorates .....	45
4.3.3	What did this entail? .....	47
5	Why the "Let them rot" strategy? .....	51
5.1	COIN- Algerian civil war: .....	51
5.1.1	Capacities: .....	52
5.1.2	Geographical: .....	54
5.1.3	Methodical: .....	55
5.2	What were the origins of the hard-line stance? .....	59
5.3	How did the FIS go about making their coalition the <i>winning</i> coalition? .....	62
5.4	How did the army respond in force and why? .....	64
5.4.1	Was there a logical rational behind the tactics deployed by the army? .....	68
5.5	Retaining the divide in two parts .....	71
6	The Wild Card, how it came to be and what part it played .....	74

6.1	What were the consequences of the “Let them rot” strategy? .....	75
6.1.1	What were the goals and actions of GIA in the theatre? .....	77
6.2	In what way were the GIA relevant with this perspective on the civil war? .....	82
7	The descent into a “Savage War” .....	85
7.1	Why the proliferation of violence? .....	85
7.2	Two reasons for escalating violence in the abandoned areas .....	90
7.3	What can the massacres tell us? .....	93
8	The money game, a matter of priorities? .....	99
8.1	What’s the importance of private goods? .....	100
8.2	How did the leadership overcome a shrinking resources pool? .....	102
8.2.1	How did they utilize the influx of goods available from 1994? .....	105
8.2.2	How was the army in a position to ignore the Sant Egidio meeting? .....	106
9	Did the sway on power hold? .....	107
9.1	How did Zeroual challenge the army? .....	107
9.2	What were the motivations behind the civil defence groups? .....	112
9.3	How did the army respond to the threat President Zeroual had become? .....	115
9.4	Was there an end to it all? .....	117
10	Conclusion: .....	120
	Literature .....	123





# 1 Introduction

The topic I have chosen to approach in this question concerns Algeria, a north- African country on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. More precisely it concerns the latter part of its modern history. The country in itself is not particularly ancient, as it was historically an uniquely annexed part of France. That is until as one of the first third-world countries it liberated itself through a war of independence (1954-1962). From that time until the period under discussion in this paper much could be said, and indeed more will be later. However, for now I will say that the events between 1989 and 1999 stands out as the pivotal moment in the modern history of Algeria. I claim that this was partly due to the way in which they unfolded and partly due to the effects they have had on the Algeria we see today. The moment I write of is the civil war of Algeria that took place in the 1990's. In it we find several incidents of notable violence enacted against civilians, insurgents and government forces alike. The violence peaked in the last years of the war, 1996-1998 with several appalling massacres that makes one wonder; why? It also serves as a rather curious historical example to what we see unfolding in present day Syria. I will not be as forthright as to say that both conflicts are the same, but certain parallels can be drawn and as such I look into the past to answer one particular question that baffled commentators of the Algerian Civil War - "Why did the Algerian civil war 1989-1999 descend into what has been called a "savagewar"?" I must note that even though the current situation in Syria makes it an interesting parallel, and one that could be interesting to approach, this is not addressed, focused on or made into a comparison in this paper.

The preamble has several underlying points to it; first, it establishes that it was a 'civil war'; second, it establishes the time frame of this civil war and, third, with the word "descend" it implies that there was less violence in the beginning. This is all intentional. The first two points I will grapple with when I discuss the secondary literature further down. The third means exactly what it implies. The civil war is, in my hypotheses, a clear decent from what started out as a struggle for progressive reforms in a country which, along with many others in the world at the time, had experienced a fall in living standards due to the oil price crises of the 1980's. The late 1980's and early 1990's was the time for the second wave of democracies and so the question is an important one in that it can explain why this halted in Algeria. I believe this happened due to a largely unaddressed and crippling trait of the Algerian base of power, a base of power, that was so concerned in being sovereign or all powerful that it let an

entire country's population wreck itself rather than actually share any of the power because it saw this as the most rational choice in maintaining its self-interest. The power base in Algeria is and has been since their independence in 1962 the Algerian Army.<sup>1</sup> It exerted its power through an old institution expressed in the Algerian culture as the *jema'a*, meaning that one governs and decides as many rather than one.<sup>2</sup> This may sound counterintuitive to a country that up until the reforms of the late 1980's had been governed officially by a single party state, however what is meant by this term is not overall power sharing, but that a small group governs together. If the question has a clear answer and it is the above, then knowing the reasons and processes that lead to it may help one understand, prevent and perhaps even untangle similar events as we see them. If the hypothesis holds, one can try and identify why the people in this instance were not part of the army's self-interest and if so how one could make it part of it. These are some of the possibilities and benefits I see coming from asking the question and trying to answer it.

The question is a hard one, however. It may not even have a clear answer. To answer it here we must take a sound look at the politics of Algeria leading up to and during the civil war beside the actual violence in the conflict. As we need to first understand if or how the population, or the majority of it, was not important to the army *jema'a* in particular only the structure of what maintained their presence and ability to be the *jema'a* can answer that. Once we have identified how they maintained their position we will have to address what led to the war, if it was a challenge to their position, to something in the structure that held them there or even something else( as discussed in chapter 2.3). Once this question has been addressed the next step is to figure out how exactly they reacted, if any changes occurred in the structure that maintained their position so as to alter their possible responses in the civil war. The army was not the only actor in the war; rather it was one of many. I will have to approach these as well to further see how they influenced the decent with their methods, perspectives on the population and the army. Once I have described who were fighting who and why they were fighting I will go on in more detail on exactly how they fought to satisfy the "savageness" of the preamble. In chapter 5 I will draw upon the political set up I have laid out in chapter 3 and 4 to explain why the army responded with strategies seen as unbecoming of any nations' army. The unintended results of what is described in chapter 5 and what it led to for the population, the insurgents and the further decent into savageness and the result of it will be

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Stone, *The Agony of Algeria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

addressed in chapter 6. Just how these results affected the war will be discussed in chapter 7 where the worst atrocities of the war will be addressed.

As mentioned above, the politics must be scrutinized to make sense of the events throughout the civil war. The actions, the reasons behind them and their results will in chapter 8 be looked at through an economical perspective as the economic situation of the country without a doubt contributed to the start of it and the strategies executed in it. I will discuss the major economical happenings of the 1990's and see why they happened and how they led, directly or indirectly, to a further promotion of violence before I end my inquiry with chapter 9 that deals with the conclusion of the war and what it may tell us about the direct and indirect reasons for the violence throughout it.

## 1.1 Choice of Theory

As is abundantly clear there are many sub questions to the overlying one that needs to be answered. There are many complicated processes at work and to help me answer all these questions I have chosen to apply "The selectorate Theory". I suspect the theories' categories will fit the context of Algeria both with regards to its politics and war parties. As I hope to communicate throughout this paper, this is by no means a theory exempted from faults and gap.<sup>3</sup> The theory proposes that any *leader* has a *winning coalition* that is drawn from a *selectorate* pool. These categories may all vary in size and it is with these variations that we see the biggest changes. The selectorate is everyone viable for a position in the winning coalition and the ones that willingly or unwillingly chose the winning coalition.<sup>4</sup> Though it can be applied to any type of society or group – a democracy serves as an illustrative example. The selectorate are those eligible to vote, the winning coalition are the politicians getting the votes providing the leader with political support so that he may maintain his position of power.<sup>5</sup> In this example, any individual with suffrage does have a say to some extent in who is the leader, but the winning coalition are the party members that actually pick the candidate and so have a direct influence in getting him and keeping him there.<sup>6</sup> The relationship is however a two-way street, the leader gets the support he needs and he supplies

---

<sup>3</sup> A discussion of the theory, its faults and critique of it will be offered further down.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (The MIT Press, 2004), 41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–39.

the winning coalition directly or the selectorate in general with *private* and *public goods*.<sup>7</sup> Public goods are what in democracies appear as roads, schools and hospitals, basically meaning policies that make the selectorates' life better. Private goods do exist in democracies as well but are typically lower as they often represent corruption or backdoor negotiations where the leader will serve key individuals what they want for what he wants. The theory establishes through empirical studies that a leader's main interest is to stay in power. That good policies(public goods) are such a large part of democracies is attributed to the fact that good policies tend to keep one in power. Therefore if the leader is a "good" leader, he enriches the selectorate here being the ones that elect the winning coalition that again elects the leader helps one maintain the leadership.

This example was one in which the selectorate and the winning coalition were big. If the situation is different, however, so are the results. In a state or group where few have a say in the election of a leader or those electing the leader the ratio between public and private goods tends to be opposite. If only a handful of people help one maintain the leadership – which the theory claims is the main goal of a leader – it is cheaper to hand those few individuals private goods rather than use resources on public goods that serves no purpose in maintaining power. This is why maintaining control of and having resources is absolutely paramount in any state governed by a smaller number of people, because if you do not there are no private goods to buy support. The private goods do not need to be actual money however, and having few resources is an impediment to anyone trying to provide public goods as well but it is the direct control that distinguishes the two.

The results of the latter example have some dire effects, especially if the leadership has resources. If the example is to be found in a nation state it means that very few people are getting benefits from the one supposedly leading them as they are not important to the leader's goal of staying in power. The only scenario they might have some influence in -even if the winning coalition and the selectorate are small - is if they contribute with resources, meaning tax in a nation state.<sup>8</sup> If the leader has another source of income there really is no mechanism as there is no incentive found in the theory that can make the leader produce beneficial public goods.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 44–45.

The simplicity of the theory is its greatest strength but also makes room for criticism. Many disagree on its usefulness, of particular note is Ryan Kennedy who has argued quite strongly against the theory as he finds inconsistencies within it. In his view it is not as applicable as first stated across regime types. He claims that his findings from an extensive use of the theory across time and different regime types produces different results than those projected by the theory's authors.<sup>9</sup> This, however, is not as relevant to this paper, or at least not conclusive. Since his findings were the result of introducing different measures of democracy into the equation, as Algeria by no means is a democracy his second finding is more interesting. As he in the second finding concluded that the measures used for the winning coalition's size has a correlation with the stability of leaders in non-democracies. Kevin A. Clark and Randall W. Stone however argue that the theory's most important findings are all wrong due to miscalculations on its authors' part.<sup>10</sup> This is a technical mathematical argument against the foundations the theory's findings rests upon, and as I do not intend to utilize it in any mathematical fashion throughout the paper I am not risking the same fault. It can however imply that the "rules" or findings of the theory are at best inconclusive as to usefulness across regime types. On the other hand, further critiques of the theory more or less emphasize the shortcomings of the theory, as the authors themselves also do. As they acknowledge in the book themselves the theory treats the leader as an actor with sole control over policy. It also situates questions of ideological competition outside of the model, as public goods are normal goods meaning ideology is only touched upon when finding similarities between leaders and followers. It is lacking with regards to the separation of powers as there are no checks and balances among powerful actors. These questions exceeds the boundaries of the theory, for it is assumed that all members of groups are identical except for their own affinities for one another.<sup>11</sup>

These are all critical points that are worth mentioning in relation to my own paper. In this paper however the theory is used to clarify fundamental categories of different groups within Algeria. Thereafter I take advantage of the trends and mechanisms the theory suggests and I apply these to the interaction and rationale behind acts done by or to other groups. I go beyond the theory in several instances - especially with regard to checks and balances - as I

---

<sup>9</sup> Ryan Kennedy, "Survival and Accountability: An Analysis of the Empirical Support for 'Selectorate Theory,'" *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 695–714, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2478.2009.00552.x.

<sup>10</sup> Kevin A. Clarke and Randall W. Stone, "Democracy and the Logic of Political Survival," *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 03 (August 2008): 387–92, doi:10.1017/S0003055408080131.

<sup>11</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 60, 74, 75.

see these groups functioning beyond the dynamics of the selectorate theory. In addition, I freely use it as a tool to explain a separate set of the categories with regards to the insurgents whose reasons and rationale are easier to explain in the context of the theory. The categories and definitions from the selectorate theory are to some extent also modified to suit the paper's needs. Although the leadership of the army is as mentioned above one of the *jema'a* and not a single leader, the theory does not suggest that it has to be. However, if one were to scrutinize the inner workings of the *jema'a* one might reach findings that made the theory less useful. As this is near to impossible due to the informal way it operated I will have to trace its opinions, actions and methods through the empirical evidence and what it suggests according to the theory. This also means that political in "Political survival" is to be understood as both formal and informal politics here. So it is seen as a categorization that identifies the simplest elements in a functioning group - that seeks its own interests whatever they may be - , and so I derive from the selectorate theory some "rules" as to how these elements function towards each other. The theory's disregard of ideology has no immediate effect as it would only concern the insurgents in Algeria, as they were all to some extent aligned with some form of islamism. When the ideology carries weight in the analysis however it will be appropriately discussed. What I suspect will become evident however is that ideology was not a major variable that pushed in towards any outcome - at least not concerning my predicament - , as I will argue the reasons for the war in Algeria were more practical than anything else.

With this theory in mind, I think that several things will become clear. First I think that the economic and political reasons for the civil war will become evident as the first suggest an affluent and so a less-able leadership that had to cede political power since it could no longer provide the private goods it had with higher oil prices. I think that their ability to do this as the theory suggests affects their position greatly and as the start of political liberalization with a less sturdy economy is a natural outcome. However I believe this liberalization went too far and involved a new set of actors that demanded too much control over the army's resources due to an understanding of a real expansion of the selectorate. I argue that the army misjudged to what extent this expansion would cost them in terms of resources and so reneged on the process they had allowed to unfold as will be discussed throughout chapters 2 and 3. I also expect to see that any betterment of the fiscal situation will embolden the army to reassess its power, as the theory suggests that leaders with small winning coalitions with access to resources have no need for the population at large. I think it is this lack of contribution to the leadership's position that above all allowed for the descent into a savage war.

## 1.2 Review of sources

My preamble assumes that the conflict that ravaged Algeria during the 1990's was a civil war. This definition is contested however. And if it is agreed upon the start and end of it is also widely discussed. Hugh Roberts an analyst of the country for one has some issues with it being a civil war. He especially makes a case against the insightful book *The Algerian Civil War* by Luis Martinez, in which he rightly critiques the definition Martinez puts forth and then the following data used to describe the alleged civil war. Hugh Roberts maintains that the factional politics and violence negate the thesis that it was a civil war according to Martinez's definition, and that according to it the war is a rivalry to consolidate the state.<sup>12</sup> In this specific case he might be right, that Martinez is a bit off the mark applying the definition he does, but still it is here maintained that a civil war was indeed the product of the insurgency that took place. I have come to this conclusion based on the death tolls that stand above 200 000 lives, the geographical expanse of the conflict and the fact that some areas were not only ungoverned but governed by others than the state.

The books that make up most of my secondary literature disagree on more than just this definition however; the reasons for the war are contested as well. Cathrine Løchstøer in her book *Ved Demokratiets Grense* concludes that the war was a result of socioeconomics and international variables like oil prices and foreign support and control from the IMF and The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that unravelled the politics. The civil war in her regards did not start until around the year 1995 as this is the point where the "bumper" function of the trade unions and political parties no longer can ease the pressure from the population.<sup>13</sup> Her explanation for the violence during the war is in my regard an oversimplified one. She holds, for example, that the experiences from the war of independence lay the foundations for and set the standard for the same type of conflict later on.<sup>14</sup> Although I agree with her on the first point I find the second point lacking as there is no clear correlation between the two other than rhetorical anecdotes like the fact that the same villa used by the French for torture was used by the army during the civil war.<sup>15</sup> This is a curious fact but proves nothing, in addition she also assumes that the political liberalization was not in fact genuine, the main argument behind that conclusion is however not finding any good reasons for it to be genuine

---

<sup>12</sup> Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield: Algeria 1988-2002, Studies in a Broken Polity*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Verso, 2003), 353.

<sup>13</sup> Cathrine Løchstøer, *Algerie: ved demokratiets grense* (Aschehoug, 1995), 251.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 255–256.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 256; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 313.

something this paper in fact does.<sup>16</sup> I think the main weakness of the book is how close it is to actual events, as the empirical foundation yet is not as big as one should like the regretful outcome of the democratization process is what's being dealt with at large and these two points make some of her comments more confusing than enlightening as in general her categories of islamists in particular seem to overlap, be faulty and untidy.

Michael Willis on the other hand presents us with a brilliant work that clarifies a lot of the confusion surrounding the early events of the civil war make. In his book *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria* he traces the different Islamist factions and ideologies throughout modern Algerian history up to the civil war, something that makes the divisions among them and their mixed actions easier to understand.<sup>17</sup> This book was out one year after Løchstøer's book so it also suffers from being close up to the events described in the latter part of it. This also sets a cloud of premonition over the analysis - as the civil war was not over at the time of writing, the tentative future is often interpreted into the past. Concerning the reasons for the civil war Willis claims that the FLN and the army had hoped to achieve some sort of equilibrium with the islamists in politics, politics that they controlled. This would mean that the FIS would be welcomed in the political system as long as they recognized the army's position and behaved accordingly. That conclusion leaves any real sentiment towards democracy out of the equation but for different reasons than those proposed by Løchstøer. As an example he describes how both one General in particular, Khaled Nezzar meant that the FIS had no place in politics as well as negative comments from the members of FIS pertaining to the privileged position of the army hampering any cooperation.<sup>18</sup>

Another eminent researcher in the field is Luis Martinez who is himself Algerian. His book has less of an overall political approach to the conflict as he goes more in-depth and utilizes a large amount of first hand sources such as interviews of actual victims and perpetrators, drawing on their experience to paint a picture of the situation of the population at large. He divides the civil war into two periods where one can trace different tactics from a destitute people. In the first he shows how people in a pragmatic way only try to survive and get resources to do so in a situation that is all out war between the army, insurgents and local emirs that govern like the mafia with racketeering, fake roadblocks and heavy informal

---

<sup>16</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 256.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History* (Washington Square, N.Y.: NYU Press, 1999), Xv.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.



taxation.<sup>19</sup> The second period is characterized by the economic changes that took place after 1994 when the IMF rescheduled Algeria's loans enabling the government to target the youth in economic programs to avoid more insurgents. This was a period of economic and social improvement. Before this period, Martinez sees violence as being the means to achieve one's aims, and traces this cultural trait all the way back to the country's Ottoman history, something which also aligns to some degree with Løchstøers conclusion.<sup>20</sup> I however find issues with the conclusion as it does not take into account why the Emirs of the first period actually gathered resources and what they spent them on, namely supporting and upholding their insurgency against the state not on luxurious villas and other indulgences.

I think the Martinez's books greatest asset also detracts from its value to it in some respects. As most of his sources are interviews with locals in Algeria, I find that he lends the arguments in the interviews too much credit. They are often oversimplified and do not explain many of his major points. The book, however, is a treasure trove of valuable interviews. What I find most trouble with is the conclusion he draws from them.

Contrary to the close up perspective of Martinez, Hugh Roberts in *The Battlefield Algeria 1988-2002, Studies in a Broken Polity* has as solid a political overview as the title implies. The *jema'a* term I have introduced is to be found in this book as well as Martin Stone's *The Agony of Algeria* though none of them concludes in the same way I do they also identify it as a key variable in explaining the political changes in Algeria.<sup>21</sup> Roberts's book is a collection of articles he wrote during the civil war so that explains some of inconsistencies between them but one we disagree on is the civil war definition. As he not only refutes Martinez's definition of a civil war but that it was one at all.<sup>22</sup> He consistently avoids the term, but this results in him calling the insurgents by many names as well. Sometimes they are insurgents, sometimes they are guerrillas and then terrorists.<sup>23</sup> It is not a major flaw on his part and he simply does not see the definition as useful, so abstains from it, it is also as said partly excused by the article format of the book.<sup>24</sup> One point on Algerian politics he tackles better than others however is the secretiveness of it.<sup>25</sup> This enables him to be much clearer in vague aspects of the analysis compared to others such as Martin Evans and Jones Philips in their

---

<sup>19</sup> Luis Martinez and John Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 102.

<sup>20</sup> There also is a quote on bottom page 128 that discredits his thesis. *Ibid.*, 88–89, 106, 126.

<sup>21</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 103.

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 127.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Xiii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

book *Algeria Anger of the Dispossessed*. Although he does to some extent fall into the same pitfall of alluding to mysteries and leaving the reader hanging in suspense over some covert or incomplete fact but not to the same extent as the above mentioned.<sup>26</sup> Evans and Phillips' book offers a solid analysis in my regard of what happened in Algeria, but however sound their conclusions may appear I have found several instances in which they have tenuous factual support. They are prone to recount speculations as facts, use witness accounts as definite proof even if there is only one verification.<sup>27</sup> Being somewhat uncritical as well as having a bit of a dramatic writing style it is still a book with several interesting facts and conclusions but not one I have drawn heavily on due to these reservations.

The two last works I have utilized in my analysis of Algeria both stand out in different ways. William B. Quandt's book *Between Ballots & Bullets, Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism* though containing a considerable amount of interesting empirical evidence and some mind interesting conclusions it is heavily biased. As the author says in the introduction Redha Malek, one of the key players at the onset of the civil war is a personal friend of the author, this would not necessarily make him biased but I think, simply, that it did.<sup>28</sup> The entire book presents the army more or less as an innocent bystander that in the end has to tackle the islamists who, in the book are compared to fascists.<sup>29</sup> This is an oversimplification and a misunderstanding that leads him to make false conclusions as he does when he claims that Benhadj and Madani who were to jailed FIS leaders "couldn't agree" on negotiations with the regime he forgets that contrary to being all powerful fascist leaders they were in fact the heads of a shura council that would have to be consulted before any decision was made, so not necessarily because they did not want to.<sup>30</sup> He also claims that Algeria after the French colonization was left without any societal or cultural order in a chain of arguments that concludes with the army and the single party state being the salvation of an almost barbaric land who could not take care of itself in total opposition to what Hugh Roberts claims on the subject.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> As an example Roberts writes that President Boumedine(1932-1978) died from a mysterious disease, when in fact he died of a rare blood disease. Ibid., 18.

<sup>27</sup> Evans, Martin Phillips, John, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), n. 55.

<sup>28</sup> William B. Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism*, First Thus edition (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), Introduction.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 9, 146.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 112; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 43.

The other book is Anthony H. Cordesman's *A Tragedy of Arms, Military and Security Development in the Maghreb*. As the title implies, the book's main focus and outlook is a military one. It does not focus solely on Algeria either but rather grasps the entirety of the western part of North Africa in one analysis with this perspective. The strengths of this book include a wealth of empirical evidence relating to the army's sphere of influence, much of which I have used in this paper. The weakness of this book, however, lies in its often myopic focus on military matters - something that often renders its conclusions too narrow and lacking. As the main conclusion of the book is that too much money was spent on the army, meaning more than the country could afford resulted in poor policy choices and a civil war.<sup>32</sup>The focus does however give one some surprising facts not found in other works on the area from the same period.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms: Military and Security Developments in the Maghreb* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> As an example Cordesman gives a different account on the killing of HCE Chairman Boudiaf. *Ibid.*, 117.

## 2 Where did it all begin?

The events to be discussed here began on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1989 with a ratification of the new constitution. In it, all references to socialism (which the prior was laden) were removed and with it the single party that had been the official government of Algeria became part of a new multiparty political system. As the new constitution recognized the right to form ‘associations’ of political character any party could in theory now vie for power. That same year from February to March the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was formed, eventually to be legally recognized in September of same year. The new constitution was a reformist project spearheaded by President Chadli who dismissed several officials that tried to stand in his way, like Kasdi Merbah the Prime Minister until 1989, Moulod Hamrouche was then appointed prime minister. Even though the new constitution dethroned the FLN it approved of the new radical economic liberalization that went hand in hand with the political liberalization from the start of the project.

In June 1990 the FIS won a major victory in the municipal elections to the shock and disbelief of several of other involved parties. Not long after this President Chadli relinquished the defence portfolio to Major-General Khaled Nezzar something that would have major consequences for his political office later on. Before we discuss the events of the late 1980’s at greater length I will address the lack of single actors. I will also describe the “Algerian Powerhouse” spelling out who it consisted of and identify those who made up the different categories of the selectorate theory in Algeria. Thereafter I will turn to a discussion of just how the reform program executed with the new constitution by President Chadli’s initiative challenged the army.

### 2.1 Establishing a point of departure

In this analysis it is important to understand how the Algerian powerhouse worked, how it changed and who its members were throughout and before the Algerian civil war. Here we must first look at the actors or groupings that represented power in Algeria with the categories given in the selectorate theory. Before the coup in 1992 the selectorate mainly consisted of party members from the FLN and high ranking officers and generals in the army. This is evident by the sheer amount of politicians in the winning coalition with an army background.

In addition there may have been certain influential families that were part of the selectorate. This however, is one point in which Algeria comes across as “egalitarian”, as the war of independence (1954-1962) reshuffled the elite by way of positions and influence acquired through it. Nevertheless these influential families amount to no distinguished family names compared to other “bunker-states” and as such won’t be addressed here.<sup>34</sup>

If we take a closer look at the one of the main pools of the selectorate starting with the army we find a distinct lack of family names. However, do note that it is more important to look at the political rivalry through a prism that makes a clan rather than an individual the single actor. Information on this is, however, scarce and one can be certain that even though the selectorate can be large in some regards, it automatically shrinks with this phenomenon in mind, as only certain fronts or patriarchs have the ability to represent larger parts of it like villages or communes.<sup>35</sup> Hugh Roberts could be said to discuss topics in Algeria in this manner to a certain extent. He moves in this direction when he with good evidence rejects the claims that a French cultural massacre took place during their annexation. He clearly identifies several key titles and positions that stem from a tribal culture predating the French annexation in the current institutions. These two points put together could be an answer to the lack of the same family names coming to the fore in the top echelons, that there indeed is a group thinking or action, though it isn’t necessarily tied to a specific family name but works as one. Other authors on the subject - such as Martin Stone - point to the fact that a very high percentage of leaders stem from a certain geographical area called the TBS (Tebessa-Batna-Skikda) -triangle in northern Algeria. Which would indicate that at least some clans have more sway than others considering that they stem from the same areas.<sup>36</sup>

At the beginning of the eventful decade of 1980’s, there was an attempt to modernize the Algerian army of which a large part of the selectorate consisted. When I write that they were a large part of the selectorate, it is meant as a potential part, since I naturally don’t mean that the lowest ranking private could be called upon to serve in the winning coalition. But they had

---

<sup>34</sup> There is of course a clan system involved in Algeria, but throughout the literature there are few or no references to a specific family or families having exceptionally large influence. “Bunker-states” is a term used to describe those states that have greatest issues with adjusting to capitalism, and they often contain clan like structures governing. Clement Moore Henry and Robert Springborg, *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*, 2 edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Then again the categorization of regime types will not be fruitful in this paper as it; “leads to the construction of arbitrarily drawn boundaries”. Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 72.

<sup>35</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 147; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 127; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 124.

the opportunity to climb the hierarchy at a later stage. As a result of this modernization the army received a large influx of high ranking officers whom did not fight during the war of independence, or came to ALN's (National Liberation Army) assistance at a very late stage of the independence war.<sup>37</sup> Now the privates that theoretically had the opportunity to rise in ranks and one day be viable picks from the selectorate to be in the winning coalition would only be such if they gave the "higher ups" what they wanted.<sup>38</sup> Therefore every promotion hinged on loyalty and political view thus maintaining a rather homogenous view and the same motivations.<sup>39</sup>

The officers were a large and important part of the selectorate that promoted their own into the winning coalition during the end of the 1980's which may be part of the explanation of the developments during the 1990's. They were not the only large group representing the selectorate at this stage though, as the state allied party FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) also contributed with people serving in the winning coalition. They had done so for decades, though their tasks were always beholden to the unquestioning hegemony of the armed forces, they served as a secondary apparatus providing key figures when it came to public relations, diplomacy and state officials.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.2 The Algerian powerhouse

What is called "the winning coalition" seems slightly confusing when considering Algeria pre-1991. The confusions stem from the fact that parts of it were "public" and parts of it were hidden.<sup>41</sup> Key members from the FLN, the president and key backers as mentioned in the army were what constituted the winning coalition. The leadership that should follow as a natural category was even more hidden. Beneath a political facade there was the army, FLN and the presidency which operated by a system of checks and balances.<sup>42</sup> The army had held the strongest position therein – as an entity – making the strongest generals the de facto leadership and as such the leadership will hence forth be termed "the army".

---

<sup>37</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 151; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 132.

<sup>38</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 38.

<sup>39</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 20,152; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 236.

<sup>40</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Xiii.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

## 2.2.1 Identifying the winning coalition

As mentioned earlier in the selectorate certain key members like patriarchs or similar fronts of it represented many others from the same selectorate, in what was a complex and shifting network of clans.<sup>43</sup> These members mainly came from the army as officers or from the FLN. This was the case with the president who held the reins after Houari Boumediene, Rabah Bitat during the 1980's and with President Chadli. The latter was a somewhat perplexing figure with regards to the selectorate theory, as he certainly held real power but more as a front figure for the secretive army. He was a part of the leadership as their front figure but in effect primarily part of the winning coalition— with regards to his background in the army.<sup>44</sup> He started to put in effect what in reality was a challenge to the current leadership of the army as he with his reforms no longer served as a proper proxy for the leadership but rather an obstinate part of the winning coalition.

The army's representatives in the winning coalition also consisted of officers educated in France and the Soviet Union, ushered into their position by the self-maintaining system of the officer's *jema'a*.<sup>45</sup> This education served as a connection between them that made a wing within the army itself have a certain bond between themselves. The leadership tends to form coalitions with people like them; therefore as they were accused of at several instances Algeria had a somewhat French influenced leadership sharing common values and backgrounds.<sup>46</sup> These served as ministers and military leaders in key areas. The overlapping between individuals in the army and the political sphere makes it hard to separate the two, but there were professional politicians who were a part of the winning coalition as well. The president and the cabinet could do as the army wanted, forming an obedient winning coalition by showing loyalty and by ceding any real or interesting decisions to them.<sup>47</sup> But in this clockwork the president had a far greater role than any party member. This stemmed from President Houari Boumediene's efforts back in the 1960's.<sup>48</sup> He certainly concentrated what power there was in the visible political apparatus onto the president. The once influential

---

<sup>43</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 201.

<sup>44</sup> President Chadli served in a military capacity from 1964- 1979.

<sup>45</sup> The *jema'a* is the Algerian word expressing the "prism of clan" one must look through, or the cultural phenomenon Hugh Roberts claims survived the French occupation in which one governs as a group rather than individually.

<sup>46</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 61; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 308; Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 38, 60, 61.

<sup>48</sup> Boumediene was the president of Algeria until his death in 1978.

“Oujada Group” was one of the last major power brokers before this happened.<sup>49</sup> With no such groups existing in the same way the 1980’s, the parts of the FLN party in the winning coalition was restricted to members appointed to ministers besides the president.<sup>50</sup>

A final point on the winning coalition, especially towards the late 1980’s was the focus on technocrats. An increased proliferation of them happened to face the very real state issues arising with drops in oil prices and the tension already felt due to the unemployed youth. This environment made room for technocrats that in addition to loyalty were appointed for their skills as well as their loyalty. Some of these really wanted political change, especially with regards to the political economy. Reforms addressing problems in it would have to be followed up by political reforms, or so it was believed. The role “outsiders” played when creating a winning coalition is a point to which I’ll return in greater detail in chapter 4. For now, it is instructive to note that it was probably the pretext and the arguments from this strata that convinced the army to go along with President Chadli’s reform project at the outset.<sup>51</sup>

## 2.2.2 Who were the leadership?

According to the information at hand, the leadership in Algeria according to the information at hand is by no doubt the army, and so it was during Chadli’s presidency. This was contested at least once by the politician Abane Ramdane who tried to put the military under civilian rule early on after independence. He would, like so many other leaders of the FLN rise high just to be put down when trying to bestow too much power upon himself rather than the *jema’a*.<sup>52</sup> After Boumediene’s coup in 1965 the army solidly became - and has been since - the principal source of power in Algeria.<sup>53</sup> This is an elusive truth most analysts of the country nevertheless agree on, that the army and not the people are sovereign though not at first glance. Its main purpose it would seem has been to shuffle the winning coalition as it saw fit in addition to manipulating the political issues concerning it.<sup>54</sup>

Although the above is true, there has been as there usually are some checks and balances impeding an absolute sovereignty. This conclusion rests upon the fact that as much as the

---

<sup>49</sup> The Oujada group was established by Boumediene as a group of officers in a clan like establishment. It continued to be a political clan bloc till the 1970’s.

<sup>50</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 48–49, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 229.

<sup>52</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 49.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>54</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 253.



actors in the winning coalition and the selectorate need the leadership to gain private goods, it is nonetheless a two-way street. Within a certain framework one could say that the checks and balances have operated between the army, president and party. The president's role has to some extent been an arbiter between the other two as he would have a background in the army and operate in the purely political sphere upon taking office. The framework is of course dictated by the army, as became all too clear from what followed when the political liberalization program failed.<sup>55</sup> However, the FLN's historical rejection of individual leadership and the culture for *jema'a* in the civilian and military selectorate and the leadership certainly played its part in making room for the challenge President Chadli put forth.<sup>56</sup>

The way in which the army led the country certainly bore some negative consequences both for the country - as is widely discussed in literature on authoritarian states with elite classes pertaining to most of the countries resources and power, but also with regards to army capacities. Since an army so involved in politics, an army who emphasize loyalty and support promotes just that and not the necessary skill sets an army should have it results in poor military capacities rendering its ideal existence less useful as was clearly demonstrated during the onset of the civil war.<sup>57</sup> In this regard one could say that rather than serving the country the army owns it, but not as a Prussian state, just as the determining variable for power without actually governing making it an organization that only meddles to serve its own needs rather than those of the country at large.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> This is discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>56</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 252,50.

<sup>57</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 206. Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 39, 249–250.

## 2.3 How did President Chadli Challenge the status quo?

What President Chadli effectively was doing amounted to an expansion of the selectorate and in a democracy setting the winning coalition itself. He thereby increased the amount of private goods in need of being doled out if there was to be no price drop in the purchase of loyalty, which the leadership did not want.<sup>59</sup> Previously the selectorate had been exclusively from the party or the army's top echelons with a few and controlled exceptions. Chadli disrupted the natural order of things, party, army, politics and checks and balance by inviting other parties into the equation making the balance between the president, army and party powers more precarious than ever.

In addition it could be an indication of Chadli disrupting the direct money flow of the army. Just before the onset of the military coup the military budget dropped, oddly enough, from an average of 5% of BNP to an all-time low at 1,7% in 1991. This in itself was half of the direct funds spent on the army, and it could be part of Chadli's failed plan in which he sought to show a willingness to control the money flow himself through political power.<sup>60</sup>

When delving into Algerian politics the only thing one can be absolutely certain of is that Algerian politics are extremely secretive, there's a saying the Algerians have on the topic: "Tirer la couverture vers soi", meaning the quarrels of a couple between the sheets, are hidden in the *les coulisses* (the corridors of power).<sup>61</sup> The only thing we can glimpse is the actions taken, and sometimes the actors executing them. On this note there was an attempt at political opening in Algeria starting in the late 80's, and it is clear that President Chadli was the man behind the initiative.

So it is now clear that the army and not the people were sovereign; there was a power play between the president, the party and the army - with the army being concerned with itself more than anything else. Due to the October Riots in 1988 stemming from a dissent with the

---

<sup>59</sup> If the given resources you have to distribute as private goods are  $x$ , this is divided on the number in the winning coalition – an increase in it makes for a higher number divided on  $x$ . Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 238. Chadli was the ruling president during the 80's. Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 221.

<sup>60</sup> It should be noted though that civil security forces does not count into this number. As they soon were under army control during the following insurgency the point might be void. Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 16.

<sup>61</sup> The saying was brought to my attention in one of Huge Roberts articles on Algerian politics, in which he treats the same problem. Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 237.

living conditions in Algeria, there was a definite will expressed by the people; change was needed.<sup>62</sup> Precisely how or if President Chadli convinced the army that political opening was the solution is unclear however.

What the army did not see or at least did not feel threatened by was the fact that President Chadli was trying to wrest the power from it. By instigating a pluralist political platform he would have radically changed who the selectorate consisted of and thus who made up the winning coalition and its size, giving it a stronger position. This can be derived from the selectorate theory as it amounts to a change in balance of power between the leadership and the winning coalition, when the winning coalition is big it is a seller's market with the right mechanisms in place, whereas a small winning coalition is a buyer's market. This might have been the reason why the FLN didn't protest as much at the reforms since they also were under the power of the army. In this regard President Chadli must have taken great care to tread lightly regarding the party as no leader in his position had been able to grab power and come out of the fray in a stronger position.<sup>63</sup>

Another point that has been the subject of some discussion – explaining the willingness of the FLN - is the lack of ideology within the FLN. The ideological void would make for no inherently conflicting arguments towards a plural political environment other than concerns of its own wellbeing. Cathrine Løchstøer writes of the FLN's admiration of the *Baath* parties handling of the islamists in Syria during in the 1980's and Hugh Roberts says they "admired it (the Baath party)" but other than that there is little academic writing to suggest that any overall ideology other than it being the first political machinery of a new state.<sup>64</sup> The only fact saying something else the author has come across from the FLN towards President Chadli, is the suggestion that they encouraged the FIS as a counterweight to the growing power of the presidency.<sup>65</sup> This may be correct but counter to it, it is also clear that the army would have felt secure enough. By continuing to manipulate all actors, reaching for important positions no matter what political affiliations they claimed to have, trusting in their ability to dole out private goods to ensure loyalty and their own position as long as they controlled the flow of money.

---

<sup>62</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 218,219.

<sup>63</sup> The FLN had opposed leaders who tried to gather too much power unto their own person. Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 50.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 29, 52–53.

<sup>65</sup> This is important with respects to the position had held so far. Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 22, 106.

This process resulted in something none of the actors would have predicted, or at least not counted on. The competition for power in Algeria is and always has been a zero-sum game where the winner takes all and the loser nothing.<sup>66</sup> So with the new possibility for real choices, President Chadli's political liberalization in fact opened up cleavages that were not seen as clearly or certainly not expressed to any significant degree in the political sphere. The state had never before been a channel for public expressions as it now was, making the distinction between it apparent for all.<sup>67</sup>

In line with the reforms the army removed all its representatives from the Central Committee and Political Bureau of the Party FLN; this was in accordance with the new pluralist constitution that removed the army as such from any formal role in the government.<sup>68</sup> As they themselves describe in their Algerian historical account; "...it became necessary with a division of powers."<sup>69</sup> In the historical account they go on about how they in respecting the constitution of February 1989 they expand and uphold their mission; "...to the defence of the sovereignty and national unity..." stating that the ANP (The Peoples National Army former ALN) had been raised above the political discourse.<sup>70</sup> The effect it had contrary to the starting point was that the formal coalition - with regards to the winning coalition - was revoked, and that there were no longer any immediate links between the leadership i.e. the army and the winning coalition institutionally. President Chadli had in effect severed the ties between the apparatus the army used to control its winning coalition and the army. The crux of the matter, to which we will now turn, is that President Chadli didn't account for, or at least had too little support in the leadership to handle, the ability to muster the forces which could and would be essential for his political project.

Since the army in itself was separated from the civilian world, and existed for itself more than anything else what President Chadli failed to recognize was that the ability to muster forces was paramount. Especially when challenging an institution that in itself had no other major attributes than just that. For the army's part, the importance of this ability is what shaped the

---

<sup>66</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 231. "The competition for is a zero-sum game in which the winner take all, and vae victis."

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>68</sup> "After Chadli's collapsed experiment, the army commanders were answerable to no one but each other. Political parties and press.... are now proxies.... in the factional struggle within the army thereby creating political chaos." Ibid., 205,206.

<sup>69</sup> "ANP's History in Arabic," Official site, *Ministry of National Defence*, (August 11, 2014), 5-10,

[http://www.mdn.dz/site\\_principal/index.php?L=ar#undefined](http://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/index.php?L=ar#undefined).Original text:وبات من الضروري الفصل بين السلطات:

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.Original text; وبهذه الصياغة الجديدة تسامى الجيش الوطني الشعبي عن النقاش السياسي، حيث إنحصرت مهامه في الدفاع عن السيادة والوحدة الوطنيتين

coming decade, in that it made its selectorate aware of the fact that for the defence of the current system, with the skillsets many in their selectorate had they would have to support and defend it to maintain their current level of private goods and or the possibility to get even more.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the necessary desertion from the winning coalition to cripple the army is as claimed in *The Logic of Political survival* not considerable. However there is a premise for getting senior officers who control forces to join the desertion, something that was close to impossible with the way the *jema'a* worked.<sup>72</sup>

The ability to muster armed fighting forces has in some ways been reduced post World War II as the proliferation of cheap automatic weapons made up for skills before needed with trained knights or archers.<sup>73</sup> Something the insurgency that followed made vividly clear. Before it came to that though the islamists as mentioned might have played the part of the FLN's counterweight to President Chadli's growing powers. Or there might have been another reason for their allowed participation in the new pluralist environment. The islamists were nothing new in the sense that they were an unknown variable that no one had any idea how to counter. As mentioned above the FLN at least were well aware of what had happened in Hama, the islamists workings in Egypt and neighbouring Tunisia were also known to both the army, the party and President Chadli.<sup>74</sup> But while opening up politically it was widely believed that it would mean less effort used at beating any islamist sentiments in the political sphere. As parties in political competition rather than in any other form of contest as insurgency with islamist sentiments had been a prevailing factor throughout the 1980's with the then insurgency leader Mustapha Bouyali and his movement the MIA (*Mouvement islamique algèrien*).<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 368–369.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>74</sup> When speaking of Algerian islamist and comparing them to other islamists in the Arab world, it must be noted that at least at this point there were big differences between Algeria's djezarist islamist trend and the ikhwani trend seen in other countries. They were much more nationally oriented and were only partly coming from the fringes of the political sphere as their influence on the family code in June 1984 shows.

<sup>75</sup> Bouyali orchestrated the first recognizable insurgency in Algeria from 1982-1987 with MIA. Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 230.

### 3 In what way did the army respond, and why?

As established in the previous chapter, President Chadli's initiative had challenged the army's power position in Algeria for several reasons, more of which will be discussed here. Despite the progression towards political liberalization the people in the Algerian capital took to the streets in October 1988 to express general discontent with their living conditions. The response led to a tension between the army and the Algerian citizens as they massacred hundreds of protestors. Despite this show of brute strength the army continued to be willing to proceed with the political liberalization. This was commenced by allowing new parties to register in 1988 and 1989 when both the FIS with Ali Benhadj and Abbassi Madani serving as party leaders and the RCD (*Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie*) with Said Saadi were accepted as legitimate parties.<sup>76</sup> The formal recognition of the multiparty system came with the constitutional reform of February 1989.

The FIS won landslide victories in June 1990 and January 1991, both elections boosting their political capital immensely. However it made opposing forces in Algeria nervous and led to the arrests of prominent leaders in the FIS as well as public outcry from more secular lenient parties. These government arrests and political opposition, not to say outright encouragement to ban the FIS, led to hidden schemes on their supporter's part as well. Guemmar is an infamous border station in Algeria and was the location of the first violent strike at the state in November 1991. In it 25 Islamist insurgents attacked the border station leaving several soldiers dead.

The second round of the elections was never to be held. Regardless of public outcries due to the FIS's victory and the actions of Islamist supporters, the army moved and shut the process down in a coup led by a General Khaled Nezzar who served as Minister of Defence from July 1990. The army forced President Chadli to resign and created an interim council to serve in his stead consisting of five members all handpicked by the army. There was a constitutional law saying that after any president was removed from office, new elections should follow

---

<sup>76</sup>The RCD is a political party in Algeria; it is secular and made up of Berbers.

within 45 days of his downfall. This was disregarded so the HCE (The High Council of State) started on already dubious legal grounds.<sup>77</sup>

In this context I will through my set of categories and the way they interact try to explain the rationale behind the immediate reactions of the army following the riots and the project President Chadli started describe in the last chapter. I will attempt to find the key elements in this new political reality and say something about what they meant and how the army sought to benefit from them as with the unhinging from the FLN party. Furthermore I will try to make sense of the FIS's actions throughout the election period one in which one could say they took a bold stance. They mainly did this by threatening the army's resource pool. I will also discuss their involvement in the attack on Guemmar. These topics and the most curious question of all, how could the FIS win such a landslide victory in the first round of elections will all be addressed in this chapter that tries to figure out why the army responded in the way it did.

The aspirations of the army are somewhat unclear, but it should by now be established that the army in fact were in a very comfortable position both before and during President Chadli's office - even when his changes began to take effect. Before their problems started their aspirations amounted to nothing more than upholding the status quo with them firmly as the power base. That developments on chemical weapons of mass destruction took off significantly from 1988 - which is the year before the political liberalization commenced - could indicate some aspirations or reactions.<sup>78</sup> The focus on weapons of mass destruction could have been a demand from the army in return for any political opening or it could have been an expression of the army's concern regarding the October riots in 1988, seeking a means to safeguard itself or remove any threats by this last resort. Though the development never got far enough for usage, the situation as we shall see went from bad to worse.

As in any country there were several issues at hand before the pluralist constitution was implemented, some problems of which President Chadli allegedly hoped to solve.<sup>79</sup> The most heated topic were the previously mentioned October riots. They neither had a clear agenda nor a single cause igniting them, but socioeconomical causes are put forth as a complex reason by analysts on the topic. It was said that they were an expression of the people's despair due to a

---

<sup>77</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 249–250.

<sup>78</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 173, 21.

<sup>79</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 64.

drop in oil prices, which the previous year greatly affected their living conditions. The army handled these riots “poorly” seen from a conventional “western human rights” point of view, with hundreds of casualties. Therefore the army could have felt pressured to agree with the political solution offered by President Chadli. This also follows in the selectorate theory as they would have had to try and appease the populace somewhat, if not they could be subject to international reactions to a continuation in handling the problems as they did in 1988.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.1 What was the leadership’s initial reaction?

Following the acceptance of the pluralist project the situation with the people did not improve significantly, and the man in charge or at least blamed for not being able to handle the situation was Prime Minister Hamrouh. The army demanded that he be removed and replaced by Ahmed Ghazali.<sup>81</sup> The move by the army clearly indicated their grip on the winning coalition, and prompted an alliance between the FIS and President Chadli which again more or less guaranteed that President Chadli wouldn’t run for a fourth term no matter the outcome of the upcoming elections. This in effect removed the man who had become the army’s greatest opponent.<sup>82</sup> With a reshuffle of the winning coalition the army asserted the vulnerability of everyone else’s position. This meant that they all understood that as challengers they would be replaced – if they failed – since the leadership first and foremost needed loyalty from their winning coalition.<sup>83</sup> The army however still believed that the FIS could be beaten or controlled politically and that they were another actor seeking to dine at their table.

The single most important move by the army with the new instituted system was their total withdrawal from the party FLN, severing all ties in an attempt to show that they would adapt to the situation and that the seats in the winning coalition now could belong to “anyone” they deemed worthy.<sup>84</sup> Some scholars hold that it was the FLN itself that tried to wrestle the power from the army, meaning President Chadli was a mere front figure. I find this unlikely as I see the severed ties more as a natural response to a multiparty reality.<sup>85</sup> This meant that they de facto accepted an expansion of the selectorate that now consisted of all political parties, in

---

<sup>80</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 250.

<sup>81</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 214; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 234.

<sup>82</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 76.

<sup>83</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 62.

<sup>84</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 223; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 267.

<sup>85</sup> Noam Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres* (Hoggar, n.d.), 320.



theory even the FIS. This move also removed all restraints on the army, the checks and balances were now in effect gone due to the expansion of the selectorate, it was a “sellers’ market” for high ranking positions and not the other way around.<sup>86</sup> This rings especially true since the influx of candidates for the winning coalition came from exile and as such from a weaker position which made them easier and weaker recipients of private goods.

As the first round of elections drew near it seems that the army even flirted with the FIS, making a question quoted in Hugh Roberts *The Battlefield Algeria, Studies in a Broken Polity* relevant; “Why did the army allow the FIS to win a landslide victory?”<sup>87</sup> Now this question assume as does this paper that the army is sovereign and that all power stems from it, so how can one answer this question? The answer could be as some have suggested that the army wanted political equilibrium, where a domesticated FIS was integrated into the institutional system and as such didn’t challenge the army’s own right to wield power and ability to muster forces. In other words, the FIS could be used as the upcoming underdog that made for a fiercer competition for spots in the winning coalition against any secular, or other politically oriented actor that before had been groomed in the FLN instead of insurgents.<sup>88</sup> The situation didn’t unfold in this manner at all, in fact the entire project of President Chadli collapsed due to one single factor and that was the overwhelming and unexpected electoral victory of the FIS. In retrospect this victory at seems unexpected, but it could also be that it indeed was a ploy to counter the growing powers of President Chadli executed by an army that suffered under a new political identity after the October riots, as the people’s executioners rather than their erstwhile liberating heroes.<sup>89</sup>

## 3.2 Why did the leadership feel threatened?

The army felt threatened, and saw its position as being weaker on two accounts. First it would be bound to one party – the FLN – in the multiparty reality that President Chadli set about creating. To the army, this must have seemed like putting all your eggs in one basket. Second, the expansion of the selectorate is threatening as it can be harder to control who gets to be in the winning coalition resulting in less control.

---

<sup>86</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 253.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>88</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 219.

<sup>89</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 220.

When the FIS won its landslide victories in the first round of elections the army felt acutely threatened due to the fact that the FIS had been outspoken with regards to the army and their privileges. The victory made them likely candidates for the winning coalition which would hamper the army's efforts to dominate since that coalition wouldn't be interested in seeing the army benefitting from their work and as such be an adverse winning coalition.

The army as has been mentioned practiced *jema'a*, leadership in a group, in this case a group of generals. This group had throughout the 1980's undergo a series of changes. Most of the generals in it had a French military education, and with it french secular values. When the FIS won the first round of municipal elections and got bolder these values seemed threatened. The FIS's reasons for boldness could have been either a real belief in that the purely political position was strong in itself or they could have been relying on traditions of covert insurgency from Bouyali in the 1980's - prepared to fight as some facts points towards.<sup>90</sup>

With this in mind it seems prudent to point out that although the FIS looked like a cohesive political organization it was not. This meant that both reasons could have made them bold and that in this situation it in reality probably made for one of their weaker points. In any case, the boldness allowed members and leaders both before and after the elections to speak out against the army specifically, threatening the positions of top generals outright.<sup>91</sup> These threats were seen in speeches containing predictions, like the quote from the FIS cleric Imam Mohammed Said who encouraged the population to prepare for changes with regard to attire and food.<sup>92</sup> The first changes the FIS made when actually governing their municipalities like sex-segregating classrooms, banning alcohol and closing sports for women in several places also made for a stark contrast to the French-adopted values of the power holders as it foreshadowed what political power in the hands of the islamists could look like.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> The tradition of islamist insurgency goes all the way back to the independence war where the first attempt at a power grab was snatched away by Houari Boumedine. Later on islamist insurgency spiked in the 1960's and then again in the 1980's. There is also the fact that islamist insurgents actually captured and controlled the city of Laghouat in 1982. Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 20, 23; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 269; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 181; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 49.

<sup>91</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 62.

<sup>92</sup> Luis Martinez's "The Algerian Civil War"(159) cites one individual on this specific quote. The source claims that the cleric was addressing economic concerns and not championing a forced conservative situation on the people. He argued that what he meant was instead of buying expensive imported clothes and food, the Algerians could now prepare for a national industry providing them with cheaper and locally produced food and clothes. Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 240.

<sup>93</sup> The source given here discusses these accusations, as he concludes with them being exaggerated and only affecting small parts of the population. In Cathrine Løchstøer's book, the conclusion is the opposite. Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 158-159.

These policy changes were not encouraging for the army who now saw that parts of their selectorate would be unruly. This made for worse odds for the army and higher chances for the FIS in gaining positions in the winning coalition. Despite the fact that they had no natural loyalty towards the army and most likely were quite resistant to any private goods the army would seek to manipulate them with. On that point however there were instances of FIS members being more cooperative with the army than others, but the most important parts of their leadership were jailed throughout the civil war. On a general level the mere numbers of insurgents early on suggests that any success on the army's part was meagre in this regard. The danger of losing the resources they controlled through their proxies was certainly a threat not taken lightly. The army had tried to safeguard against this by making any provision of political power at the cost of corporate interests to the army, giving them the ability to keep the winning coalition loyal – if corruptible that is.<sup>94</sup> This was done through positioning army loyalists in state corporations as owners and directors, as well as through heavy army influence in the HCE who controlled the state's finances.

These factors came to a head where control of the winning coalition and the selectorate was at stake. The advantage of a sellers' market for the leadership would evaporate if there was no market, meaning the selectorate were numb to any incentives given by the power brokers and as such could wrestle control out of their hands.<sup>95</sup> The islamist were looking to control the army as well as not letting themselves be controlled, so the indulgence of the FIS became an apparent mistake that made the army move as they did.

Cathrine Løchstøer accredits the army with a new political identity from the old identity of them being the people's liberators from the independence war to; "the peoples hangman".<sup>96</sup> This was a label given with regards to the handling of the October riots in 1988. It's worth noting that by allowing the FIS to win the election they could be said to have killed two birds with one stone. They got rid of President Chadli who lost his backing, and they managed to mobilise secular sentiments against a common enemy, the FIS as they would "radically" change Algerian society. Even if this was the case with the identity of "the hangman" the common folk gave the army, it seems like the FIS did not understand or at least might not have been as opposed to the army as previously discussed. This leans on the fact that most of the FIS propaganda was aimed at the former regime party FLN and not towards the army

---

<sup>94</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 135; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 245.

<sup>95</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 137.

<sup>96</sup> Freely translated from: Folkets frigjøre var nå blitt folkets bødler, ny politisk identitet. Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 220.

continuing well into the civil war.<sup>97</sup> This could be attributed to the FIS misunderstanding the picture but more likely it was that they chose to tread carefully towards the fulcrum of power. In addition, the threats discussed earlier stemmed from only parts of the non-cohesive FIS. As we shall see, this changed not long after the situation had turned bloody; all propaganda was aimed at the army from 1993 and onwards.

Preceding the coup there were several confrontations in the political sphere. Arrests of FIS members were carried out on accusations of instigating unrest leading to several strikes and more demonstrations, some that were successful and some that were not.<sup>98</sup> This was not encouraged by the army who knew well of the mass support of the FIS but handled by the internal security forces.<sup>99</sup> Now for their power in general the masses meant little, but unrest and mobilization of large numbers of people is frightening for any ruler. Therefore warnings were issued throughout the autumn of 1991 that if FIS should encourage more of these confrontations there would be consequences.<sup>100</sup> Similar concerns were found – especially with Abdelkader Hachani -with the FIS as they noted with concern that troop movements before the election in 1992 were ensuring that whatever the outcome, the army most likely would have its way.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.3 A point of no return?

Before the FIS could finalize its victory by the second round of elections the army forced a coup to stop the proceeding of this situation. The army found itself in an unfamiliar position, on the centre stage. President Chadli's stance on the gulf war – the opposite of the FIS - made getting rid of him easier as he lost his best political capital with their support because of it.<sup>102</sup> The coup and the election results were not foreseen by everyone as I see it, as the ad-hoc unconstitutional coup indicates. It could be that the army allowed the FIS to win so that they could force the usurping president out of power with support from the elite groups (the

---

<sup>97</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 67.

<sup>98</sup> Ali BenHadj and AbassiMedani, two leaders of the FIS were arrested on charges of; “armed conspiracy against the security of the state.” Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 76; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 115.

<sup>99</sup> These arrests were carried out by the *gendarmie* who until the state of war was initiated were not subjugated to the army.

<sup>100</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 217, 252.

<sup>101</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 2.

<sup>102</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 63.

selectorate for the winning coalition at the time) due to the imminent threat to the winning coalition and the selectorate of the islamists.<sup>103</sup>

The threats above spurred the army to go ahead with the coup, spearheaded by General Nezzar and those later known as the “eradicator” generals. The common denominator for all these actors in what was then the “leadership” was a French or Soviet education. Laden with French influence and Soviet “camaraderie” they all had a shared interest in maintaining their political power, in controlling the money flow which gave them just that and their privileged western life style of which they were prepared to use violence to protect.<sup>104</sup>

Although the army was behind the coup, and though they had enough will and manpower to see it through, the way in which it was done and what followed was not single minded. Something that stood out with regards to the prime minister – put in his position by the army after Hamrouche – who seemed to be more consensual and independent from the army than what they preferred - a probable reason for his demise.<sup>105</sup> Another argument on this point is that later in the conflict there were generals how would show themselves to be more lenient towards the islamists; wanting negotiations and peace rather than the diehard line set forth by the French educated generals.

William Quandt in his book *Between Ballots and Bullets* has a somewhat optimistic approach to the entire project and believed that there were sincere efforts at making a multiparty system for the sake of actual political opening and as such a sovereign people. In his book he sees all the mishaps of the 1990's as resting on a single “mistake” made by the “Algerian reformists” as they: “sought to outmanoeuvre both the old guard of the FLN, the radicals of the FIS” with their gerrymandering of the election. The Algerian reformists here are President Chadli, his technocrats and those supporting the reforms. This apparently backfired on the reformists as it gave the winners whom they thought would have been them a lot more than they would have otherwise gotten. He sees this giving the army no other choice than to intervening due to the landslide victory of the FIS.<sup>106</sup> There is something to it, that there were miscalculations with regards to the gerrymandering no doubt, their actual effects were not the wanted effect. But as discussed above, it is more likely that the army allowed the FIS to run and win the election for

---

<sup>103</sup> This would diminish their chances at being in the winning coalition, as the islamists would be competitors for positions therein.

<sup>104</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 134; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 35.

<sup>105</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 214.

<sup>106</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 160.

their own reasons. The coup and the following decade of horror had more to do with the normative stance of the FIS and less with what they “actually” won or not. They acted in a way the army simply could not tolerate, and as such rendered the outcome with the FIS in power a problem no matter how much or little power they would have held. If they had only won some municipalities the army would still have acted against a power holder criticising and starting initiatives that hampered their own positions, so I propose that the stance the FIS maintained after winning was their demise.

It was a zero-sum game so the radical coup of the army changed everything. The electorate changed, the winning coalition changed and the eradicator voices in the leadership’s *jem’a* were even stronger than before, especially when the insurgency started as will be discussed further down. With regards to the new electorate it became apparent immediately that some of the parties that had run in the elections understood the changes, and so the positions in the winning coalition were coveted. Said Saadi the leader of the RCD had even thrown in his support with the sceptics before the coupe. He called for strikes and demonstrations and even “any means, including violence” to prevent the holding of a second round of voting which he claimed would bury Algeria.<sup>107</sup>

These could have been sincere statements but they certainly maintained the attributes a member of the winning coalition should have; namely loyalty and support. The reshuffling in the winning coalition as mentioned with the Prime Minister Ghozali - who was too independent and therefore replaced by Prime Minister Abdessalam who depended entirely on the power he gained through the army as he had no popular base himself - showed that opportunities that hadn’t been there before were now present.<sup>108</sup> These gave strong incentives to vie for power.

The coup in itself was executed thus; General Nezzar pushed through with a “divide and rule” policy in the political establishment that was thoroughly disoriented due to the victory of the FIS and the new multiparty reality to which they were all newcomers.<sup>109</sup> At the onset President Chadli wouldn’t sign the army’s attempt to remove the FIS from the elections

---

<sup>107</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 234.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 214,250.Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 65.

<sup>109</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 134, 136.

showing his obstinacy toward the current will of the army. The little power he had was then stripped from him in what was a poor attempt at trying to make the coup seem legal.<sup>110</sup>

Since President Chadli's term was due in December 1993 and a new presidential election constitutionally needed to be held within 45 days of a president's departure they had a legal issue at hand. They circumvented this by establishing the HCE representing the presidential powers.<sup>111</sup> With the HCE functioning as a new winning coalition within the political sphere in place consisting of several key members including General Nezzar himself it was easy to control the game politically. They used the new political powers to close down all institutional bases of the FIS and all other Islamist affiliations, including private companies, their trade union (SIT) and cultural and charitable organizations, in effect wiping them off the political map.<sup>112</sup> With the HCE in a governing position it gave them the opportunity to use constitutional mechanisms to achieve the above, gathering what little institutional power held by the regional councils to the HCE.<sup>113</sup> This could point to two things; either a naive attitude reckoning the FIS would see themselves beaten "legally" and concede their loss. This would have meant that they didn't expect an insurgency. Or it meant that the army expected the insurgency and just wanted to remove all who dared to challenge them at their own game and that this was the first step in that direction with the *jem'a* agreeing on "eradication" as a method for what quickly followed.

President Chadli's fall was not as abrupt and sudden as I might have portrayed it here. There were several factors that led to his final downfall, including the threats the army felt with regard to him, his direct challenge to their hegemony and his continued support of the FIS. This final point actually made it all the worse, since he took the opposite stance with regards to the Gulf crisis than they had; this made it hard to maintain an "alliance". So due to this, one of his allies that aided his challenge of the army also withdrew their support.<sup>114</sup> His decisions made perfect sense since his tentative winning coalition - or the coalition he would have been a part of - would after a hypothetical victory over the army have become the Islamists. But as head of state in the Arab foreign political milieu he could not simply take another stance towards Iraq. So having divorced himself thoroughly from the FLN already after the Gulf crisis he stood without any support.

---

<sup>110</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 243. Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 250.

<sup>111</sup> HCE, French acronym etc. Haut Comité de l'état. Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 249.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 293,247.

<sup>114</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 313,267.

Others like the above mentioned William Quandt has linked President Chadli's fall to the democratization process itself, seeing him as an authoritarian figure in effect committing political suicide to enforce a new reality. It could be said that it was this that happened but the process on the surface with the expansion of the selectorate into a multiparty reality looks more like a pragmatic approach within a game of positioning oneself correctly, a game which he lost.<sup>115</sup>

The HCE was a governmental organ replacing or taking on the role of the president, again more aligned with the tradition of *jema'a* as it consisted of multiple members. There were five members, two of them senior generals, Khaled Nezzar and Larbi Belkheir. The first also held the two offices of Defence Minister and Interior Minister which plays directly into the ability to muster forces of which the army now held an even stronger hand as the internal security forces were subjugated under the Ministry of Interior affairs. The fact that they had two generals serving on the HCE gave them direct control into what now only bore a poor semblance of a legal ruling organ.<sup>116</sup> The extraordinary powers of the HCE resulted in what has been discussed earlier – that is to say, no checks and balances whatsoever – effectively giving the army free reign.

The coup nevertheless resulted in an insurgency; this shows that whatever the army had planned it most likely failed. They had already stated that they thought the islamists would be beaten with less effort in the political arena rather than in pitched battles.<sup>117</sup> Now that they had beaten them, or cancelled the contest in the political arena it followed that there would be an insurgency. I base this on the will to take up arms that had been seen in the 1980's as well as in the sheer audacity of the army and the effect of stripping a huge victory away from such a large group of people. And as a final point when the islamists struck, one gets the impression of a coherent large group executing asymmetrical warfare with precision and planning.

One of the first of these asymmetrical attacks was the attack on the border post Guemmar. This was used as an argument by the army to excuse its actions, saying that the islamists were indeed terrorists and had planned for insurgency if they didn't get what they wanted all along. It may be correct that the attacks were planned for a long time, but the FIS and the loose

---

<sup>115</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 126.

<sup>116</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 244, 245, Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 103; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 250, 215, 249.

<sup>117</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 230.



category “the islamists” doesn’t fit the argument. For one the FIS certainly was a somewhat synthetic grouping gathered by some basic common denominators and not as suggested a strong and coherent organization like the Muslim brotherhood. They consisted in the main part of a nationally oriented *djezarist* direction and then again of people willing to take up arms and people not willing to take up arms of which the *djezarist* were a large portion.<sup>118</sup> The cohesiveness of the FIS will be discussed at length in chapter 4.

Whether it was planned or not, the attack led to an uncompromising stance by the army; total extermination of all armed groups.<sup>119</sup> This very hard-line attitude from the onset leads to what has been called “a savage war” in which the French analytical categories to the situation that followed, divided the state actors into “eradicators” or “negotiators”.<sup>120</sup> This can be a useful analytic approach, but with the theory I am applying it becomes redundant. The reason for this is that the interpretation rests on the actual arguments used in the debate concerning the islamists and the coup from the actors instigating it or being the victims of it themselves. This is somewhat irrelevant data when looking at it with the perspective I am, they might say one thing but here it is more of a pretext to positioning themselves where they want to be within the winning coalition. Therefore there are completely different reasons for the hard-line stance in this instance; this approach also better explains the shifting positions of several of the actors along the way, like Zeroual and the political opposition that would come at a later stage.<sup>121</sup> I will continue to use the terms only to denote a grouping of politicians and generals that acted in a somewhat cohesive way, rather than showing normative traits towards the term bestowed upon them.

That the stance was a clear expression of the army’s interest in maintaining its position as sovereign was clear on several accounts. First the very forceful “eradicator” stance made it clear that they wanted to be where they were, the second was the promotion of figures that accepted the stance and held it themselves – something as mentioned Rais Saaid tried to capitalize on.<sup>122</sup> In all the arguments I made for the threatened position they felt only one solution comes forth as a plausible way to deal with the islamists. If they would back down for precisely that way, they wouldn’t expand the selectorate to individuals that weren’t willing to work or be part of it on the army’s terms, since this could entail loss of control, resources

---

<sup>118</sup> The *djezarist* were a nationalist oriented islamist movement in Algeria.

<sup>119</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 116.

<sup>120</sup> Phil Rees, *Algeria’s Hidden War*, Video, 2012, <http://vimeo.com/43758894>.

<sup>121</sup> See chapter 9 for more information on Zeroual.

<sup>122</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 294.

and the lifestyle they had learnt to cherish in France - something both Hugh Roberts and Luis Martinez agree on.<sup>123</sup>

The protection of all revenues was already in play in Algeria, as all production facilities are located in the remote south, for which the geographical locations of the oil reserves are not the only reason.<sup>124</sup> There are a host of perplexing questions with regards to the oil facilities, such as why the islamists didn't strike at more vigorously, or why there was such a small number of incidents harming the oil sector this however will be addressed in a separate chapter. For now we shall look at the more immediate channelling of these resources and what happened to it after the coup. The state funding for the local municipalities of FIS was cut off shortly before the coup leaving the FIS without funds where it was supposed to govern. If this was in order to dissuade the FIS from continuing to do so as the citizens would experience a worse governing apparatus, or if it was a show of strength or the start of a meticulous plan leading up to the coup it certainly shows what power the army had. I say this as it could deprive legally elected officials from the funding they needed to do work on behalf of - or as - the state.<sup>125</sup> Another way to look at it is if it was an action required by necessity. The Algerian economy was not doing well by the end of the 1980's and even worse at the onset of the 1990's. Having already explained the lack of importance which the people in general attached to the army it stands to reason that any decision not to fund them in a municipality would not be a hard one to make, especially if it hurt the challengers.<sup>126</sup>

The dire economic situation was somewhat mended shortly after the coup, as they received a 550 million USD aid relief package from France and a western consortium.<sup>127</sup> This strengthened the army and its loyalists at a critical point as the winning coalition as a rule only is as loyal as the flow of private goods offered to it is steady.<sup>128</sup> The relief package was not only an immediate resource to be utilized - it also showed that somehow the regime had managed to win the support of the international community despite transgressions and so the future appeared one of economic stability.

The foreign aid was not without its troubles, as the influence from abroad was not a welcome point for the opposition, especially with regards to FIS who used it in their propaganda

---

<sup>123</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 156; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 35, 68.

<sup>124</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 169.

<sup>125</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 23.

<sup>126</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 70.

<sup>127</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 116.

<sup>128</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 58-61.

campaign against the state. Saying that the regime was a puppet for foreign forces (with some truth to it, as the western world dreaded islamists in power evidently more than they wished to see the third wave of democracy succeed).<sup>129</sup> Some analysts even went as far as to say that the French were in fact in a “hostage” position under the Algerian regime.<sup>130</sup>

Several things became evident once the dust had settled. Firstly, the army had shown clearly that it preferred to be sovereign in its own right; the sentiments of the supporters gathered behind the FIS had shown willingness to challenge both the political sphere and the way in which the army only took care of itself. Secondly, we can see that the army distanced itself from its traditional allies or selectorate in that it expanded it to its own ranks and basically everyone else showing loyalty and something to contribute to their cause. This “independence” and the new way the selectorate shifted are essential for what is to be discussed, as it lays the foundations for all the choices made by the army and the insurgents spanning the violent part of the conflict. Following the coup there were two groups with the ability to muster forces. They were both interested in being in a position to lead through a winning coalition stemming from a selectorate, what they differed on was the respective sizes of these. The vital point to notice though is where they acted in the same manner. In that those who positioned themselves or were kept outside of their thought paradigms and served no purpose for keeping or potentially putting them in a place of power – the disenfranchised had no apparent value at all.

---

<sup>129</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 254.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

## 4 War, the continuation of politics

The coup and its surroundings have been clarified, as have the first moves on the insurgents' part with the attack on Guemmar. Following the establishment of the HCE the army needed someone with legitimacy to don the fig leaf in the form of the position of leader. They called upon Mohammed Boudiaf, an Algerian living in Morocco in political exile. He was known as a freedom fighter from the War of Independence 1954-1962 and carried with him some legitimacy to smooth over the unconstitutional coup. He was one of a new group of people who were occasionally allowed into the fold - these had spent time abroad either willingly or in exile, and all were vying for a return to power. Therefore several came willingly to do as the army commanded.<sup>131</sup> With a working HCE the multiparty system was not totally disbanded but delayed as control needed to be established following the tumult of the coup. As such the political parties that had emerged in the late 1980's had no actual political control but neither were they disbanded except from FIS for obvious reasons.

The presence of these political parties did however play a role in the public discourse following the coup, where some sided with the army in that a coupe was necessary others held that the election result of the first round should be recognized, FIS should be let back into the fold and a second round of elections should be held. This however amounted to little as they had no real power to enforce this in addition to a rather strong presence of coup-supporting parties. The burnt bridges between the army and the FLN - the nation's single ruling party for decades - had however amounted to them opposing the army with regard to the FIS question as they also wanted recognition of their electoral results. On a broader scale, one can note that a clear political division emerged among those who have been called the "eradicators" and the "negotiators". The names are derived from their stance on the Islamist insurgents. The negotiators - as the name implies, wanted to barter a political truce stopping the escalating violence, whereas the eradicators saw no other way than a total obliteration of the sentiments feeding the FIS's and the insurgents' support.

Institutionally this was easy to achieve as all public displays of FIS and every institutional aspect gained after the first election round as governors were unravelled, fired and disbanded. This included their worker union SIT and even commercial enterprises known to be FIS driven.

---

<sup>131</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 244.

A trade monopoly on paper importation was also established to undercut any media campaign through officially but paperless regime critical papers besides outright banning of newspapers that made the fight against the insurgency “harder”.<sup>132</sup>

The HCE as mentioned only served as a shadow leadership, for the power as ever lay in the hands of the army who only inserted their proxies into the ruling council of Algeria first with Boudiaf and then General Nezzar who both came from the army. Even though their role in politics had been removed with the separation from the FLN and only partially re-established with some former army members in the HCE their presence in the public sphere was nevertheless felt in the conflict that in the following years would grow worse and worse. The figurehead of this institutional presence was General Mohammed Lamari who served as the supreme commander of Algeria’s forces. He was renowned “eradicator” and his promotion to supreme commander is a vital sign showing that the *jem’a* preferred this position. The forces he commanded were enlarged in 1992 when all forces formerly under the Ministry of Interior came under General Lamari’s command following a state of emergency declaration allowing him to assume command legally.

The conflict itself had escalated after Guemmar with an increasing amount of attacks on government positions, personnel and resources. This was made possible partly due to alleged preparation but also a natural occurrence as several prisoners from the earlier insurgency with islamist sentiments had been released after the October riots in a move to appease the population. In fact the group called MIA which had been active in the 1980’s found itself reinvigorated with its old members free under the command of Abdelkader Chebouti who without a doubt made the extension from politics to war when he lead his insurgents into the conflict following the coupe. They sought victory in two ways, and much like the political parties the FIS itself was divided. On one hand were the people wanting to push for negotiations and on the other hand were members that supported MIA that came to be known as AIS (*Arme islamique du salut*) in a less articulated fight.

Chebouti himself was declared Emir in 1993 with the establishment of his own Islamic state, something discussed at length further down. This was only possible as the ANP found themselves in a bit of trouble and could not or would not protect all of its citizens something that will be addressed in chapter 5. The vacuum this created enabled the insurgents to fill the

---

<sup>132</sup> Løchster 251,

gap and establish their own ruling institutions in areas from which they could later launch their attacks. These attacks were diverse, striking both at government owned industries, army personnel and members of the winning coalition.

In this chapter I will first try to give an overview of which parties sided with the army and which sided with the insurgents politically. Thereafter I will comment on what this meant in terms of the selectorate theory, for the changes had clear effects on which groups now could be said to be part of the army's selectorate as well as the insurgents. Following this I mean to discuss how the decision to insert Boudiaf worked out for the army, and in what way he challenged them as all other leaders that had been inserted in the political apparatus. The importance of the state of emergency will be addressed as this gave the army control of all civilian forces.

Second I will go through more thoroughly the insurgents' immediate reactions to the coup, describing their divide in more detail. I will interpret their actions and what they meant according to the selectorate theory and as mentioned analyse what Cheboutie's declaration of an Islamic state can be said to have meant for their overall strategy as a third point. In the last part of this chapter I will address the insurgents more operational strategy in which one will start to see the decent into a savage war.

## **4.1 Who sided with whom?**

The selectorate of the army did not change significantly when compared to the situation before the coup, although it became even more loosened from the FLN as it was. The disassociated way of the selectorate became more important and is discussed as a rare phenomenon in Algeria. In the self-imposed or imposed ostracism one would try to increase one's value by increasing connections abroad and knowledge so that the leadership hopefully could make use of you later on and therefore bring you back into the fold. This is a phenomenon of which the second HCE leader Boudiaf is a prime example.

One could argued that each member as part of the visible leadership had beneath it a winning coalition keeping it in the position with its own selectorate watering the theory down somewhat – though I think this only a descriptive reflection of the tribal aspect of Algeria further enriching the analysis rather than making it ineffective or void. Beside the

disappearance of the FLN and the increasing numbers of people like Boudiaf, the new parts of the selectorate were the political parties established when the multiparty system was initiated. In addition a much more flexible usage of all non-FLN personnel was possible as the army no longer were committed to a single party, basically meaning that anyone picked by the army could potentially support it. Martin Stone in his book “The Agony of Algeria” sees these; “political parties as pressure groups for minor clans or shadowy elements within the regime”, and to some extent he could be correct that this was their function between President Chadli’s imitative and the coup.<sup>133</sup> After the coup however they had little actual power to assert themselves with. If there was any agency it was in what they could offer in return for private goods in what was a seller’s market of power - not the other way around – therefore excluding “pressure” as a viable *modus operandi*.

The comments before the coup and afterwards with the positioning of the different parties must also be understood in the context of the selectorate theory. As all those who aligned themselves with the “views” of the army - meaning an eradication of the islamists without them actually ever having a political foothold - would make themselves more attractive. This was now possible as they were part of the selectorate that was now expanded and so potentially could contain them.

Although not all the political parties opted for this stance, to a certain degree some put their bets in much the same way as above. - With the islamists or at least on a reality in which the army would not have as much power as it now had. This becomes evident when the result of the stance was no headway given in the current system, but the hopes of a new system that recognized the political parties as it by the constitution actually should do. This would at least mean that there would be a fairer competition and a much larger selectorate giving all of them a chance to rise. Others may have had sincere support for the FIS hoping that with their eventual victory the “loyalty” shown with their persistent demand of FIS recognition would curry favor in a new selectorate.

Other organizations such as the ONM – war veteran organization who strongly supported the regime certainly made for potential members of the winning coalition as Ali Kafi the chairman of the HCE after Boudiaf actually was the chairman of ONM before assuming the

---

<sup>133</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 128.

HCE position. Therefore it as an organization was also a selectorate pool the regime could draw upon.<sup>134</sup>

By the French definitions the eradicators - meaning those who thought islamists did not deserve a place in politics - consisted of the following important organizations and actors; UGTA (*Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens*), RAFD (*Rassemblement Algérien des Femmes pour la Démocratie*), RCD and PAGES (*Parti de l'Avant-Garde Socialiste*).<sup>135</sup> In one way or another all of these represented interests that were more aligned with the “French” values held by the influential generals. UGTA had been the sole union for decades – at the onset illegal as the union SIT became legal only for a short period during the late 80’s - and had been and continued to be a strong ally of the army’s leadership.<sup>136</sup> RAFD had taken a blow in the 1980’s when the family law was changed to appease the islamists to a certain extent. This direction the country was heading in was unacceptable so they were also firm eradicators.<sup>137</sup> *Ettehad* formerly known as PAGES (*Parti de l'Avant-Garde Socialiste*) were a communist party found the entire islamist agenda foreign and disturbing.<sup>138</sup>

It is worth noting that the FLN were actually of the opposite opinion, demanding the recognition of the election results from 1991 and a continuation of the elections. This shows just how severe the break between the army, the president and the FLN had been. This could also be a mature FLN, recognizing being beaten at their own game. Here it is more likely that they least of all saw themselves returning to the army’s favour due to its earlier actions, giving them only one option as to where it could hope to return to any power at all, through the reality in which FIS won the election.

Following this overview of the selectorate it should be apparent just how little power anyone beside the army had. As there was nothing they managed to execute other than verbal critique that had no immediate effect, there was an iron grip on all power except the insurgency which will be discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

---

<sup>134</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 165; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 250.

<sup>135</sup> UGTA was the only legal trade union in Algeria until the late 1980’s and RAFD, RCD and PAGES were all political parties in Algeria following the political liberalization in the late 1980’s.

<sup>136</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 234.

<sup>137</sup> Caroline Sweetman, *Gender, Development, and Citizenship* (Oxfam, 2004), 27; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 261.

<sup>138</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 37, 143, 167.



## 4.2 Who made up the new winning coalition?

The army chose to substitute President Chadli with the establishment of HCE along with a heavy army presence and the insertion of Boudiaf as its leader. This was to last until President Chadli's original term was out.<sup>139</sup> The HCE effectively became the new winning coalition of the army leadership.

As the army was naturally uncomfortable with being in the immediate front of the country's leadership, they established the HCE and veiled their leadership behind it, in effect making them their new winning coalition. As touched upon earlier they were responsible for exerting the army's political power but formally they represented state power. With the leadership in this model being a *jema'a* - a council of peers - within the army one could say that the presence of General Nezzar for one now blended the boundaries between the leadership and the winning coalition since his prior position was within the *jema'a* tradition among the high ranking generals of the army. Though with the swap in position – taking on a political office – his interests might have been self-serving and thus deviating from the role he was to serve in the HCE. He was however a proxy serving the army *jema'a* in the new found institution of the HCE, so a part of the winning coalition helping to execute the will of the *jema'a*. However it was this weakness in the power system that again and again was behind much of Algeria's troubles in the 1990's as General Zeroual would be a clear example of later on.

It should also be mentioned that the army led in a passive and peculiar way. The HCE did not convene often, in fact the first meeting after its establishment did not commence until months after it had been established. Therefore one could see at least parts of the HCE, as General Nezzar and General Belkheir only functioning as army proxies ensuring that the army got its way when important decisions were made. This insurance proxy was visible to a point as the army was accused of staging the assassination of the leader of the HCE – Boudiaf - whom they brought into the fold from exile in Morocco. This removal could mean that their influence and their self-asserted right to it was put forth as an argument for them killing him off themselves as he strayed somewhat from what is perceived to have been the army's wishes.<sup>140</sup> Whether or not they were actually behind the assassination is beside the point. Moreover it clearly illustrates that this mechanism, though not formal, was indeed present.

---

<sup>139</sup> The HCE lead the country during the first years after the coup, in the absence of President Chadli. Boudiaf was an Algerian politician and former freedom fighter from the independence war then living exiled in Morocco.

<sup>140</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 264; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 108.

The accusation also shows that the winning coalition of the army created time and time again was hard to control.

Setting speculations of blame aside, it was apparent that Boudiaf had an agenda independent of his army benefactors. He started a harsh campaign against corruption that affected one high ranking general in particular - Mustapha Bellocif - who had funnelled millions of dollars into private accounts. This meant that any general in the leadership most likely could fall prey to his anti-corruption campaign. Boudiaf's reasons for this could have been honest statesmanship and wanting a better Algiers, but in the selectorate theory it is again tempting to look at some ulterior motives for his actions. Boudiaf was an outsider, not invested in the situation as he had been in Morocco for several years. He fit into the role of what the leadership conveyed as a legitimate leader after a political upheaval. They wanted it to end with some semblance of legitimacy to staunch opposition.<sup>141</sup> His position as chairman of the HCE, though, empowered Boudiaf, offering him as many opportunities as restrictions. The restrictions were not much more than being loyal to the army of which there was no inherent reason he should be now that he had obtained a position. As money flow is paramount to control, the move against corruption could therefore have been a move to tap into the resource flow securing his position and making him one of the patrons rather than a client in the relationship he was cast into.<sup>142</sup> Beside the political challenges with their proxies in the winning coalition being the only possible political opponents the army also faced more physical challenges.

The areas that concerned the army due to their hard-line stance had largely been taken care of politically with the disassembly of the political and private organizations of the FIS. What was left was to fight the insurgency. The army obtained absolute control of all state forces after the state of emergency was declared. That included all forces under the ministry of interior – though that too was led by a former general. In that way they would probably have held some sway in this sector in any case, but the move to a state of emergency made it lawfully under the direct control of the army. These forces consisted of all internal security forces, namely; police, secret police and different squads that were developed throughout the insurgency serving multiple tasks. One general in particular became well known in 1993. His name was General Mohammed Lamari, and he was the front figure for the hard-line stance of

---

<sup>141</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 243.

<sup>142</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 265.

total eradication of the jihadi opposition and as of 1993 he was the formal supreme leader of all forces in Algeria.<sup>143</sup>

The winning coalition was not restricted to the members of the HCE, although they provided the army with a legalistic façade for their leadership in turn for some amount of restricted political power and private goods. The limited political power is apparent; the private goods will be addressed in chapter 8. There were several other eminent individuals that made up the coalition. The inner workings of the army are hard to pinpoint, but it is natural to think that there was support from certain key individuals that contributed with the ability to muster forces giving generals more or less power in the leadership. Here the premise is that the hierarchy of the army didn't work in the conventional manner as briefly discussed in the introduction (2.1) rather that the officers as before threw in their support in exchange for private goods either in monetary funds or key positions, promotions etc. guaranteeing the top echelons their support in the direction they were leading. These officers were as mentioned overwhelmingly French educated, as were any professional politicians like former Prime Minister Redha Malek, HCE member Ali Haroun and the former Interior Minister Aboubakr Belkaid.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 472.

<sup>144</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 155–156.

## 4.3 The divide

### 4.3.1 What was the opposition's reaction to the coupe?

When the Islamist party FIS realized what had happened it forced the state's hand when it rebelled physically; in a reinvigorated MIA – later to become AIS. The AIS was in reality the continuation of an insurgency that had lasted through the first half of the 1980's. Many of its members seized the opportunity to participate in politics when President Chadli started his reform program. They backed the insurgency together with numerous other groupings – AIS fighting with Abdelkader Chebouti made the extension of politics apparent for all.<sup>145</sup>

The Islamists in Algeria had rebelled several times – though on a small scale and unsuccessfully - in the short life span of the independent state. The last insurgency led by the now dead Boyali during the 1980's saw several Islamist insurgents arrested. These prisoners were released during the tumults towards the end of the 1980's in an effort to try to ease the strain the FIS put on the state with their strikes and protests. It followed the bloody handling of the October riots as well as the imprisonment of several of their key leaders who were accused of agitating the unrest.<sup>146</sup> There were also several Algerian fighters returning from the battle in Afghanistan from 1988 and onwards providing skills in addition to the fighting ability with the proliferation of cheap weapons. Of these several had connections to the FIS and a somewhat confusing group called the "*Takfir wal-hijra*".<sup>147</sup> There has been much conjecture over who exactly was behind the incident at Guemmar on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991. The tendency is to attribute it to 25 of these "Afghan" warriors. One of these who got imprisoned for the assault, Aissa Messaoudi aka Tayeb Al-Afghani was a member of the FIS trade union SIT – the only connection found by the author between FIS and Guemmar. The incident left several border guards working at the station dead, and started a spiral of accusations from the regime saying that the FIS had conspired all along to use violence even if they lost the elections.<sup>148</sup>

---

<sup>145</sup> When I write that the FIS reinvigorated MIA I do not want to suggest that it was such a simple procedure with MIA being the sole and absolute arm of the FIS. The fact is the FIS were divided on what to do, but the ones who were not ready for a commitment to take up arms either quit, or worked alongside the banned political FIS as best they could. In addition Chebouti had a close working relationship with the FIS, though not as formal as it may seem. One of the main criteria for ending the insurgency for both MIA and FIS however was the acknowledgement and proper measures based on the election results.

<sup>146</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 22. Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 234.

<sup>147</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 217.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 236; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 227; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 186.

The validity of the argument should not be the focus of our discussion here as the incident and its actors are irrelevant to the question at hand. Its only relevance here is in terms of what it led the opposition to do; to commence with an insurgency. The decision to release captives from the prisons during the tense periods between the start of the political reforms and the coupe together with the influx of fighters brought voices and capacities to the fore that bore some weight. The actions that were supposed to appease the FIS were in large part an important variable leading to the insurgency to come. The islamists (or more precisely in this instance the FIS) reacted in two ways – reflecting the heterogeneous mix of the Algerian islamists. During a meeting in *Batna* several members such as Benazous Zebda and Hachemi Sahnouni who later went on to the more extreme version of insurgency in the group called GIA (*Groupe Islamique Armé*) were kicked out of the FIS due to their opinions on the way forward but still within it there were members and leaders who were willing to take up arms to demand what they saw as just, namely their rightful place in politics – though some were less willing to commence with violence.<sup>149</sup> Those who saw violence as the appropriate modus operandi either supported the insurgency as politicians or outright joined the reinvigorated MIA led by the “Lion of the Mountains”, Chebouti.<sup>150</sup> Those that weren’t willing to take up arms certainly capitalized on the fact that someone had taken up arms against them and applied pressured to start negotiations. As both of these stances were apparent in the dual leadership of the FIS in Ali Belhadj and Abbassi Madani both of who were imprisoned in 1991. They were imprisoned for “threatening state security” where Belhadj certainly was more in favour of rebellion than Madani, it made it harder or easier all with regard to one’s aim at handling the conflict.

### **4.3.2 Contested selectorates**

The opposition’s actions demand answers, some of which will now be provided in the context laid out so far; why did the war turn out so grisly? Since the FIS rebelled something happened to the entire paradigm, effectively their obstinacy changed several things. First of all it created a parallel set of leadership, winning coalition and selectorate. This is true when you take into account that the FIS didn’t lean on any existing state structure, for they were without a doubt ejected thoroughly from it making them the disenfranchised. Therefore what they did was to create their own contest to win, when they couldn’t be a part of the other. As discussed in

---

<sup>149</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 273.

<sup>150</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 60.

“The Logic of Political Survival” the disenfranchised seek to replace one selectorate with another.<sup>151</sup> A point supported by the competition between the insurgents and the ANP in recruiting the youth.<sup>152</sup>

The leadership was as in the army made up of several individuals in a *jema'a*. Two of its members have been mentioned already - Benhadj and Medani - but then there were the leaders not imprisoned. There were leaders abroad in France and the United States creating another winning coalition while the selectorate were *de facto* any member of the FIS and to a certain extent the fighters behind the insurgency at least at the onset. The selectorate theory does not factor this kind of scenario, as it consists of competing paradigms of the same model, the mechanisms working in-between them are therefore partly derived from logic, and partly by extrapolating some key aspects from the theory. As stated in the introduction since the theory is merely used to categorize the different groupings of the conflict and their relation to one another this does not negate or confuse any findings.<sup>153</sup>

Several things happened that made this significantly more complex. Shifting goals and alliances and other actors came to the fore making it even less clear who was aligned with whom. In short any member who aspired to be a decision maker within the FIS – naturally being an islamist – was a part of the selectorate. During the insurgency the commanders of the forces were certainly part of the winning coalition in which they contributed with the ability to muster forces in return for funds gained through the FIS’s extensive networks and connections. What this all amounted to will be addressed in the next subchapter. Before that however there is another case to be made for the actions of the opposition. Here I am pointing to the fact that they wanted back into the “old” system.

The argument rests on the function of the AIS. It states that the logic of the AIS-strategy is to put pressure on the state. There is no intention to aim for a popular uprising, which in fact my thesis neither states.<sup>154</sup> In the instance above with the insurgency amounting to pressure in the

---

<sup>151</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 361-362, 368.

<sup>152</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 79.

<sup>153</sup> The other point one could raise in objection is that the theory is developed and used to explain the behavior of states not loose groupings. It is however possible to use it on any set of groups, as several of the examples mentioned in the book are not in fact actors, they are loose groups of people or organizations like King Leopold and the FIFA.

<sup>154</sup> An objection that could be made is that since it was all about getting the FIS back into the existing system, looking at their tactics like this: The logic of AIS’s strategy was pressure tactics not a popular uprising. Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, 154. The function of the guerrilla movements essentially is that of providing

form of nuisance value it is curious that no moves are made towards people with actual power, there are some moves towards the army but there it is killing of soldiers from their selectorate and not much more.<sup>155</sup> The public discourse captures few imaginations other than the ones already agreeing on the message; the very fact that Chebouti declared himself “national emir” in addition to speaking of higher intentions than merely getting a concession from those governing to allow the FIS into the fold.<sup>156</sup> The reasons behind the declaration and what it entailed will now be addressed.

### 4.3.3 What did this entail?

What the insurgents effectively did was not only accosting the formal winning coalition taking its current status, but also to create a parallel winning coalition, thus making for a competitive market. This is visible when several authors on the subject write of a state within the state. The framework set for this competition holds not only winning political support through votes and favours, but violence is introduced as a means of obtaining or inducing a bigger selectorate. Killing off enough of the opposing winning coalition is a decapitation strategy implied by the state and the insurgents as the conflict unfolds with the goal of removing or crippling the competition.<sup>157</sup> On the parallel dimension of the “real” opposition, meaning the ones that actually acted against the current system and not only sought favour from the current power structure there are several important points supporting this argument. They show not only how the FIS tried to topple the existing power structure with their own structure, but also how other players acted in between the two.

As already mentioned Chebouti declared himself “national emir” which could mean actual prince in the historical “head of state” configuration, or more likely – due to his alliance with the FIS – more like a chief of the armed forces. He did however as Hugh Roberts puts it; “establish an Islamic state” from 1992-1993, so the roles could either be blended, subversive or a direct front of the separate paradigm for the selectorate theory.<sup>158</sup> First the reality might not be as tidy as we would have liked, meaning that the title meant both chief of arms and

---

pressure in the form of nuisance value. (Ibid., 135-36). However this does not make sense when the pressure groups give themselves the above titles and govern as “state” leaders through them.

<sup>155</sup> It could be that the army did such a good job of protecting its high value targets that the insurgents saw the soldiers and (wrongfully) the police as being part of the selectorate which was the second best thing.

<sup>156</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 271.

<sup>157</sup> Decapitation strategy is to disrupt or defeat an enemy by eliminating its military and political leadership.

<sup>158</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 268.

leader. Second that it could be a very real fact that reveals more than a wish to be reintroduced in politics but rather a separate system dictated by an emir outside of Algeria's political traditions. Although he was not the only representative for the FIS, he might have been the figurehead or the national emir in a military sense; there certainly were insurgents that answered more directly to the FIS. They were situated throughout Alger, near the Atlas Mountains south of the capitol. Their area of operations stretched as far east as Lakhdaria in the Bouira province towards Kabyles and covered most of the Mitidja plain that includes the municipalities of Alger, Blida, Tipaza and Boumerdes.<sup>159</sup> In these areas some were subject to an especially brutal tactic on the government's part by being abandoned. This spurred the insurgents to create substitutions for state institutions, and more contested places experienced one government at night and another during the day.<sup>160</sup> In the outer regions that were sparsely populated the population saw less of the insurgency's violent actions and experienced their rule as the only one in a calmer environment.<sup>161</sup> These instances and actions all support my argument in the previous subchapter, saying that the FIS parts fronting the insurgency challenged the entire system and with it fronting an entire new set of selectorate, winning coalition and leadership stemming from a different source of power. This becomes even clearer when the targets of their violence come under scrutiny.

The targets of the AIS via the FIS were state personnel; first and foremost police officers, soldiers and other representatives of what they knew or believed represented the selectorate or winning coalition of the army. To make the competition for places in their own winning coalition more lucrative the logical thing to do would be to give incentive to actors with something to bring to the table be it economical goods, the ability to muster forces or political power to join them instead of the parallel structure. The tactic seems to have been to undermine the leadership and the winning coalition by killing of their members. They attacked the origins of the resources keeping the winning coalition loyal and ruined their support by way of removing their selectorate's security. Attacks like the one at Sidi Moussa one of the first attacks on the regime point to this fact, another indication would be the number of casualties the police incurred by the end of August 1992, in total 70 dead officers.<sup>162</sup> This would be one of many ways to show the selectorate that they were not safe. By attacking government infrastructure - as a large part of industry was governmental not

---

<sup>159</sup> Algérois, the Nord-Constantinois and the Oranie. Ibid., 129.

<sup>160</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 216.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>162</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 268, 255.



only the hydrocarbon sector – they tried to disrupt the money flow. Several factories were sabotaged, and logistical routes disrupted. This has been described as one of their failures in hurting the regime, though the effort put into it showed a clear will impact upon the regime in a fiscal way.

Other than that, the security situation also prompted international actors doing business in Algeria to reconsider their efforts, scaring away foreign skills and foreign money. The attacks on two French surveyors, who were kidnapped and later killed in September 1993 near Sidi Bel Abbes and the killing of two Russian military advisors and three foreign contract workers in SONATRECH's employment a month later certainly points to this as well. This had a negative impact both on the foreign presence and FDI.<sup>163</sup>

The will to sustain losses at the regimes winning coalition's expense should already be apparent with regards to Boudiaf, especially if one accepts that this was indeed done by islamists with connections to the FIS and not through some covert government plot. Although several attacks on the selectorate within the army also show the same will, even officers betrayed their fellow soldiers by allowing islamists into army barracks at night to kill.<sup>164</sup> The state of the army itself amidst the insurgency is a somewhat discussed topic, where Anthony H. Cordesman claims that the army was divided in more than opinion as the instances above could imply.<sup>165</sup> Several others like Roberts, Stone and Quandt make no mention of this or deem the deeds too few or minor to have any analytic weight to imply such a division. The actions nevertheless show a clear will to hurt the selectorate. They robbed them of definite security even amongst their own and the reigning attitude within the FIS that said the war should not be waged against the people made it clear that they differentiated between who were effective targets. This precondition might just as well be a definition of "legitimate" targets, appealing to a sense of right and wrong, and the very reasons for the people being illegitimate targets in a state such as Algiers amounts to the same as effective targets.<sup>166</sup> Some such assassinations and tendencies to kill off the selectorate and the winning coalition

---

<sup>163</sup> SONATRECH (*Société Nationale pour la Recherche, la Production, le Transport, la Transformation, et la Commercialisation des Hydrocarbures s.p.a*) is the government owned company formed to work the Algerian hydrocarbon sector. FDI is an acronym for "foreign direct investment." And it is;" An investment made by a company or entity based in one country, into a company or entity based in another country. Open economies with skilled workforces and good growth prospects tend to attract larger amounts of foreign direct investment than closed, highly regulated economies." Ibid., 283.

<sup>164</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 194.

<sup>165</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 108.

<sup>166</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 170.

were seen from the onset of the insurgency. Just spanning from February 1992 to April 1993, a total of 860 people were killed in ambushes presumed to be carried out by “Islamic extremists” of whom 315 were killed in addition to 170 civilians and the remaining 375 casualties were sustained by the security forces.<sup>167</sup>

These questions of allegiances are important in terms of understanding the violent developments that took place shortly after the coupe. When we see why certain political as well as societal players chose to stick with the one side or the other the results will become easier to understand. We essentially have two stances on each side of the conflict, where one is to fight and the other is not to give up but to sue for negotiations. On both sides we find that the will to fight is the stronger. The reasons behind the allegiances then explain why assassinations, sabotage and strategies of fear and violence were employed on both sides as it became a contest of the selectorates more than anything else. In the following chapter I will try to go into more depth in describing these strategies, how they “complimented” each other and fuelled a continuation of violence ending in “a savage war”.

---

<sup>167</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 191.

# 5 Why the “Let them rot” strategy?

In this chapter I will first put forth a more detailed historical account of the regime forces’ immediate clampdown on the insurgency, where I will present several brutal tactics which were employed against the insurgents and the population at large to apprehend them. In it the “let them rot “ strategy will be described thoroughly. This is followed by a short historical investigation into from where the “eradicator” stance stemmed and a discussion of it. To further clarify the dynamics between the army forces and the insurgents I will address the FIS’s *modus operandi* as a counter balance to the government strategies. This is followed by a discussion of why the army responded in the way first described in the historical account based on that *modus operandi*. I will facilitate the discussion in the selectorate theory framework in which a rationale for it may be found and the success of it addressed. As a final point I discuss the army’s cohesiveness facing the internal challenge. All this serves as good preparation for the darker side of the insurgency which will be addressed in chapter 6.

## 5.1 COIN- Algerian civil war:

The COIN capabilities of Algeria in the early 90’s saw a tremendous challenge coming their way.<sup>168</sup> The Algerian army had some experience in what are called LIC – low intensity conflicts – from Bouyali and MIA’s insurgency in the 1980’s. Still it was an unprepared, uneducated and ill-equipped army that faced an insurgency rising to civil war levels in the matter of a few years. Here I shall try to explain the development of COIN-strategies from an army point of view. The period starts with sporadic and unstructured responses to an unknown and growing threat – other than the obvious solutions to certain problems it is hard to see a thorough going thought process and plan coming from the army. Towards the mid 1990’s there was however a significant improvement both in army methods and in cooperation between civil and military power.

Sources on the specifics of this strategy and the following operations are rare, random and incomplete. The following is therefore Algeria’s COIN based on what my research has allowed me to glimpse, and admittedly not the whole story. Even so there are several facts

---

<sup>168</sup> COIN is short for Counter-insurgency

that tell us much about their reaction at the outset of the insurgency and the following struggle. I will start with a discussion their capacities.

### 5.1.1 Capacities:

Anthony H. Cordesman's main point when writing about Algeria in his book *A Tragedy of Arms* is that the ANP was a force without meaning, adequate training or equipment.<sup>169</sup> There are few encouraging words pertaining to either of these points, the situation was as of 2001 improved when it came both to training and equipment and in the insurgency the army could be said to have found *a meaning* in protecting the interests and personnel of a certain strata in the Algerian society.<sup>170</sup>

First things first, the army was not the organisation behind most of the early fighting.<sup>171</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter the army gained control over the Ministry of Interior which again controlled all national security forces such as the gendarmie – police – and all their specialized units. This immediately became another asset for the military leadership since a state of emergency was declared shortly following the coupe. This force was at the beginning the size of 16 000 men. They were used as anti-terrorist forces both in the desert and the mountain areas. Another group previously under civil command were the GIS (*Groupe d'intervention et de Surveillance*) which had an elite force that became infamous during the course of the civil war, going by the nickname; "Ninjas".<sup>172</sup>

The problem of the army's lack of training would be the same for the police, though they at least had a certain amount of experience in doing what they had trained for, making them of better quality. In addition their day to day business in some ways was better suited to handle the urban challenges with the insurgency. They already had informers and people trained on intelligence gathering such as GIS – trained in Eastern Europe – who knew the urban environment well. Such capabilities would become a huge asset.

In my view, the reason why conventional forces were used to a lesser degree rests on two facts, the first being their inadequate training that had more of a political content resulting in a

---

<sup>169</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 20.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>172</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 248.

hierarchy that rewarded loyalty more than any professional skills.<sup>173</sup> This was such a powerful concern that officers and soldiers alike with any notion of sympathy for the cause of the insurgents were moved to the border stations of Morocco and Libya at one point.<sup>174</sup> The other that the training they actually received was short and conventional in nature. Conventional training has its uses in conventional warfare where it can be quite effective if done correctly, in this sort of LIC environment the training has few advantages. They would be more in the nature of having a ready infrastructure that could consume the correct training to adapt into this new environment so it's more of a potential than an actual advantage. The 18 months an Algerian conscript spent in the army after enlisting consisted of 6 months of military conventional training proceeded by 12 months of civil works in alignment with ANP being the people's army. If and when both the conventional as well as the forces under the ministry of interior were used there was also room for improvement. The command process lacked efficiency due to strict command lines giving officers on the ground little room to manoeuvre in addition to the commands coming from the top having a heavy set of politics involved as well as any military concerns.<sup>175</sup>

A point in the military leadership's direction is the fact that only two years into the insurgency they had seen the need for more specialised competence in their armed forces towards LIC. The academy at Biskra started its training of officers with COIN theory in April 1993, the result of this academy would come later but measures to increase its fighting capacities were taken early on.<sup>176</sup> They also recruited several foreign advisors, though this was done in a more covert manner. There were several listed up with covers and "real" positions working for ANP to help them with this unknown type of conflict. In the book *An Inquiry into the Algerian Massacres* the experience of several of the officers stems from similar conditions fighting insurgents in South Africa which would be valuable advice. The role would previously have fallen to soviet liaisons and advisors but after the fall of the Soviet Union several of Algeria's former liaisons officers and educators left the country and as such created a vacuum that they were not able to fill themselves until Biskra rolled out their first class of officers in 1996.

---

<sup>173</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 20, 152.

<sup>174</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 163.

<sup>175</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 2, 21; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 134.

<sup>176</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 72–73.

## 5.1.2 Geographical:

I will now approach what methods the forces above implemented at the onset of the insurgency and explain how and when they changed and became more focused. Before I get into the specific methodology I will explain how geography played a part in its execution and focus.

At first any commune that FIS had won during the first round of elections was occupied and controlled by security forces – not the army.<sup>177</sup> Algiers the capital was also encircled to keep MIA fighters out creating an iron wall to maintain order after conducting large scale security sweeps in urban areas resulting in mass arrests. This became an overall strategy, concentrating on bigger cities and leaving much of the countryside to fend for itself.<sup>178</sup> This move is one of the reasons why some writers like Luis Martinez point to what he calls the “let rot them rot” strategy which will be discussed at length further on.

Another point that should be made is that the increased focus on the nomenclature and foreign enclaves in the cities received even more specific attention.<sup>179</sup> This fits to a certain degree with the “let them rot” description but it is more specific and more a strengthening of measures taken in small parts of bigger areas that were not to “rot and die”. This could easily be criticized and certainly was both during and after the insurgency. Although the increased security for certain VIP’s certainly is not uncommon in any emergency. However the total lack of security elsewhere certainly makes this harder to defend. My arguments against any critique on this point would be a rational following to what I have already said about capacities. There were few combat-ready soldiers, most security forces and military forces lacked proper training and equipment, and given the huge geographical area Algeria covers it is a clear example of making the best of a bad situation with what you have. Claiming that it “is the best” rests on two things, first that VIP’s are in themselves a high value target which became blatantly clear not too far into the LIC. Because of assassinations and threats more security was needed in accord with their positions. Foreign enclaves are not necessary more exposed to threats (at least they did not know that at the time) but any incidents affecting foreigners bears ramifications on a different scale than any national ever would however

---

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>178</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 293.

<sup>179</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 191.

cynical that may sound. This was and is especially true for Algeria with the need they had for ever more FDI due to and hampering foreign debt.

The final and in some ways most controversial measure they took to gain more geographical control was to “encourage” migrants from the districts to return from whence they came to relieve the pressure on cities in addition to filtering out any insurgents coming in to strengthen cells in the cities. This also makes sense if one considers the election results from the first round combined with the “let them rot” strategy. Rural citizens above all sympathized with the FIS - something that could be established if one looks to the elections results - and as such were probably seen to represent a more potential threat than the average urban dweller.<sup>180</sup>

### **5.1.3 Methodical:**

Wherever the forces made their presence felt they operated mainly in two ways, one way was covert operations resulting in arrests or eliminations and the other was maintaining checkpoints at important road sections in addition to upholding a curfew. The curfew got expanded and prolonged several times during the first years starting with a curfew of the capital before expanding to Algerois (north Algeria).

The police forces adapted to the challenge by adopting the Islamist look, with full beard and Islamist attire. This helped them infiltrate certain circles of sympathizers as well as spread confusion as to who was doing what towards whom.<sup>181</sup> Another strike against any supporters the insurgents had was done by replacing radical imams in addition to a general lockdown on mosques. Police would both visibly and covertly observe who attended Friday sermons, what was said and try and sabotage this point that was the meeting place for radical leanings.<sup>182</sup> They seem to have had some success at this point, though strict paperwork on constructing a mosque had resulted in thousands of informal, or unregistered mosques and prayer rooms being erected all over Algeria in the 1980's, exempting many from being monitored at all. So even if it worked where the measure was implemented it did not cover all of its intended targets. It should be noted that a large number of these illegal prayer rooms that had been

---

<sup>180</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 178.

<sup>181</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 133; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 77.

<sup>182</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 255–256.

tolerated for some time were demolished, but the sheer number of them secured the result above.<sup>183</sup>

The relative strength of the police and their usefulness in fighting the insurgents meant that a great deal of their time and resources went into the fight; this again meant that their regular duties to a large degree were neglected.<sup>184</sup> The thesis that the Algerian people knew violence as a means to gain riches as Luis Martinez upholds rest on those that filled the vacuum left after the police. Several blocks of cities, suburbs and entire regions were left to themselves entirely and there was little or no security being offered from the state. Some lean towards this being a conscious decision from the regime, making security a commodity gained by cooperation and loyalty. The fact that the regime released criminals early on makes for a good argument.<sup>185</sup> There are two counter arguments that could be made against the release of prisoners as an argument for security as a commodity though. It is not clear from my source on this last point what kind of criminals they were. A fact, I find to be an important point here, for if they were islamists arrested during the insurgency in the 80's that had a previous history of being released to appease the forces that now exacted violence in the country it would be a self-destructive argument – though maybe not a smart move on the governments part. The other point refers to the capacities mentioned above. When the immediate threat to the sovereignty and the welfare of the state was insurgents that elevated the level of violence and criminal activity to a peak height and if their the capacities were faulty in the prison sector as well it would make sense to make room for this new more threatening type of criminal. Something both the release of criminals and the establishment of new massive prison camps in the southern parts of the country could support.

Not long after the insurgency started with the assault on the Guemmar border station it was used as a pretext to shut down the FIS on all fronts. Most FIS leaders were isolated or stigmatized in the state media, while more moderate forces within the FIS were helped along the way. From June over 2500 FIS members were arrested and allocated to fresh prison camps in the southern parts of Algeria.<sup>186</sup> The way the police went about gathering intelligence that lead to these arrests and the slander on the leaders they wanted brought down is no secret and

---

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>184</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 67.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>186</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 76.



is supported by an abundance of sources. Torture was the preferred method.<sup>187</sup> Described as “the only way to defeat an invisible enemy” it was utilized to a large extent.<sup>188</sup> When precision and collateral damage were not a concern the success rate of this method was obvious for the army command as they saw thousands arrested, hundreds executed and some broken to such an extent that they swapped sides to all intents and purposes.

Strategies stemming from a French officer Paul Leger who had great success with the same methods during the Algerian Independence war were implemented. The strategy rested on two basic precepts. Firstly, that a turned enemy was more valuable than a dead enemy, and secondly, that everyone could be turned. The security forces had great success with this method, capturing insurgents and breaking them. Thereafter they returned and served as informants.<sup>189</sup> In addition to the focus on gathering as much information as they could on the insurgents, later on especially from 1993 when there were several actors executing the insurgency with different goals, and different methods they manipulated the groups in a “divide and conquer” way. There were not many instances of conquering any group until later on, but some were decimated and became marginalized after a while when an especially violent and powerful group called GIA challenged AIS through several major conflicts with AIS taking the brunt of the losses.<sup>190</sup>

The weakness of this tactic was that the state forces were not the only ones implementing it, both in terms of informants and the proxy warfare in divide and conquer. GIA and AIS executed operations several times that would not have been possible without inside knowledge giving proof for informants within the army off which there was more than one instance of disciplinary action. In addition they used their channels to make government forces fight for them in their own internal rivalries.<sup>191</sup>

As mentioned earlier the importance of controlling the flow of people by regular check points was also - as expected – one of the methods used shortly after the escalation of the insurgency. Entire neighbourhoods were cordoned off, making for more systematic and effective searches leading to arrests of suspects/insurgents by the infamous ninjas. All willing informers operated under great personal risk so during operations they would be veiled so not

---

<sup>187</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 59.

<sup>188</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 216.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>190</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 219.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

to reveal their identities.<sup>192</sup> The policy of isolating and controlling communes was not always followed up with the presence of security personnel within its borders; this resulted in armed bands and lawlessness creating an environment of fear and abandonment - an environment in which fighters leaning towards the methods of GIA rather than MIA ruled. This will be addressed at length in chapter 6.<sup>193</sup>

On a larger scale the security checks with bomb searches were one thing, trees along roadsides were also cut for safer transportation removing possibilities for easy travel and ambush for the insurgents and the railroad between Algiers and Oran was also protected by erecting a security fence.<sup>194</sup> Since any COIN procedure recognises that routine is a predictable advantage for the insurgent, high value targets were encouraged to break any.<sup>195</sup> Though faulty to some degrees in that they left thousands in the hands of brutal insurgents' bordering on nothing more than violent criminals in addition to some degree of double play in that their strategies were also used against them, the security forces had great operational success during the summer months of 1992. The prioritizing of high value targets such as state officials and foreign workers detrimental to the economic survival of the state had a certain rational to it. So did the choice to use torture and compartmentalization of the country and especially cities as they did. If we consider the lack of competence and men with operational value the state had – though of course it is not hard to argue as to who was responsible for the lack of both of the above. The success they had in 1992 was due to good intelligence as well as a realistic approach to which methods and procedures needed to be implemented with regards to the capacities they had at hand.<sup>196</sup>

There was also a more legal effort to support these methods as the government enacted several important laws. All the perpetrators involved in the incident that had provoked the start of the armed insurgency, Guemmar, were sentenced to death, a precedent that would be applied on several insurgents soon after their capture. This became possible because the security personnel were legally strengthened with laws giving them authority to detain any

---

<sup>192</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 188.

<sup>193</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 73.

<sup>194</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 203.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>196</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 271, 291.

suspect without trial. New secret courts were established in which the judge was anonymous and much freer to pass the death penalty on perpetrators as young as 16 years old.<sup>197</sup>

Politically speaking, the authorities were given new powers to close down any institutional basis of the Islamist. As of November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1992 several private enterprises, organisations (like SIT - the FIS's labour union) in addition to several cultural or charitable organisations were shut down as well as a curtailment in citizen's right of association.<sup>198</sup> The APW and APC regional councils were shut down or the power invested in them was transferred to appropriate actors.<sup>199</sup>

The curfew was extended twice, the second time including three more regions, Cheliff, M'Sila and Djelfa in addition to Algiers, showing both willingness and the means to apply this quite serious measure as needed. These measures gave the authorities the means to arrest several suspects and detain them for as long as they wished if they were not executed immediately. To facilitate the bulging new pressure on the prison institutions detention centres were erected in parts of the Sahara desert housing as many as 30 000 by FIS estimates or a somewhat smaller but dubious official number of 5000 inmates.<sup>200</sup>

## 5.2 What were the origins of the hard-line stance?

Before we explore what was done, let us take one step back and see if we can identify any origins to the particular sentiments held in the leadership. One thought on the origins of the dramatic hardliner stance would be that the previous experiences of the regime from the 1980's – with Bouyali's insurgency – had promoted the voices in the army leadership that in times without insurgency were not as needed and thus weaker. They maintained their positions when the situation escalated into a coup, and then again when it turned violent. Regardless of why certain opinions were promoted during President Chadli's presidency, the question of the selectorate became the determining variable for the Algerian civil war.

The so called hard-line stance or the group called the “eradicators” is in what Hugh Roberts claims to be a French analytic approach to the situation in Algeria, one of two sides. The other

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 261, 291–293; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 78.

<sup>198</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 293.

<sup>199</sup> APW and APC were official regional governance councils in the municipalities won by the FIS.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 256.

one the “negotiators” creates a dichotomous view of the conflict, neat and easy to grasp. Though the situation to any well-versed reader appears to be far from it, still the name of this group still communicates something, not least the policy of those in power; with control of all state forces indeed saw it as their own job to liquidate all insurgents. They tried to do just that through a strategy that’s been coined “let them rot” by Luis Martinez, in which a troubled area is bereft of any security and any state sponsorship or governance whatsoever. What lies behind the “let them rot” strategy was that it not only held for the islamist insurgents but “liquidation” of all islamists – within the army’s understanding of the term - likening it to genocide.<sup>201</sup> This is reinforced by the fact that they seemed to go to any length ensuring this, fighting what was called an “invisible” enemy with torture, unlawful arrests, etc. making security a commodity that only certain people could afford.<sup>202</sup>

However, the way they went about the strategy is certainly more confusing, as there seems to be a half-hearted effort to it. This gives rise to speculations of what the conflict really was all about. It seems they wanted to at least confine the situation to tolerable proportions rather than actually resolving it altogether. This could be a manifestation of what is suggested in the selectorate theory, where it is stated that autocratic leaders do not rely upon military victory to the same extent as democratic leaders. This however is only true so long as they have enough private goods for their supporters.<sup>203</sup> I want to make it clear that there was no quarter given in the conflict, and that the population at large was unimportant in this fight.<sup>204</sup> There will be more on the logic of this in chapter 5.3.1 for now we will look more into the “eradicators” themselves.<sup>205</sup>

These “eradicators” or “*Les eradicateurs*” were voices in the leadership that held on to their secular values and egocentric methods which they carried with them from their military education in France, both with regards to a secular lifestyle and their preferred military method of keeping it. Prominent among them were the key officers promoted to commanding positions in the ANP from 1988 and onwards. Among them were Major-General Mohamed Lamari who became Chief of Staff in 1993, Gendarmerie Chief Major-General Benabbas Selim Saadi in addition to the French educated wing of the political class; Prime Minister

---

<sup>201</sup> The “liquidation of all islamists” was said by one General in the hardliner camp. Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 312.

<sup>202</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 137; Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 216.

<sup>203</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 236–238.

<sup>204</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 92. Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 70.

<sup>205</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 270.

Redha Malek (1993-1994), Ali Haroun a HCE member (1993-1995) and Aboubakr Belkaid who was served in a multitude of ministerial posts from 1987 to 1992.<sup>206</sup>

The circumstances that lead to this hard-line stance and the positioning of these particularly opinionated individuals as leaders are complex and many. Some are worth highlighting in order to get a better understanding of the development. First of those is the persistent presence of islamist insurgency all the way from 1963 till the insurgency in 1990's functioning as a constant threat to the governments. The size and effects of the insurgency in the 60's and the 80's were not as encompassing as the insurgency during the civil war, but the fact that it kept reappearing could have prompted a "final solution".<sup>207</sup> The army's encounter with Bouyali the former leader of the MIA was especially frustrating as he rendered the security forces helpless with the help he got from the locals until a harsher method was applied.<sup>208</sup> This concluded the insurgency and most likely set a precedent for the oncoming civil war. What certainly reinforced the view on the conflict was the legitimacy or the presumed loyalty from the vast electorate gained by the islamists in the elections. As this also would have given them room for support even within the army's own ranks, it also increased their strength and numbers in what was always perceived as a zero-sum game.<sup>209</sup>

The French military education of the promoted leaders also came with a French understanding - or at least an attempt at or interpretation - of French COIN (Counter insurgency). This entailed a similar approach to the insurgency to that which the French applied during the war of independence in the 1950's. An example often used to make this vividly clear is the utilization of the same villa for torture as the French applied during the independence war.<sup>210</sup> However, this final argument is somewhat dubious if one looks at the resources available though. The method and approach has more to it than a French military education in the top echelons of the Algerian army applying the same strategies that lost Algeria for the French - something I will argue extensively for at a later stage. It is worth mentioning though, and the education could at least explain the rise of the officers to their respective positions as they were a counter pole to the opinions of the islamists and thus seen within the leadership and the winning coalition a reassurance facing the threats lined up in chapter four. Before we delve further into the army's method it is enlightening to look at the insurgents' methods first,

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 155, 156.

<sup>207</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 49.

<sup>208</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 24.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 231; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 247.

<sup>210</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 313.

since they had the initiative rendering the armies response to just that, a response to something of which we will now consider.

### **5.3 How did the FIS go about making their coalition the *winning* coalition?**

FIS sought favour, and support with the promise of a new reality that consisted of a larger electorate, in some ways using the same strategy as Lincoln did with the emancipation of the slaves but without the economic aspect to it. The sitting regime on the other hand was not interested in expanding its electorate as it clearly stated with the coupe. However this restricted their ways of appeal; therefore one can see the harsh and brutal clampdown as nothing but a natural course of action having made these choices. The FIS knew this, and it also knew that the regime favoured a prolonged situation that would thin out their strongest asset; the positive promise of a big electorate fading away when the electorate was forced to pay a huge price for it by experiencing the conditions of a harsh insurgency and lack of governorship for an extended period of time. The FIS knew that time was working against them and so that the strength ratio only was on their side during a very short window, so from the onset they were always open for negotiation.<sup>211</sup> The fact that conscious or not the insurgents applied both the major points of Guevara and Marighella in their insurgency made them very effective.<sup>212</sup>

First of all it is assumed in this subchapter that the FIS through MIA in fact wanted to do more than just exert pressure on the power holders, as argued earlier with the establishment of Caliphates and titles of “Emir” and “President” and in building new institutions parallel to the existing ones.<sup>213</sup> Before the coupe in 1992 the islamists had not been in the position they were now in, with a legitimate claim to govern and a large electorate to lean upon. Before the coup the situation had been what Guevara in insurgency method initially claimed were bad conditions for a “revolution”;

---

<sup>211</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, 1 edition (Westport, Conn. u.a.: Praeger, 2006); Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, James D. Morrow, et al., *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2004), 236.

<sup>212</sup> Carlos Marighella (1911-1969) was a Brazilian revolutionary and urban warfare theorist, Erenesto “Che” Guevara (1928-1967) was an Argentinian guerilla leader and military theorist.

<sup>213</sup> Ref. chap 3.1

*“Guevara, initially however, would concede that not all the conditions for a revolution could be created though the methods of guerrilla activities alone: “Where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or no, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak cannot be promoted, since the possibilities for peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted”.*<sup>214</sup>

Following the coupe the break in the constitutional legality of the regime if not apparent was doubtful in the least, and even Guevara expanded on the previous quote three years later saying that one might still be able to create a successful revolution “simply by causing the government to overreact to the insurgency”.<sup>215</sup> If the insurgents read Guevara or if they didn’t what they achieved was nonetheless an “overreaction” from the government. Although the overreaction had a certain logic to it, it was executed in such a way that it did not benefit the insurgents to the extent Guevara would have it. The outcome he aimed at was a population so aggravated that it would throw in its lot in with the insurgents, giving them enough agency to topple the regime by way of a mass revolt much in the same way as Carlos Marighella argued:

*“[It would be] necessary to turn political crises into armed conflicts by performing violent actions that will force those in power to transform the political situation of the country into a military situation. That will alienate the masses who, from then on, will revolt against the army and police and thus blame them of the state of things.”*<sup>216</sup>

In Algeria on the other hand what happened in this regard was closer to what intelligence expert Christopher Ford claimed was a premise for insurgency victory, namely a neutral population.<sup>217</sup> This did not lead to the certain victory of the insurgents, but it certainly gave them some headway. The population at large was not unaware of the regime’s overreaction, nor was it unaware of the legitimacy of the insurgents and the promise of an expansion of the selectorate should the FIS win. The disenfranchised on the other hand as suggested in the selectorate theory remain safer if they remain passive, something that could explain parts of

---

<sup>214</sup> J. Thomas Moriarty, “The Vanguard’s Dilemma: Understanding and Exploiting Insurgent Strategies,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (September 2010): 481, doi:10.1080/09592318.2010.505479.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 484.

<sup>216</sup> Ian Beckett, ed., *Modern Counter-Insurgency* (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub Co, 2007), 176.

<sup>217</sup> Christopher Ford is best known for being a senior US state department official in the George W. Bush administration. He has written extensively on COIN. Moriarty, “The Vanguard’s Dilemma,” 484; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, n. 92.

the lacking “mass revolution”.<sup>218</sup> This boils down to a risk assessment, in that the disenfranchised and potential selectorate members face oppression or even death if the insurgency persists or fails counter to the unlikelihood that it might actually succeed. So even if there were incentives prompting several of the former disenfranchised to cooperate with the FIS, it did not amount to a mass movement that won the day because passivity was safer. This could have been a result of the conditions during the Algerian civil war, where the proliferation of insurgency groups with diverging goals and methods created an environment where support was not given but taken and every actor in the carnage was an unpredictable and potentially dangerous enemy. This was by no means the well thought-through strategy of the MIA, but rather the result of several of the government’s desperate responses to the insurgency. The stakes made them desperate.

They did not do as Guevara had done in his last endeavour, that is to run to the hills believing in extending the momentum and a slow build up (and sit it out until they were caught). They did this with Chebouti but also followed patterns that are close to what is called the “Foco theory”, concentrating on urban areas. This pressured the security forces everywhere, making them the “invisible enemy” that *had* to be fought with torture.<sup>219</sup> From the rural areas they gathered support where the government had abandoned them; in addition they hampered the logistics of both government industries and private enterprises. In the cities they tried to rob the selectorate and the winning coalition of their security. Their winning coalition would then benefit from these measures by way of stepping in where the government could not or would not. They would facilitate the security of private enterprises; they would govern as best they could where there were troubles. The islamists’ would eventually have their winning coalition by victory over the government’s winning coalition which they tried to undermine with the measures above.

## 5.4 How did the army respond in force and why?

Although the army did not want this development, it set out to crush it from the onset with a very brutal stance – no negotiation. This was done because the army could not afford to expand the selectorate which any negotiation would arrive at. As the army knew that any

---

<sup>218</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 369.

<sup>219</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla Warfare: A Historical and Critical Study* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 345.



negotiations would negate their favoured positions as the fulcrum of power in Algeria, their own political survival was prioritized as fighting had no clear downside for the *jema'a*.<sup>220</sup> So it was completely natural for it to act the way it did, protecting its own selectorate and resources physically and politically by holding on to the same size with the same amount of private goods in return for power. This, in my view, was the first inevitable mistake made by the government however, as will be shown later on. The army did in fact rescind to a certain degree on the selectorate's size something that will be addressed in chapter 9.

The way the army set about making sure their winning coalition and thereby that it would stay in power rested on three separate goals. First the army had to protect its selectorate physically; second protect its resources and lastly to protect the members of the winning coalition. As long as all these chips were in place nothing could disrupt their position. Now as shown above, the insurgents attacked all three of them, threatening the security of the selectorate and members of the winning coalition and seeking to hurt the resource pool by attacking infrastructure and government businesses. The definite military tactics are neither published nor thoroughly explained in any English literature on the topic, but from certain instances and facts it is possible to construct an analysis that points to important elements in the combined military and civil actions of the army. They did however state that they would (in a very poor translation of which the original text cannot be found online):

*"As for the terrorist crimes and the subversive actions from which the countries and the population suffer daily, it is clear that in fact there plagues can ,in no form, have right of city under the banner of the algerian State. ....will continue to deliver to them, whatever the price, the combat which they deserve to restore safety, stability and peace, for the safeguard of a republican, democratic, pluralist State guaranteeing the fundamental values ..."Decided to fight the crime and the criminals, the NPA[ANP] " gets busy since the crisis which the country saw, to defend the institutions of the State and to give by more consistency to the principle of the exercise of popular sovereignty within the framework of an authentic democracy " will declare the general of the armed corps, Mr.Mohamed Lamari, chief of staff of the NPA. "*<sup>221</sup>

How the army protected its selectorate as has been defined here as; officers - and soldiers as potential members of the selectorate, exiled politicians and officers, politicians and

---

<sup>220</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 249.

<sup>221</sup> "ANP's History," Official site, *Ministry of National Defence*, (August 11, 2014), 7, [http://www.mdn.dz/site\\_principal/index.php?L=an](http://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/index.php?L=an).

organization leaders with similar values and loyalties was through several means. First it focused its capacities on protecting the selectorate, areas where they lived at the expense of populace in general.<sup>222</sup> Where they protected the selectorate the army enforced a curfew and later expanded it several times both due to better capacities and due to the increased threat. It also policed the radical mosque to better keep control of the masses and the recruitment of them.<sup>223</sup> It also removed thousands of instigators or sympathizers to detention centers located in the Sahara far away from any areas populated by its selectorate, thereby decreasing the immediate threat level. In the army any officer or soldier known to have sympathy for the insurgents' cause were displaced near to the borders of Libya or Morocco.<sup>224</sup> With the same sentiment in mind, to maintain a cohesive selectorate, a crackdown on any teachers sympathizing with armed groups following the first HCE meeting. The unlawful arrests were maintained in special anti-terrorists courts that several magistrates criticized as unlawful. This resulted in the suspension of magistrates not a revision of the method as "whatever the price" apparently was the winning argument.<sup>225</sup>

One of the army's more successful operations that certainly weakened the insurgents in the beginning was an operation executed towards an insurgency meeting in Tamesguida. The different groupings of Islamists that had spawned through the first few years conveyed to make alliances and better cooperation, this meeting was disrupted by security forces who also killed several prominent leaders from multiple groups, removing trust and will for any cooperation among them.<sup>226</sup> This was part of something called the "Turkish technique" the oriental version of the divide and conquer strategy. By causing a division between the groups they sought to make them fragment and fight each other, Luis Martinez goes as far as saying that, "The regime hoped to induce the AIS to surrender by causing it to lose its base of support as a result of the impact of GIA (*Groupe Islamique Armé*) violence".<sup>227</sup> Now these other groups and the part they played will be put into context, but first we must address the two other points the government had to address, resources and the protection of their winning coalition but before we do the price for this strategy should be highlighted. As Jerome T. Moriarty correctly asserts in his article on the subject of army tactics during a civil war:

---

<sup>222</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 150.

<sup>223</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 255–266; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 247.

<sup>224</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 261. Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 163.

<sup>225</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 200.

<sup>226</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 272.

<sup>227</sup> There is no source to government strategy backing up this claim in his book. He came to it on his own though through a sound reasoning - but could be false. GIA will be addressed further in the next chapter.

*“A government can get away with being passive to insurgent attacks in rural areas given the lack of mass media coverage, however, in cities they are forced to respond... In short, the government beat the insurgents at their own game by becoming overly aggressive to the point where the vanguards could not survive. While this overly aggressive method has proven successful at defeating urban-foci insurgencies, several problems arise from utilizing it. First, while the government is able to defeat the insurgents, the extreme and complete disregard for human rights further accelerates, or in some cases, creates the loss of legitimacy for the government. In time, this loss of legitimacy and increased public disenfranchisement for the government creates new and possibly even stronger insurgencies in the future. Thus, this approach might gain a tactical victory for the government, but strategically it is counter-productive. And second, there are the obvious ethical and moral considerations.”<sup>228</sup>*

What he criticizes with the method is its temporary effect and the moral cost of executing it. As discussed, so long as the selectorate and the winning coalition are made happy by way of private goods the moral dimension of it becomes irrelevant in that they solely are trying to obtain what they want, this will be addressed in length in a later chapter. Here I wish to note that he is correct in that an enormous price was paid for the relative success of the army, by violations of human rights comprised of torture, random arrests with undue process and no concern for collateral damage, but the important thing is that it wasn't paid by the army's selectorate, rather it was paid by the FIS's selectorate.<sup>229</sup>

These measures surely went a long way in protecting the members of the winning coalition, but for those more measures were taken. Sidi Fredj, a seaside resort west of Algiers became the secure haven for politicians and senior civil servants. It was heavily guarded by the army who also protected itself by letting the lowest ranking members or the internal security forces and later on the militias take the brunt of the attacks.<sup>230</sup> Now this was not always successful as several members of even the HCE were assassinated, Boudiaf for one as already discussed. Ladi Flici and Hafid Senhadri members of the HCE were also killed in March 1993 and the Defence Minister, Major-General Khaled Nezzar was close to dying twice by insurgency hands.<sup>231</sup> The failure in some instances is most likely a result of the character and operation

---

<sup>228</sup> Moriarty, “The Vanguard's Dilemma,” 490.

<sup>229</sup> Reports of counter-insurgency forces firing with RPG's in close quarter combat with insurgents among civilians serves as one example on collateral damage. Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 216; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 64.

<sup>230</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 192, 131; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 151.

<sup>231</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 192; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 136.

patterns of the two sides, leaving an inevitable outcome to a certain degree. The insurgents that were part of the “Foco-insurgency” in urban areas weren’t out in the open and as such were unpredictable and demanded heavy intelligence to keep track of. As a position of defence often is static, the position of attack will always be the dynamic and more challenging to handle and it will apparently look successful even if they only succeed once.

Protecting its resources however, was a less daunting task. As they got the huge aid-relief from France and the western consortium they had an economical buffer, in addition Prime Minister Belaid declared a “war economy” as early as 1992. This is beside the fact that they always knew that the hydrocarbon sector was the most vital part. To ensure its safety they established four restricted zones surrounding the oil fields in the Sahara though not before April 1995.<sup>232</sup> This may have been due to the fact that the insurgents didn’t seem to understand the importance of this sector, rather attacking the cement factories and other governmental industries. That could be one explanation or it could be that the insurgents indeed saw the importance of sector and therefore were afraid or unwilling to destroy and disrupt too much of it for its own future prospects. The few times the hydrocarbon sector was attacked it was foreign personnel that were killed or it was minor disruptions that did not hamper production.

#### **5.4.1 Was there a logical rationale behind the tactics deployed by the army?**

The army started to train officers who could more effectively fight the insurgency later on in an early stage. They recruited officers from abroad to fill the missing Soviet-officers role as military liaisons in the struggle. They also recognized their own incompetence, lack of experience and the tough battle ahead, making tough choices which resulted in what Luis Martinez calls the “let them rot” strategy. This had had two purposes, giving the army breathing space as they could concentrate their capacity on battles that could be won or areas that could be controlled with higher certainty. This had the added benefit of making the populace (the selectorate of the FIS) in these areas see how it “would” be under Islamist rule (which they probably knew would be bad due to the strain and pressure the fight caused) which worked against the Islamists (AIS/FIS) best argument – namely a larger selectorate.

---

<sup>232</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 249, 265.

This interpretation speaks in favour of Anthony H. Cordesman view on the part that the massacres from President Zerouals time and onwards were on the army's part; "to be more sins of neglect than sins of commission. ...the army may have tolerated violence where it finds it politically useful, but it is not clear that it actually encouraged it."<sup>233</sup> The neglect or toleration may have been part due to it being political useful, or as will be addressed now it could simply be a matter of capacity.

As alluded to earlier the Algerian army was not a very proficient one, the military analyst Anthony H. Cordesman goes as far as calling parts of the army; "clumsy and ineffective".<sup>234</sup> The very purpose of the army has been questionable to say the least. It has been a people's army, something the mandatory service shows clearly when two thirds of the time serving there is spent working on civil works projects rather than acquiring any combat skills. The previous insurgency experiences that were dealt with happened on a much smaller scale, and as such did not touch upon the army's overall fighting capacities, in addition at the time the army still had foreign liaison officers who offered expertise on the insurgency issues and with regards to equipment, maintenance and keeping the skills up to date.<sup>235</sup> These officers were for the most part from the Soviet Union, and as such disappeared at the onset of the insurgency since it coalesced with the fall of the Soviet Union.

These two factors, poor training and poor equipment capacity are without a doubt, key factors for the handling of the insurgency. The *jema'a* of officers at the top no doubt knew in what condition the army was, something that the hiring of new foreign experts from South Africa to fill the gap the Soviet's left attests to.<sup>236</sup> The initiative to train and educate a new class of senior military leaders with a specialization in COIN to better fight the insurgency points to the same thing, amending a lack in capacities.<sup>237</sup> The importance of these two factors rests on the ability to fight. The insurgency were not proficient in every aspect either, but again the nature of insurgency demands much more of the counter-insurgents part than the attacking insurgent's part.<sup>238</sup> The insurgents no doubt benefitted from experts in the field who fought the soviets in Afghanistan, these the so called "Afghans" returned from 1988 and onwards. This meant that the insurgency that spread out all over the greater Algeria, from the east in

---

<sup>233</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 127.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>236</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 498.

<sup>237</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 72–73, 156.

<sup>238</sup> Calula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 3.

Batna to the west in Relizane was hard to contain. More importantly, the army existed more to serve itself than the people. The lack of fighting strength and knowledge of this in combination with the small selectorate and winning coalition it made perfect sense to shrink the operational areas in the general strategies. There were of course operations, check points and fighting in larger areas than some few select selectorate areas but this was not the overall strategy and entered the theater at a later stage, when the selectorate in fact had expanded somewhat.

The premise here is that the army had a poor fighting capacity to fight and that it was more self-interested than anything else. In literature on the civil war, that is not written from a military point of view it may appear that there is some disagreement on this. Evans and Philips write in their book *Anger of the Dispossessed* on the subject that the army had a lot of early success, while Anthony H. Cordman writes the opposite.<sup>239</sup> I think these diverging analysis' rest on the simple point I am trying to make here, that if you accept that a few in what I call the selectorate and winning coalition were important and not the population at large, then yes the army was effective. On the other hand, if one wishes to have a more subjective view of the situation in which certain values, procedures and such must be taken into an overall account than the army failed horribly at protecting the population at large, booth from the insurgents and themselves.

It is these failures that lead Luis Martinez to coin the "Let Them Rot" method of operation. He describes it as a situation in which areas with insurgents are isolated, and then the abandoning of the local population into what is a less fortunate position of being terrorized. This is done to dissuade them from supporting the insurgency.<sup>240</sup> As they were not a part of the insurgency, and a minimal part of the resource flow – since income taxation was more or less non-existent in Algeria - they were dispensable at no political or fiscal cost to the regime.<sup>241</sup> With that in mind, the terrorizing is the most cost efficient short term way of dissuading the local populace from supporting the insurgency. In a country where one for example has democracy and the populace is a part of the selectorate the way one would approach the matter is entirely different.<sup>242</sup> Through investing in the area, with good policing, friendly minded soldiers, government programs for improving the situations, but these are all

---

<sup>239</sup> The success obviously depends on what criteria you have for calling it so, militarily based on capacities and strategic objectives it was a success. Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 184.

<sup>240</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 22.

<sup>241</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, Morrow, et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*, 70, 238, 249, 362.

<sup>242</sup> Calula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*.

more costly and in the selectorate theory a waste of resources especially when the population does not contribute with tax money. The example of King Leopold II serves as a great example of this mechanism in play, as he was considered a progressive and popular king in Belgium whereas in Congo he governed in a way that only enriched himself and brought absolute misery to the natives.<sup>243</sup> Algeria was to some extent in the same situation, only it is vastly more complex to see it.

So when analysts of the situation write that “The inability or unwillingness of the state to provide basic security was shocking” it is correct that they were unwilling to provide security as public goods. It is correct in there being no direct incentive to do so.<sup>244</sup> The shocking part of it would be for the analyst who fails to see the lack of it and makes a moral judgment call. Or if one takes into account not the position of the power holder but rather the ones without power or the disenfranchised with other rules governing them in the selectorate theory, because in Algeria for the army this made perfect sense. The terror is a simpler, less resource demanding and a less costly political way of coercing the population towards creating a hostile environment for the insurgents contrary to reform and community build up as described in conventional COIN-theory.<sup>245</sup>

In the rationalization of the “tactics” chosen to fight of the insurgency, one could emphasize the desire not to be formally dependable on the west. As Løchstøer mentions that austerity programs and foreign aid were accepted only when in very dire straits.<sup>246</sup> So the protecting of resources, foreigners and the winning coalition in safe areas it could also be seen as a very rational thing to do when one wanted desperately to attract FDI due to the unfruitful oil industry. The neglect of the population that did not produce much for the regime or their selectorates benefit could then be seen more as a moral evil they were willing to accept.

## 5.5 Retaining the divide in two parts

There was always an imminent danger of division, both within the army and politically among the former major players. So when the state of emergency was provided all forces

---

<sup>243</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, Morrow, et al., *The Logic of Political Survival*, 208-212.

<sup>244</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 75.

<sup>245</sup> Conventional COIN is less agreed upon than one should like, there is a lot of discussion on the subject. What is agreed on is that it indeed is about winning the hearts and minds and at the same time providing absolute security. How to do the one and the other however is still in the making.

<sup>246</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 202.

controlled by the Ministry of Interior came under the leadership of the army, boosting their capacity to muster troops and their hold on power as there were no other fighting forces other than the Islamist insurgents that could threaten them. This was a major political and military victory for the army, one that ensured that all opposing voices from the former winning coalition and the current had little de facto agency.

In the military and angle of Cordesman's writing he perceives the civil war to have divided the army to the point that it could be called a civil war. He also traces this and the method used by the army all the way back to the independence war and the divide between the officers who fought alongside the French before swapping sides and those who fought against the French from the start of the independence war.<sup>247</sup> His book covers a lot of ground both thematically and literary, this could be the reason for his somewhat unique perspective of the divide within the army. There was some difference of opinion among the officers, but it was not expressed as he claims, in a divided army fighting each other. There was a legitimate concern that there would be desertion, but there was not any noticeable numbers swapping sides, neither was the disagreement between the French wing within the army's top echelons and the more localized wing expressed in any proven violent way.<sup>248</sup> The few events that happened were rare; since loyalty was given a higher priority than capability within the army it ensured some degree of safety. The individuals in ANP that showed sympathy for the Islamists cause were also moved out of the apex of the insurgency near the Mitidja plain, to border stations with Libya and Morocco.<sup>249</sup> In the instances where soldiers did aid the insurgents it was more on an individual level by their own initiative or in small groups that in any event didn't signify a mass desertion to the cause of the insurgency.<sup>250</sup>

The next thing the army did was to ensure there would be no other actors drawing resources or power from state institutions in declaring a state of emergency. This automatically put all forces controlled by the Ministry of Interior under army command. This was done as early as February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1992.<sup>251</sup> They effectively removed the control of all police forces and other civilian security forces from possible political opposition which in the end was stripped away with the establishment of the HCE. This also bolstered their fighting capabilities with security

---

<sup>247</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 108.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 20; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 247.

<sup>249</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 163.

<sup>250</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 194.

<sup>251</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 247.



forces that had actual experience on a broader scale than the army who had not done much fighting. The entire method and purpose of the police force was nonetheless soon altered.<sup>252</sup>

We have seen the development of tactics on both sides of the conflict; I have discussed their meaning and a possible way in which they interacted. As I uphold in this chapter the main finding is that due to the criteria for belonging in a selectorate whether the army's or the insurgents the possibility to sway or coerce enough of the others selectorate away from their winning coalition would strip them of support. This was the main goal for both sides, discouraging, coercing, simply cutting away at the winning coalition and to frighten off the selectorate from supporting the opposing side. As these were the root backers of both structures it seems to have been the main point in a rationale that had them attacking each other's selectorates. This is clear from the way the army treated the population at large in the "let them rot" strategy in which they only took care of their own selectorate and left the rest to fend for themselves in a volatile environment. Whereas the insurgents on the other hand actively tried to kill of the army's winning coalition and discourage their selectortorate through assassinations, random violence, sabotage and bombs. Why this tactic failed and the government's tactic to a large extent worked to achieve their goals is a complex question of which one part will be answered in the following chapter addressing the "wild card" - briefly introduced in this chapter as GIA who made being abandoned by the government a wretched thing.

---

<sup>252</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 154, 167; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 290; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 153.

## 6 The Wild Card, how it came to be and what part it played

As soon as the insurgency commenced there was only one coherent organized group in AIS who had a large support network around them with the FIS and their sympathizers. After a couple of months however, several of these sympathizers and other groups with inclinations similar to the FIS started their own insurgency. The effect or cause spread virally. In Tamesguida in 1993 an effort was made to join forces, to forge an alliance between the larger groups and to formally unite them under Chebouti. GIA was part of this initiative and Allal Mohammed one GIA leader had sworn beforehand that he would indeed give up overall command to Chebouti. The Algerian state intelligence forces, GIS however had managed to pick up on the initiative to the extent that they could attack the meeting of all top insurgent leaders in force.<sup>253</sup> This sowed distrust and ruined all planned cooperation between the different groups, the government forces even managed to destroy a couple entirely from that one attack. So with no apparent loyalties among themselves most groups found themselves fending for their own, often in cordoned off areas where the government as mentioned in the previous chapter had withdrawn.

In this Chapter we will address the effects this had, one effect in particular in that it made room for GIA. First off I will address the early years and start up of GIA, I will then juxtapose them up against AIS to point to several apparent differences in ideology and hence in method. The difference in ideology affects their view on who comprises their own selectorate and who comprises their enemies selectorate, winning coalition and leadership which again results in a different method if one applies the theory here. As this is so, I will try and fit GIA into the theory.

To serve as an example we will look at the assassination of Boudiaf, to further point to the ambiguity of GIA, “the wild card”. I have named it so as the GIA in many instances seems to have executed actions that in the end may have served a purpose on the government’s part, both this assassination and not the least the turf wars that developed and escalated from 1994 and onwards between GIA and AIS.<sup>1</sup> The importance of Tamesguida in this result will be

---

<sup>253</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 281.

addressed as I shall try to make it clear how GIA worked as a catalyst in the descent into a savage war.

## 6.1 What were the consequences of the “Let them rot” strategy?

The strategy of isolation or “let them rot” and government withdrawal favoured a group or groupings known as GIA (*Groupe Islamique Armé*). They were a somewhat cohesive group, with wide networks abroad and within Algeria funnelling resources to help their cause. The frustrated youths that had experienced the government response in the October riots, and experienced a harsh socioeconomic environment in addition to a total government withdrawal in several areas made for easy recruits.<sup>254</sup> GIA as an entity was first mentioned in the Algerian press in September 1993, before that many among them were those called the “Afghans”. One of the first leaders, Abdalhak Layda, was an Afghan veteran.<sup>255</sup> The nature of the GIA and the way they worked made it even harder for the population to cooperate with the police when they sought to clamp down on them. This may seem a bit contradictory to the isolation strategy, but the rationale here would be that these groupings worked out of the areas abandoned by the government, not only within them. The actions they carried out in other urban areas like assassinations and sabotages meant that they were a threat to the army’s selectorate and their resources; therefore the cooperation of the local populace would have been valuable to the counter-insurgency forces. They did not manage this to any large extent as the armed bands removed any possibility for collaborating with the security forces through fear and violence.<sup>256</sup>

There were several differences between GIA and the AIS. First and foremost was the perspective on the people. While the AIS thought that the war should not be waged against the people, the GIA held that terror was the only way to induce the people to collaborate.<sup>257</sup> And after the early attempts by the insurgents to cooperate and make a common stand at Tamesguida failed, these differences increased to the point where they were fighting each other. GIA established its own Caliphate, with its own government which the FIS explicitly

---

<sup>254</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 78.

<sup>255</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 187.

<sup>256</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 113.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

condemned and distanced itself from due to their methods. Those methods included killing foreigners, journalists and the extended family of government officials; this in combination with the way in which GIA also sought to coerce people into their interpretation of Islam pitted most other islamist insurgents against them.<sup>258</sup> None of this happened over night though, the development of GIA's "ideology" or lack of one some might say, escalated over time – starting with the radical ideologue Omar El-Eulmi.<sup>259</sup>

The difference in ideology and thereby method can also be traced back to the two different strains of Algerian islamisme, the FIS and AIS came from a long tradition called the *djazarists* in Algeria. These were as briefly touched upon nationally oriented islamists that lacked the global, or at least "umma" orientation of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, but in other respects were similar in ideology. The GIA stemmed from another direction, with a tradition for violent jihad that had global reach and a heavy influence from the campaign in Afghanistan. The difference in method and ideology made for a difference in the approach towards a selectorate. Since the FIS saw the people as the source of power in practical terms at least, they sought to include them in their selectorate and thereby increase its size making it lucrative for the common citizen to support them in their fight. GIA on the other hand were from the salafi tradition that does not recognizing the very conception of a modern nation state or its borders at all.<sup>260</sup>

The results on the two points - violence and area of operation- were that some *djazarists* would agree on violence against the regime, but not all. The GIA also seem broken apart, though not necessarily along the same lines. Rather they had no issues with violence and seems to have a more relative stance when it came to the geographical location of the fight.<sup>261</sup> They were not internationally focused or at least not regionally until years later, foreshadowed with the airliner hijacking in December 1994.<sup>262</sup> But the *djazarist* were a nationalist-Islamism phenomenon that was foremost concerned with Algeria. GIA were more global in the sense explained above.

---

<sup>258</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 260; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 269; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 188.

<sup>259</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 285.

<sup>260</sup> As the salafis in general wish to remake the past glories of what they perceive to be the "correct" Islam, the modern notion of statehood is often an example of "false bias" in that the "umma" predates what we now identify with it. Though the salafi ideology certainly can be many things, the actions done by GIA during the civil war and after with a splinter group called GSPC at least hints at a less fixed local focus.

<sup>261</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 287.

<sup>262</sup> Alan Riding, "Hijacked Airliner Forced to France," *The New York Times*, December 26, 1994, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/26/world/hijacked-airliner-forced-to-france.html>.

So it can be said that the difference between these two main factions appear on two fronts that on some subjects overlap. The *djazarist* faction would be inclined to follow constitutional elections and seeing violence as a last resort against tyranny. While the GIA would not accept power coming from any other than God, therefore they denied all ideas of elections and the pretence of legitimacy and power from the people.

The other distinct characteristic of the GIA was the criminal architecture of its fundraising. Extending beyond being violent through fighting the regime, they carried out bank robberies, dealt in drugs, hijackings, racketeering, and even outsourced missions to regular criminals.<sup>263</sup> This was off course all part of their need for resources, but the organized crime certainly set them apart from any hallow endeavour to exert the will of God. The FIS handled it differently, though some racketeering and fake roadblocks demanding “taxes” certainly took place it was a different approach. When the selectorate is big, and a source of income for the leadership as it was with the FIS and AIS they also expect something in return. Bouyali certainly had made use of criminal gangs and networks in his fight during the 1980’s but it was in no way on the same scale or executed in the same manner or for the same purpose, rather to offer a more covert logistical apparatus.<sup>264</sup> What the selectorate of the FIS really got in return was little though, other than the promise of a better political platform as soon as the FIS was in power.

### **6.1.1 What were the goals and actions of GIA in the theatre?**

What we can tell of GIA’s selectorate was that there was not one in the conventional framework of my categories, though they according to communiqués, claimed that they fought for an entire new system mandated by God – which would make the interpreters of his will the winning coalition though no formal requirements other than religious schooling would put restrictions on who was in the selectorate.<sup>265</sup>

GIA was loosely organized and did not even have one collective initiative other than spreading seemingly arbitrary misfortune and havoc. They were led by individuals that if powerful enough or violent enough could claim the title of emir, as so many did this it is

---

<sup>263</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 108, 142.

<sup>264</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 181.

<sup>265</sup> Though GIA in rejecting the conventional *ulama* “class” would be more like a lay-movement, with an informal recognition of these interpreters of God’s will. Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 258; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 116; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 269; Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 221.

unclear how exactly and what exactly their goals and workings were. At least this is the impression one gets through reading the very in-depth analysis of their works in Luis Martinez's *The Algerian Civil War 1990-1998*. Although there are some characteristics one can see throughout the groups that over time become more united and have a common set of goals.

In the selectorate theory we would need, as said to have a somewhat different approach to the category. Since GIA did not recognize the notion of a nation state and neither the sovereignty of the people they at first seem not to fit into the theory.<sup>266</sup> These factors are not necessary to use the theory however, what the GIA in fact did, with their ideology was to say that every Muslim was in the selectorate. Since the sovereignty rests with God it implies that there must be believers in God giving him, or ceding to him the power of sovereignty since even he needs to be sovereign over something, this could be done by accepting that power is in fact with God.

The coerced conversion of people in their areas to the "correct" Islam can therefore tell us two things. First that any Muslim not in line with their way of thinking was not in fact a Muslim and therefore not deserving in being part of the selectorate, shrinking it quite a bit. Second, anyone who converted to GIA's interpretation of Islam inherently - willing or not - had to accept the rules or premises set for that particular interpretation of Islam. They thereby ensured their loyalty - herein private goods would be in regard to the hereafter making it a really cost efficient system. The winning coalition in such a system would by the lack of direct divine intervention have to assume the role of the *ulama*, the interpreters of Gods will similar to how Iran or ISIS works today. This would in effect mean that the winning coalition would be the leadership as well, only bound by their ability to interpret sharia or Gods law and will. Although there were more worldly needs arising even among this hallow armed band, the ability to muster forces as discussed earlier certainly gave people in the early establishment of the Caliphate weight and positions in the winning coalition as well.<sup>267</sup>

To succeed with the endeavour of the caliphate they had the same goals as the AIS, the killing of the current winning coalition of the army and the robbing of the resources used to keep them loyal. So their method and approach not to say definition of "winning coalition" differed from AIS's immensely. Something their continued attacks on infrastructure that later even

---

<sup>266</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 4.

<sup>267</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 260.

expanded to schools of which they burnt hundreds make vividly clear. The definition of the “winning coalition and selectorate ” that were to be targeted expanded several times, first to all government officials, to journalists and intellectuals that either supported the regime or criticized GIA, and then to all family members of any government affiliated individual, to foreigners and lastly to anyone contributing to the government’s continuation in power.<sup>268</sup> It was these acts of violence that served as criteria to rise within their ranks; the slaying of “enemies of god” has been interpreted into religious rituals by some.<sup>269</sup> Omar El-Eulmi was the conveyor of the interpretation behind the first *fatwas* that argued for the legitimacy of the expansion of legitimate targets, he himself was killed by security forces in April 1993, but this did not stop the targeting of them by the GIA.<sup>270</sup>

There is a clear sense of a systematic method trying to crumble the regime, when GIA started to kill members of the CCN (*Conseil Consultatif National*) they diverged from what they were doing by killing the security forces. This is one of two oddities when it comes to the civil war, the first here is the killing of the CCN members, who in reality had no real power. They served only with a consulting capacity for the Presidency and HCE and did not come close to the role the national assembly had before it.<sup>271</sup> They could not direct or affect anything, it could be that these were easier targets than the actual HCE members and therefore were more practical to assassinate. Killing them would have worked in the GIA’s favour in that it was a strong signal for their own winning coalition, that they actually managed to kill someone close to power. The second oddity is the approach the insurgents in general had to the hydrocarbon sector, but this will be discussed in chapter 8. The GIA however did manage to kill some HCE members as already mentioned, succeeding in their goal but it had little effect as they were too few and rapidly replaced.<sup>272</sup>

The most controversial killing is that of HCE leader Boudiaf who may and may not have been killed by early GIA members. Løchstøer writes in her book that the one who killed Boudiaf, was a man named Lembarek Boumaarafi who was a former intelligence officer. She also writes that he was sentenced to death but it never came to an execution. Hugh Roberts claims that it was a member of the “Special intervention unit” GIS. Their accounts differ on several

---

<sup>268</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 283; Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 192; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 208; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 192; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 264.

<sup>269</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 264.

<sup>270</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 283. *Fatwas* are non-binding judicial judgments in Islam.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 262, 282.

<sup>272</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 192.

points, while Anthony HC writes that it was; “a gunman in a squad trooper’s uniform” that shot Boudiaf.<sup>273</sup> Exactly what happened isn’t so much the issue here, the killing of Boudiaf and the handling of it in this analysis says more about the title of this chapter; “The Wild Card”. One can read in most writings on the Algerian Civil War about how the GIA might have been a part of, partly under the control of, allied with or in itself the DRS (*Departement du Renseignement et de la Securite*) – a subdivision of the GIS. There are many reasons for this, the regimes goals were fulfilled several times by their actions, like the killings of intellectuals and journalists that were critical booth to the regime and the GIA.<sup>274</sup> In this analysis this is explained without having to delve into conspiracy theories, it has more to do with the fact that there were three sides in the war and they all worked the same way diverging in who was important to protect, and who was important to kill.

After some time however GIA seemed to lose its focus, their goals shifted entirely to resources rather than a “political” fight, then later when there was a divide in GIA that lead to what was known as GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat*) they started to attack security personnel again. This could be an indicator for them realising that their definition of the selectorate was wrong or ineffective, intellectuals, journalists and members of the CCN were not that important targets after all.<sup>275</sup> Whereas the arming of civilians in 1995-1996 changed things yet again, now that the power play within the regime brought forth changes that made them reassess their targets more appropriately to the new situation in what has been listed by Stathis Kalyvas to be;

*”A particular strategic conjuncture characterized by (a) fragmented and unstable rule over the civilian population, (b) mass civilian defections toward incumbents and (c) escalation of violence.”*<sup>276</sup>

What makes the GIA the wild card is the fact that they seem to fit so nicely into a great expanse of analyses due to their seemingly aimless or multi directed actions. This stems from the loose organisation of the group as well as the shifting conditions. In their negation of country borders, their liberal interpretations of legitimate targets in addition to the regime’s

---

<sup>273</sup> Look at the different sources for the full and different accounts, reasons and offenders. Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 248; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 117; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 109.29.

<sup>274</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 208, 211.

<sup>275</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 269.

<sup>276</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 164; Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria,” *Rationality and Society* 11, no. 3 (August 1, 1999): 245, doi:10.1177/104346399011003001.



lack of security and control put few restrictions on their actions. This is what led Luis Martinez to develop his main argument that violence became a means to get what you wanted. GIA became quite proficient in this endeavour, and after a while it would seem like the resources they got a hold of was no longer a means to an end but rather the end in itself.<sup>277</sup>

What started out as crippling manoeuvres with regards to the regime's resources pool in which they had some success, became a lucrative business.<sup>278</sup> The targeting of private businesses and the logistical trade routes in between them rendered them no more than a mafia after a while.<sup>279</sup> They controlled several important road stretches by 1994, in the cities they operated much like a mafia organisation with racketeering and they may even have helped manipulate their "allies" competition by ruining the business of competitors.<sup>280</sup> When the resources became scarce, and the respective insurgent groups had grown larger it developed into a turf war between them. The heavy "taxation" of the "clientele" led to a very dissatisfied populace that were suffering, robbed of their resources rather than willingly supporting the insurgency.<sup>281</sup> It was in this respect they had the largest impact within the selectorate theory. Since their methods lead them to estrange the FIS and AIS's potential selectorate towards any islamist group without having the regime expanding theirs.

---

<sup>277</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 269; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 119, 128, 139; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 257.

<sup>278</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 196.

<sup>279</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 108.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 132, 213.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

## 6.2 In what way were the GIA relevant with this perspective on the civil war?

The only success the government's forces had in the beginning was keeping the more moderate islamists (consisting of AIS (armed) and the FIS (illegal political activity)) from forming any solid alliance with GIA. Part of this strategy actually caused such a division between them that they were fighting each other. The regime excelled in protecting its selectorate, the regime consistently shunned all others than its own selectorate, having some casualties due to the assassinations and bombings executed by GIA especially, but few important actors in the winning coalition were hit. This shows how well they actually did.<sup>282</sup>

In the early days of the insurgency there were attempts to gather all islamists under one banner to fight the regime. There were even pledges of alliance between Seddiki - leader of the "Afghans" - who would formally unite under the same banner as the MIA.<sup>283</sup> More in this direction was to be discussed and agreed upon in what probably was one of the best initiatives on the insurgent's part and one of the greatest successes on the regimes part. The meeting in Tamesguida was supposed to consolidate their forces and power since there beforehand had been little or none cooperation or co-ordination between the various groups.<sup>284</sup> In that way it was a great initiative and probably would have given the insurgents a better fighting chance, this did not happen due to the effective intelligence system of the regime. They learned about the initiative and the meeting place and time. They assaulted a meeting in progress and managed to kill several prominent insurgents leader like the GIA leader Allal Mohammed. Though Chebouti managed to escape they succeeded in sowing distrust between the various groups which killed off the initiative and rather aggravated competition between the groups in a divide and let them fight among themselves – set up.<sup>285</sup>

Having sown distrust between the insurgents the regime forces had just started their manipulation in their offence, as the regime benefitted from GIA in two particular ways.<sup>286</sup> The two points are such that Luis Martinez indicates they prove that GIA were actually being controlled by or allied with the regime. What the GIA did without a doubt had a positive

---

<sup>282</sup> Ref. Chapter 7.1 for some examples.

<sup>283</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 272.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 270–272.

<sup>285</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 206, 219; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 272, 281.

<sup>286</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 211.

effect indirectly since the brutal handling and the killing of unarmed civilians whom the GIA deemed legitimate targets discouraged the potential selectorate of the FIS from any involvement. It had said effect as their experience was a terrifying one with the insurgents i.e. the islamists, this severely weakened the cause of the more moderate fighters. In addition those who were capable of pointing to the discrepancy in this logic were assassinated; several regime and GIA critical journalists and intellectuals were killed throughout the civil war.<sup>287</sup> Although this argument could be disputed, since the stance of the GIA and their expanded definition of legitimate targets after a while rendered pretty much everyone legitimate targets it would force the population to take a stance rather than being neutral needing to some extent to leave the safety of passivity. There is also the fact that in an area with no governmental control, meaning no security this would prompt one to side with the GIA and adopted their view becoming a part of their selectorate to avoid danger.<sup>288</sup>

The relevance would then be that the GIA were a wild card in the sense that they had no firm position or goals. As a wild card can have any suit, colour, number or any other property in a game depending on the card holder the GIA are here called just that as they were certainly highly unpredictable. At the same time they themselves were very indiscriminate in their methods, making them a positive player for the regime in some scenarios in which they estranged the populace from other islamists insurgents by treating the populace harshly. In addition to the government manipulation that lead both the GIA and the AIS to fight pitched battles with each other over turf and selectorate especially later on when both resources and supporters became scarce. Rather than being a direct part of the (intelligence apparatus) it looks like the GIA was an unstable actor that was manipulated to render the FIS/MIA approach harder, even later attempts at merging the two failed - as one in 1994 - and when the GIA went too far, MIA did not even consider a merge.<sup>289</sup>

The circumstances created by the insurgency and the “let them rot” strategy of the army made room for petty criminals and other groups guided by several diverse islamist ideologies – or none - to prosper. The regime protected its selectorate and no one else, and implemented the “let them rot” strategy giving these groups room to grow.<sup>290</sup> Making the theatre even more confusing, though these were not an important part of the equation - they were a part of the

---

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 286.

<sup>288</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 283.

<sup>289</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 206, 212, 219; Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 189; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 271.

<sup>290</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 140.

abandoned areas. In a theatre where violence is a means to reach an end, and where in general (though certainly exceptions exist) the insurgents benefitted the most from the support of this particular part of selectorate at the onset, they became a power piece. The criminal nature makes this true, the rise of the loosely connected GIA makes this true if one looks at the focus they had on resources, both in earning them and sabotaging the states endeavours – however misguided they were as appropriately discussed. The way in which GIA interpreted their circumstances in accord with their ideology resulted in a view on the populace at large that made all connected with the regime plausible targets at worst, this in addition to the results of Tamesguida with a non-cohesive, large and mistrusting mass of insurgents made their moves unpredictable often ending in utter violence and in turf wars over areas abandoned by the army. The second part of the complex question of why the insurgents – both GIA and AIS’s - tactics failed and why the government’s tactic to a large extent worked to achieve their goals will now be addressed as we look at the more grisly parts of the civil war.

# 7 The descent into a “Savage War”

From 1995 and onwards massacres started to occur besides the killing we have already seen. The level of general violence was also immensely high due to a higher strain on the insurgents who faced a better trained and equipped army from 1995 and onwards. In addition we see a fall in members of the insurgency; this however is also attributed to a higher competency level. It is important to note however that only parts of the army were better equipped and trained, not the entirety of it. The improvement was a result of the initiatives started in 1993 with the Biskra academy and a financial sector that improved immensely after 1994 as will be discussed in chapter 8.

In this chapter we start off with a discussion on some of the numbers presented in chapter five, on the abilities and material and economic assets of the army. I then discuss if the lack of abilities and resources really mattered for what the leadership really wanted to achieve, if the lack in skills actually made them fail in their endeavours. With these points established I continue with addressing the proliferation of violence and the two main reasons for it. First the choice of leaving population centres to “rot” and second a socio economic mechanism that can explain the new level of guns and what follows with it. On that note I also find it suitable to address the very character of the massacres, as they were of a particularly grisly nature in what can be seen as evil, ruthless or barbarian. This hinges on the sheer amount of slit throats, and more manual killings which certainly do not make for a pleasant scenario.

The last part of the chapter concerns the government’s own reaction to the massacres, or one could say their inaction. As it has been seen as an enigma leading to speculations down most venues I discuss it and present a possible rationale for it through mandates, capacities in addition to some scrutiny onto the critiques of the inaction presenting a more logical scenario than evil men killing others for no apparent reason.

## 7.1 Why the proliferation of violence?

The “let them rot” strategy as said was the result of a lack of military capacity at the time and the ad hoc nature of the escalating conflict created an uncontrolled vacuum where actors could proceed (in certain areas) as they liked. The lack of capacity was a result of poor

military training, military training for conventional warfare, similar to what we think of with regards to World War II and lack of foreign liaison officers with the proper knowledge and skills. Since army officers were part of the potential selectorate the training also contained a highly political content rather than skill content for promoted officers, in addition the fact that ANP was a people's army resulting in much time spent on civil works projects rather than actual military training. This therefore restricted the army's capacities to commit effective forces on a large scale to any other place than where they were absolutely needed. The monopoly on violence was as such conceded in general as well as broken by insurgency attacks.

Algeria as many other nations had issues with military equipment, stocking up on new fancy equipment looks good on the paper but without the proper follow up with regards to maintenance and proper training the equipment will have no actual fighting value.<sup>291</sup> This fact did not win or lose the entire battle in Algeria but it is in favour of the brutal choices made at the onset and throughout the civil war. The state of much of the equipment of the Algerian army was close to useless, as it had been appropriated without the proper follow up and without the proper training and maintenance.<sup>292</sup> On top of this, though numerous the Algerian army had a tradition for being a people's army, AHC points to the fact that any conscript in it spent a mere six months in military training and the last twelve months of his service working civil works projects like building roads and dams.<sup>293</sup> These soldiers in an army without recent fighting experience, with obsolete equipment and poor training were organized with a very rigid command line where the Chief of Staff exercised a direct line of command to the major combat units.<sup>294</sup> This would hamper any effective fighting, leaving little or no trust in the company commanders themselves.

It is of course a natural mechanism in an army that sees itself as sovereign and holds all power in its top echelons that it takes the initiative and the possibility for it from commanders as has been an imperative since the classical era which stories are brimming with military usurpers in a freer position. This works and there is no need for any other way in times of peace with no imminent dangers not demanding any efficient action, the insurgency on the other hand created one. The leadership did not reorganize its command lines even so, giving a clear

---

<sup>291</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 17.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 152; Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 490.

<sup>294</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 152.

indication that strategic reasons were ranked lower than politics.<sup>295</sup> It renders poor fighting capabilities but not critical in the Algerian regimes mind-set as autocratic leaders can afford to sustain domestic troubles as long as their supporters are provided with private goods. Even though these factors meant that they had poorer fighting capabilities and with it less of an ability to protect the entire nation and combat the insurgency effectively they seem to have been satisfied to an extent in their ability to protect what I have already established as their main concern, the selectorate and the winning coalition. But even this came at a price, the Algerian pride. There were foreign political and economic partners that helped them along with new equipment and financial aid to maintain this something that was not popular in all political circles.<sup>296</sup>

A lot more could be said about the state of the army, in any case the main point to emphasize here is that it was in a poor state that limited the ability to fight an enemy. This in itself would not necessarily be reason enough to implement the strategy of “let them rot” but it certainly would push any nation and leadership to focus what they had on whatever they deemed important. What is important will always vary and be open for discussion but in this regard it has been made clear that it was the winning coalition and the selectorate.

The army are said to have; “failed (spectacularly) in restoring order, keeping a monopoly on violence.”<sup>297</sup> As facts surrounding casualties and crimes committed came to be known later, it also became known that the government in fact did not publish official casualty statistics. This was allegedly held back as not to spread fear to the public. Evans and Phillips list up the killings of civilians, teachers, mayors, robberies, the costs connected to bombing and arson.<sup>298</sup> The numbers are terrifying and high, but these results were not necessarily a failure on the government’s part.

I would argue that it was no failure, that there never was a wish or a will to necessarily amend the monopoly on violence as is normal for a state. The needs of the army and strategic goals derived from them never seem to have expanded in this direction at all based on what they actually did. The lack of will to negotiate, even the hampering of initiatives leading in that direction in combination with the state of the army and the utilization of it in no regard shows

---

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>296</sup> There were private investors in the oil sector all the while from 1991 and throughout the civil war. Martinez, “*The Algerian Civil War*”, 179. Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 156.

<sup>297</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 161.

<sup>298</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 206.

a will to end the conflict and regain the monopoly.<sup>299</sup> If they thought that negotiations would give them more than fighting would - meaning they would remain in power, they would have done so, but as for any self-serving leader this is a secondary consideration to staying in office.<sup>300</sup> Where they actually failed was allowing for the occasional success of the insurgents in assassinating the army's winning coalition, like the HCE members Ladif Flici and Hafid Senhadri whom were killed in broad daylight in March 1993.<sup>301</sup> Other than these instances of assassinations there seem not to be any apparent reason for any other action, it is even speculated that the killings of intellectuals and critics of the regime were "allowed to be killed" meaning a passive approach to security drawing it up as a commodity for which the price was loyalty and valuable support.<sup>302</sup> The bonus of this endeavour has often been the rationale explained in other analysis of the method in that the populace was treated in a horrible way within the vacuum of government control.<sup>303</sup> This would give the populace incentive to drop their support for the insurgents having experienced the governance of the islamists as discussed in chapter 4. However this is true only as much as it crippled the ambitions of the islamist insurgents making their strongest argument – the expansion of the selectorate – seem less lucrative. The army had no apparent need for the population being on their side. The neutral position the population seem to have assumed some years into the conflict suited them well, though their position was at stake from 1995 and onwards with the massacres and the mobilization of militias as will be discussed in chapter 7.3 and 9.2.<sup>304</sup>

If there were any other initiatives that could represent different conclusions they were quickly stumped either by political manoeuvring or by the sudden death of the leader for the initiative. President Boudiaf assassination as we have seen is an example of one who may have wanted to correct some things in the state of affairs; he had three objectives according to Martin Stone; to create a new political front to replace the FLN – the RPN (*Rassemblement Patriotique National*), to end high levels of corruption and to use whatever methods necessary to safeguard the secular-nationalist character of independent Algeria and in that the prevention of any religious parties coming to power.<sup>305</sup> As is evident the first two points could seem problematic with regards to what's already been discussed, if there was to be a new

---

<sup>299</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 114.

<sup>300</sup> Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, 238.

<sup>301</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 192.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>303</sup> It should be noted that in this claim they possess no traceable sources. *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>304</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 300.

<sup>305</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 104.



political formal front for the power holders they would again be restrained to some extent as discussed in chapter 3. The pursuit of corruption however is what most analysts on the scenario seem to think got him killed if it was not the insurgents.

The goal contradicted the status quo, and it certainly was not followed up after his death. The last point was more in line with the rationale of the army, as the “whatever means necessary” implies that a rationale of protecting those who were deemed important to keep the character of the country as it was would make room for the method chosen, and not necessarily win the war outright. Martinez for one identifies or fails to identify any will at all stemming from the authorities wanting to end the conflict forcefully or peacefully.<sup>306</sup> This sentiment was shared by the French Prime Minister Eduard Balladur who worried that Algeria wasn’t making a serious attempt to end the crisis when talking about the Hijacking of Air France A300 in 1994.<sup>307</sup> Quandt on the other hand claims that the state of things was a result of the Algerians applying the same tactics the French used during the civil war. This may be, but it could also just be a tempting comparison, since if this really were the case it makes no sense. Due to the fact that the French lost using the exact same strategies the Algerians who won back then were supposedly using facing their own insurgency.<sup>308</sup>

The rationale above is however disrupted by one ambiguous character, General Zeroual who became HCE chairman after Ali Kafi in 1994, and later President in the first presidential election in 1995.<sup>309</sup> More on his ambitions and the way in which the rationale and system was challenged by him in chapter 9.1, for now it is to be noted that he sought to manipulate the political environment in his favour at some cost but not nearly in the way the FIS wanted. In effect he just replaced the current leadership for a small political price. This meant that he as well was comfortable with the rationale spelled out above so there were no power holders formal or informal beside the FIS through their insurgency power who had any interest in the disenfranchised, something that was not communicated clearly due to the nature of their fellow islamists, the GIA.

---

<sup>306</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 56.

<sup>307</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 207.

<sup>308</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 89.

<sup>309</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 271.

## 7.2 Two reasons for escalating violence in the abandoned areas

On the insurgent's part Martinez is correct when he says that violence became the means of gaining what you wanted to a certain degree. The situation dictated that if you wanted to have a say, you would need to step up to the plate due to the fact that there were armed insurgents in the void. So there arose a need to take the same measures as the other actors whom held guns in large areas of Algeria. This did not mean that everyone suddenly became more violent making a harsh and difficult situation for the soldiers and officers, but rather that there is a counter intuitive mechanism at play. I'll use an example from a survey on hockey players done by Thomas Schelling in behavioural economics to explain, from his book *Micromotives and Microbehaviours*.

In short what he discovered was that when questioned if they would prefer to play with or without helmets all players answered that they would prefer not to. At the same time most players answered that they would like the rules to demand them to play with helmets. First baffled, he then figured out that the reason for this is that it feels better to play without a helmet so it gives them a competitive advantage. However they all know that there is more risk involved due to injuries. They also know that if there is no rule some would play without helmets despite the fact that there is more risk involved due to the advantage it holds counter to someone playing with a helmet. So the end result would be that everyone played without a helmet to reduce the competitive advantage rendering no competitive advantage and more risk. This led them to want a rule levelling the turf while being more protected.<sup>310</sup> The violence phenomena works the same way only in the absence of a government there is no one making and upholding the rules, giving most people the incentive to do something they would rather not to keep the playing field levelled – namely arming themselves with guns. This made the rules of the game different in addition to the vacuum which made it possible.<sup>311</sup> The guns in this analogy would work much the same way as playing hockey without helmets, if one player gets it the competitive advantage is such that everyone else is prompted to have it to even the odds. The monopoly on violence usually functions as the rule, saying everyone

---

<sup>310</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, Revised edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), chap. 7.

<sup>311</sup> Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge* (Yale University Press, 2007)

should wear helmets or not have guns. Whereas without the government allowing guns to be available it turned into a riskier but not better situation.

What prompted the first to take up the gun might be just the lack of control in itself. Or more likely it could be the fact that just some in the beginning carried guns and used it not only towards the government. The result was nevertheless that the fear and insecurity tactic executed by the government led to so much frustration and anger directed to those whom enforced it that what had been a national struggle seemed to become localized. With young men taking to the streets with violence in mind to exert violence on those who were thought to tip of the police and the police itself that arrested, tortured and robbed them of their freedom.<sup>312</sup> Then again not every village descended into a violent chaos, Luis Martinez attributes this to deep rooted social mechanisms through an informal *jema'a* in a village council in Algeria that would function much like the rule enforcing a monopoly on guns.<sup>313</sup>

The new conditions overall certainly changed the atmosphere of Algeria a lot, as the people were abandoned by the government they also abandoned them.<sup>314</sup> Political support for any faction became less of a priority as the people took refuge in survival strategies in what was;” passive hostility rather than active support for the fundamentalists”.<sup>315</sup> Løchstøer juxtaposes the position you could have even more, in the eradicator-negotiator dichotomy. This is on her part a fault in my regard, as the passivity and hopeless situation of the population at large meant that they were not inclined to be swayed either the one or the other way.<sup>316</sup>

---

<sup>312</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 60, 83.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>315</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, n. 72.

<sup>316</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 270.

## Knives versus shotguns:

Before we move onto what the massacres can tell us on the nature of the war in general I will present a somewhat unorthodox reason as to why the massacres themselves were executed in such a grisly way. There are an abundance of discussions on the rationale behind the savagery of the killings. They often speak of “pure evil”, rituals of passage or that the enemy, especially in a civil war is demonized to justify the killings.<sup>317</sup> I think this is wrong for Algeria. By killing savagely you demonize none other than yourself. It also seems to be a circular argument; because this person is so bad I can kill him in a savage way (due to his lack of worth etc.), I kill him so savagely because he is so bad. It might have made more sense if the situation had appeared more dichotomous, with clear cut fronts, geographical, ethnic or religious distinctions but this was not so. Only to some degree in that the elite or the upper strata were a line of separation, but even there it was blurred and they were nonetheless not the victims of the massacres.

Although it is easy to imagine how slit throats screams evil and brutality, there may exist a much more rational explanation for this, namely knives versus shotguns. It is mentioned in several books, and emphasized (though not to this possibility) in the BBC documentary (1994) “Algeria’s Hidden War” that a large majority of the insurgents firearms were shotguns, only 1/3 were automatic weapons.<sup>318</sup> This fact could imply two things: First that there was resource scarceness. This would mean that any waste of ammunition on an opponent deemed not threatening that nonetheless needed to be killed for whatever reason would make it more sensible to kill the enemy without spending resources (ammunition). The other is that if the weapon - remember the majority of the insurgents were carrying shotguns - is a shotgun a slit throat is a rational choice both in terms of efficiency (how long it will take to kill of victims – in the most extreme cases up to 400) and with regard to a secure kill – a shotgun blast to the torso is not a secure kill (depending on the distance) with the alternative being even more savage than a slit throat – a head beyond recognition. As appalling as these arguments may seem, I still think this to be a logical reasons for the nature of the killings. However irrational the choice to kill all these people were, the way in which it was done if the shotgun count indeed is true carries more sense than a particular spirit, mind-set or some such evil at play. If killing large quantities of anything with shotguns were efficient they would be used in

---

<sup>317</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 66.

<sup>318</sup> Rees, *Algeria’s Hidden War*.

slaughter house. In fact in this horrendous event the slit throats might even have been seen as a small mercy contrary to much more dishevelled corpses.

### 7.3 What can the massacres tell us?

It is discussed when the first massacres took place in Algeria, some claim it happened as far back as 1993, but it is at least acknowledged that they occurred with a huge death toll and frequently from 1995 and onwards till the 2000's. This was one of the most visible signs of the violent decay of society the insurgency had led to, also one of the most controversial subjects of the civil war since sources are scarce and often biased. What they can tell us in this discussion is two things, first; the massacres were a strong argument in the states arming of civilians and second they had a very visible effect of the army's will to let everyone else beside their selectorate and winning coalition be left to their own devices. I will argue my case for this drawing on communiqués from the "Free Officers of Algeria" and eyewitness accounts who speak about army mandates, and army concerns that concluded in a position of no engagement even when massacres took place- even next to army barracks.

There were several major massacres that took place in Algeria, some of them claiming as many as 400 lives as in the western province of Relizane.<sup>319</sup> By the end of 1996 a large number of villages took on the shape of fortresses that were surrounded by watchtowers barbed wires and mines to protect themselves from the massacres which allegedly were executed by the GIA.<sup>320</sup> There are suspicions and accusations raised at the army for being the executer or at least the motivators behind the massacres. But as the killing of people that were already outside the army's selectorate but nonetheless citizens who already had realized that the insurgent's governance was a horrible thing at the time the massacres started, the army killing them makes no apparent sense. The accusation that the government was behind the killing of foreigners is irrational as well. Even though it would have been nice to get rid of critical eyes during what is claimed to be a purgatory of all internal opposition, it would also imply that they were biting the hand that fed them. Looking at the reshuffle of people responsible for the economy in 1993-94 and the courting of foreign companies and states to gain resources (in near desperation close to 1994) it is counter intuitive and the price of

---

<sup>319</sup> There was a very large number of Massacres; the bloodiest ones were in Rais, Beni Messous and Bentalha in August and September 1997. Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 120, 164; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 220.

<sup>320</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 233.

removing tentative preying eyes that already had shown a will of support contrary to losing FDI is too high. Then again one might say that journalists could have reported from Algeria, giving a more nuanced picture of what was really going on also hampering international support.

The important thing with concerns to the government was the response to the massacres, not if they were a direct result of their actions. Since it is the outcome that is essential – the arming of civilians – and not exactly who instigated them it will not be discussed further here. The arming of citizens will be addressed in chapter 9.2. What I will argue here and what I think is essential about the execution of the massacres and the lack of military action on them is that it tells us something important with regards to the selectorate theory. If we apply the selectorate theory it is easier to see the unimportance of the population; if not part of the selectorate or the winning coalition it is an extreme sign of the uselessness of the population. It will become clear how important the capacity argument made earlier is as well. This comes into effect in several of the points made in the previous chapter. The inefficiency of the chain of command is paramount as it increases the response time of any fighting unit, as was the case at barracks just some hundred feet from one of the massacres where the army did not intervene.<sup>321</sup> When the chain of command demands orders from the chief of staff it is self-explanatory that the response time will be slow. Especially when it seems like several army barracks were under a mandate not to intervene in any incident as is recorded as the answer to villagers calling for help at the Beni Messous massacre September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1997. It was said that response to insurgency attacks was under the mandate of the *gendarmie*, meaning the internal security forces.<sup>322</sup> Some soldiers were instructed not to leave their army barracks at night without written instruction and another source from the MOAL (*le Mouvement Algérien des Officiers Libres*, The Free Algerian Officers) – a secret group of informant officers in the ANP - said that there was a fax sent from the Chief of Staff ordering all units to cancel all leaves and that further banned all sorties under all circumstances.<sup>323</sup> While some forces called upon seem to have direct orders not to intervene others seem to have taken advantage of the

---

<sup>321</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 480.

<sup>322</sup> Note that it was the *gendarmie* who had a mandate to intervene, not the army i.e. the selectorate. Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 161.

<sup>323</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 478, 480–481.

fact that there were no orders telling them to intervene, leaving yet another village under attack defenceless.<sup>324</sup>

The result of these massacres - the killing of hundreds of individuals can easily lead one to false assumptions - the very extremity of the acts makes no room for any logical or good argument for any armed man to abstain from intervening, something that certainly can prompt one to speculate in just who were behind the massacres. However cynical it may appear I think it is clear that any army division under a mandate is expected to uphold that mandate, especially if there are good reasons for it. There could of course be an exception where some army commander defies all orders, procedures and leads a counter attack defending the civilians. In such an instance he would be cheered on by human hearts for showing a valiant nature, but it is in any army essential that orders are to be followed and anyone with the command to do such a thing would most likely know or understand the rationale behind it. Much as discussed before here I will argue that it rests on capacity and needs.

Although the academy at Biskra had supplied the army with a new officer class with COIN capabilities the army overall still had some issues with regards to fighting insurgency at large. This is an important point, as there seems to have been a small cluster of troops throughout the LIC (Low intensity conflict) that had capabilities or at least fought and pulled off successful operations such as the one at Tamesguida.<sup>325</sup> But overall the situation was not as good. The government offered excuses with this in mind as well; even a French minister sided with the Algerian regime in saying that there were technical reasons for the non-intervention. In this he included both apparent dangers for the forces if a counterattack was initiated and also the fact that they were under a mandate not to do just that.<sup>326</sup> A quote from a General X in *An Inquiry into The Algerian Massacres* is used as an argument to raise suspicions on the army's actions in favour of them with no reason other than hatred for islamists sympathizers letting the massacres happen or even executing them themselves. But this quote can be interpreted in two ways as he could just have stated what the status quo was. The army was inexperienced in this kind of warfare – meaning insurgency.<sup>327</sup>

---

<sup>324</sup> MOAL, or here AMFO is an organization of dissident army officers, or defectors wanting a better Algeria through a less corrupt army. Ibid., 474, 476.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 512; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 127.

<sup>326</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 488, 490.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 498.

Now there is some discussion on the topic of the ANP's COIN capabilities at the time, one author on the subject M.S. Lalioui points to the fact that the ANP had a COIN doctrine in their military academies as part of their colonial legacy. Having the curriculum of a very specific way of fighting is however far from implementing training, getting equipment and seeing it realized on a larger scale within an army. So it was in their textbooks but it should be apparent that the lack of COIN capabilities was an issue from the onset of the civil war and that it in no way was their strong suit.<sup>328</sup> She goes on in criticizing the army's behaviour, as a "European special forces veteran" quoted from a news excerpt also claims that the army could have gone in and "killed the terrorists".<sup>329</sup> This quote among other things is one used by Lalioui to build the case that since the army did not intervene it must have wanted the massacres to happen. It pivots towards Hume's Law, leading from what is to ought. The argument here tries to abstain from that, rather than wanting the massacres to happen, they are deemed an uncritical part of the situation on a long term basis since the people at large are not part of the selectorate and in the time frame of the massacres with soldiers at hand they are deemed useless. This in the words proper meaning prompting one to decide not to engage, as there is a rather sound decision being made that it is; both too dangerous due to the uncertainties in the surrounding areas and by the lack of skills other than conventional training and equipment meant for other types of combat. That a special forces veteran should speak on behalf of soldiers he does not know either in capabilities or in person of a situation happening under circumstances he is not familiar with also is a weak point by any standard. Lalioui on the other hand renders this "excuse" of army incompetence as bizarre, an odd statement that definitely follows Hume's Law and not any rational logic thinking.<sup>330</sup> It is of course impossible to know if the army had succeeded in intervening against a massacre since they apparently never did, but likely the outcome would have been more deaths and a total waste of troops strategically speaking and even without fulfilling any important goal for the army *jema'a* in line with the lack of import of the populace to their continued position in power.

The dangers lightly touched upon must be seen as one of the reasons for the mandate that then again hindered operations from the army side. At several massacres sites there were army barracks close at hand, the sources for the following security concerns comes from survivors

---

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 496.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 478.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 491.



of massacres telling us what response they got when calling on aid trying to object to the non-intervention.<sup>331</sup> So they should not be biased in any way, they only lack or disagree in the same understanding of the overall concerns. Several sources mention mines and wires as an endangering concern on the soldiers behalf, also the lack of night time capabilities is mentioned as a reason not to intervene.<sup>332</sup> Now if these concerns were real or not is hard to know, but say that they were – something that could be since several villages indeed had taken on the appearance of fortresses with barbed wire and mines surrounding them – it would be a major unknown variable for any operation. Prodding through minefields takes time, and the response time of the operation would be further delayed. Witnesses and survivors have commented on the argument of the mine danger saying that ambulances arrived freely after the massacres in addition to some fleeing the site meaning that there were no mines. This makes it clear that no matter what the army thought the sites were free of mines, but that is a discovery made in hindsight and so it does not follow that the army at the time should have concluded with the same.<sup>333</sup> Although it can strengthen the suspicion that the army really did not believe that there were any mines but used it as an excuse, but there is no certain way of knowing it and anyhow the mandates from the top seem to have its first focus to secure the army as a whole and thereby basing its conclusion on general assumptions. So the mines might not have been surrounding the particular incident where the ambulance came and went, but there is no doubt that a lot of villages were surrounded by mines. So the army would rather spend its energy on what was part of the selectorate and rather use forces which were either expendable like the *gendarmie* who were excluded from it or forces that had the proper training and equipment securing a low casualty operation with higher gains.

The denial and the words spoken seldom really tell you anything real, meaning that it is rather to be found following the logic of the power struggle. Lalioui says in a rather odd argument for the army having been behind the massacres if not directly executing them then condoning them. He puts forth an explanation of several key points from the army in dealing with the accusations, first they deny responsibility, and then they provide justification and try to rationalize the massacres or discredit sources of information on them. Lastly they claim the accuser has no right to criticize, when even this fails they partially acknowledge what they cannot explain away, this in his opinion is a strong argument indirectly implying that they

---

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 479; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 161.

<sup>333</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 479.

knew all along or that they were behind it all.<sup>334</sup> It might seem suspicious, but it seems that the list could just as well be applied by someone wrongly accused of something, being innocent as someone guilty. The course of the argument seems to be the normal course of any discussion where one is accused of something, rendering it less convincing in anything other than a rhetorical way.

Two analysts, namely Kalyvas and Cordesman agree that the massacres indeed were not perpetrated by the government but rather by insurgency forces, specifically GIA. Their reasons were according to Cordesman that they wanted to show the governments forces that they had no control over the countryside, the more convincing argument is that of Kalyvas.<sup>335</sup> He sees them as part of a deterrent for unarmed villages in arming themselves as many of the villages that suffered massacres were villages in wait for weapons or villages that had asked to be armed by the army.<sup>336</sup> Perusing the Ministry of Defence's own homepage one will find that in their own account of why they armed these citizens they acknowledge that;

*"It remains that the NPA could not be everywhere at the same time. It is for that and with an aim of causing a dynamics and of setting up an organization of protection of the citizens, especially the villagers residents in the most moved back regions of the country which the groups of legitimate-defence were created."*<sup>337</sup>

So as we've seen in this chapter there indeed is a case to be made for the odd behaviour of the army with regards to the massacres if one applies the selectorate theory and as such accepts the importance or lack of importance of certain groups in society we see it more as an issue of prioritizing based on what resources are available. With this in mind the strangeness if not completely unravelled at least becomes clearer. Here I also hold that Kalyvas is right in his assessment of why the insurgents carried out the massacres and the interesting question of why the self-defence militias were created on the other hand will be addressed in chapter 9.2. Before that however there is a need to address what's only been mentioned briefly, the economical aspect into this conflict as it both restricted, enabled and dissuaded several of the key players in this war and as was one of the major reasons for the way it was played out.

---

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 492.

<sup>335</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 126.

<sup>336</sup> Kalyvas, "Wanton and Senseless?"

<sup>337</sup> "ANP's History," 7.

## 8 The money game, a matter of priorities?

The economic situation of Algeria has so far been told in short, in this chapter I aim to address this vital part of the civil war more thoroughly. In short Algeria's political program that set the wheels spinning was a result of a buckling economy. When the army went forward with its coupe the economic situation was as dire and volatile as the political. That's why France spearheaded an economical rescue mission for Algeria that was given at the onset of the civil war. As back then Algeria had a large debt with an all-consuming interest rate giving them little room for manoeuvring. A long term solution was needed however and the shuffle of prime ministers is a clear indication as to how the discussion on this issue went. Prime Minister Abdessalam meant that the safest and best way to restructure the economy was to go back to the industry heavy economy initiated in the 1970's Algeria, as this did not improve the situation during his short lived office he was replaced by Ali Kafi in 1994, a prime minister more willing to make radical changes. These changes meant putting the Algerian pride of self-sufficiency aside and accepting a restructuring of their debt with terms dictated by the IMF. This however did not happen until 1994, though they are closely connected with what Luis Martinez calls a plunder economy where seemingly well-meant initiatives in the end largely serve a small percentage of the population. The political changes that took place in 1995 with the first presidential election since the coupe were of course also connected to these terms, but this event and its repercussions will be addressed at length in chapter 9.

In this chapter I will start by applying the selectorate theory on the economic situation at the onset of the civil war, pointing to the importance of private goods as this can explain part of the lack in fighting capabilities of the army. It is also a clear reason for some of the immediate economic changes like the instigation of a war economy. The repercussions of the war economy and an assessment of its effect will lead up to the IMF deal which after all was needed to sustain the power position of a hard pressed army. This position could have been worse if the insurgents had struck at the most vital part of the Algerian economy, something they did not do. I will discuss why they did not and make sense of their inaction. The final point of this chapter is closely related to the changes that took place after the IMF deal so I will make those apparent before pointing to one example that shows the new found economic

position and its consequences. The army faced what could have been a crippling political blow through the Sant Egidio meeting of 1995 which was an international effort gathering Algerian political parties, including the FIS to work out a document that all could agree on for an end to the civil war, however the HCE sent no representatives and neither did the eradicator parties listed in chapter 5.2.<sup>338</sup>

## 8.1 What's the importance of private goods?

The economy played a huge part in the power shifts, since Algeria was hampered by a huge national debt swallowing a staggering percentage of the national budget. The unparalleled income source of the country – the hydrocarbon sector - was safeguarded with the same priority as the winning coalition from the onset, ending with restriction zones in much of the southern country. The debt still held that both the army and the HCE were ill manned to handle the insurgency effectively as the army had few resources to spend boosting their fighting capabilities.

As explained, private goods are what keep the winning coalition loyal; therefore it is paramount to have it for the leadership and that's why they sought guarantees for their corporate interests in exchange for the diluted political role when President Chadli started his reforms.<sup>339</sup> When the situation changed, they knew that their entire power structure rested on having access to resources for their continued presence in power. Although one on the other hand could say that resources will be a priority to protect or try to extract as much of as possible in any war situation for any given country. This is of course not false; the reason for it being mentioned here is the special case of Algeria. As the neglect of protecting the populace and rather focusing to such a degree on resources makes it apparent that there is more to it. William Quandt in his book makes a point of connecting all affluence in Algeria to the state tracing it all the way back to Algeria's independence. With this he means to say that all accumulation of wealth depended on the state – meaning the army - that doled out goods to those who were loyal, creating the divide between the winning coalition and the rest.<sup>340</sup> This broke with the somewhat egalitarian nature of the newly established state over time, creating

---

<sup>338</sup> Like the RCD.

<sup>339</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 135.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

the elite of which the leadership needed support by way of loyalty, ability to muster forces or whatever else they could contribute with to keep them in power.

To secure the inflow of resources the first thing that was done after the coup was to secure the foreign aid as already mentioned. Then the new Prime Minister Abdessalam Belaid mobilized a war economy, in which the allocation of resources is a large part.<sup>341</sup> The point here is that they would be even freer to allocate resources as needed in what Luis Martinez calls “the plunder economy”.<sup>342</sup>

The oil installations such as the production facilities, pipelines and the harbours were vulnerable parts in the overwhelmingly large part it was of the industrial sector so they were well guarded. There were a few incidents that prompted actions to better safeguard it. The MIA sabotage of a gas pipeline near the southern town of Laghouat, and GIA’s targeting of everyone working in the hydrocarbon sector serves as examples in that they probably were part of the reason for the allowance of private security measures for foreign companies.<sup>343</sup> Even with this allowance, from the onset of the civil war, the foreign companies in Algeria limited their manpower to the essentials.

The need to protect the resources also led to the four restriction zones in the southern parts of the country, they were sparsely populated and the area where most of the production took place. There were some attacks despite the restriction zones like on a facility in Ghardaia in the Mزاب region where five foreign nationals working for Bechtel were killed.<sup>344</sup> Though some incidents happened, the few attacks on facilities at least seemed either to fail outright, or they didn’t interrupt production in any significant way. This means that the regime were largely successful in protecting their assets something that made them keep the loyalty of their supporters and the means to protect them. Despite the apparent success in this, the machinery of the economy itself was hampered and the percentage of the GDP that was needed to pay of foreign debts did not change, this led to a desperate attempt by Prime Minister Abdessalam where he tried to steer the economy back to what had seemed to work in the 1970’s. When this failed Hugh Roberts claims the army buckled to foreign pressure and ousted him for Ali

---

<sup>341</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 249.

<sup>342</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, n. 1.

<sup>343</sup> Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 299; Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*.

<sup>344</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 265; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 169.

Kafi who was more willing to implement the measures the IMF demanded for rescheduling of loans in 1994.<sup>345</sup>

## 8.2 How did the leadership overcome a shrinking resources pool?

The restructuring of the national debt in accord with IMF was a major happening. Since it promised the winning coalition the goods they expected to be assured, before this any hold on power was shaky at best. This can be glimpsed as several key players from the time of the coupe soon were out of the picture, in addition to a volatile situation afterwards with the removal and replacement of several key figures in the leadership and winning coalition. The country Algeria had since its meagre beginnings been proud of its ability to maintain its interest payments, the rescheduling would be a stain on that record therefore there was a lot of ill will on rescinding on this and a futile attempt at doing otherwise was made only 8 months before the deal for rescheduling.<sup>346</sup> This speaks volumes on the issue.

The resources at hand before the transition, were the aid relief of 550 million USD and 1, 45 billion USD received from France and the western consortium France convinced to help.<sup>347</sup> For a regime whose main goal was to stay in power and that barely managed to do so and lacked the capabilities to protect its winning coalition and selectorate sufficiently, new funding was essential. In 1994 a deal was struck with the IMF who put clear restrictions on the economic policies of Algeria against a rescheduling and a billion dollars' worth of loans.<sup>348</sup> The loan was a result of external pressure as foreign partners demanded measures of security and in controlling the insurgency if they were to operate in the country. Since the production of hydrocarbons demanded essential foreign skills and FDI the pressure led Algeria to accept what Cathrine Løchstøer calls; "... the most humiliating thing the Algerian government could imagine..."<sup>349</sup>

The immediate effects were apparent as funds were spent on better equipment to enhance the fight against the insurgents to even more tolerable levels, like a number of helicopters bought

---

<sup>345</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 326–327.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 161; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 201, 271.

<sup>347</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 116.

<sup>348</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 202.

<sup>349</sup> Freely translated from Norwegian. Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 161; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 201.

from France which David Galula identifies these as one of the most important assets in direct fighting with insurgents giving a clear tactical advantage with regards to response time and mobility.<sup>350</sup> The new funds also came with some reforms that gave incentive to do more business, housing support, and some privatization that actually enhanced the situation of people at large, something Luis Martinez especially makes a point of. It is at this time he claims that the “jihadis” turn to profiteering more than fighting the regime as there are new possibilities to enrich oneself.<sup>351</sup> This was a twofold thing though, since the increased ability to enrich oneself also benefitted the ones still trying to weaken the regime at some points to the degree that they could negotiate with the authorities, and hand out official building permits and the like in fact coming closer to governing in a way that reflected well on them in the areas they operated.<sup>352</sup>

A reduction of the hydrocarbon revenues was as we have seen therefore one obstacle that the regime never had to overcome in any significant way. The fact that the insurgents had so few successful operations on the infrastructure of the hydrocarbon sector rests on the fact that they had few operations targeting the sector in general, this goes for both the AIS and the GIA groupings. There were some attempts, like the first on Sonatrech where a car park belonging to it was struck, and later there were some pipelines that were hit but the output was uninterrupted.<sup>353</sup> This could be a real blunder by the insurgents, as they focused their attacks on the wrong sectors that really did not hurt but rather helped the regime on in some ways.<sup>354</sup> This is the impression one gets when reading Luis Martinez’s account on the infrastructure focus, but with the theory applied here it is a very natural occurrence, since those resources especially in a situation of total war are a future prospect for the winning side. If the FIS was welcomed back into the fold, or they won a military victory of sorts through AIS these resources would be very important for their own governance and power when the dust settled to serve as a well of public and private goods. The few attacks that were executed could be explained as a tactic to reduce their opponent’s numbers since they in fact did station forces to protect the resources that then again never were much of a battlefield. By not focusing that much on the sector they clearly either misunderstood the import of it or they must have had

---

<sup>350</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 176.

<sup>351</sup> That many turned to trade to enrich themselves rather than to fight is in line with Galulas COIN-theory, since its reforms conceded on the governments part (here through pressure from the IMF) improves the insurgent and the populations situation to such a degree that fighting becomes unattractive. Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 144–145.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 192, 177.

<sup>353</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 169; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 153.

<sup>354</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 272–273.

the future in mind. This could also explain the somewhat weird targeting of the GIA; they targeted anyone working in the hydrocarbon sector.<sup>355</sup> Though technical skills in operating and running the facilities would be needed in any future Caliphate of theirs, it was in fact a move of minimizing losses.

The deal with the IMF rendered many of the islamists struggles and rhetoric useless as the IMF demands improved the living conditions for the populace at large but more as a side effect of the terms dictated by the IMF than any doling out of public goods.<sup>356</sup> If one emphasizes the capacity argument I have made one could speculate on the willingness of the regime to actually care for its entire population. The argument of need, in which there is no apparent reason for the regime to dole out any private goods in any way to anyone beside those whom mattered in the winning coalition and their selectorate says something else. The reforms and programs that were started to help the micro-economy was therefore most likely the result of the demands of the IMF or nothing more than a half-hearted effort they with the improved economic situation could afford to do. This conclusion rests on the above and the clear divide that became apparent after Zerouals rise to presidency, how this prolonged the insurgency by competing for the selectorate and the narrow winning coalition rather than showing a will to end it all together.

Moneywise this is clear or at least indicated by the shifting attitude towards renewed deals or expansion on existing ones with the IMF the following years, as they did not renew it in 1998, but then again they did so in May 1999 when the situation at large had changed considerably of which will be written more in the following chapter.<sup>357</sup> The assassination of UGTA leader Abdelhak Benhamouda who aspired to form his own party, represented a will to end the deals with the IMF and kill the terrorists at all cost in 1997 is more likely to indicate a power struggle rather than a random assassination by the GIA.<sup>358</sup> This “eradication” line was nothing new, but in the new situation after the IMF loans they could expand on their capabilities to such a degree that their goal became somewhat more realistic. So the path towards dialogue was one they were forced to at the onset as they seemed to be incapable and unwilling to win battle outright, then when the loan from the IMF made them affluent and so capable again they were in a position to continue the dialogue process but from another angle. It meant that

---

<sup>355</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 219.

<sup>356</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 274.

<sup>357</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 135, 137.

<sup>358</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 236.



they were so much stronger that they could play out negotiations if they so wanted but on their own terms.

### **8.2.1 How did they utilize the influx of goods available from 1994?**

Having the ability to keep the winning coalition happy in the end was more important than any issues of pride and meant a much more effective fight thereafter, both in terms of the previous and in terms of actual resources to augment the army's capacities by improving their assets equipment with new helicopters and night-time equipment which vastly improved their operational efficiency.<sup>359</sup> Therefore they accepted the demands from the IMF when rescheduling its debts in 1994, which started a privatizing cabal that enriched several in the winning coalition.<sup>360</sup>

While the army got a much firmer hold on power by controlling all state lead armed forces, - as is an imperative in a state with a military junta, to have the ability to muster military might in support of any leadership – they were politically superior by holding and controlling the majority of the seats in HCE and later the loyalty of those who got private goods. Martinez identifies that exact process taking place when the privatization started, without a doubt there to some extent was an increased flux of public goods, but as he says it; “the privatization happened, to please the patronage of the regime” – patronage meaning winning coalition.<sup>361</sup>

The influx of fiscal assets was complimented by their will to get rid of trouble makers granting them a firm position when they were headed for a more normal state of affairs with Zeroual in 1995. The first graduates from Biskra in addition to new equipment also contributed to an increased capacity to fight the insurgent leading to a more efficient fight in addition to a war torn and tired population - the numbers of the insurgents went down following 1995. The drop in numbers reflects the fact that they as well became more professional and so relied less on numbers.

---

<sup>359</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 156.

<sup>360</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 272–273.

<sup>361</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 124.

## 8.2.2 How was the army in a position to ignore the Sant Egidio meeting?

The double dimension of selectorates and winning coalitions between the FIS and the army becomes quite clear with the St.Egidio meeting. It makes the total discrepancy between the two clear, in that the meeting was not acknowledged at all by the sitting regime. This was due to the fact that it gave neither the leadership, the winning coalition, the now challenging President Zeroual nor the selectorate anything they did not already have. It was aimed at the larger selectorate the FIS hoped to create. Martine Stone basically points to the same thing when he writes of the “National Contract” produced at the meeting, and the different parties that acknowledged it.<sup>362</sup> The point being that the “outsiders” those who only were tentative candidates for being part of the selectorate but that excluded themselves by demanding the FIS being let into the fold once again were the only ones signing the document. By doing this they did not necessarily want the FIS itself in power, but they indicate that they preferred a situation or outcome that would have an expanded selectorate in which they themselves could have a possibility for becoming part of the winning coalition. The regime even tried to bait leaders of the FIS itself out of their hopes for spots in the alternative selectorate, in this way they certainly tried to undermine the machinery the FIS had built up and it was especially a blow to FIS leadership in exile as these were the least likely to ever come to the positions they coveted unless there was a victory on the FIS’ part.<sup>363</sup>

In this chapter we have seen and discussed the main economic issues throughout the civil war. From the dire straits the army found themselves in at the onset to the much improved position they had after accepting the IMF’s terms for debt rescheduling. With a new found ability to purchase equipment for a more efficient fight, to the increased ability to please the winning coalition with a reinforced ability to dole out private goods. We have also discussed why the insurgents never made any critical and debilitating attacks towards the most important industrial sector, the hydrocarbon sector as it would be a vital part of their own governance if they ever succeeded in their endeavour. The pivotal event in the economic events of the 1990’s Algeria is without a doubt the rescheduling deal of 1994, as it wrought the changes above but more than that it made the feel safe enough to allow for presidential elections. The effect of this seemingly positive political change and how it affected the unfolding of the civil war will now be addressed.

---

<sup>362</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 118.

<sup>363</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 237.

## 9 Did the sway on power hold?

In this last chapter I seek to explain and discuss the last real political conflict that had direct effects on the on-going civil war. We find it in President Liamine Zeroual who started out as a soldier in the war of independence in 1957, his first position as a politician came in 1993 as Minister of Defence which then led him to assume the chairmanship of the HCE in January 1994 as an army proxy. Following the IMF deal and all the changes it brought about presidential elections were held in 1995 of which he was the victor. This chapter describes how he much like President Chadli serving as an army proxy in the same manner challenged his original leadership – the army *jema'a*. He did this through several acts; the one I will address first is his slow and steady strengthening of institutions and what it meant for the power struggle. Following that I will describe at length how he got to be the new president and address his deviation from army interests through backdoor negotiations with FIS leaders, his attempt at securing his own position and power through a new constitution as well as his response to President Chadli's main problem, the inability to muster forces. On that note the role, the reason and effect of the civil defence groups will be discussed at length ending with the army's reaction to all off these challenges with a new election in 1997 that as I claim was the beginning of the civil wars end.

### 9.1 How did Zeroual challenge the army?

President Zeroual focused on building up institutions; with this he slowly (and “invisibly”) gained a stronger foothold. He seemingly identified the same issue Hugh Roberts claims is the single problem that plagues Algeria, dysfunctional institutions.<sup>364</sup> He played both sides (it could seem) by stating that all insurgents should be wiped out at the same time as he on multiple occasions attempted backdoor negotiations with the FIS. A second ousting of an ex-military national leader would probably seem a bit too much leaving the army with little choice other than to fight President Zeroual (whom also had support from the less hardliner inclined generals - meaning parts of the winning coalition) on his own terms, namely politically. He managed to see through several reshuffles of military commands in addition to chiefs of police which in regards to the ability to muster forces was the same thing at the time.

---

<sup>364</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 207.

This was possible due to the strong legitimacy President Zeroual had, both due to willingness or attempts at starting negotiation and the fact that he won an election judged to be fair by foreign observers.

The reshuffles in the winning coalition (generals, ministers etc.) and the added benefits the public image gave him towards his winning coalition made him powerful. The new party of the sitting Zeroual, the RND (National Rally for Democracy) created mere months before the legislative election in 1997 won a sweeping victory. This showed that he held a strong position in accord with the questions posed by Hugh Roberts earlier, “why did the army allow the islamists to win?”, the implications of it is that either President Zeroual was so powerful that he dictated his own victory or the army was in such a squeezed position that they had no other option, both alternatives speaking on President Zeroual's behalf. On the elections the same commentator from Hugh Roberts's book goes on to say that they were held in order to resolve a certain number of political problems.<sup>365</sup> As is written here, if that question is the correct one the answer is; no. As the election rather showed that the current president had gotten further with the same project that President Chadli tried earlier, so it was more an expression of strength in which President Zeroual had gotten ratified – willingly or not - by enough forces in the army to continue.<sup>366</sup> This is indicated if not proven by the fact that President Zeroual sacked the former chief of police, Abas Ghezail a well-known pro-Lamari eradicator and then replaced him with one loyal to him, Yayeb Derradji.<sup>367</sup>

General Zeroual first became the new leader of the HCE in 1994. He had then migrated from being the Minister of Defence and an individual part of the army's leadership *jema'a*. This migration seems to have had the same effect on all who made it. Being the *jema'a*'s primary representative outside of the army influencing and controlling their will in policy seems to have been the vulnerable part of the system they had. As he was now part of the winning coalition more than the leadership his interests changed accordingly and the ambitions of the winning coalition came to the surface rather than the leaderships, as with President Chadli. After the IMF loans the regime found itself in a place strong enough and experienced enough to try to normalize the situation, this is what must be interpreted from the presidential elections held in 1995. These were in fact two years delayed, since Chadli's presidency expired in 1993, the HCE with its shaky mandate actually was not supposed to govern that

---

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 193–194.

<sup>367</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 244.

long. Here it will also be seen as a move to appease foreign investors and the IMF who not long before gained influence and power over the leadership by way of the deal struck in 1994. The elections were successful largely due to a heavy presence of security forces at all voting stations maintaining order.<sup>368</sup> Foreign observers had few if any negative comments on how the elections had been held and all seemed to be working in the army's favour. As they now had one of "theirs" publicly elected as head of the political apparatus in a legitimate way removing or appeasing concerns from abroad, but as mentioned, in a different group other ambitions came to the fore.<sup>369</sup> He did not stray that far necessarily on the approach to the insurgency, at least at the onset. He met the daunting challenge of his office with a combined military and economic policy possible with the new funding after 1994, trying to contain the overall Islamist dissidence with economic reform, building programs and the like that targeted the young Algerians in particular. There were not any executions after he took on office though, at least not through the court apparatus, the approach was still brutal and without compromise.<sup>370</sup>

President Zeroual started to deviate from the line held by the *jema'a* when he initiated backdoor negotiations with Abassi the FIS leader who still served time in jail. There had been no room for negotiation; there was no compromise as General Lamari the Chief of staff and one of the more influential members of the *jema'a* stated both in words and actions. President Zeroual bypassed these opinions in the army when he initiated talks, something that could mean two things. Firstly, he started to feel comfortable enough to represent his own ambitions and most likely the opinions of some of the other members of the leadership as well judging from his reshuffles in it. The other explanation is that it was a cunning plan, in which they predicted that the talk initiative would forestall a possible merger between the AIS and the GIA as it certainly did.<sup>371</sup> Not only that but there was an escalation of violence in the time surrounding the talks, but sources here are a bit confusing. Some write that GIA in fact wanted negotiations and that is why they started their bomb campaign in 1994 to force negotiations with the Islamists and the government.<sup>372</sup> This could be due to the loose organization of GIA or understanding of what it was due to the complex workings and diverging goals therein, no matter the last option is probably the least likely since President

---

<sup>368</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 156.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>370</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 152; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 243.

<sup>371</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 189.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 193; Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 170.

Zeroual seems to have continued on with his project of fulfilling his ambitions and not necessarily using his position to gain a total victory in any way over the insurgents at large.

His attempt at consolidation of power at the presidency was supported by the constitution that had become a somewhat more important part in the attempt at normalizing the situation. The new constitution was part of the political renewal needed after three years of civil war in the wake of the IMF deal struck in 1994 as discussed in chapter 8. The constitution was a rule providing factor in any case, and even from the weak position it had been in with the creation of the HCE which clearly broke the previous one, it still shows that there was some respect for it even subsequent to that. To make it more actionable the ability to muster forces. This was attained through political power to some degree by several reshuffles in the winning coalition both within the army and the ministers who now held the same positions as the members of the HCE had in the winning coalition.<sup>373</sup> President Zeroual managed to position a civilian defence minister “of his own”, he also managed to reshuffle in the army command to the degree that it became a much more balanced situation for him.<sup>374</sup> This was possible due to the constitution at the same time as he strengthened its position – more correctly his ability to use it in his favour.

In 1996 the presidential powers expanded dramatically, almost to the extent that he could rule by decree in certain situations. He was granted the ability to appoint, magistrates, provincial governors and the central bank governor which again gave him the ability to build his own winning coalition and get close to the resource pool.<sup>375</sup> The reason that he was not ousted in the same way as President Chadli was probably the fact that he had certain backers in the army *jema'a* in addition to the safeguards that now were in place for the president under the new constitution.<sup>376</sup> Not to mention the necessity of the new foreign relations and the implications that came along with it after the IMF deal. The rivalry was by no means non-existent but as mentioned the army had to deal with President Zeroual politically and with the powers they had in that regard rather than direct confrontation, though some analyst in the field claim the assassinations that occurred on generals and their supporters meaning parts of

---

<sup>373</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: TBS The Book Service Ltd, 1977).

<sup>374</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 170; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 124.

<sup>375</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 528; Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria*, 244.

<sup>376</sup> This came with the new constitution of November 1996 in which the president was given virtually veto power over the parliament. Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 187; Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 528.

the leadership and winning coalition had their roots within it and not in the insurgency.<sup>377</sup>

Whatever truth there is in these claims they need not be addressed here though, since losses were incurred on “both sides” and in effect had little direct effect on the rivalry.<sup>378</sup>

Another point to be made with regards to the constitution and the power it provided President Zeroual was the strength it lent to his institution building project. The informal political groupings in Algeria had always been important as they were bypassing the very weak institutions; this gave room for the groups like the “Oujada Group” that existed and had political influence in the beginning of the Algerian statehood. From the 1960’s to mid 1970’s it had a lot of influence in the policy choices as the president of the time also was a part of it.<sup>379</sup> The army *jema’a* was no exception to this trait, so President Zeroual’s institution building must be seen in contrast to this. The ousting of all Islamist sympathizers could have been an excuse to get rid of certain informal structures within the institutions, in the period where they were ousted initiation of computerization in the departments was started as well. This gave less room for an informal procedure with the paper trail much more accessible.<sup>380</sup> Establishing his own winning coalition and selectorate much in the same way as the FIS he directly opposed to the army. To wrestle power from them, he had to remove the power of the informal politics.<sup>381</sup> Such was the complex theatre where the FIS vied for power with insurgency and pressure groups, President Zeroual opposed the leadership he was supposed to represent and then the opposition meaning the other political parties did as best they could in-between it all. It’s important to note that several of the parties that first ran for elections in the early 1990’s maintained the position that FIS should be allowed back into the fold. Why is it that they did so while others did not? Within the selectorate theory it is a sensible choice. Since a new potential leadership - as they would have been at least a much more potent winning coalition if not the direct leadership when in power - made it a buyer’s market for the other parties. This would have given them the opportunity to play the FIS and the army against one another to secure most possible private goods to their own party.

---

<sup>377</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 326–327.

<sup>378</sup> All the examples given on HCE members, officers, insurgency leaders and CCN (*Conseil Consultatif National*) members being killed didn’t change the situation much. The only one that really did change a lot was the assassination of HCE leader Bou diaf who’s assassination remains discussed still.

<sup>379</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 124.

<sup>380</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 172.

<sup>381</sup> Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets*, 73.

## 9.2 What were the motivations behind the civil defence groups?

The obvious reasons, or claimed reasons for the civil defence groups was the need to ensure the security of the populace falling victims to insurgency raids. The importance of the armed civil defence groups had another function as well; it weakened the strong card of the army by diluting the ability to muster armed forces effectively making them a new power play piece. To such an extent that it has been speculated if both the killing of civilians in massacres and the abstaining from intervening in them was all part of an army ploy. This is not proven, but there is no doubt that the auxiliary forces shifted power or at least moved it closer to equilibrium. The forces amounted to some 100 000.<sup>382</sup>

The mobilization of these unconventional forces was first encouraged in 1994, by the then Interior Minister Abderrahmane Meziane Cherif. He promised to arm civilian groups who wanted to defend themselves against the violence of the insurgents. Cherif was put into his position by HCE leader Zeroual a position in which he made many changes within the police force to make them into a more effective fighting force.<sup>383</sup> This factor meant that the ability to muster forces had been diluted, and the army found itself without total control of all armed forces. Although if the analysis is correct the encouragement of General Kamel Abderrahmane who commanded the western Algerian region on the self-arming implies what was a possible argument in the previous chapter, that some forces within the army *jema'a* wanted President Zeroual to succeed with his project.<sup>384</sup>

Cherif did not blindly encourage the arming of civilians; at least he said that it would happen under strict surveillance and only in isolated areas when it was formally allowed to do so in March 1995.<sup>385</sup> Despite the encouragement from top officials and the promises of control and surveillance this was not to happen, in fact the militias were not lawfully recognized until January 1997.<sup>386</sup> The reasons behind the creation of the militias and the way in which it happened are told in a different way on the Algerian Ministry of defence's webpage. In some translated communiqués of which they do not present the original Arabic text they speak of;

---

<sup>382</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 145.

<sup>383</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 150, 153; Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 261; Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 201.

<sup>384</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 462, 534.

<sup>385</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 261.

<sup>386</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 316.



*“In the fight relentless [against the terrorists] ... the defence of the right so that force always remains within the law ... In this direction, it engaged operations of raking and contributed its share to the creation of structures of proximity (Groups of Legitimate-defence) ... These operations made it possible to avoid many other massacres and to drive back the terrorist groups in their last cuttings off.”*<sup>387</sup>

The somewhat incorrect language doesn't render it entirely unclear as to what was made, for what reason and seemingly in a legitimate and lawful way. They go in saying that:

*“These legitimate-defence groups are placed under the supervision of the Ministry of National Defence. Create and regulated by the executive decree 97-04 of January 04<sup>th</sup>, 1997, the groups of Legitimate-defence, are duly authorized by the authorities and made up of voluntary citizens.”*<sup>388</sup>

This backs up my source saying they were not officially lawfully recognized until 1997, though the continued usage of the word “legitimate” certainly seem to address something. They formally were under the authority of the *wali* - the governor. They claim these groups had a lot of success in defeating the insurgents as they;” knew well the ground and the terrorists who, for some ones, were native localities even where they prevailed.”<sup>389</sup> These “GLD” as their called in the communiqués have an official mission;

*“...to prevent or counter [with] the acts of terrorism and subversion directed against the sites of dwellings, the places of social life, as well as the public [of] infrastructures and social equipment.”*<sup>390</sup>

What is not addressed at all is the lack of control, the lack of legitimacy and the instances in which as Kalyvas claims the armament of citizens lead to more violence. So clearly they either failed in some instances, or they were created for other reason or not created at all as Martinez claims.<sup>391</sup> Here we lean towards the latter, that they were a mere act of desperation, a survival strategy that the power brokers in Algeria later capitalized on. The first suggestion

---

<sup>387</sup> “ANP’s History,” 7.

<sup>388</sup> [http://www.mdn.dz/site\\_principal/accueil\\_an.php#undefined](http://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/accueil_an.php#undefined) , side sju

<sup>389</sup> “ANP’s History,” 7.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 109.

might not seem implausible, but the facts surrounding their appearance in Algeria seem to negate any greater plan or thought surrounding their purpose. The somewhat delayed lawful recognition of them, three years at least indicates the same conclusion.

Lawful or not they were mobilized and served several purposes, intended and unintended. Even if the control of forces had been diluted, the army who always had left most of the fighting to the police and civil executive forces now saw them combined with the militias fighting the insurgency.<sup>392</sup> In this they were part of operations that retook areas abandoned by the army in their “let them rot” strategy earlier in the civil war. They managed to limit the freedom of action of the insurgents and even drive them out of certain areas;”...The combined action of the NPA (ANP) and other forces of safety [the militias] thus showed the elimination and the arrest of many terrorist heads...”<sup>393</sup> Their management was executed by former “mujahedeen” from the independence war and that gave them some ability and a fighting chance.<sup>394</sup>

As mentioned the militias had two functions. The first described above, the second discussed here. The FFS (*Front des Forces socialistes*) leader Hocine Ait Ahmed warned about the dangers of an outright civil war because of the encouragement of the militia establishment, and once again encouraged negotiations instead of escalation.<sup>395</sup> This is not what happened but the situation did escalate, in Kalvvas’s article, “Wanton and Senseless” he describes how the militia establishment and the arming of them proved to be a reason behind several village massacres contrary to; “The report which in resulted is that all the zones where the citizens armed themselves and constituted in legitimate-defence groups are less exposed to the risk of terrorist attacks.”<sup>396</sup> In this he points out the connection between villages that have applied for arms from the government and the targets of GIA rendering much of the alleged intent behind the militia encouragement useless.<sup>397</sup> Cordesman goes even further in claiming that the local militias themselves have carried out massacres and exacted revenge for earlier misdeeds when armed, while Martin Stone in his book makes a point of how the militias were misused in a bid for land, tracing aggravation between landholders going back to the independence war. This allegedly was done though operations guised as attacks on insurgents and islamists when

---

<sup>392</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 151; Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 151.

<sup>393</sup> “ANP’s History,” 7.

<sup>394</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 165; Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 318–319; “ANP’s History,” 7.

<sup>395</sup> Løchstøer, *Algerie*, 261.

<sup>396</sup> “ANP’s History,” 7.

<sup>397</sup> P hillips, John, *Algeria*, 233.

in fact it was control over coveted land that was the goal.<sup>398</sup> But these motivations and actions were nothing more than side effects of the real purpose, yet another more important reason will be discussed in the following chapter concerning the army's response to President Zerouals threat.

## 9.3 How did the army respond to the threat

### President Zeroual had become?

The army responded by priming on a multiparty system again. By lawfully acknowledging some of the civil defence groups they were legally subjugated to the army via the Ministry of Defence contrary to a loosely organized paramilitary force. Also by the failure of this power play - since they ended up hurting communities that wanted the government's protection - the army mandated a non-intervention policy with regards to the massacres for conventional forces at least as far as we can tell. The acceptance of a multi-party system this time came with better prepared rules that were dictated by the army. They created an environment of dualism, two islamist parties (not the FIS though), two secular government parties, two berber parties, the FLN returned to the fold next to the RND. Even the FLN became pro regime again in 1996 when the tides might seem to have turned. This resulted in them being one of the two parties played upon, as RND became its regime supporting twin.<sup>399</sup> So in fact they did not elect governing parties but rather an opposition being the only one with some sway against the army in the checks and balances described in chapter 1.<sup>400</sup>

This gave the army the possibility to play one of against the other. In this way the selectorate was expanded, but in a way that served the army since they had a big enough selectorate that none could be assured of anything - least of all making it to the winning coalition - though not as big as to remove the power of private goods. The fact that the selectorate consisted of two of all actors secured the "seller's market" which the army could exploit when recruiting its winning coalition. The results of the elections shows just how strong a position the army had maintained despite President Zeroual's challenge, his party didn't even get 10% of the votes

---

<sup>398</sup> Stone, *The Agony of Algeria*, 178; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 160.

<sup>399</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 187, 233.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

in the parliamentary election in 2002, and Zeroual himself did not even try out for the presidency in 1999.<sup>401</sup>

Before all this though it was clear that the army did not accept the new way things were going, something that will be made clear through several points in this chapter. The first diversion from the policy of no negotiation was maybe the first sign of the army's growing concern and disagreement with the new president.<sup>402</sup> It seems like the forces within their leadership had learned from the experience with President Chadli, as their move was not one of a direct military coup but rather a more extensive use of their winning coalition in what became a political battle to wrestle control out of the usurper President Zeroual. This was possible due to the opposition which was ever seeking favour with the army, which are those who had not politically bound themselves to the FIS by being firm on their return to the fold. This soliciting of favours throughout the civil war did not end with President Zeroual's challenge, some sought favour there, others with the army whom by experience seemed to be the safest bet.<sup>403</sup> The creation of the new multi-party system was a lesson learned from the previous encounter with it, since it now was controlled and formed in a way in which the army could manipulate the players towards their goals. The dualism of every party made for a textbook example of applying a divide and rule strategy that also gained them some appearance of legitimacy since all interests were "represented".

On the ability to muster forces the massacres and the militias as mentioned became pieces in the power play. The dilution of manpower control was countered with mandates of non-interference in which it became abundantly clear that President Zeroual still needed the army and could do nothing without them since the internal security forces were not as many and the militias were local, the army in fact – when it wanted – were better suited to cover larger areas.<sup>404</sup> By being passive the army showed President Zeroual that they were strong enough to do as they liked and could even "sabotage" his initiatives like the militias or overtake it as happened with the lawful recognition of them. There are even some instances where it is reported that the army directly hindered the militias from doing what they were supposed on the night of a massacre. In Bent Halla the self-defence militia were invited by the next door army captain to spend the night in their barracks. This is of course inconclusive evidence of

---

<sup>401</sup> Lahouari Addi, "Army Divided over Algeria's Future," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999, <http://mondediplo.com/1999/03/02algeria>.

<sup>402</sup> Roberts, *The Battlefield*, 237.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>404</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 503.

army sabotage of the militia, indeed they also cooperated at several occasions but it could indicate that there was a will to see the militias fail in their endeavour.<sup>405</sup>

The assassinations of top generals and ministers representing the winning coalition on both sides may have weakened one side enough so that the dethroning of President Zeroual became a fact.<sup>406</sup> One such assassination that no doubt was a striking blow meted out by shadowy army backers or the insurgents with no such affiliations was that of Abdelhaq Benhamouda in January 1997. He was the labour leader and a close ally of the president.<sup>407</sup> There was not an attempt to run for a second period by Zeroual, and key players of the army eventually held all the important positions giving them the most effective winning coalition within the political apparatus leaving Zeroual with a weaker base. This in effect left the army on top, with an even better set up for the continuation of their sovereignty. Something that was not to change at all until very recently when President Abdelazis Bouteflika somehow got a law passed giving him direct control over the republican guard.<sup>408</sup>

## 9.4 Was there an end to it all?

The war to some extent ended here, with the army's final assertion of power. Until the army had come up with a system in which it comfortably sat with all the power and the opportunity to continue to do so it was in their interest to prolong it. Indeed Martinez claims it was in everyone's interest; the difference now was that the army no longer had an interest in it.<sup>409</sup> There had been meek attempts at "clemency" acts since 1994, these however proved inefficient.<sup>410</sup> Although in July 1999 the "Civil Concord" was proposed as an act to mobilize the people for peace. With it came a new amnesty that would expire January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2000. By the end date it's estimated that about 80% of the insurgents had surrendered.<sup>411</sup> The FIS still were not allowed to participate in the political contest however, as mentioned the political parties representing islamist sentiments were new and probably less obstinate.<sup>412</sup> Following some "confessions" from the army in which it was admitted that some acts overstepping legal

---

<sup>405</sup> Phillips, John, *Algeria*, 241.

<sup>406</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 326.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 520.

<sup>408</sup> "ANP News," Official site, *Ministry of National Defence*, (March 5, 2014),

[http://www.mdn.dz/site\\_cgr/index.php?L=an#](http://www.mdn.dz/site_cgr/index.php?L=an#).

<sup>409</sup> Martinez and Entelis, *The Algerian Civil War*, 234.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>411</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 124, 130.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

boundaries had occurred the Ministry of Interior accepted cases from families filing missing person reports. All news about the war, and even investigating into the conduct of the government throughout the war and critique of it remains a criminal offence according to the National Reconciliation Charter of 2005 in Algeria – explaining the somewhat murky waters.<sup>413</sup> And the “confessions” however were not more than what General Lamari said; “...atrocities committed by individuals acting in isolation...”<sup>414</sup> Of which at least two persons were prosecuted, though the result of these prosecutions are unknown. This at least in my opinion speaks volumes on the fact, that the savage war of Algeria never was about right and wrong, evil and good, legitimate or illegitimate but rather about a collection of people in power trying to remain there for no other reasons than just that.<sup>415</sup> President Bouteflika who was pro army when he assumed the presidency in 1999 served in this capacity only by the grace of the general’s *jema’a*.<sup>416</sup>

The main finding in this chapter is based on the debacle after President Chadli, and the challenge of President Zeroual. The army’s system of leading in the shadows saw a persistent problem with their *jema’a*’s proxy in the winning coalition, whether a president in a single party reality, leader of the HCE or a coxed and elected president. As all of the proxies in these roles real job was to ensure the will of the army’s *jema’a* they all failed, the reasons as discussed with both President Chadli, HCE leader Boudiaf were all that they started to act on behalf of or in the interest of the formal ruling organ, the winning coalition itself and not the leadership as if they forgot who put them there. The same problem occurs when President Zeroual tried to consolidate his power from an even stronger and seemingly more legitimate position than those preceding him. He deftly manoeuvred around the main issues at hand, the ability to muster forces as well as seeing a clear cut weakness in the way the *jema’a* preferred to rule. This observation in and off itself does not answer the preamble directly, but it suggest some reasons stemming from the complex power struggle that prompted some of the most vicious initiatives and allowances done throughout the civil war. As the civil defence groups, the non-intervention mandate of the army and the outright cynical manipulating of the different insurgency groups all were results of the weak link between a decided *jema’a* and

---

<sup>413</sup> <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/2009/0421/p06s06-wome.html> 20.01.2015

<sup>414</sup> Chomsky et al., *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*, 474; Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 162–163.

<sup>415</sup> Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 161.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 133; Peregrino Dr. Brimah, “The Patriots: How Algeria Checked Its ‘Boko Haram’ Crisis in the 90’s Black Decade,” *News360*, April 29, 2014, <http://news360.com/article/236529732>.

their proxies in formal politics and their results affected the disenfranchised group who held no political or economic value in a most savage way.

# 10 Conclusion:

In this paper I've tried to lay out a different understanding of the Algerian civil war. This attempt is as stated in the introduction nothing more than just that, an attempt at understanding what is perceived as an infinitely complex matter of which one can only glimpse the inner workings. This is the reason why an overall theory has been utilized to identify certain key categories in the upper – and therefore most likely actionable – strata of Algeria. First I identified within the “power house” those making the decisions, those supporting this collection of generals in this case and lastly those at the very bottom that really empower the machinery. I chose to take advantage of already pre-set categories from a theory that in this paper is thought to be useful in explaining certain key aspects of the conflict.

Having done this I continued to explain how one could perceive the reforms of the late 1980's as a political battle over power in which President Chadli lost. However before this loss was incurred, areas of the public sphere of Algeria had changed, we found an army no longer constrained by its alliance to the FLN, in addition we found that the islamist faction had been given a participatory role however fickle it was. From this I've tried to explain the importance of these new realities in that the army who once found itself at least contained to some degree within a system of checks and balances was now unshackled. Further the islamist sentiments had been allowed room in the public sphere and as we continue even gained ground. As is discussed in the chapter the reasons for this are clouded but suggests an army thinking they could have their way with them as they had with the FLN. When this failed the conditions for “an extension of politics” were set, and as such the insurgency commenced.

The predicament of this paper asks how to explain the descent into a savage war, so far what has been explained leans more towards the reasons behind it, not directly addressing the severity. These are however in the author's opinion vital in explaining its nature. As the identification of each of the categories allows one to follow a certain logic that explains the descent with the premise that one in power wish to remain so. This assumption needless to say is apparent in the very fact that there was a war. Therefore, following this logic, I've tried to explain the overall methods and strategies being implemented by both sides, first of the FIS courting the population at large to an expanded selectorate with the gruesome but reasonable response being a total disregard for those not important for one's own political survival on the



other front. For the army's part this meant that anyone not part of the army's selectorate would be left to their own devices, as the army saw its own political survival as a higher priority than the actual survival of the people at large actually benefitting from the disastrous outcome. As discussed in the paper this is only one reason, as at the onset of the war we find the army lacking in its original purpose, in terms of skills and in terms of resources. This was however amended in 1994 when a rescheduling of loans took place and the economy got better.

The importance of the economy has been clearly shown through examples and troop concentration. However upon mending the army's economic position the deal with the IMF wrought changes in the political sphere. A new project was started, in which a new conflict arose with the army's third candidate assuming a political leader position. I find that a transition from the army's *jema'a* to a political office is a recurrent challenge for the army *jema'a*. President Zeroual challenged the army in much the same way as President Chadli only that he in addition to building institutions making a better political machinery to counter its power, also challenged the army's ability to muster forces. This was only possible due to the "Let them rot" strategy. Since the strategy had created an environment that certainly didn't give the insurgents much headway it nonetheless resulted in a deprived population.

The strategy despite its horrendous character worked against the insurgents, as their strategy was to include people in a new political reality in which opportunities would be available to all. The "Let them rot" strategy was accompanied by manipulating divisions between the insurgents, a move that changed what the "Islamist" strategy was. Several groupings in a disarranged front warred against the government and themselves following the successful attack in Tamesguida. This combined with the lack of governance and the horrible conditions brought on by the insurgency led to a passive and depoliticized populace that in the end armed themselves to at least counter the violence done towards them.

It was this proliferation of forces fighting the insurgents that became President Zeroual's strongest asset in his political fight against the army, as it watered down the army's total control of all armed forces on the counter-insurgents' side. This control gained through the 'state of war' condition nevertheless was reclaimed in 1997 when all the militias were subjugated to the Ministry of defence. The army is also seen to manipulate the conditions surrounding the new elections in 1999 allowing for two political parties of all wings. This made it easier to gain support by playing them off against each other. How this is done

remains to be figured out, though the results always seem to imply the logic underlying my assumptions as President Zeroual was dethroned and replaced by President Bouteflika who back then served at the mercy of the army.

So we see a country ravaged by war, horrible massacres without intervention perpetrated in a very grisly manner, arbitrary bombing, assassinations and systemic mistreatment of its citizens due to economics. Economics in its rawest sense, to prioritize one's resources where one needs it the most. In this rationale the disenfranchised aren't needed and as such are an unnecessary price to pay, leaving them to their own devices or when it's beneficial taken advantage of through political power plays.

# Literature

- Addi, Lahouari. "Army Divided over Algeria's Future." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 3, 1999. <http://mondediplo.com/1999/03/02algeria>.
- "ANP News." Official site. *Ministry of National Defence*, March 5, 2014. [http://www.mdn.dz/site\\_cgr/index.php?L=an#](http://www.mdn.dz/site_cgr/index.php?L=an#).
- "ANP's History." Official site. *Ministry of National Defence*, August 11, 2014. [http://www.mdn.dz/site\\_principal/index.php?L=an](http://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/index.php?L=an).
- "ANP's History in Arabic." Official site. *Ministry of National Defence*, August 11, 2014. [http://www.mdn.dz/site\\_principal/index.php?L=ar#undefined](http://www.mdn.dz/site_principal/index.php?L=ar#undefined).
- Beckett, Ian, ed. *Modern Counter-Insurgency*. Aldershot: Ashgate Pub Co, 2007.
- Chomsky, Noam, Lord Eric Avebury, Youcef Bedjaoui, Abbas Aroua, Mexiane Ait-Larbi, and & 2 more. *An Inquiry Into The Algerian Massacres*. Hoggar, n.d.
- Clarke, Kevin A., and Randall W. Stone. "Democracy and the Logic of Political Survival." *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 03 (August 2008): 387–92. doi:10.1017/S0003055408080131.
- Cordesman, Anthony H. *A Tragedy of Arms: Military and Security Developments in the Maghreb*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2001.
- Dr. Brimah, Peregrino. "The Patriots: How Algeria Checked Its 'Boko Haram' Crisis in the 90's Black Decade." *News360*, April 29, 2014. <http://news360.com/article/236529732>.
- Galula, David. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. 1 edition. Westport, Conn. u.a.: Praeger, 2006.
- Henry, Clement Moore, and Robert Springborg. *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*. 2 edition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. "Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria." *Rationality and Society* 11, no. 3 (August 1, 1999): 243–85. doi:10.1177/104346399011003001.
- Kennedy, Ryan. "Survival and Accountability: An Analysis of the Empirical Support for 'Selectorate Theory.'" *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 695–714. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2478.2009.00552.x.
- Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye. *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Boston: TBS The Book Service Ltd, 1977.
- Laqueur, Walter. *Guerrilla Warfare: A Historical and Critical Study*. New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1997.
- Løchstøer, Cathrine. *Algerie: ved demokratiets grense*. Aschehoug, 1995.
- Martinez, Luis, and John Entelis. *The Algerian Civil War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Mesquita, Bruce Bueno de, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow. *The Logic of Political Survival*. The MIT Press, 2004.
- Mesquita, Bruce Bueno de, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, James D. Morrow, and & 1 more. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2004.
- Moriarty, J. Thomas. "The Vanguard's Dilemma: Understanding and Exploiting Insurgent Strategies." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (September 2010): 476–97. doi:10.1080/09592318.2010.505479.
- Phillips, John, Evans, Martin. *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Quandt, William B. *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism*. First Thus edition. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1998.
- Rees, Phil. *Algeria's Hidden War*. Video, 2012. <http://vimeo.com/43758894>.

- Riding, Alan. "Hijacked Airliner Forced to France." *The New York Times*, December 26, 1994. <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/26/world/hijacked-airliner-forced-to-france.html>.
- Roberts, Hugh. *The Battlefield: Algeria 1988-2002, Studies in a Broken Polity*. 1 edition. London; New York: Verso, 2003.
- Schelling, Thomas C. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. Revised edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- Stone, Martin. *The Agony of Algeria*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Sweetman, Caroline. *Gender, Development, and Citizenship*. Oxfam, 2004.
- Willis, Michael. *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History*. Washington Square, N.Y.: NYU Press, 1999.