



Centre for
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and Security

Armed violence and poverty in Algeria

A mini case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative
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MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK

The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has commissioned the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS) at Bradford University to carry out research to promote understanding of how and when poverty and vulnerability is exacerbated by armed violence. This study programme, which forms one element in a broader “Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative”, aims to provide the full documentation of that correlation which DFID feels is widely accepted but not confirmed. It also aims to analyse the **processes** through which such impacts occur and the **circumstances** which exacerbate or moderate them. In addition it has a practical policy-oriented purpose and concludes with programming and policy recommendations to donor government agencies.

This report on Algeria is one of 13 case studies (all of the case studies are available at www.bradford.ac.uk/cics). This research draws upon secondary data sources including existing research studies, reports and evaluations. The author would like to thank David Seddon and Tim Heath for comments made on an earlier draft. The analysis and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of DFID or the UK government.

Executive summary

The choice of Algeria as a case study of the impact of armed violence on poverty is twofold: Algeria offers the opportunity to study an Islamist¹ conflict in a middle-income country, and it reveals the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, all of whom were civilians. As an oil-rich country, Algeria would have been a huge prize for the pan-Islamist movement. The violence that erupted in 1992 between Islamist insurgents and the military clearly was a struggle for control of the state. Although small arms and light weapons played a key role in the insurgency, the sword was the terrorists' weapon of choice. In the mid-1990s, the government armed citizen militias, a step that was critical in defeating the rebels, as was U.S. support for the government after September 11th 2001. Security has been re-established in most large cities, where many have sought refuge. The war is running down but still causing more than 500 deaths each year, and insecurity is preventing the return of the displaced.

Over the course of the conflict, armed violence has resulted in the direct killing of some 100,000 and has transformed threatening behaviour (robbery, extortion, rape, and kidnapping) into murderous acts. Lately the violence has degenerated into criminality. Ethnic cleansing is not a feature of this conflict nor is the recruitment of female combatants. As with most civil conflicts, it is not possible to give separate tallies for the deaths of civilians and combatants, nor is there data on which weapons caused more deaths.

The main indirect impact of armed violence is an exacerbation of the urban housing shortage, especially as the conflict has displaced some 1.5 million people. Levels of poverty rose between 1988 and 1995 but appear to have stagnated since then. There are undocumented claims of increasing inequality, which some assume is due to the conflicts but others believe is related to ongoing economic liberalisation policies. Women have suffered, not only because the war increased the number of widows and fear has destroyed social capital, but because the Islamists targeted women and girls in the attempt to impose their ideology. Beginning in the 1980s, the government was already making concessions to the Islamists, sacrificing women's rights.

¹ The term Islamist is used to indicate a political project and is distinguished from the religion of Islam.

1. Introduction

This report focuses on three issues:

1. The circumstances of armed violence in Algeria in the decade of the 1990s. I summarise the chronology, describe the main actors and their aims, and give some details about the violent acts perpetrated. Details on the history of conflict can be obtained from Roberts (2003) and Martinez (1998).
2. The impact of armed violence on women and girls. I look at displacement, rape and murder, and attacks on non-conforming women and girls (e.g., women living alone, women and girls refusing the Islamist dress code, girls attending mixed secular schools, and women working outside the home). This section includes some indication of the broader effects as well as the indirect effects of the climate of armed violence and insecurity, especially on women.
3. The impact of armed violence on livelihoods. Where possible (where information is readily available) I describe livelihoods and the interruption and distortion of commerce, with some reference to other macro-economic disruptions that are at the root of these impacts.

2. Armed violence in Algeria in the 1990s

2.1. *The circumstances of armed violence*

The story really begins in 1988, when ‘bread riots’ engulfed Algeria, eventually leading to the liberalisation of the political arena (multi-party system, free press, legalisation of civil society organisations), the downfall of President Chadli Benjedid’s government, and an army coup. Among the new parties was a grouping of Islamists called the FIS (Front islamique du salut or Islamic Salvation Front); it emerged in 1989 as a federation of the hundreds of networks of cells, including paramilitary cells, that had constituted themselves in the 1980s.² In the local elections in May 1990, the FIS carried 54 per cent of the popular vote and in December 1991 emerged as the overall winner in the first round of legislative elections.³ At that point the government cancelled the second electoral round, the military removed Chadli from power, appointed a High State Council, declared a state of emergency, and banned the FIS. Years of violence ensued, violence so savage and bloody that many Algerians are still stunned.⁴ An estimated 80,000-100,000 people lost their lives to a terrorist insurgency.⁵ Sporadic outbreaks of violence continue: about 500 people died this year so far as a result.

² Kaplan, 1998. Once they were legitimated the Islamist parties began to attract international resources, notably from Saudi Arabia and the Islamic banks, particularly Al-Taqwa (Piety) owned by the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, based in the Bahamas, which funded the social welfare activities in the Algiers region of Cheikh Mahfoud Nahnah’s party Hamas (Martinez, 1999 quoted in Lloyd, 2003).

³ Pierre and Quandt, 1995

⁴ Rédha Malek, interview, 17 April 2001; Karadja 1998

⁵ Garfield and Drucker estimated that between 1992-1999, 60,000 were killed in Algeria, or 0.2 per cent of the population; this represented 3.3 crude deaths per 10,000 people per year, far below the country’s baseline of 60 crude deaths per 10,000. In other words, while the psychological impact of terrorism may be great, the mortality impact is small. They suggest that the low death rates attributable to terrorism show that deaths alone are a poor measure for assessing the full impact of armed conflict and political violence, and that research on other measures and their combination in composite measures is needed.

The FIS claim that the arrest in May 1991 of their leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, and the ban in February 1992 interrupted a democratic process, which would have brought their party to power, provoking them to take up arms; but the historical record shows that some Islamists were already active guerrillas in the 1970s and 1980s, arming themselves by attacking military bases to steal weapons and by smuggling weapons.⁶

In the 1990s a myriad of competing armed groups operated in the name of Islam (see appendix for the main ones; there are also many smaller groups operating only at local level and either devoid of wider ambitions or oscillating between the larger movements).⁷ An estimated 27,000 armed guerrillas were active during the height of the conflict; the army estimated that they were reduced to some 700 as of the end of 2002. One explanation for the proliferation of groups is the army's counterinsurgency strategy, which sowed dissension within the rebellion to scotch the threat to the state; the resulting plethora of armed movements has proved difficult to eradicate militarily or end by political means.⁸

2.2 The main actors and their aims

Two or three types of guerrilla movement in Algeria can be distinguished by their motives and aims.⁹ For the initiators of the rebellion, regrouped initially in Abdelkader Cheboute's reconstituted MIA (1991-1993) and Saïd Makhloufi's MEI (1992-1997), the objective was the revolutionary establishment of an Islamic state.¹⁰ Their premise was that the army's actions in January 1992 had demonstrated the futility of an electoral strategy, that the FIS was finished, and that only an armed revolution would achieve an Islamic state. Their priority was to overthrow the state, and their primary targets were members of the security forces, as well as some civilians regarded as 'collaborators.'

The GIA (1992 to present) typifies a second kind of movement; under the influence of Algerian 'Afghans,' (Algerians who had trained with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan).¹¹ The establishment of an Islamic state was to follow the re-Islamisation of society (consisting of 'correct' Islamic practice as dictated by the strictest variants of Salafi

⁶ A large quantity of weapons was smuggled in the mid-seventies in Cap Sigli, a beach in Bejaia Province (El Watan, 5 September 1998).

⁷ It should be noted that there were no female combatants in any of the Islamist groups.

⁸ ICG, 2004. The International Crisis Group does not attribute its reports, which are the most detailed I have found; however, without knowing the author or authors, one cannot evaluate the judgements made. For example, ICG reports that the FIS is now willing to respect the democratic process and that its armed wing, the AIS, was not responsible for the massacres and atrocities (the GIA was), but ICG gives no evidence and cites only interviews with FIS leaders. At the same time the ICG notes 'the opportunistic character of its [FIS] discourse and the way it pursued momentary tactics...rather than expressing a constant political outlook' (ICG, 2004, p.8 fn 60). On the basis of FIS public statements and patterns of past behaviour, one might as easily conclude that the pursuit of power overrode all other considerations.

⁹ Martinez, 1998; ICG, 2004

¹⁰ ICG, 2004

¹¹ One lesson from the Algerian experience should be underscored: although much is said about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as recruiting grounds for terrorists, less attention is paid to the training these fighters receive in war zones and the havoc battled-hardened guerrillas wreak when return home, bringing violence into communities (viz Lloyd 2003, 17).

dogma and especially hard on women). Their coercive attitude to the population frequently developed into a local reign of terror. For much of the GIA, this preoccupation tended to take precedence over fighting the state. In many cases, it degenerated into highly predatory behaviour that became increasingly indistinguishable from banditry.

The third vision, that of the AIS which crystallised in 1994, conceived the armed struggle in terms of a legitimate rebellion given the state's unjust behaviour; its objective was not to overthrow the state but to induce it to change, in particular by re-legitimising the FIS. Presenting itself as the armed wing of the FIS, the AIS acknowledged the political authority of Abassi, Ben Hadj and the other imprisoned FIS leaders and recognised Rabah Kebir's Instance Exécutive à l'Étranger as the party's external representative. Its purpose was to apply military pressure on the regime in support of the FIS's efforts to achieve dialogue with the authorities and a negotiated solution.

It would be false to suggest that militarised Islamism contrasts with a secular civilian Algerian government: political power has always been in the hands of the military in Algeria. The military has used the threat of internal disorder to justify its rule: 'The military's relatively cohesive organizational structure has given it a comparative political advantage; and petrodollars have helped to keep soldiers in place by giving an unpopular regime a means of buying acquiescence from many citizens.'¹² The response of the government to the Islamist attacks was repression: arrests, the internment of suspects in camps, and the 'disappearance' of prisoners.¹³

The army's counter-insurgency campaign begun in 1992 has been controversial, particularly its manipulation of the GIA, which prevented the rebellion from uniting under a stable leadership and in support of any clear or constant intelligible objective. The intelligence service was successful in infiltrating agents into the GIA, turning certain GIA commanders, and manipulating the extremist wing of the rebellion, composed largely of Algerian veterans of the Afghan war. From 1994 the military armed 150,000-200,000 people in militia groups and recruited another 80,000 as communal guards.¹⁴

2.3 Details of the violence

The GIA has distinguished itself since 1993 by its extreme cruelty and savagery, and repeated rejection of a negotiated settlement. It has attacked civilians indiscriminately, abducted and killed foreigners, planted bombs in public places, slaughtered travellers at false roadblocks, and committed numerous massacres in villages and townships.

The Islamists targeted prominent women and men (doctors, lawyers, journalists, and other professionals and intellectuals) and individuals connected with the government like the police and the military. Their modus operandi was that of terrorists who use violence to demoralise, intimidate and subjugate their opponents as well as any member of civil society not following their dictates with respect to behaviour and

¹² Quandt, 2002, 20

¹³ Amnesty International, 2000

¹⁴ Sidhoum, 2003

dress.¹⁵ Their weapon of choice was the sword (*l'arme blanche*), used by specially trained experts in beheadings and throat slittings (*égorgements*). There was a pronounced escalation as the violence spiralled over the decade. When the government responded with force to the initial assassinations and bombings, the terrorists stepped up their activities, establishing roadblocks and killing everyone ambushed in this way. When the government reacted to this new tactic with additional force, the terrorists again escalated their attacks, descending *en masse* on popular towns in the Mitidja, the fertile plain that extends to the east and south of Algiers. On a single night in August 1997 they massacred 100-300 women, children, and men in Haï-Raïs, and in September they slaughtered 64 in Beni-Messous and 100-200 in Bentalha.¹⁶

3. The impact on women and girls

3.1 Displacement

Displacement, the first direct impact considered here, stemmed from the Islamists' attacks on private houses and homesteads, forcing women to flee with their families not once but sometimes several times. The war has internally displaced an estimated 1-1.5 million people.

Disaggregated information on this subject is fragmented and gives only a scattered image of the extent of the problem. Local media state that 300,000 live as internally displaced in the province of Medea, 125,000 in Jijel, 90,000 (15,000 families) in Chlef, 66,000 (11,000 families) in Aïn Defla, 30,000 in Tiaret, and 30,000 in Saïda. Also, tens of thousands fled the violence and took shelter in the outskirts of Oran.¹⁷ Although it is likely that many people moved to the outskirts of Algiers, there is no information about the internally displaced in the capital city.¹⁸

Internal displacement from rural areas over the last decade should be seen in the context of a more general urbanisation process where unemployment and poverty have led to widespread economic migration into towns. According to one newspaper, close to five million people left the countryside for urban areas between 1977 and 1998.¹⁹

To give a concrete sense of the trauma of displacement, here are three stories. At a bathhouse, one woman recounted her story to Chérifa Bouatta:

They came; they kidnapped girls and massacred their parents. We saved ourselves by running away to E. It was peaceful, tranquil; we lived with a paternal uncle. One day, others came, they killed half the village and my oldest son. We fled and went to G. but that couldn't last; there wasn't enough room for all of us, so we came here; I live in a hut. My husband

¹⁵ Karadja, 1998

¹⁶ Barrak, 1998

¹⁷ *Le soir d'Algérie*, 11 September 2003; *El Watan*, 4 August 2003, 20 November 2002, 12 November 2002, 6 August 2002; UNDP, 2001

¹⁸ Norwegian Refugee Council, 2004

¹⁹ *Le Matin*, 8 September 2002

isn't working; my daughters are cleaning the houses of others; me, I haven't found any work; I'm too old.²⁰

Khalida Messaoudi is a prominent feminist and politician, provocative enough to warrant a *fatwa* (a religious commandment based on scholarly legal decisions) calling for her death. She went underground in 1993, wearing a black wig to hide her (natural) bright red hair, sleeping every night in a different bed. Finding a safe place was not always easy as many people were too afraid to take her in. She survived the war and is now spokesperson for the president.²¹

In the case of Torkiya, the need to flee came after witnessing from her balcony the murder of a young policeman. She ran down to the street to cover his body with a sheet. For this gesture the Islamists condemned her to death and she spent the next two years in hiding, on the run with her three children. When, exhausted, she finally returned to her apartment, she was tracked down and murdered.²²

3.2 Kidnapping, rape and murder

The GIA also kidnapped young girls and women, forcing them to serve as cooks and cleaners in their forest camps and to provide sex when demanded.²³ A *fatwa* legalised kidnapping but cannot justify the treatment meted out to captive women and girls. Even interpretations of Islamic law that justify slavery and taking women as 'war booty,' current in Sudan and Algeria, would not seem to condone the treatment of Fella Zouaoui, fourteen years old, of Sidi Moussa.

Khaled Ferhah, a GIA operative who coveted Fella, organised a raid on her home in order to kidnap her and take her to his camp as 'war booty;' in the course of the raid, his band murdered all the members of her family at home (three happened to be in town that day). According to GIA rules, first he had to offer Fella to Zouabri, the group's 'emir' (commander), who raped her every night for a week and then assigned her to Khaled. Khaled thought he would then keep her for himself and spare her the collective rape reserved for most captives. His comrades disapproved and put both of their lives in danger. Khaled tried to flee with Fella but he was intercepted and beheaded on the spot; Fella was tied with wire and dragged back to Tala-Acha, the camp where Zouabri condemned her to death. Blamed for Khaled's attempted escape, she was tied, spread-eagled, to an iron gate on the ground where she was gang raped daily and stomped on by dozens of terrorists shouting, 'To hell with the sorceress!' Her torturers tore out an eye and stabbed her repeatedly. After twelve days Zouabri took a sword and cut her body in two. Though her corpse has never been found, Fella's fate is known because another captive, Djamila, escaped to tell it.²⁴

Captured women did not have the right to wash or to comb their hair. We were not allowed to pray, or to cover our hair, or wear a veil. Girls like me who had worn *hijab* no longer had the right to do so. All of the daily [religious] duties

²⁰ Bouatta, 1998, 121

²¹ Interview, Algiers, April 2001

²² Belloula, 2000

²³ Turshen, 2002

²⁴ Belloula, 2000

became privileges granted only to the so-called free women, the wives, mothers, or sisters of the terrorists.²⁵

According to the FIS, Muslim women have the right to respect and to refuse an imposed husband. But not Yamina, a sixteen year-old from Bathia, a village at the foot of the Ouarsenis mountains, who was forced to quit school when the terrorists installed in her village burnt it down, and who wore *hijab* (in self-defence). In December 1994, Nebaâ, the emir of the terrorist band, forced her into a temporary marriage with his 'lieutenant' Haroun, despite her father's protest. The night of the ceremony Haroun raped her in her family home while holding a knife at her throat. Over the next two months, he repeatedly beat her with a belt and raped her. Then he was killed in a shoot out with government forces, and seven months later Yamina gave birth to a son whom the village and the state regard as illegitimate.²⁶ This is but one of many examples collected by Algerian journalists and feminists.

3.3 Attacks on non-conforming women and girls

Islam is the state religion of Algeria but Algeria is not an Islamic state, which is the goal of the Islamists. Women who do not observe the Islamists' rules are, by their definition, not Muslim women. A radical interpretation of *jihad*, which legitimises the use of force to impose Islamist beliefs on 'non-observing' Muslim and non-Muslim alike,²⁷ justified the declaration that women and girls who refuse to wear *hijab* are legitimate murder targets. Katia Bengana, a seventeen year-old high school senior in Blida, had been warned but she told her mother, 'Even if one day I will be assassinated, I will never wear *hijab* against my will. If I must wear something, it will be the traditional dress of Kabylia, rather than the imported *hijab* they want to force on us.'²⁸ On 28 February 1994, a group of men ambushed, shot, and killed her as she left school. This is one example of too many.²⁹

Islamists attacked women workers (because women should not work outside the home), female students (because women should receive segregated, religious education only), and mothers living alone (because women should always live with a husband or father). One of the first women workers to be killed was twenty-one year old Karima Belhadj, a secretary at a police station who supported a family of eight; she was shot on her way home in April 1993.³⁰ Even women in traditional women's work roles (e.g., in hammams and hairdressing salons) were killed.

In September 1994 the GIA called for a boycott of schools and threatened reprisals—school burnings and murders of pupils and teachers—on anyone defying the order.³¹ Where they controlled villages, Islamists shut public schools. Bombs destroyed schools in many places where Islamists did not control public education, where coeducation persisted and girls mixed with boys in lunchrooms, where French was taught, and where girls participated in sports. In 1998, a year when violence had

²⁵ Mériem, Chr ea, March 1998, as told to Nac era Belloula 2000, 116

²⁶ Belloula, 2000

²⁷ Al-Ashmawy, 1989

²⁸ Taveau, 1999, 141

²⁹ Aslaoui, 2000

³⁰ Power-Stevens, 1995

³¹ Alia, 1995

already begun to subside, Islamists bombed 17 schools.³² The number would have been higher but by then students knew to report suspicious packages, so in El-Biar on 21 January 1998, pupils discovered a bomb that security services were able to defuse 20 minutes before it was set to go off.³³

Although Islam proclaims the primary importance of the family as the basis of the community of Muslims, Islamism disrupts family life. Far from reasserting ‘traditional family values,’ Islamism turns children against parents by encouraging them to spy on their parents and report on such ‘non-Islamic’ activities as drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and watching television. Islamism alienates the young from the old in the most modern of ways, by using the induction techniques of cults to isolate recruits from their families and bond them to the leader of an armed band. The clerics’ insistence on the Arabisation of the school curriculum pitted the older generation of French-speakers against a younger generation of Arab-speakers, especially in the period when Arab-speakers were penalised in the job market; it also set rural Arab-speakers against urban French-speakers and opened the way to the murder of French-speaking Algerian intellectuals.³⁴

3.4 Broader and indirect effects of armed violence

Terror and fear of reprisals work to destroy familial and neighbourly relations; they sow suspicion, distrust, and anxiety, and they turn friends into spies (or worse, attackers). In the Algerian civil war, Islamists terrorised citizens who resisted their decisions; when Islamists took over villages, people feared that the security forces might accuse them of collaboration, so they were caught between the two.

Families condemned by Islamists for whatever reason—resistance, ‘non-Islamic’ behaviour—became isolated. Women especially lived in fear and felt that this isolation diminished their choices: ‘No women escaped these despotic condemnations, whether they were women of easy virtue, housemaids, fortune-tellers, or women who worked for the government.’³⁵ If Islamists killed a member of a family, no neighbour dared to present condolences, no one attended the funeral. The attitude toward victims who witnessed the massacre of their family—one 33 year-old woman in Raïs lost her mother, sisters, sister-in-law, brothers, and two nieces who were kidnapped, nine members in all—compounded the social distress: if a family was attacked it was because they deserved it, because they had initially supported the Islamists and then deserted them, so they were the objects of an act of revenge.³⁶

From the beginning it was clear that women were both targets and pawns in the power struggles between the Islamists and the government. From 1981 President Chadli made concessions to Islamists: he tried and failed that year to pass a new family code based on Shari’a law, a code that would further curtail women’s rights in urbanizing and industrializing Algeria; he succeeded in 1984, in a reversal of women’s post-independence gains.³⁷

³² ONDH, 1999

³³ ONDH, 1999

³⁴ Carlier, 1999

³⁵ Belloula, 2000, 61

³⁶ Algérie-Interface, 6 février 2003

³⁷ Heristchi, 2004

On 20 April 1990 the FIS organised a march of several hundred thousand to present their platform to Chadli; among the points were a call for the application of *Shari'a* law and the acceleration of educational 'reform' to protect schools from non-Islamic influences like coeducation and mixed groups in school lunchrooms.³⁸ Other aspects of the FIS platform included actively discouraging women from working outside the home, and creating separate administrative services, public transport, and beaches for women and men.³⁹ *Fatwa* singling out women followed in rapid succession. A 1994 FIS *fatwa* legalised the killing of girls and women not wearing *hijab* (which in Algeria consists of a scarf that hides the hair and neck and a full-length robe – veil is not an accurate translation); another legalised kidnapping and temporary marriage.⁴⁰ According to the FIS, Muslim women have rights to (religious) education, respect, inheritance, freedom of opinion, the vote, and to refuse an imposed husband. They do not have the right to work outside the home, become political leaders, or participate in sports. They should not wear makeup, perfume, fitted clothes, or mingle with men in public; they should wear *hijab* 'which not only establishes the distinction between masculine and feminine, but underscores the separation between public and private.'⁴¹ According to *El Mounquid*, the official FIS journal, *hijab* distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims; it is obligatory for Muslim women and not an individual decision.⁴²

War not only creates widows, it also creates disability; the need to expand rehabilitation services to cope with the handicapped also distorts the health services. In the last census in 1998, Algeria counted 1.6 million disabled people, about 5 per cent of the total population.⁴³ Algeria has benefited from the progressive reforms of a brilliant psychiatrist, Frantz Fanon, and has better psychological services for victims of war and terror than most former colonies. But far less is known about the psychological impact of civil war, when one's compatriots and former neighbours suddenly become one's enemies, than the trauma of interstate war; Algerian professionals are exploring this difficult terrain with the additional complication of women professionals contesting traditional medical views of women.⁴⁴

Mohand Chérifi Amokrane, a former government minister currently with UNDP, addressing a conference recently organised by the Kabyle-based political party FFS (Front des Forces Socialistes), described the poverty resulting from the civil war: Poverty is mounting in rural and urban areas and is expressed in the extension of social ills, urban violence, riots in rural areas, and the recruitment of terrorists; suicide and begging are spreading, as is the daily spectacle of women and children searching rubbish tips for food, and prostitution, alcoholism, drug addiction, assaults and other criminal acts are increasingly common in addition to violence.⁴⁵

³⁸ Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau and Frégosi, 1991

³⁹ Hessini, 1996

⁴⁰ Hessini, 1996

⁴¹ Hessini, 1996, 8

⁴² Imache and Nour, 1994

⁴³ El Watan, 3 March 2002

⁴⁴ Observations at a meeting organised by the National Institute of Public Health, Algiers, April 2001.

⁴⁵ Le soir d'Algérie, 4 September 2004

4. The economic impact of armed violence

4.1 *The impact on livelihoods*

Algeria is a middle-income country with a per capita income of \$5,760 in 2002.⁴⁶ Before independence, between 65 and 75 per cent of the Algerian population lived in dire poverty. Post-independence socialist development efforts quickly helped reduce poverty levels: by 1966 poverty levels fell to 56 per cent, and this decline continued for the next twenty years. Rural poverty was almost double urban poverty; the poverty rate in Algiers was only 15 per cent in the 1970s. In 1980 national poverty rates fell to 28 per cent and in 1988 reached 15 per cent; but by 1995 poverty was again on the increase and rose to almost 22 per cent.⁴⁷

The question is whether the conflict seriously impacted socio-economic conditions or whether the Algerian government's development strategy created unsustainable growth that collapsed with the reverse oil shock of 1986. Inflation rose from 10 per cent in 1985 to more than 30 per cent in 1992; by 1999 IMF economic adjustment programmes had reduced it to 2.6 per cent, but at considerable cost to the population in terms of massive currency devaluation, declines in services, and redundancies in the public sector.⁴⁸

The expansion program of the 1980s kept the unemployment rate at its 1979 level (15 per cent) and even went below this level in 1985. Stabilisation and adjustment measures did not spur growth rates, however, and unemployment rose to 28 per cent in 1998.⁴⁹ The government launched the privatisation programme in 1995, at the height of the insurgency, shedding 130,000 public sector jobs by 1997.

The problem of poverty is closely linked to unemployment, displacement effects of the violence, and the housing crisis. One report asserts that the violence-induced exodus from rural areas has led to problems of criminality, violence, prostitution, and unemployment in urban areas.⁵⁰ In 1995, 90 per cent of homes were overcrowded with 1.2 households per house, and 28 per cent were severely overcrowded with more than 3.4 households per house.⁵¹

Women heading households are said to be more affected than other population groups by absolute poverty, though no Algerian data are available to substantiate this claim. According to the UN, between 1991 and 1997 the percentage of women-headed households was 11 per cent in Algeria, which is below the North African average of 12 per cent.⁵² The unemployment rate is higher among Algerian women (38.4 per cent in 1995) than men (26 per cent); more than half of the unemployed women are single (51 per cent) whereas 10.4 per cent are married.⁵³

⁴⁶ UNDP, 2004

⁴⁷ Belkacem, 2001; CENEAP 2000

⁴⁸ Belkacem, 2001

⁴⁹ CENEAP, 2002

⁵⁰ European Union, 2002

⁵¹ Belkacem, 2001

⁵² UN, 2000

⁵³ CENEAP, 2002

Following attacks on shantytowns in the ‘triangle of death’ on the Blida plain south of Algiers, a region politically hostile to the government, officials or army officers are said to have appropriated land, leading to charges that appropriation may even have been a motive for the atrocities.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the Islamists prohibited people in Les Eucalyptus (a suburb of Algiers) from paying a local property registration tax, which would have legalised their homes; the emirs threatened death to anyone who paid national or local taxes, saying that the money collected supported the army.⁵⁵

The effect of targeting and killing professionals has been the exodus of thousands, creating a shortage of skilled workers.⁵⁶ For example, Islamists targeted a professor of medicine for his work in human rights. Co-workers feared that a terrorist posing as a patient would enter the hospital and kill him, endangering their lives and those of his other patients. Though the government offered protection, he fled into exile after an attempt on his life.⁵⁷ In another example, an experienced Algerian journalist reporting on the conflict fled to Paris with her husband, who was a broadcast journalist, because of threats on their lives.⁵⁸

From 1980 to 1991, worker remittances and receipts as a percentage of imports of goods, services and income fluctuated between a low of 2.19 in 1991 and a high of 4.93 in 1987; from 1992 the figure rose significantly and varied from a low of 5.82 in 1993 and a high of 8.58 in 1995 (see Appendix B for time series 1980-1999).⁵⁹

4.2 The interruption and distortion of commerce

The armed Islamist bands ran rackets; they collected money as a ‘tax for the revolution’ and they stole goods from shops. Moreover, they controlled the main arteries of the country. The roadblocks they maintained allowed them to check the movement of goods from the ports to the interior, diverting what they needed.⁶⁰ The decentralised control of the bands meant that individual emirs lived on the money they raised. Young smugglers (called *trabendistes*) who were Islamist sympathisers aided the armed bands.

The connections with local ‘mafias’ involved in illicit economic activities, notably smuggling, intensified even as the armed movements’ political and social bases contracted. In September 1998, at the peak of the massacres that were the turning point in the war, arms smuggling was a well-prepared strategy. Hassan Hattab, a GIA emir, was reported to have activated contacts with his men abroad to smuggle weapons from a European port into Algeria.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Dammers, 1998. The quarrels in this region have to be read in the context of the nationalisation of land after independence, which was followed by the liberalisation of property rules when Chadli assumed power. Families claiming property titles from before the nationalisation of land disputed the legality of the sale of nationalised land to and by former army officers as allowed by Chadli.

⁵⁵ Martinez, 2000

⁵⁶ Power-Stevens, 1995

⁵⁷ Interview, Algiers, April 2001

⁵⁸ Interview, Algiers, April 2001

⁵⁹ Lloyd, 2003

⁶⁰ Martinez, 1998

⁶¹ El Watan, 5 September 1998

Just as arms smuggling supplied the civil war, drug smuggling expanded the use of drugs (hashish, cocaine and kif), and commentators link drug use to the civil war, noting that the traffic has become entrenched and professionalised.⁶²

4.3 Other macro-economic disruptions

The enormous population movements in recent years led to an acute housing shortage in urban areas. A massive influx of people fleeing armed attacks from extremist groups has added more pressure to the overall situation, and as a consequence living conditions have further deteriorated in the shantytowns of the major urban centres. Several newspapers have documented the decline in urban living conditions describing the breakdown of sanitation systems, the lack of drinkable water, overcrowded households and insufficient schooling facilities.⁶³

In general, the security situation in Algeria has so far not allowed for a mass return of the displaced population, since armed attacks and massacres are still occurring. People have also been discouraged from returning to their home villages because living conditions in the countryside can be even harder than in the town, with an absence of drinkable water, poor general infrastructure, as well as a lack of health facilities. Despite this situation, the government does encourage the return of the displaced to their home villages. The authorities have tried, for example, to re-populate villages by promising direct financial assistance to returnees as well as implementing programmes to rehabilitate houses, increase employment and revitalise the agricultural sector that suffered during the 1990s. Despite these intentions, the reality remains grim and effectively hampers sustainable return.⁶⁴

5. Tentative conclusions

The progress of militarisation and Islamisation over the decade of the 1990s in Algeria was interactive, with the government forces and Islamist bands responding to each other with ever-greater violence. With each strike, the martial grip on civil society tightened (declaration of martial law, curfews, etc.). Each new notch on the spiral of violence marked the spread of militarism and increasing dependency on the military. In the words of a prominent Algerian magistrate, Leïla Aslaoui: 'On the night of 3 to 4 June 1991, the Army came out once again *to save the Republic*.'⁶⁵ The social consequences of the processes of militarisation and Islamisation are far-reaching. Consider the increase in government military expenditures from 1.5 percent of GDP in 1990 to 3.9 percent in 1998.⁶⁶ Consider the 200,000 new recruits trained to

⁶² El Watan 21 July 2002, 16 May 2004. 'L'usage des drogues, porté par la violence politique et le recul de l'autorité, ainsi que par la pauvreté et l'exclusion, touche de plus en plus de jeunes frappés par le "mal-vivre" ou qui cherchent à compenser le stress et la peur dans une fuite vers des paradis artificiels.'

⁶³ Norwegian Refugee Council, 2004. Algeria's difficulties were aggravated by natural disasters that displaced hundreds of thousands of people. In November 2001, devastating floods hit Algiers, killing more than 800 people, mostly in the Bab El-Oued area. In May 2003, a strong earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 struck the country and caused catastrophic damage in five provinces in the north-central section of Algeria. The earthquake most affected the province of Boumerdes and the eastern district of Algiers. Official figures put the number of casualties at 2,320 persons killed and 10,147 injured. Hundreds of thousands were left homeless.

⁶⁴ Norwegian Refugee Council, 2004

⁶⁵ Aslaoui, 2000, 144 emphasis added

⁶⁶ UNDP, 2000

reinforce the ranks of the country's security forces (police, military, gendarmerie, and militias) as a result of the Islamist attacks.⁶⁷ Consider the formation at the end of 1994 of so-called patriot units equipped by the government to work directly with the gendarmerie, of self-defence militias in Kabylia, and of private security forces hired in the east of the country to protect the private property of notables.⁶⁸ Liberalisation facilitated the movement of money by the GIA (Armed Islamic Group), which made use of newly loosened currency exchange rules.⁶⁹ At the same time, the rescheduling of debt in 1994 released new funds, which the government used to buy weapons to fight the armed bands.⁷⁰

Militarism and Islamism have in common the usurpation of the roles and prerogatives of civil society. The infusion of military values in civil society has particular implications for women's democratic rights, as does the imposition of Islamist tenets. Military regimes limit democratic freedoms in the name of national security and employ secrecy to protect their decisions from civilian review (holding the military accountable for their actions in times of war is difficult even in democratic societies). Islamism imposes (a strict interpretation of) religious law to the exclusion of civil law.

Both Islam and the military are masculine, male-dominated institutions; both are patriarchal in the sense that they are gendered hierarchical systems of social and sexual control; and both are sex-segregated societies with sharp sexual divisions of labour. All three—patriarchal traditionalism, Islamism, and militarism—control women to accomplish their goals. 'Militaries need women to provide commercial sex to soldiers, to be loyal military wives, to fill jobs working in the defense industry, and for the military.'⁷¹ Islamism places women at the centre of family life, which is the foundation of Muslim society. The patriarchal organizational structures of Islam, the military, and many national cultures are consonant and mutually reinforcing. In combination, militarised Islamism in patriarchal cultures minimises and marginalises the multiple roles of women in society.

⁶⁷ Lamine, 1998

⁶⁸ Martinez, 1998

⁶⁹ Martinez, 1998

⁷⁰ Martinez, 1998

⁷¹ Enloe, 2000, xii

Appendix A: Armed groups⁷²

MIA Mouvement Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Movement) led by Abdelkader Chebouti, which remobilised veterans of Mustapha Bouyali's earlier movement; this disintegrated after Chebouti's death in late 1993.

MEI Mouvement pour un État Islamique (Movement for an Islamic State), led by Saïd Makhoulfi, a founder of the FIS who left the party in July 1991; the MEI disappeared after Makhoulfi's death in 1997.

GIA Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group), founded in 1992 by Mansour Miliani and Mohammed Allal, but which developed only after these had been superseded by other leaders, notably those drawn from Algerian veterans of the Afghan war; still active in 2004.

FIDA Front Islamique du Djihad Armé (Islamic Front of the Armed Jihad), founded by certain former members of the Jaz'ara tendency; it rallied to the GIA at one point but later resumed an independent existence before being eliminated in 1996.

AIS Armée Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Army), founded in July 1994 by elements of the MIA following the latter's disintegration; linked to the FIS and led by ex-FIS militants Mezrag Madani and Ahmed Ben Aïcha until its dissolution in 2000.

LIDD Ligue Islamique pour le Da'wa et le Djihad (Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad), founded in 1996 by Ali Benhadjar, former GIA commander in Medea district; dissolved itself in 2000.

GSPC Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat), founded in September 1998 by Hassan Hattab, former GIA commander for Boumerdès and Kabylia region; still active. The Salafiyya jihadists (GSPC and HDS) enjoy a narrow domestic constituency, are linked to Al Qaeda, and rely on external sources of legitimation.

HDS Houmat Al-Da'wa al-Salafiyya (Guardians of the Salafi Call), founded in 1996 by Kada Ben Chiha, former GIA commander for western Algeria; still active.

Appendix B: Workers remittances and receipts as percentage of imports of goods, services and income

1980	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
2.79	2.82	2.41	2.39	3.04	4.93	3.58	2.94	2.83
1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
2.19	6.28	5.82	8.24	8.58	7.23	8.05	7.80	7.54

Source: Lloyd 2003, adapted from 2001 World Development Indicators, World Bank.

⁷² Based on ICG, 2004

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