

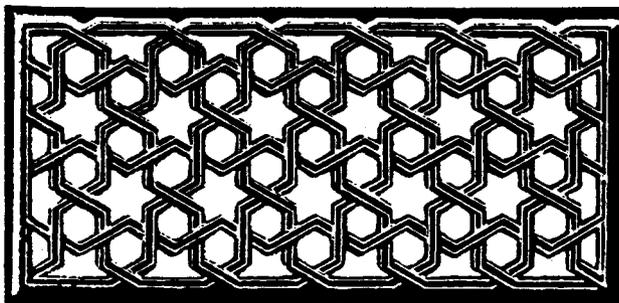
POLICY FOCUS

**AN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA?
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
MIDDLE EAST AND THE WEST**

GIDEON GERA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than three years after Algeria's military-backed government annulled the results of the first round of parliamentary elections, the country remains locked in a bloody civil war with insurgents seeking to establish a *sharia*-based Islamic regime. While by no means assured, an Islamist takeover could occur in one of three ways: gradual Islamist ascendancy resulting from tactical compromise between Islamists and elements of the government; a sudden collapse of the regime, caused by the continuous strain on the military and security forces; and disintegration of the country into separate enclaves, with Islamists governing some areas and hard-line secularists and Berbers in control of others.

In all circumstances, an Islamist victory would have serious repercussions for North Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and U.S. interests in these areas. These repercussions would vary depending on the method of takeover, the speed of the government's collapse, and the extent of violence involved in the process. Moreover, the impact of an Islamist government would be affected by the success or failure of the new regime's effort to improve the Algerian economy so as to meet the needs of the poor and unemployed who comprise its main power base.

In general, the emergence of an Islamist regime in Algeria would have an effect similar to that of the Khomeini revolution in Iran in 1979, providing a tremendous boost to similar movements throughout the Middle East and the Islamic world. Algeria's new rulers are likely to provide moral, political, and at times material support to kindred movements that threaten the political stability of moderate, pro-Western Arab regimes (especially Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt), oppose the Arab-Israeli peace process and work to establish Islamist regimes in sub-Saharan Africa. Depending on the solidity of the regime in Algiers, Islamist rulers feeling threatened could participate directly in terrorist or other military ventures in Europe, the Middle East, or beyond.

In addition to the immediate repercussions on its neighboring North African states, an Islamist takeover in Algeria would have a significant impact on European security. Not only would southern Europe—especially France—face large-scale immigration of Algerian intellectuals and other secularists, but the victory of Algerian Islamists could deepen rifts within Europe's existing Muslim communities. Moreover, growing European economic interests in Algeria could be targeted should the Islamists not succeed in providing an economic windfall for their supporters.

Depending on circumstances, an Islamist Algeria could adversely affect U.S. interests in the unhindered flow of oil and gas, the Arab-Israeli peace process, the security of pro-West Arab and African moderates, nonproliferation, counter-terrorism, and human rights. Responding to this challenge would involve one of three options: accommodation, containment, and rollback. Given current political and military realities, a policy of "active containment"—implemented in concert with European, Asian, and Middle Eastern allies—would offer the best way to ensure that Islamist rulers in Algeria do not flout the rules and norms of acceptable international behavior.

AN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA? IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE WEST

The conflict in Algeria is depicted by some as terrorism and banditry and by others as a popular revolt or religious uprising, but in reality it is a civil war. Although the army-led Algerian government has maintained power through more than three years of fighting, a victory by Islamist opposition forces remains a distinct possibility. Here, Islamism refers to a radical political movement that seeks the possibly violent seizure of power in order to replace an “impious, illegitimate” (*jahili*) regime with one based on the primacy of Islamic law (*sharia*).¹ The potential implications of an Islamist takeover in North Africa’s biggest country—for its four bordering states, the larger Arab world, the Mediterranean rim of Europe, and for U.S. interests in the Middle East—are the subject of this study.

Contemporary Algeria

Algeria today is not the same country that in 1962 proudly wrested independence from France after eight years of war and then assumed the role of leader of revolutionary “Third Worldism” and flag-bearer of “positive neutralism.” Algeria has become an impoverished country suffering from an acute socio-economic and political crisis. After initial economic achievements based mainly on the country’s oil and gas resources, the Soviet-style command economy installed three decades ago failed to industrialize the country through the creation of large state industries and to develop agriculture through collectivization. When the economy was liberalized in the late 1970s and a larger role was allotted to the private sector, only the regime’s newly-rich elites avoided the damaging effects. The collapse of oil prices in 1986 precipitated the current crisis.

Algeria’s population is young (65 percent of all Algerians are under twenty-five and 44 percent are under fifteen) and rapidly increasing—from 10 million in 1962 to almost 27 million now—though the growth rate has been slowing. The compounded pressures of demography, extensive urbanization (51 percent of the population lives in urban areas), inadequate infrastructure, and economic recession have strained education and health services and caused a severe housing shortage. The standard of living has fallen sharply, with private consumption per capita dropping 18 percent from 1985 to 1992. Unemployment now amounts to approximately one-quarter of the labor force; it has grown rapidly since 1980 when the state—the largest employer—ceased to create new jobs for the expanding population. The young were especially affected; two-thirds of the

¹ Ibrahim A. Karawan, “Arab Dilemmas in the 1990s: Breaking Taboos and Searching for Signposts,” *Middle East Journal* 48 (Summer 1994): p. 450; see also Hassan al-Turabi quoted in *Mideast Mirror*, August 31, 1994; Francois Burgat, *L’Islamisme au Maghreb* (Paris: Karthala, 1988); Bruno Etienne, *L’Islamisme radical* (Paris: Hachette, 1987); and Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

unemployed are under twenty-five, almost all of whom have never held a job since leaving school. Thus, there developed in Algeria a significant group of literate, unemployed youth brimming with frustrated expectations the regime could never meet.²

Ever since it violently ousted the provisional government in 1962 and named Ahmed Ben Bella as the country's first president, Algeria's military has been the real power in the land. It exercised its power both directly (all presidents except Ben Bella and the murdered Muhammad Boudiaf were officers) and indirectly (through the ruling National Liberation Front or FLN). The power of the military was part of the one enduring achievement of French colonial rule—the creation of a huge bureaucracy. Upon independence, French officialdom was replaced by a new, patrimonial master-class in the military, the administration, and the FLN—all of which soon fell victim to the scourge of widespread corruption.

Thus, despite initial high hopes, many Algerians today believe they are ruled by a regime that has forgotten its revolutionary origins and by illegitimate leaders who appear to have failed the test of governing. In the words of an intellectual assassinated by Islamists in 1993, "Algerian society was crushed and impoverished for thirty years by a regime which used mediocrity, sycophancy, and cynicism as criteria for advancement."³

The Origins of Islamism in Algeria

Islamism's emergence as the main opposition to the regime reflects one of the more dynamic elements in Algerian political culture. Indeed, the ascendance of Islamism in Algeria is not only the heritage of the reformist Islamic scholars (*ulama*) of the 1930s, but also an ironic throwback to some of the ideas of former President Houari Boumedienne (1965-78).⁴

As Ibn Khaldun pointed out centuries ago, the two basic political identities in the Maghreb (North Africa) have been tribal and Islamic. Maghrebi Islam differed from Islam in the Mashreq (Arab East) in two important respects: it was uniform (almost all Maghrebis are Sunni Muslim, there hardly being any indigenous Christians) and it was the population's most important symbol of identity. It fulfilled a similar function to Arab nationalism in the Levant, unifying Arabic- and Berber-speakers and endowing resistance to foreign rule with a religious-national imprint. North Africa's centuries-long forward position on the front-line between Islam and Christianity deepened this imprint.⁵

Until the beginning of this century, rural Maghrebi society was predominantly tribal and patrimonial. The Ottomans had only a limited foothold

² Raymond Benhaim, Youssef Courbage, and Remy Leveau, *Le Maghreb en suspense* (Paris: Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, 1994); see also Gilles Kepel "Ouverture," in Kepel, ed., *Exils et royaumes: les appartenances au monde arabo-musulman aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1994), pp. 89-104.

³ Tahir Jaout quoted in *Monde Arabe, Maghreb Machrek (MAMM)* 141, (July-September 1993): pp. 111-14.

⁴ For a grassroots view of this see Luis Martinez, "Les eucalyptus, banlieu d'Alger dans la guerre civile," in Kepel, ed., *Exils et royaumes*.

⁵ Jaout, as quoted in *MAMM*, pp. 111-14; see also Carl Brown, "Islam's Role in North Africa," in I. William Zartman, ed., *Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 31-33; see also Mohammad Elbaki Hermassi, "State, Legitimacy, and Democratization in the Maghrib," in Ellis Goldberg, Rasat Kasaba, and Joel Migdal, eds., *Rules and Rights in the Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), p. 105; and Remy Leveau, "Algérie: les peiges de l'aide internationale," *Politique Internationale* 65 (Autumn 1994): pp. 178-82.

along the Algerian coast while numerous independent tribes ruled 69 percent of the land; as a result, over half of the population was never under the control of a central power. After the advent of French colonialism in 1830, these independent tribes fought the French for almost half a century. Tribalism lingers in Algerian society today in the persistence of regional loyalties and differences and in the continued recruitment of local tribesmen into numerous underground armed groups (*maquis*). Algeria's contemporary political and intellectual elite find a sense of continuity based solely in the autonomous chieftaincies of the past.⁶

In both Morocco and Tunisia, specific political entities evolved through a combination of Islam and tribal (or dynastic) ascendancy. But there never was a pre-colonial Algerian state, with the exception of Amir 'Abd al-Qadir's ephemeral reign during the nineteenth century French invasion. Thus there were hardly any non-tribal indigenous political traditions in pre-colonial Algeria.

The political identity of present-day Algeria has been shaped by Islamic-based opposition to French rule. The only Muslim institution legally recognized by the French since the middle of the nineteenth century was the judicial system, which became the foundation of a distinct national community. As early as 1930 the leader of Algerian *ulama*, 'Abd al-Hamid Bin Badis, articulated the nationalist aspect of Islam with the potent slogan: "Islam is my religion, Algeria is my country, and Arabic is my language."⁷

Two related components of Algerian political culture are authoritarianism and violence. Authoritarianism has its roots in both traditional political norms and in the models of contemporary Arab military regimes. Violence probably is an inheritance of the tribal past and the recent struggle for independence. Another key component is the French heritage which, though often vilified, is alive and active.

Building on these elements, the authoritarian military regime of Boumedienne re-wrote Algerian history to conform to the regime's political views, with the assistance of some fundamentalist scholars (who probably considered this a necessary part of nation-building). According to this new version of events, the 1962 Algerian revolution revived a (mainly mythical) Arab-Islamic state destroyed by the French in 1830; the intervening period was depicted as a continuous insurrection. As much as possible, the manifold aspects of the French impact on Algeria and of the stirrings of intellectual pluralism were obliterated. Given the youth of the population, three-quarters of whom had grown up after independence and knew only indirectly about colonial rule and revolt (if at all), this portrait of history soon became the accepted version. It was significantly underpinned by two other policies introduced by Boumedienne and continued by his successor, Chazli Ben Jedid: Arabization and the development of Islam as the state religion.

The Arabization of elementary and secondary education and of human and social sciences faculties was mostly completed by 1982. Physical sciences,

⁶ Mohammed Elbaki Hermassi, *Leadership and National Development in North Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 23, 36, 46-49; see also Mohammed Harbi, "Culturalisme, 'wilayisme' et clientelisme," in Reporters sans frontieres, eds., *Le drame Algérien* (Paris: La Decouverte, 1994), pp. 123-25.

⁷ Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance* (Paris: La Decouverte, 1994), pp. 91-92; see also Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge University Press: 1981), pp. 166-67; and Allan Christelow, "The Muslim Judge and Municipal Politics in Colonial Algeria and Senegal," in Juan R.I. Cole, ed., *Comparing Muslim Societies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 133-62.

medicine, and technological disciplines, however, continued to be taught in French. The cultural and ideological intent was twofold: first, to break with the continuing French presence and to restrain Berber culture; and second, to reinforce the reach of modern Arab political currents. Islamism played a key role in this, as the Egyptian Muslim Brothers provided many of the Arabic teachers needed to operationalize the Arabization process. The result was a deepening of the cultural and social cleavages between the Arabic- and French-speaking elites, as well as the alienation of Algeria's sizable Berber minority whose language was proscribed in schools.

For at least the first two decades following independence, Islam served to legitimize successive Algerian regimes while also containing the advance of secular and democratic trends. Though emphasized by the FLN as an integral part of its ideology since 1956, Islam was first defined as the state religion only in the 1976 Boumedienne constitution. It was linked neither to particular interests nor to a specific clergy. Ben Jedid reaffirmed this position in the 1986 National Charter, accelerated the construction of mosques (which rose in number from 2,200 in 1966 to 6,000 in 1986) to compete with the Islamist movement's non-governmental mosques, and increased the number of *imams* (Muslim clerics) by establishing the Islamic University at Constantine.⁸ Furthermore, a very restrictive and traditional family code was adopted in 1984 that adversely affected the status of women.⁹

The Rise of Islamism

Radical Islamism grew in Algeria in the mid-1970s out of the refusal by a few *ulama* to accept the state monopoly on Islam and subordinate themselves to a regime that they claimed had no religious legitimacy. Before long, it developed into a movement striving to replace the Algerian regime with an Islamic republic. Ironically, however, it never could have reached its present strong position without the helping hand of the regime's campaign of Arabization and its wish for Islamic legitimization.

The first violent clashes between Islamist and pro-Communist students occurred in 1982. One year earlier, the first Islamist underground, the *Mouvement Islamique d'Algérie*, began armed actions to overthrow the "impious regime." Its leader, Mustapha Bouyali, was killed in 1987 following the trial of more than 130 of his adherents, some of whom later became the leaders of the present insurrection. During the 1980s the movement spread through unauthorized, independent mosques headed by "free" *imams*, mainly in the poorer quarters. Its strategy was to construct a microcosmic Islamic state from the bottom up by surrounding the mosques with dispensaries, schools, and markets.¹⁰

⁸ *Imams* have been centrally appointed since 1983. The government shortsightedly appointed a senior Egyptian Muslim Brother, Sheikh Muhammad Ghazali, as the first rector of the Islamic University.

⁹ Francois Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb* (Paris: Karthala, 1988), p. 125; see also Stora, p. 77; and, for Ghazali's present views, *New York Times*, August 18, 1993.

¹⁰ On the history of Islamism in Algeria, see Francois Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa* (Austin: University of Texas, 1993), an updated, English translation of Burgat, 1988; Severine Labat, "Islamismes et Islamistes en Algérie," in Kepel, ed., *Exils et royaumes*, pp. 42-47; see also Rabha Attaf, "La dimension moderniste du FIS," in *Le drame Algérien*, pp. 189-92; and Leveau, pp. 182-83.

In 1988, Algeria was the scene of violent riots, triggered by an increase in prices of basic goods that was mandated by the International Monetary Fund. In response, President Ben Jedid reversed the government's policy of repression as a way to balance rivals within the ostensibly pro-regime FLN and legalized the growing Islamist movement, the various strands of which organized themselves as the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS). In September 1989, the government seemingly contradicted the constitution approved a few months earlier by recognizing the FIS as a legal political party.¹¹ Through patient educational and social work—including its swift and efficient response to the distress of the 1989 earthquake—the FIS earned popularity and displayed its strength by winning the municipal elections of 1990. This enhanced the party's prestige and provided its young cadres with much-needed administrative experience. It was at this point that a violent confrontation between some factions in the FIS and the military leadership began.¹² Following the army's suppression of a general strike in June 1991, the FIS activated its military wing, the *Mouvement Islamique Armée* or MIA (later known as the *Armée Islamique du Salut* or AIS) headed by "General" 'Abd al-Qadir Chibuti, a survivor of Bouyali's *maquis*. MIA was joined by other clandestine groups and reinforced by veterans of the anti-Communist crusade in Afghanistan (known as "Afghanis") who became role models for the Islamist underground.¹³

In December 1991, the FIS achieved great success in the first round of parliamentary elections. Having repeatedly underestimated the FIS' strength, the army reacted to the latter's imminent parliamentary victory by canceling the second round of voting and voiding the election altogether; this led to the forced resignation of President Ben Jedid in January 1992. The present violence is rooted in the Islamists' perception that a hostile military (whom they call "putschists") "stole" their electoral victory.¹⁴

The FIS, who openly aimed at the creation of an Islamist state, was the first party of its kind to be legally recognized in an Arab state. It has developed from a collection of many different social and political strands. Although the underprivileged and unemployed urban masses comprise the bulk of FIS supporters, it also has a large following among the urban middle class—tradesmen, officials, and professionals. Indeed, many of its post-1990 leaders and parliamentary candidates are graduates of Western universities.¹⁵

The FIS was also perceived by many as a reactivation from political memory of the religious-national-popular identity associated with the tradition of Algeria's mythical pre-1830 nation. Its eclectic form of Islam is a way of expressing Algerian national identity. In other words, the FIS reappropriated the anti-colonialist mentality of the early and supposedly "pure" FLN and presented itself as the rightful heir of the 1954 revolution (symbolism here is important; *fi*ls means "son" in French). It has attacked the legitimacy of the present regime by equating

¹¹ Mohammed Harbi, "Algérie: l'interruption du processus électoral," *Monde Arabe, Maghreb Machrek* 135 (January-March, 1992): pp. 145-54; see also Burgat and Dowell, pp. 274-75.

¹² For the debates inside the FIS until the end of 1991, see Labat, pp. 49-63; and Pierre Devoluy and Mireille Duteil, *La poudrière Algérienne* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1994), pp. 123-37.

¹³ The number of Algerians who joined the Afghan resistance has been variously estimated at 1,000-3,000. See *New York Times*, May 12, 1993; and Herve Terrel, "L'enclave Islamique de la rue Jean-Pierre-Timbaud," in Kepel, ed., *Exils et royaumes*.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, February 6, 1994; see also *Mideast Mirror*, April 20, 1994.

¹⁵ Labat, pp. 59-67; see also Attaf, p. 198; and Ahmed Rouadjia, "Le FIS a la conquete de la societe," in *Le drame Algérien*, pp. 202-04.

it with the French colonialists and claiming that the government's very existence runs counter to Islam. For example, the FIS calls its adherents *mujahidin* (holy warriors), as did the FLN.

Along the way, the FIS demonized every aspect of French culture and European identity left in Algeria, including concepts of secularism, individualism, Marxism, materialism, consumerism, and even democracy (which after the Gulf War was discredited not only as a product of French colonialism but also as a hypocritical Western concept).¹⁶ Thus, anyone who more or less accepted French ideas was apt to be branded a collaborator or traitor. Intellectuals, especially Francophones, were suspect.¹⁷ This assumed particular importance because, to many young Algerians, the consumerist "North" (meaning France or the West in general), especially as viewed on television, was a coveted ideal. Indeed, the Islamists condemned the parabolic antennas needed to receive foreign television stations as "paradiabolics."¹⁸

The escalation of the civil war in 1994 and 1995 has been marked by a lethal campaign against foreigners by the extremist *Groupe Islamique Armée* (GIA), most of whose founding members were Afghanis. Some are alleged to have ties with Iran; their tactics of car bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings are similar to those adopted by the Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon. GIA reasoned that "foreigners represent the regime's economic backbone. Their safe presence indicates that the country is living in a normal state."¹⁹ Consolidation of many armed groups under the wing of the GIA reportedly occurred in the early summer of 1994. The GIA's prestige rose when the French government retaliated against the killing of five French officials in August 1994. In response, the AIS (which had resisted GIA leadership) stated that France had declared war on the FIS.²⁰ Since then, the level of violence has risen consistently.

The goal of the Algerian Islamists' long and violent struggle is to replace the current regime with Islamic rule. Imprisonment and exile have more or less isolated the political (and religious) leadership of the FIS, resulting in the ascendancy of its radical military wing and the further polarization of the conflict.

Although the Algerian regime has displayed impressive "staying power" over the past three years, central authority appears to be slowly but inexorably crumbling; the incumbent government will hold out as long as it can, but it is hardly likely to subdue the insurrection. The regime has only a limited hold on the country, and the number of reliable, loyal soldiers—estimated at 40,000-60,000 men—is clearly insufficient to exercise control even during daylight hours. Islamists, increasingly dominated by the GIA, constitute the *de facto* authority in wide areas.²¹ The conflict has already cost more than 30,000 lives and caused more than \$2 billion in damage according to official Algerian estimates. As of mid-1995, the daily rate of casualties and material damage has continued to rise. More than ever the regime continues to depend on foreign financial aid in order to carry on.²²

¹⁶ Hassan al-Turabi, *Mideast Mirror*, August 31, 1994.

¹⁷ Stora, *Histoire de l'Algérie*.

¹⁸ Olivier Roy, *L'échec de l'Islam politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), pp. 113, 242; see also *Wall Street Journal*, October 31, 1994.

¹⁹ *Al-Khabar*, February 7, 1994, in *JPRS-NEA*, March 16, 1994.

²⁰ *Al-Watan al-'Arabi*, May 25, 1994, in *JPRS-NEA*, June 29, 1994; see also *Rose al-Yusuf*, August 8, 1994, and *European*, August 12, 1994, in *FBIS-NES*, August 11, 1994.

²¹ *Mideast Mirror*, August 23, 1994.

²² *Washington Post* and *Mideast Mirror*, September 8, 1994; later estimates were more than 30,000

Under present circumstances, an accommodation of the type suggested by some Algerian politicians—the outcome of dialogue between the regime and the main political parties, including the FIS—does not seem probable. Any agreement with the Islamists would mean sharing power with them (i.e., their participation in a “consensual” government). This would almost surely be a prelude to an Islamist takeover through gradual infiltration into key posts, mainly by way of the social service, education, and judicial systems.

This assessment has been substantiated by an attempt at such a dialogue by President Zeroual in the autumn of 1994. Some FIS notables were freed from jail and the movement’s imprisoned leaders, Abbassi Madani and Ali Ben-Haj, were transferred to house arrest in mid-September 1994. Apparently, FIS leaders construed Zeroual’s gesture as a sign of weakness; refusing to proclaim an end to violence or to condemn it, they demanded the release of all Islamist prisoners, the removal of the ban on the FIS, and the participation of FIS military leaders in eventual talks.

The army considered the last requirement humiliating; the FIS reportedly retorted by demanding a purge of the army’s high command. It was not clear whether FIS political leaders control their various armed constituent groups and if they would pledge to respect constitutional legitimacy and the outcome of eventual elections. Whether power sharing had been Zeroual’s real intent or not, the way to an accommodation has been barred by the FIS’ view of the regime as illegitimate and usurpatory,²³ by GIA violence, and by the uncompromising positions of military and civilian anti-Islamist hard-liners.²⁴

Furthermore, a “peace platform” put together in January 1995 in Rome by representatives of the FIS and the main secular parties—the FLN and the leftist-Berber Socialist Forces Front (FFS)—was quickly rejected by hard-liners on both sides. The platform proposed to hold multi-party talks on the formation of an interim administration to prepare for national elections (not the presidential elections envisaged by the regime) and committed the Islamist opposition to respect democratic norms in return for an end to repression and the legalization of the FIS.

To the military, this looked like another attempt to rehabilitate the Islamists, and the president condemned the proposal as foreign-inspired meddling. The GIA added demands to punish some generals and to ban “communist and atheist parties.”²⁵ Soon afterwards, violence escalated further.

Possible Scenarios of an Islamist Takeover

Scenario writers naturally look for precedents and paradigms, but there are no complete repetitions of history, only similarities. Algeria is not Iran, a Shi’i state with a longstanding national-political tradition.²⁶ Nor is it Afghanistan, which has an established army with powerful political ambitions. Lebanon, though

killed. See also *New York Times*, March 11, 1995; and *Financial Times*, March 11, 1995.

²³ In July 1994, Ben-Haj refused a dialogue and demanded the “illegitimate” government’s submission to Islamist terms.

²⁴ *Al-Hayat*, August 20, 1994, in *FBIS-NES*, August 22, 1994; see also *Mideast Mirror*, August 22 and 28, September 28, October 3, 6, 10, 13, 18, and 21, and November 2 and 4, 1994.

²⁵ *New York Times*, January 16, 1995.

²⁶ Sophie Bessis, “Les spécificités de l’Islamisme Algérien,” in *Le drame Algérien*, pp. 196-98.

plagued by wars among its various communities, does not serve as a valid comparison either.

Assuming (though not necessarily forecasting) the defeat of the present regime, the following scenarios of an Islamist takeover may be envisaged:²⁷

- **Compromise.** Arrived at through the exhaustion of both sides, this differs substantially from Zeroual's attempted dialogue. Probably requiring the endorsement of the Islamist *sheikhs* (civic leaders), compromise could be achieved by mid-level cadres from both sides—civilian officials, politicians, and mid-level officers²⁸ from the regime and elements within the rebel leadership. Operationally, this could take the form of a *coup d'état* carried out by army officers appalled at the destruction of the Algerian state. The ideological meeting ground would be shared nationalistic and Islamic values such as national borders (e.g., the Western Sahara), sovereignty (e.g., against France), and populist policies. In this scenario, the “cleansed” military would maintain its autonomy. Even if this led to a drawn-out process of gradual Islamist takeover, it could be presented as a relatively moderate solution promising economic improvement.²⁹

- **Sudden Collapse.** The combined effect of the continuous strain on the Algerian military and police,³⁰ the unreliability and frequent desertions of conscripts, and the defections of officers could cause a sudden crumbling of morale, discipline, and combat-readiness. Were this to occur in a major unit, it could quickly spread across the country and lead to an immediate Islamist takeover. The closest precedent would be the disintegration of the Iranian military in late 1978, which began with a mutiny of air force warrant officers.

- **Breakup.** Were military disintegration gradual and countrywide, the country could split into separate enclaves. There are regional differences between the east (the more traditional *Constantinois*) and west (the Moroccan-influenced *Oranais*) and between the sprawling urban metropolis of Algiers (dominated by Islamists) and Berber-controlled Kabylia. None of these differences would matter much in a unified state, but in a period of gradual disintegration they could lead to an “Afghan” situation of warlordism. President Zeroual's resignation (which he reportedly was considering if his negotiations with the FIS failed)³¹ could trigger the gradual breakup of Algeria. With nothing more to lose, hard-line military commanders and elite units, joined by their civilian and secular supporters, would redeploy to sympathetic regions of the country, possibly including Kabylia.³²

Since the transfer of FIS leaders to house arrest, Berber dissatisfaction has manifested itself through demands for official recognition of their language (*Tamazight*), a general strike, and a boycott of schools in Kabylia. These expressions of dissent were probably encouraged by military hard-liners.³³ An

²⁷ For an earlier elaboration of scenarios, see Pierre Robert Baduel, “Introduction,” in *L'Algérie incertaine* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1994), pp. 18-20.

²⁸ Some of them reportedly approved of the attempt at a dialogue with the FIS. See *Mideast Mirror*, November 2, 1994.

²⁹ Benhaim, et al., *Le Maghreb en suspense*, pp. 57-58; see also *Mideast Mirror*, August 23, 1994.

³⁰ This strain is especially heavy on the units actively engaged in repression, which exposes the soldiers' families to possible retaliation (e.g., at least sixty-three relatives of policemen were injured by a car bomb on March 10, 1995).

³¹ *Mideast Mirror*, October 5, 1994.

³² Bessis, p. 198; for a Berber outlook, see Salem Chaker, “Quelques evidences sur la question Berbere,” *Confluences* 11 (Summer 1994): pp. 103-11. Berber villages also set up self-defense units. See *Nouvel Observateur*, January 19, 1995 and *Washington Post*, March 15, 1995.

³³ See *Mideast Mirror*, September 15, 26, 28, 29, and October 3, 5, and 6, 1994; and *Economist*, October 15, 1994; to reinforce its position the regime accepted Berber cultural demands in April,

indication to that effect was a reported statement by the chief of staff of the armed forces, General Muhammad Al-'Amari in Tizi-Ouzou, the capital of the Berber district: "If the Islamists advance, we may be forced to give them a 'Gaza and Jericho' while establishing in this country a republic for you [Berbers] and a republic for the democrats."³⁴

In this scenario, a bloody stalemate between the main factions would plunge the country into political and economic chaos. Regions held by the followers of the present regime could attract outside help, possibly from Morocco,³⁵ Egypt, and France. Such help could lead to retaliation by Islamists against these outside sponsors. But even if the Islamists held major centers, they would face severe difficulties if they were unable to provide an improved economic future for their followers.

1995. See *Mideast Mirror*, April 24, 1995.

³⁴ *Al-Hayat* in *Mideast Mirror*, August 23, 1994.

³⁵ Morocco's encouragement of Berber language demands was hardly fortuitous. See *Mideast Mirror*, September 26, 1994.

POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF AN ISLAMIST TAKEOVER

DOMESTIC IMPACT

The prospect of an Islamist takeover in Algeria has already caused widespread consternation in the West and among pro-Western regimes in the Middle East. As a well-known scholar put it: "The triumph of the Islamic movement in Algeria would harden other Islamic movements and increase pressure on other regimes in the region."³⁶ To some this may sound like a return of the eleventh and twelfth century fundamentalist tribal movements, the Murabitun (also known as "Almoravids") and Muwahidun ("Almohads"), that set forth from southern Morocco to conquer North Africa and Spain. While other scholars are more sanguine about the potential implications of an Islamist victory, to Islamists everywhere it would be a signpost on the inevitable march of history.

The actual impact of an Islamist takeover will depend on the way it occurs; the more sudden and decisive, the bigger the immediate effect. Yet some consequences would be common to most forms of takeover.

First, officials of the defeated regime, secularist politicians, and intellectuals would try to emigrate, mostly to France but possibly also to neighboring countries. The more sudden and decisive the takeover, the greater the mass exodus. Yet such emigration might be smaller than imagined because many who feared for their lives and property under an Islamist regime have already left Algeria. Others would elect to stay (or to return after a short while) for personal or nationalist reasons.

Second, a power struggle among rival Islamist factions in which scores are settled and possible purges carried out is highly probable. This struggle could occur on ideological or social grounds and would depend on exactly which leaders emerged from the long civil war. Political leaders could be challenged by military ones. Ideological confrontation, clothed in proper religious terms, could pit the modernist-nationalist (Algerianist or *Jaza'iri*) trend against the more traditional pan-Islamic (*Salafi*) movement. Social tension could fuel a confrontation between first-generation urban high school and university graduates (many of whom are poor and unemployed) and descendants of the urban bourgeoisie—*ulama*, professionals, and merchants. Indeed, such a struggle may already have begun.³⁷

Third, whatever the consequences outside Algeria, an Islamist regime would have to provide solutions for the same acute socio-economic problems facing the current regime. The poor and unemployed who support the Islamists would expect their share of the state's wealth that was previously allocated to others. To achieve that, an Islamist regime would have to focus on domestic affairs and the economy, consolidating its political and ideological position, reorganizing the bureaucracy and the distribution of revenues, and imposing austerity measures. This would require both motivation (i.e., indoctrination) and repressive

³⁶ Shaul Bakhash, quoted in "Algerian Turmoil Poses Test for the Region," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 18, 1994. See also *CSM*, August 30, November 3, and March 15, 1994.

³⁷ *Mideast Mirror*, March 15, August 30, and November 3, 1994.

supervision. At the same time, a new regime would have to build up its armed forces for national pride, repression, and defense.

By whatever means it assumed full control, an Islamist regime in Algeria would likely evolve in the following stages:

- **An initial stage of euphoria.** The regime would assume an angrily defiant, anti-Western attitude and an aggressive stance toward neighboring states (who might in turn retaliate). In the short run, this could endanger the free flow of oil and gas as well as safe travel in the region. During this stage, the rebuilding of Algerian military power would begin.

- **The pragmatic, consolidation phase.** During this phase, priority would be given to economic problems and the military build-up would probably continue.

- **Possibly—after some time—failure and a second aggressive phase.** If the regime failed to ameliorate socio-economic conditions and institutionalize its rule, it could face a choice between renewed external conflict or domestic rebellion. Continuing hardships could be blamed on a hostile environment (e.g., “corrupt” neighboring regimes, imperialist “Satans”). This might lead to a nightmare scenario of the Islamist regime lashing out, creating tensions along its borders, initiating terrorism, and attempting to procure weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in order to regain legitimacy at home and status abroad. Another development could be a loss of power to the Islamists’ disappointed followers, including military officers.

Economic Consequences

The enormous challenges of socio-economic deprivation in Algeria would make a pragmatic policy of economic cooperation with the West almost mandatory for an Islamist regime.

Algeria is heavily dependent on hydrocarbon revenues, which currently comprise over 90 percent of its export earnings and 60 percent of total budgetary revenues; this dependence will remain well into the next century. As a result, Algeria is extremely vulnerable to external shocks, with a \$1 drop in the average price for Algerian crude entailing a loss of roughly \$500 million in annual export earnings. Algeria exports approximately 10 percent of the world’s natural gas, which amounts to a third of its total exports. Thus, a cooperative relationship with foreign oil and gas companies would be essential to the regime. This would repeat the precedent of Iran.

A good indication in this regard would be the Islamist regime’s attitude toward the two pipelines carrying Algerian gas to the European market. The annual capacity of the Transmed pipeline, which passes via Tunisia to Italy and on to Slovenia, is to be increased from 16 to 24 billion cubic meters by the end of 1995. Bechtel’s construction of the 530 km Algerian section of a second 1,300 km Europe-Maghreb pipeline via Morocco to Spain began in October 1994 after repeated delays. If completed as planned in 1996 with a capacity of 10 billion cubic meters, it would serve these countries as well as Portugal, France, and Germany.³⁸ The completion of these projects could hardly be carried out in an unstable, hostile climate. Construction would thus depend on the Islamist regime’s willingness to avoid conflict.

³⁸ World Bank figures; see also U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, *Algeria’s Gas and Oil Field Machinery Annual Report, 1993*; and *Middle East Economic Digest*, June 24 and October 21, 1994.

In these circumstances, an Islamist regime might envisage a deal with the West in which it would assure the flow of oil and gas in exchange for continued international aid and support. This seems to be well understood by the Islamists, as indicated by the relative (though not complete) immunity of oil installations from their attacks and the relatively mild statements of FIS spokesmen on the subject. As Islamist leaders have stated, it is in Algeria's interest to open its doors economically and pursue good relations with the West. At the same time, FIS leaders said that Algeria's main trading partners bear a heavy responsibility for the future course of events in Algeria. Although it declared illegal all international agreements signed by Algeria since January 1992, the FIS had contacts with several Western companies and international banks.³⁹ In the same vein, Tunisian Islamist leader Rashid al-Ghanushi voiced his opinion that, like Iran, an Islamist Algeria would sell its oil to the West.⁴⁰

Such pragmatic policies could conceivably change if the regime were unable to improve Algeria's economic situation and sensed an approaching crisis. Conversely, this cooperative approach could also be altered if European dependence on Algerian oil and gas increased in the future, thereby improving Algeria's bargaining stance.

EXTERNAL IMPACT

The main impact of an Islamist takeover in Algeria on Arab regimes throughout the Middle East would be strategic but mostly invisible. It would be widely interpreted as a political victory of "pure" Islam over one of the region's corrupt and Western-supported regimes. This would invigorate Islamist opposition movements throughout the region and place heavy constraints on the freedom of action of incumbent regimes. Algerian Islamists themselves are unlikely to be at the vanguard of a campaign to export their Islamic revolution as Iran's Revolutionary Guards have tried to do in Lebanon. But their victory would provide a powerful boost to the revolutionary efforts of Islamists throughout the Middle East and beyond.

Algeria's neighboring states have well-developed national identities as well as particular historical and political circumstances that differentiate them from Algeria. The Moroccan monarchy enjoys religious legitimacy and seems resilient; the more Westernized Tunisia enjoys considerable economic prosperity.⁴¹ Though indigenous Islamist groups have sprung up in both countries, events in Algeria seem to have rallied much of the urban middle classes in these countries to the regimes.⁴² In any case, having closely watched the confrontation in Algeria for the last three years, both Morocco and Tunisia have had time to prepare for the possible consequences.

Although at present it seems unlikely that an Islamist takeover in Algeria would destabilize the Moroccan and Tunisian regimes—that is, initiate a North African "domino effect"—both regimes would assess such a takeover rather

³⁹ Interview with FIS spokesman Rabah al-Kabir, *Financial Times*, August 20, 1994.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, January 9, 1994.

⁴¹ For a brief assessment of the military strengths of Morocco and Tunisia, see William Zartman, "State-Building and the Military in Arab Africa," in Bahgat Korany, Paul Noble, and Rex Brynen, eds., *The Many Faces of National Security in the Arab World* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 243-44.

⁴² Benhaim et al., pp. 29-34.

negatively, knowing that Algerian resentment toward them, rephrased in religious terms, would increase. Their economic growth would be adversely affected by any uncertainty concerning political stability. The two states would attempt to prevent Algerian domestic turmoil from spilling over their borders and undermine Algerian efforts to export its Islamist experiment to their countries. In the longer run, they share with other states in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa an interest in containing Islamism *within* Algeria.

Morocco

The possible effects on Morocco of an Islamist takeover in Algeria would be at least threefold. First, an Islamist Algeria would threaten the stability of the Moroccan regime by supporting and radicalizing the existing Islamist undercurrent inside Morocco. At present, the Moroccan regime claims to control this trend (there are thirteen known Islamist groups but no political party has been permitted) and has attempted to co-opt Islamist leaders into mainstream institutions.⁴³ The uniqueness of Moroccan Islam could limit the audience for Algerian Islamists in the country. However, Morocco has not been able to fully control arms smuggling across its long borders with Algeria and its self-assurance could be exaggerated. The moral and political effect of an Islamist triumph in Algeria could have an uplifting impact on Moroccan Islamism, especially if a monarchical succession crisis were to occur.

Second, an Islamist regime in Algeria could attempt to revive longstanding disputes on its frontiers and especially the question of the Western Sahara in order to divert attention away from domestic problems. Morocco's concerns have been nurtured by the continuity of Algerian support for an independent Western Sahara (reaffirmed in February 1994) despite Moroccan efforts to end that policy. Significantly, the FIS was reported to have accused Morocco of trying to exploit the turmoil in Algeria to "satisfy its dreams of hegemony in the Maghreb."⁴⁴ The August 1994 row between the two countries which led Algeria to close the border reflects a climate of mutual suspicion that has characterized their relations for most of the last three decades.⁴⁵ Also, prolonged tension between the two countries and a possible Algerian military build-up would prompt parallel Moroccan steps, including efforts to match any Algerian attempt to develop WMDs.⁴⁶

Third, in the context of the possible breakup of Algeria into regional strongholds, Morocco's recent encouragement of the Berber movement might indicate a "containment" policy that could attempt to delay a full Islamist takeover by actively supporting anti-Islamist regions. Such intervention would exacerbate the Islamists' hostility toward the monarchy and give added impetus to Algerian Islamist retaliation against Rabat.

⁴³ *Economist*, February 26, 1994; see also Benhaim et al., pp. 54-55.

⁴⁴ *Al-Watan al-'Arabi* May 26 and July 8, 1994, in *JPRS-NEA*, July 8, 1994; see also *Mideast Mirror*, August 30 and September 2, 1994.

⁴⁵ For a vivid portrait of Algerian Islamist influence on a Moroccan border town, see *Le Monde*, June 22, 1994.

⁴⁶ In April 1991, the press reported that Algeria was secretly building a Chinese-supplied reactor and research facility at Ain Oussera, a remote site in the Atlas Mountains south of Algiers. See Leonard Spector, "Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East," *Orbis* 36 (1992) pp. 190-92; and *Boston Globe*, February 8, 1994. In January 1995, Algeria signed and ratified the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), probably to ensure continued Western support; see Reuters, January 12, 1995.

Tunisia

The chances of an Islamist takeover in Tunisia, though marginally greater than in Morocco, may be considered slim. Tunisia has a homogeneous population that has been enjoying considerable economic progress in recent years. Its educated, prosperous middle class seems satisfied that it is not affected by events in Algeria. Tunisia's own Islamist movement, the al-Nahda, has been outlawed and suppressed. Though it served at one time as an outlet for the opposition, it probably has only a small following left inside the country.

Tunisia has two concerns about the potential impact of an Islamist regime in Algeria on its own stability. First, the FIS has had longstanding ties with the al-Nahda and would probably provide the Tunisian Islamists with support and sanctuary. Second, even if it attempted to curb or prevent migration from Algeria, Tunisia would probably also receive a considerable influx of Algerian opponents of the Islamist takeover. In both cases, Tunisian-Algerian relations would deteriorate.

Libya

Since 1978, Libyan ruler Moammar Qadhafi has denounced the orthodox *ulama* and Islamists who have opposed his concept of Islam. Judging by his frequent diatribes against Islamist movements, the latter may have gained some following in Libya, especially in the coastal cities and among students.

Qadhafi claimed to have good relations with both sides in the Algerian civil war but seems to be increasingly worried about the impact of Islamism in Libya. A few months before he professed friendship with FIS leaders,⁴⁷ he denounced Algerian Islamists as heretics bent on the destruction of their country and as agents of the CIA.⁴⁸ As a sign of the continuing ties between the two regimes, President Zeroual was among the few heads of state to attend the September 1994 celebrations marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Qadhafi's revolution.

As long as Qadhafi is in power, Libya is unlikely to be directly endangered by an Islamist takeover in Algeria. While a victory for Algerian Islamists would harden the determination of Libyan Islamists, who might even receive some aid from their Algerian brethren, it would also prompt Qadhafi to further reinforce internal control and repression. A more significant threat would emerge with the death or political demise of Qadhafi. The resultant instability in Libya might position Islamists to be serious contenders in a succession struggle. In that case, Algerian support might become pivotal.

Egypt

Since Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981, Egypt's leadership has been in violent confrontation with radical Islamist organizations. These groups have

⁴⁷ Tripoli Television, August 31 and September 1, 1993, in *FBIS-NES*, September 1 and 9, 1993.

⁴⁸ Tripoli Television, May 1 and 3, 1993, in *FBIS-NES*, May 5, 1993.

employed a strategy of terror against leading intellectuals, government officials, military and security officers, tourists and other foreigners, and the country's economic infrastructure—a pattern later imitated by their Algerian counterparts. Yet Egypt's circumstances are very different from Algeria's. With a long history of central control and an equally long record of experience in containing domestic adversaries and isolating them from external allies, the Egyptian government stands on firmer legs than the Algerian regime. The existence of prestigious religious institutions (including the Islamic university al-Azhar) where Islamism is present but controlled, further limits the country's vulnerability to religious subversion from outside.⁴⁹

Over the years, there have been contacts between the FIS and Egyptian Islamic groups.⁵⁰ From an Islamic perspective, Algeria has consistently followed the Egyptian lead throughout this century. Egyptian Islamists would undoubtedly perceive an Islamist success in Algeria as a tremendous moral boost, especially given Cairo's assertive effort to eradicate its two most militant opponents—the Gama'at and Islamic Jihad—and intimidate the more popular Muslim Brotherhood. The Algerians might give these groups some support, possibly via Sudan, but it is difficult to imagine a plausible scenario in which an Islamist takeover in Algeria directly affects Hosni Mubarak's control of the country. A more real concern would be how an Islamist victory in Algeria might affect the perception of Egyptian stability among Egypt's commercial elites, foreign financial institutions, and overseas supporters. A loss of confidence among these elements might itself trigger difficulties for the Mubarak government greater than those directly posed by the Egyptian Islamists.

Saudi Arabia

Some observers consider Saudi Arabia more susceptible to an Islamist takeover.⁵¹ Indeed, the Saudi regime has been continuously and increasingly concerned about domestic Islamist dissent, which has grown bolder since the Gulf War.⁵² Before 1990, the FIS benefited amply from Saudi munificence, especially when its emissaries went on pilgrimage.⁵³ But when Algerian Islamists openly sided with Iraq during the Gulf War, the Saudi attitude toward them changed from generosity to animosity. The kingdom normalized its relations with Algeria after Ben Jedid's resignation and the annulment of the elections and reportedly lent it \$2 billion in early 1992; the funding of Islamists in Algeria (and elsewhere) by Saudi non-governmental "charities" was later prohibited. Yet ties between Algerian and private Saudi Islamists probably continue.⁵⁴

Ever worried about the potential domestic impact of any successful revolution or subversion in the Middle East, the Saudis would view an Islamist regime in Algeria with alarm (more so if a Sudanese connection were discerned). Although an Islamist Algeria would undoubtedly be hostile toward the Saudi monarchy, its impact on the kingdom would be limited to political rhetoric and

⁴⁹ For a comparison between Algeria and Egypt, see Fahmi Huwaydi as quoted in *Mideast Mirror*, February 22, 1994.

⁵⁰ *Al-Wafd*, March 9, 1994, in *FBIS-NES*, March 23, 1994.

⁵¹ *Economist*, "Islam and the West," August 6, 1994.

⁵² *New York Times*, September 22 and 28, 1994; see also *Economist*, October 8, 1994.

⁵³ Arun Kapil, "Les partis Islamistes en Algérie," *Monde Arabe, Maghreb Machrek* 133 (July-September 1991): p. 107; *New York Times*, March 1, 1993.

⁵⁴ Islamic Republic (Iran) News Agency, January 25, 1992, in *FBIS-NES*, January 31, 1992; see also Burgat and Dowell, p. 304; and *New York Times*, September 22 and 28, 1994.

moral support for Saudi Islamists. Even with the prospect of a looming succession crisis, an Islamist revolution in Saudi Arabia does not seem likely in the near future, although contending princes could themselves attempt to enlist Islamist support.⁵⁵

Sudan

The Islamist regime in the Sudan, masterminded by Hassan al-Turabi, has long had relations with the FIS. Signs of cooperation between Sudanese and Algerian Islamists surfaced during the December 1993 meeting of the Popular Arab Islamic Conference in Khartoum, which was attended by two exiled FIS leaders. Turabi reportedly urged them to step up operations aimed at establishing an Islamic republic in their country.⁵⁶

Turabi has also confirmed his role as a mediator between France and Algerian Islamists.⁵⁷ These ties could be broadened after an Islamist takeover. Sudanese and Algerian Islamists could cooperate in efforts to expand their influence throughout the Maghreb, elsewhere in Africa, and in other parts of the Islamic world.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran would delight in an Islamist takeover in Algeria, viewing it as a further success of the revolution inaugurated by Ayatollah Khomeini. Previously clandestine contacts (mainly with GIA militants) would become public and mutual friendship would be proclaimed. While Iranian attempts to exploit this affinity would be limited by Algerian nationalist distrust, substantive cooperation can be expected in subversive and terrorist efforts throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and possibly Europe, as well as in missionary activities in Africa.

The Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Given the incumbent Algerian government's support for the Arab-Israeli peace process, an Islamist regime in Algeria would be expected to join other Islamist movements in firmly opposing the peacemaking efforts. Although there may be no more than 300 Jews in Algeria at present, an anti-Jewish current seems to be part of Islamist anti-government sentiments from the grass roots level to the senior leadership.⁵⁸ As a FIS spokesman-in-exile, Anwar Haddam, commented on the peace process: "In the short term, the status quo might be preserved and some dictator regimes supported to safeguard [Western] interests in the region and protect the Jews, but nobody can stop the wheel of history."⁵⁹

Although the Arab-Israeli issue would be secondary among the concerns of an Algerian Islamist regime, one may expect the Islamists to propound a strident

⁵⁵ Simon Henderson, *After King Fahd: Succession in Saudi Arabia*, Washington Institute Policy Paper Number Thirty-Seven (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1994).

⁵⁶ *Al-Watan al-'Arabi*, January 7, 1994.

⁵⁷ *Mideast Mirror*, August 25, 1994.

⁵⁸ Emmanuel Sivan, "Three Hundred Very Dangerous Jews," *Ha'aretz*, December 30, 1993; see also Labat, p. 54; and Martinez, pp. 94-95.

⁵⁹ *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 21, 1994, in *FBIS-NES*, August 26, 1994.

anti-peace policy that would recall traditional Algerian hostility toward Israel. In addition to rhetoric, it could include support for radical Palestinian organizations such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Aid and even cooperation in terrorist activities could not be ruled out, especially if Islamist relations with France were to deteriorate; Jewish leaders and institutions in France would be prime targets. Algeria's opposition to the peace process could constrain Moroccan and Tunisian (and possibly Egyptian) attitudes toward Israel. This destructive approach might be mitigated should the diminishing boycott of Israel by North African states lead to significant economic benefits for Algeria's neighbors. In that case, an Islamist regime in Algeria might choose to differentiate between rhetoric and the advantages of a more pragmatic attitude toward the peace process.

Europe

Southwestern Europe and the Maghreb have been linked by many bonds for centuries. Today's Maghrebis are both attached to and envious of the prosperous "North." At present, the Maghreb has no real alternative to political and especially economic ties with the European Union (EU), which itself has a great interest in this relationship. The distance from Algeria (and of course Morocco) to Spain is shorter than that from Bosnia to Germany. Also, the Maghreb is a market of 90 million consumers and has a complementary industrial base. Moreover, Algeria supplies 29 percent of the EU's gas, making it Europe's second-largest source; this includes supplying France with 30 percent of its requirements, Belgium with 40 percent, and Italy with up to 35 percent of its total supply. Spain, having invested in the pending Europe-Maghrebi pipeline, hopes to rely on Algerian gas for 12 percent of its total energy needs.⁶⁰

Any obstruction of this relationship by the rise of an Islamist, anti-Western regime in Algeria would be detrimental to both the Maghreb and the EU. The presence of up to 10 million Muslims in the EU and the residual antagonism toward them means that turmoil in the Maghreb may pose as big a threat to the interests of the EU as instability in the Balkans. EU countries—mainly but not exclusively France—would also be threatened with severe political, security, and social problems fueled by a possible massive influx of Algerians.⁶¹

At the strong urging of its southern member states, the issue of Algerian immigration has been placed high on the EU agenda, competing for attention with the problems of Eastern Europe.⁶² The EU's policy toward an Islamist Algeria would have to balance domestic and security considerations, the French position, and the feasibility of restricting aid to and trade with Algeria. In addition, Europe would have to take into account Algeria's capabilities for countermeasures, such as the possible dispatch of Algerian combatants to Bosnia in the short run and the

⁶⁰ United States Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration, relevant documents; see also Benhaim, et al., pp. 36-37; and Reuters, October 10, 1994.

⁶¹ Commissariat General du Plan, *L'Europe, la France et la Méditerranée: vers de nouveaux partenariats* (Paris: Documentation Française, 1993), pp. 89-90; see also Ghassan Salame, "Torn between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean: Europe and the Middle East in the Post-Cold War Era," *Middle East Journal* 48 (1994), pp. 239, 246; *Economist*, July 16, 1994; and *Wall Street Journal*, October 31, 1994. For an analysis of the security and stability aspects of migration, see Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," *International Security* 17 (1992-93): pp. 91-126.

⁶² *New York Times*, January 23, 1995; see also *Economist*, January 14 and March 18, 1995. For Arab reactions, see *Mideast Mirror*, February 21, 1995.

long-term consequences of a military build-up, terrorism, and economic disruptions.

The “realistic” approach already adopted by some European countries—Germany, Italy, Spain, and Britain—and readily encouraged by FIS emissaries⁶³ could lead the EU to accommodate itself to an Islamist regime in Algeria. If oil consumption in Europe (and elsewhere in the world) rises over the next ten to fifteen years as some are predicting, the EU will depend increasingly on Algerian oil and gas and might court an Islamist Algeria to ensure a continuation or increase in supplies.⁶⁴ If the EU considers its security and stability endangered, however, the possibility of some kind of confrontation cannot be ruled out.

France faces especially difficult problems. It retains deep emotional and cultural ties to Algeria, which was once an integral part of its territory and where its language continues to be widely spoken. France has remained the preferred country of Algerians seeking education, employment, and refuge. (Indeed, the FIS was able to establish its own organization there, the *Fraternité des Algériens de France*, whose leaders were arrested in 1993.)⁶⁵ Over 1 million Algerian nationals currently live in France; including both nationalized and illegal immigrants, there may be up to 3 million people of Algerian origin in the country.⁶⁶

Across French society and inside France’s ruling institutions, there is a growing worry that the situation in Algeria has again become a serious internal political and security problem. As a French essayist put it, “Algeria is our Mexico.”⁶⁷ The fact that French citizens constitute about 30 percent of the victims of the Algerian Islamists’ nearly two-year-old assassination campaign against foreigners has aggravated this sentiment. The French government has reacted by cracking down on Islamists in France and augmenting its support to the incumbent Algerian regime, though there are signs that Paris is now reconsidering its strong financial support of Algeria’s military rule.⁶⁸

A broader concern is that the Islamists will impede the integration and assimilation of the country’s approximately 5 million Muslims, who comprise its second-largest religious group. A recent example is the dispute over the wearing of head scarves by Muslim girls in public schools, considered by the government as contradicting the constitutional principle of secularity (*laïcité*) and—according to the minister of defense—“in . . . large part a political statement.”⁶⁹

On the other side, the sense of bitter hostility many Algerians feel toward France was revived by the Gulf War and French support for the military regime. The FIS has depicted France as trying to renew its domination of Algeria and has threatened retaliation.⁷⁰

⁶³ See, for example, Anwar Haddam, *al-Watan al-'Arabi*, July 22, 1994, in *FBIS-NES*, August 8, 1994; and Leveau, pp. 188-89.

⁶⁴ *Economist*, “The Global Economy—A Survey,” October 1, 1994.

⁶⁵ *New York Times*, November 10, 1993.

⁶⁶ Benhaim et al., p. 16; see also *Economist*, July 16, 1994.

⁶⁷ Alain Minc, quoted in *Wall Street Journal*, October 31, 1994.

⁶⁸ *New York Times*, April 29, 1995.

⁶⁹ *Christian Science Monitor*, October 5, 1994; see also *Economist*, October 8, 1994; *Mideast Mirror*, October 10, 1994; and Weiner, “Security, Stability, and International Migration.”

⁷⁰ *Al-Watan al-'Arabi*, July 22, 1994, in *FBIS-NES*, August 8, 1994; see also *Mideast Mirror*, October 3, 1994. The December 24, 1994 hijacking of an Air France jetliner by the GIA, allegedly in order to explode it over Paris, demonstrated this hostility. See *New York Times*, December 27, 1994, and *Washington Post*, December 28, 1994.

An Islamist takeover in Algeria would have the following main consequences for France:

- An influx of as many as several hundred thousand refugees from Algeria. This could create immediate problems of absorption and dramatically increase France's Muslim population.

- Turbulence inside the Algerian expatriate community, similar to what occurred over the past two decades within France's Lebanese and Iranian communities. Islamists would seek to increase their influence, especially in the mosques, cultural centers, and among the youth. Opposition to this could quickly result in violent clashes across social and ideological lines, pitting the established Algerian communities in France against newcomers, secularist intellectuals (especially Berbers) against radical Islamists, and supporters against opponents of the new regime.

- Unrest in the Algerian community in France would create both political and internal security problems, as Islamists are regarded by the French authorities as a kind of fifth column. This could be compounded by the involvement of an Islamist government in agitation (couched in religious terms), subversion, and even terrorism.

- An influx of Algerians and turmoil in the expatriate community might lead to a backlash among French voters. Sympathy for the human rights of Algerian Islamists has reportedly almost disappeared among French intellectuals. This development is already influencing current government policies, as evidenced by the 1995 presidential elections.

- In addition, an Islamist Algeria would be detrimental to French regional interests in the Middle East and Africa.

Yet given the larger French strategic, cultural, and economic interests in the Maghreb and the Middle East and Africa in general, it is conceivable that in time France would accommodate itself to an Islamist regime in Algeria. In turn, the Islamists would respect French interests and tone down their activities among Algerians in France. In that scenario, France can be expected to follow a more general European trend.

Sub-Saharan Africa

An Islamist takeover might spill over to Algeria's relatively unstable and poor sub-Saharan Muslim neighbors such as Chad, Mali, and especially Niger. The rise to power of anti-Western Islamists in these countries would be possible, especially if the Algerians were to actively (that is, with some material aid) propagate their message. This could reduce France's political, cultural, and economic influence in that region and possibly affect other African states with large Muslim communities such as Senegal and Nigeria.

The United States

While the United States has relatively few direct interests in Algeria, Washington is deeply concerned about the strategic implications of a possible Islamist takeover for U.S. interests in the wider Middle East, and especially the impact on pro-Western regimes in the region. U.S. officials believe there is a political solution to the ongoing civil war, and have used their access to the Algerian leaders, based on a longstanding relationship and Algeria's role in the release of American diplomats held in Iran in 1979-80, to promote the idea of a dialogue with the opposition. In parallel, Washington has opened a channel to FIS political representatives, ostensibly to reinforce "pragmatic tendencies within the Islamist movement." (This is probably one lesson gleaned from the Iranian revolution of 1979.)⁷¹

But U.S. policymakers are aware that they lack many of the traditional levers of foreign policy and thus have no real influence over developments in Algeria.⁷² Pro-Western Arab regimes such as Egypt have already suggested that U.S. efforts to promote dialogue between the Algerian government and leaders of the Islamist movement may give succor to the Islamists and raise questions about America's commitments to anti-Islamist regimes elsewhere in the region.⁷³

The relatively limited U.S. economic involvement in Algeria is mainly in the energy sector. Over the years, U.S. firms have helped Algeria develop its oil and gas resources. The Export-Import Bank has guaranteed \$2 billion in loans to private American corporations, including loans (mainly to Bechtel) for gas liquefaction plants and the Europe-Maghreb pipeline. Annual U.S. exports of machinery and services to Algeria's hydrocarbon sectors amount to approximately \$300 million. In addition, Algeria received \$550 million in loans for the import of agricultural commodities as part of the Commodity Credit Corporation program. The only military assistance Algeria received in 1994 was \$50,000 for military educational training in the United States, half of what it had received in 1993.⁷⁴

U.S. statements on its strategic interests in the event of an Islamist takeover in Algeria have emphasized regional stability.⁷⁵ Washington declared it was neither resigned to nor willing to condone a victory of extremism in Algeria. Beyond the consequences for Algeria itself, U.S. officials have noted that an Islamist takeover would affect the balance of forces in the region (by emboldening extremists) and possibly lead to violence. The United States would be principally concerned with negative effects on friendly Arab regimes in the Maghreb and beyond, on the Arab-Israeli peace process, and on Western Europe. Indeed, the possible impact of developments in Algeria and North Africa on Europe—especially a violent cross-

⁷¹ FIS spokesmen complimented the U.S. attitude to the extent of comparing President Clinton to the legendary King of Ethiopia who received the Prophet Muhammad's first aid-seeking mission. See *al-Watan al-'Arabi*, February 11, 1994; and *Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 1995.

⁷² Testimony of then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Mark Parris before House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, March 23 (*Department of State Dispatch*: Government Printing Office 1994) 5, no. 4, April 1994, and 40, October 3, 1994. See also the statement by Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau to the Africa Subcommittee of the House Foreign Relations Committee, September 28, 1994.

⁷³ See, for example, *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, in *Mideast Mirror*, August 23, 1994; and Peter W. Rodman, *Washington Post*, January 1, 1995.

⁷⁴ See Parris' testimony to House Subcommittee on Africa; see also Pelletreau's statement to House Foreign Relations Committee; and U.S. International Trade Administration, various documents.

⁷⁵ Pelletreau, *ibid.*

Mediterranean confrontation—would directly affect U.S. strategic interests, possibly on a global level.⁷⁶

In this context, two alternative worst-case scenarios for U.S. policy might be envisaged:

U.S. cooperation with regional allies provokes a crisis in U.S.-European relations. Islamist Algeria could secure an economic and political accommodation with the EU, thereby gaining a free hand to pursue an aggressive Islamist campaign including active support for terrorism and subversion in the Maghreb, other parts of the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa. The United States, coming to the aid of its regional allies, would be unable to apply economic sanctions because the EU (and probably Russia) would not cooperate. This could lead to a crisis in relations between an “assertive” U.S. policy and a “smug” European approach.

U.S. cooperation with Europe leads to a regional backlash. Islamist Algeria could disrupt the development of gas pipelines through a policy of blackmail (possibly backed by terrorism), thereby creating energy shortages and causing an EU outcry and economic disturbances. To overcome the crisis, by force if necessary, the EU might request U.S. cooperation and involvement. (The United States and France have already been planning for the contingency of a joint evacuation of their citizens.)⁷⁷ This scenario may lead to a deterioration in U.S. relations with several of its Middle Eastern allies.

⁷⁶ Speech by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, at The Washington Institute’s Soref Symposium, Washington D.C., May 16, 1994; see also *Christian Science Monitor*, August 18, 1994; Jim Hoagland, *Washington Post*, September 22, 1994; and Peter W. Rodman, *Washington Post*, January 1, 1995.

⁷⁷ *Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 1995.

CONCLUSIONS

Three years into a cruel civil war in Algeria, a victory by Islamist insurgents over the army-led government cannot be gainsaid. An Islamist takeover would be a major political event with serious repercussions for the Maghreb, the wider Arab region, nearby Europe, and beyond.

To Islamists in Algeria, gaining power would mean not only the victory of “God’s party” but also the success of a strategy of ruthless violence. Such a strategy might then be applied by an Islamist government commanding the state’s resources to achieve a range of goals similar to the Iranian precedent: furthering its policies in the Maghreb or among the Muslim community in France, aiding kindred movements (especially in neighboring countries), and retaliating against “impious” Arab regimes and the West.

The most important and immediate consequence of an Islamist takeover in Algeria would be on the moral/political plane. Islamist movements everywhere (and Islamist regimes like Iran and Sudan) would regard this victory as a tremendous achievement and moral boost, a “signpost on the way,” similar to the 1979 ascendance of Khomeini in Tehran. Arab rulers, especially those who have been facing Islamists for quite some time such as Morocco’s King Hassan and Tunisia’s Zeid Bin Ali, would perceive increasing threats to the political and economic stability of their regimes and to their own physical survival. Opponents of the Arab-Israeli peace process would feel emboldened. EU members might face regional and domestic security problems and difficulties in their economic relations with the Middle East and North Africa. Pro-Western Muslim regimes in sub-Saharan Africa might face subversion. U.S. strategic interests in regional security and stability, unimpeded access to oil, and nonproliferation might be adversely affected.

The possible results of an Islamist takeover would depend on many factors that could either be mutually reinforcing or contradictory. Some of the more salient are:

Priorities. An Islamist regime may have to attend to the urgent socio-economic needs of its supporters in order to consolidate the new Islamic republic. Thus, for tactical reasons (similar to the respite decreed by Lenin soon after the Bolshevik victory in Russia) it might forgo activist foreign policies for some time and seek improved relations with its neighbors in the Maghreb and to the north to guarantee much-needed revenues, especially from the export of hydrocarbons. Once securely entrenched, however—or if it felt insecure—the ruling Islamists could revert to a more aggressive and disruptive posture, especially after building up their military capability.

The way to power. The speed with which the incumbent regime crumbles and the Islamists take power will have important implications. A rapid takeover would highlight the sense of Islamist victory and encourage Islamist movements everywhere. In Algeria, however, the more rapid an Islamist takeover, the more likely the regime will focus its internal energies on economic reconstruction rather than on settling scores with remnants of the *ancien régime*.

The looming power struggle. The Islamist movement in Algeria has been aptly termed “Islamist-nationalist.”⁷⁸ If a nationalist tendency prevailed in Islamist Algeria over an extremely pan-Islamic one, there is a chance that little would change in the working of the political system and the economy other than morals and vocabulary. Traditional aspects of post-independence Algeria—the paramount role of the ruling party, the practice of clientelism, and a preference for anti-Western discourse—would remain.⁷⁹ One would expect a hostile attitude toward “impious” Maghrebi neighbors and pro-Western Arab regimes, as well as a military build-up. But the dominance of pan-Islamists might also entail more support to fellow Arab (including Palestinian) Islamist movements, more active involvement in Algerian communities in Western Europe, and a more aggressive attitude toward the West. Nationalist leaders, many of whom are Western-educated, might be more ready to adopt pragmatic economic relations with the West and especially Europe.

The capability of an Islamist Algeria to change the political map of the region by violence should not be underestimated. It is much more likely, however, that an Islamist Algeria would be a source of “revolutionary” harassment and troublemaking to its neighbors.

Policy Options

Islamist Algeria, like Khomeini’s Iran, fits the Kissingerian definition of a revolutionary power:

Whenever there exists a power which considers the international order or the manner of legitimizing it oppressive, relations between it and other powers will be revolutionary. . . . Because in revolutionary situations the contending systems are less concerned with the adjustment of differences (which in ‘legitimate’ international orders is possible only through negotiations) than with the subversion of loyalties, diplomacy is replaced either by war or by an armaments race. . . . [Possessing] the courage of its conviction . . . [*the revolutionary power*] is willing, indeed eager, to push its principles to their ultimate conclusion.⁸⁰

In these circumstances, the principal concern of outsiders would be to ensure security and stability in the widest sense. To this end, they would have to induce the revolutionary power to accept international norms and the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy.⁸¹ Such “rules of the game” might include: no terrorism or subversion (i.e., “export of the revolution”) in neighboring states or in Europe (though cultural and religious relations could be exempted) and no acquisition of WMDs. These rules might be unacceptable to the revolutionary regime, however, which might perceive the restrictions as colonialist and contrary to Islamist principles.

Should Islamists come to power in Algeria, the possible policy options are **accommodation**, **forcible removal**, and **containment**. While theoretically possible, accommodation with an Islamist Algeria is not a sound policy choice since it

⁷⁸ Roy, p. 42.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 103, 237; See also Leveau, p. 190.

⁸⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), pp. 2-3; emphasis added.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 1.

almost certainly means the eventual abdication of anti-Islamist Arab regimes in the Maghreb and beyond, economic and political upheaval in Europe, and erosion of U.S. prestige and credibility in the region. Similarly, forcible removal of an Islamist regime in power is highly problematic at least in the near term because the political, military, economic, and human costs could be very high.

An active regional policy of containment (including elements of both “carrot” and “stick”) with the aim of inducing the Islamists to accept “normal” rules of the game is the more realistic option. The carrot would be participation in European and Middle Eastern economic development projects which would improve Algeria’s economic situation (and with it the regime’s ability to satisfy its public). The stick (which in order to be credible and effective would require cooperation among the United States, the EU, and relevant Arab states) should reflect international resolve similar to the kind arrayed against Iraq in 1991.

To be perceived as enforceable, an active containment policy requires courses of action which individually could serve as a deterrent. This might include selectively curtailing aid, freezing foreign accounts, boycotting Algerian gas and oil, etc. Economic sanctions would be conditioned upon their feasibility, the capability of cooperating countries to take collective action, and the length of time the sanctions could be enforced given the energy situation at the time. Military steps—regular or occasional demonstrations of the U.S. and NATO presence in the region—could also be a tool of containment policy. Again, these steps would take into account feasibility, the structure of the military operation, and the circumstances under which these measures would be applied. (For instance, they could serve as a warning against possible terrorist and subversive actions or efforts to develop WMDs.) In addition, security measures—such as the increased control of movement of Algerians to, from, and inside cooperating countries—could be implemented.

In developing an effective policy toward an Islamist Algeria, Western (and especially U.S.) policymakers immediately confront what, for the lack of a better term, could be called their “Islamic dilemma”: That is how to face Islamism—a violent political movement in a radical religious guise—while avoiding a clash with Islam, a major world religion.⁸² An oft-proposed answer has been to differentiate between “moderate” and “extreme” Islamism. Yet this has its difficulties as well: Islamists are sufficiently well-versed in Western discourse to assuage Western concerns; terms like “democracy” may have different meanings to an Arab-Muslim audience. Furthermore, a “division of labor” has been observed between the so-called moderate or political wings of Islamist groups and violent ones. Even if such a differentiation were valid, it is moderation only in tactics (e.g., violent revolution versus non-violent evolution) and not in the divinely mandated goal of creating an Islamic state.⁸³

A possibly more efficient approach would be to ascertain the alleged moderation of “revolutionary” Islamist regimes in well-defined areas of concern: acceptance of other Muslim regimes, acquiescence to the Arab-Israeli peace process, renunciation of terrorism, development of nonconventional weapons capabilities, and acceptance of the rules of international cooperation. Some would add to this list human rights concerns and progress toward popular participation and democracy.

⁸² Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): pp. 29-41.

⁸³ *New York Times*, June 12, 1994; see also Peter W. Rodman, *Washington Post*, January 1, 1995.

An Islamist takeover in Algeria would pose hard questions not only to Algerians themselves, immersed as they are in a bloody civil war, but to their immediate and more distant neighbors. As a prominent American columnist noted, "Algeria sits astride a global political fault line."⁸⁴ Which way it tips will have a profound impact on Western interests in the Middle East and beyond.

⁸⁴ Jim Hoagland, *Washington Post*, September 22, 1994.

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