

Case analysis through the social integration lens: Using multi-stakeholder dialogue as a social transformation tool

Algeria

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Algeria faces many conflicts, two of them challenging its central authority if not its integrity: armed opposition of the so-called Islamists, and the Berberist movement that is a long-lasting form of civil disobedience. We will focus here on the dialogue with the armed groups. Many other dichotomies exist and may involve latent conflicts, but we will not deal with them here: French-speaking/Arab speaking intellectuals and journalists, regional rivalry, laic/religious, Ethnic Berbers/Arabs, Eradicators/dialogists within the government and even Salafists/Algerianists within the Islamic movement.

Peace initiatives in Algeria during the last decade have taken invariably the form of a state offering amnesty or even pardon against unconditional surrender of armed opponents. In this short note we will try to describe this very rudimentary dialogue process whereby the nature of the state, being an oil-rentier, or a bunker state, as Clement Henry¹ put it, can explain the particular type of interaction between stakeholders, the state deciding who can participate to the dialogue, and by what rules everyone has to play. In doing so we will have to identify the main stakeholders in the Algerian conflict, including those excluded from the formal dialogue process while persistently present in the minds if not in the scene. On the other hand, we have to realize that dialogue is not always egalitarian or democratic: it may well be unbalanced and authoritarian, depending on the respective weights of the interlocutors and the nature of the political system.

1. A short history of the conflict in Algeria

The social unrest coincided with economic problems for Algeria in 1988. With the fall of oil prices in the international market, Algeria faced a state of bankruptcy having for a long time relied almost exclusively on hydrocarbon exports to fund food and other commodities imports, not to mention its development projects. IMF and World Bank conditions imposed radical changes regarding the role of the state in providing subsidies, jobs, housing, health care and other social policies that Algerians were used to. As a consequence, IMF riots exploded in October 1988, as in neighbors Tunisia and Morocco with a light time-lag.

Within the state-party system, with a strong state and a weak party, FLN² has dominated the political scene since independence in 1962. The socialist nature of the regime was at that time -1988 - abandoned for a multi-party system with elections to come in 1990 and 1991. Algeria entered political and economic transitions in the worst conditions, social unrest, unemployment, etc.

¹ Henry, C. M.; 2004, <<Algeria's Agonies: Oil Rent Effects in a Bunker State>>, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9(2): 68-81

² Front de Libération National

Among the main political parties, the Islamic Front of Salvation (FIS) entered the 1990 elections and scored important victories at local and provincial elections. In 1991, it obtained a near majority of the parliament seats in the elections of 1991.³ At that time the army pushed President Chadli Bendjedid to resignation and cancelled the 1991 elections, banning FIS from a quasi-certain victory. At that time a reformist party was outlawed, its leaders sent to jail and the armed conflict exploded. Thousands of FIS militants were arrested, excluded from work, or even killed. Many MP freshly elected had to flee abroad. We should stress that many civil society organizations, including women and trade unions, were fearing that once in power the FIS will not respect diversity and democracy. These organizations backed the army crackdown and we should also stress that the discourse of certain members of the FIS was excessively intolerant and unacceptable, by democratic standards, especially on women rights.

The FIS was not only a political rival of FLN, who conducted the independence war and had been the unique authorized party since 1962. The FIS was planning a global social change; applying Islamic rule in Algeria would have constituted more than a regime change. This point is crucial because the government approach is to focus on armed opposition in order to reduce it, without any reference to this central debate: are Algerians willing to live by the Islamic rules?

Most of the atrocities of a 'dirty war' led by the army took place between 1992 and 1998, with the regular security forces and militia men on one side and armed groups under various labels such as MIA,⁴ GIA,⁵ AIS,⁶ GSPC,⁷ etc. on the other; The Islamic Army for Salvation (AIS), once the armed branch of the FIS and led by Madani Mezrag, took its distances and freedom from the party and signed a peace pact with the army. Interestingly enough, the same Madani Mezrag has been a key advocate for the reconciliation chart. In addition to pronouncing many speeches in different part of the country, he engaged in negotiations with armed groups including GSPC.

2. The main stakeholders

Algeria has definitely lived the 3 phases of fragmentation, exclusion and polarization. If many efforts from the government have succeeded in reducing the fatal effects of fragmentation and polarization, exclusion is still there. This exclusion concerns one of the main stakeholders in the crisis.

Quandt identified 4 main players in the political life in Algeria⁸:

³ Bonner, M; & al. <<Introduction>>, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9(2): 2-13

⁴ Islamic Armed Movement (MIA)

⁵ Armed Islamic Group (GIA)

⁶ Islamic Army of Salvation (AIS)

⁷ Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)

⁸ Quandt, W. B., 1998 *Between Ballots & Bullets, Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism*

- The army is the most stable and coherent force ;
- Political Islam with an estimated one-fourth of the electorate;
- The nationalists with FLN, UGTA,⁹ RND;¹⁰ and
- The democrats with FFS¹¹ being the best organized party.

According to the analysis the nationalists and the democrats together may outnumber the Islamist current. All these considerations are based on the fact that not all Algerians did vote, because of the flawed electoral laws. As a typical example, the 1991 elections rules were biased towards the larger parties: two-rounds majority system with the winner taking all. With a proportional representation system no party could gain the majority and therefore every party would have to compromise with the others. The Hamrouche government is historically responsible for this choice.

Youth: the invisible stakeholder

In a country like Algeria, social integration starts with employment and marriage. Youth aged 15-24 are the most excluded part of the population from these two crucial markets: labor market and matrimonial market. The males of this age group are also providing most of the foot-soldiers of terrorism. Unless this age-group is efficiently targeted by strong social policies, carrying a gun will give access to money, women and power over others.

<<One can also anticipate that large numbers of today’s Algerians in their twenties and thirties will remain permanently alienated from the political system. Many will never find a productive job , will never be able to afford decent housing, and will never able to raise families.>>¹²

The number of these ‘lost generations’ may be over 2 million and therefore it is not a wise policy to ignore them. Violence will never stop unless integrative policies for youth are adopted and implemented.

Main Armed Groups	Main Civil Society Organizations	Anti-terrorists groups	Top leaders in the government
Islamic Armed Movement (MIA)	Activist women	ANP: National Popular Army	Dialogists
Islamic Army of Salvation (AIS)	Secularists	Security forces	Eradicators
Armed Islamic Group (GIA)	Trade unionists	Groups for Legitimate Defense GLD (about 500000 armed men)	
Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)	Human Rights		
Islamic Front for Armed Jihad (FIDA)	Families of victims of terrorism		

Table 1. Main stakeholders in the Algerian conflict

⁹ Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens/Trade-union

¹⁰ Rassemblement National Démocratique/ National Democratic Rally

¹¹ Front des Forces Socialistes/ Front of Socialist Forces

¹² Quandt, loc cit, p. 163

The media is playing a very unusual role in the conflict. Although many journalists have been killed by the terrorists, it is very strange that the French-speaking journalists are in general against the dialogue, making fun of the dialogists.

The AIS, created in 1992 after the cancellation of the elections, decided to stop its action in 1997 and was disbanded in 2000 under an amnesty agreement with the army.

<<Today, the GIA and the GSPC remain the principal organizations in the armed rebellion.>>¹³

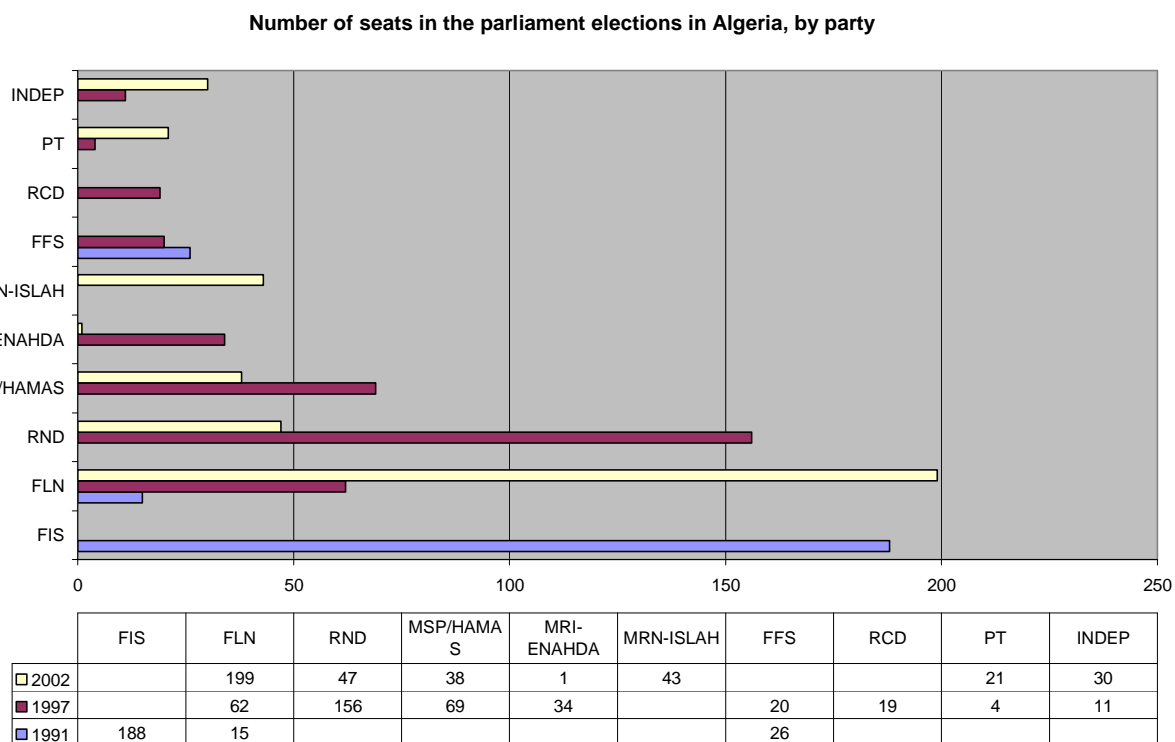


Figure 1. Main political parties entering parliament elections 1991-2002

- PT: Parti des travailleurs/ Party of Workers
- RND: Rassemblement National Démocratique/ National Democratic Rally
- RCD : Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie/ Rally for Culture and Democracy
- FFS : Front des Forces Socialistes/ Front of Socialist Forces
- FLN : Front de Liberation Nationale/ National Liberation Front
- MSP: Mouvement de la Société de la Paix/ Movement of Society for Peace
- FIS : Front Islamique du Salut /Islamic Front for Salvation

¹³ Layachi, A., 2004, <<Political Liberalisation and the Islamist Movement in Algeria>>, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9(2): 46-67

The cancellation of the 1991 legislative elections, the FIS being banned and its leaders sent to jail had a clear effect on the explosion of violence. In the first round of the 1991 elections the FIS obtained 188 seats, far above the FFS with 26 and the FLN with only 15 seats.

During the 1997 elections and as a retaliation of the regime against the parties who participated in the Sant'Egidio talks, a new party was created: the RND took 166 seats, well above the other parties. New Islamic parties MSP-HAMAS¹⁴ and NAHDA¹⁵ may have captured a part of the banned-FIS supporters.

In the 2002 elections, the FLN regained its first rank among the legal parties.

In parallel with these elections, the regime, while conducting a tough battle against the armed groups, adopted 3 laws or policies preparing the way to the general amnesty in order to secure social peace. However, these processes excluded de facto the banned-FIS and negotiated directly with the combatants. Instead of dealing with the cause, the government preferred to address the symptoms.

Are Algerians still willing to live by the Islamic rules? After 11 years and many elections and referendums designed to refute the idea, an unexpected answer came from an international survey designed and supervised by the University of Michigan¹⁶ and conducted in some Arab countries including Algeria (in 2002). This survey was carried out as part of the World Values Survey that has covered already about 80 countries all over the world. In Algeria, the sample consisted of 1,282 individuals, including 650 men and 632 women.

To the question whether the government should only implement the laws of the Shari'a, 36.7% strongly agree and 34.9% agree, while 28.4% were neutral or disagree.

To the question relating to the political democratic system, 60.4% find it very good, 32.3% fairly good, and only 7.3% fairly bad or very bad.

Interestingly, the author is puzzled with what he considered contradictory trends, taking for granted that democracy can't go along with shari'a, while a comparison of Algeria, Morocco and Egypt supports the same trends.

¹⁴ Mouvement de la Société de la Paix/ Movement of Society for Peace

¹⁵ The Renaissance Movement

¹⁶ Tessler, M. 2004, <<The View from the Street: The Attitudes and Values of Ordinary Algerians>>, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9(2):184-201

	Algeria	Morocco	Egypt
Democratic political system			
Very good	60.4	81.5	67.9
Fairly good	32.3	14.5	30.6
Fairly bad or very bad	7.3	4.0	1.5
Would it be better if people with strong religious beliefs held public office			
Strongly Agree or Agree	39.7	58.1	87.1
Neutral	30.4	18.5	8.6
Strongly Disagree or Disagree	29.9	23.4	4.3

Table 2. Some results from the World Values Survey

Interestingly enough, Algerians are not the strongest supporters of religion in politics since only 39.7% strongly agree or agree while the figure is 58.1% in Morocco and 87.1% in Egypt. This should not come as a surprise, as Moslems all over the world are expected to favor Islamic rule.

3. Dialogue procedures

In order to gain a legitimacy, the military organized several elections, including presidential elections, referendums and secret negotiations with the armed opposition. The successive governments tried systematically to negotiate the surrender of the fighters offering amnesty and at the same time conducted a tough repression.

Another dialogue, independent from the government, took place between the main political parties in Sant'Egidio, Italy. The event gathered the main Algerian political parties, representing 82% of the voters: FIS, FFS, FLN, PT,¹⁷ MDA.¹⁸ This initiative came out with a platform to end the crisis but it was rejected by the army and President Zeroual. At this time a new party was created, the others parties having been discredited by their involvement in Sant'Egidio. Of course a lesson can be drawn from this experience: all stakeholders should have been involved including the army, other armed groups, civil society organizations...

Another type of dialogue is taking place thanks to a recent initiative by OAPP,¹⁹ formed by a group of citizens willing to help the return of the armed groups back to their families. These citizens are using contacts with these families in order to know what should be done to convince fighters to disarm. According to this association, the fighters' demands are related to social integration: they want to be guaranteed not to be prosecuted, to be offered decent living conditions and not to be obliged to return to their places of origin as they fear some type of vendetta from the families of their victims.²⁰

The successive governments have adopted laws and policies to stop the violence, as outlined in the following paragraphs.

¹⁷ Parti des travailleurs/ Party of Workers

¹⁸ Movement for Democracy in Algeria

¹⁹ Organization Algérienne pour la Protection de la Paix /Algerian Organization for Peace Protection

²⁰ Liberté, <<Contacts avec les groupes armés. L'OAPP débarque>>, lundi 24 octobre 2005, p. 3

A. *The Rahma policy*

(Retired) general Liamine Zeroual was elected President in 1995. Under his rule, direct negotiations with the (jailed) FIS leaders took place to stop violence. At the same time the Rahma (amnesty) policy was promoted to encourage fighters to surrender and avoid the consequences of their acts. The AIS stopped its activities in 1997 and it was the main output of this policy. It is estimated that 3000 fighters ceased their activities. However, those who refused amnesty were the most violent because they had no political perspectives, like the AIS. At this time the regime was dominated by two conflicting approaches: eradicators/dialogists. The eradicators did everything possible to avoid a political agreement that would bring FIS back to the scene. President Zeroual would resign before his term ended.

B. *The concord law*

In 1999, President Bouteflika arrived to power and one of his top priorities was to bring an end to violence; he adopted a policy of civil concord. Terrorists were given a deadline to surrender without conditions so that they may avoid the consequences of their acts, even if probation tribunals had been set up without known results. Luis Martinez quotes the number of disarmed fighters as 6,000.²¹ Many observers were convinced that this policy would imply the restoration of the FIS, but the powerful general's plans were different: they wanted to eradicate all roots of terrorism including the religious schools and the politicized mosques.²² These divergent views will of course limit the scope of the Concord law because the President cannot go openly against his army and at the same time we have to note that this approach has been labeled as absolving terrorists of their crimes in order to secure social peace, and it is not going in the same direction with the global 'war on terrorism'.

C. *The reconciliation referendum*

On September 29th, 2005 a referendum on peace and national reconciliation took place with a very strange yes-no question: do you want peace and national reconciliation? The reply to this type of question could hardly be negative although about 300,000 voters managed to say no. In fact, saying yes implies accepting the following measures and decisions:

- Families of victims of terrorism to be compensated as martyrs of the liberation war;
- Families of perpetrators compensated as well;

²¹ Martinez, L., 2004, <<Why the Violence in Algeria>>, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9(2):14-27

²² Zoubir, H. Y., 2004, <<The Resurgence of Algeria's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century>>, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9(2):169-183

- No prosecution for people who surrender if no involvement in collective rapes, mass murders or use of explosives in public places, the rule being to believe people; and
- FIS considered as the only responsible party and so must remain excluded from political life.

As corollaries:

- No questions about security forces eventual wrongdoing
- Extradited terrorists will benefit from the same conditions

The question asked through the referendum could be summarized as: are Algerians willing to forget 100,000-150,000 deaths, thousands of disappeared, and 1.5 million displaced, and not to ask questions of perpetrators, including security forces? Not very surprisingly, the authorities came with a 97.36% figure accepting the deal while the proportion of voters is highly debatable.

Human Rights Watch analyzed the document and came with clear reservations:

- Compensating victims of terrorism as well as families of killed terrorists is a positive measure but this does not exhaust the right to know the truth, including the right to prosecute the perpetrators;
- Absolving crimes other than collective rapes, mass murders or use of explosives in public places may help serial killers to avoid any prosecution;
- The security forces should be held accountable, including senior officers; according to the charter document, torture, illegal executions and kidnappings are individual isolated activities, not involving institutions; and
- Excluding ex-FIS from the reconciliation is a wrong direction.

4. Positive and negative changes

According to Luiz Martinez, the violence as measured by the death toll has considerably decreased between 1997 and 2000-01 from 1,300 for the single month of Ramadhan in 1997 to 2,300 for 2000-01. Between 1993 and 1997, the GIA counted 30,000 fighters. In 2002 this number is said to be 700. About 15,000 fighters having been eliminated by security forces. The effect of the Civil Concord policy is estimated to be 6,000 fighters disarmed.

It is too soon to assess the effects of the latest referendum on peace and national reconciliation (held on September 29th 2005) but negotiations are taking place between the government and Hassan Hattab, the former head of GSPC, as revealed by the press.²³ Interestingly enough, he expressed as conditions the rehabilitation of the FIS, the release of its leader Ali Belhadj, still in jail, and demands to remove the 'terrorist' label from the fighters. These conditions are rather antithetic with the text of the project.

²³ El Watan, <<Hassan Hattab veut déposer les armes>>, dimanche 16 octobre 2005, p. 3

During these last 10 years as many as 11 elections or referendums took place in the country, as Abdelnacer Djabi put it. This is more than one popular consultation per year. According to this sociologist, the last referendum was just a political game between the factions in power.²⁴ Besides, Me Ali Yahia Abdenour, the former head of the LADH,²⁵ suspects that the reconciliation referendum has been conducted to avoid eventual international prosecutions for torture and extra-judicial executions.

This quest for legitimacy has been indirectly confirmed by the President himself when he declared that members of the government are opposed to the whole policy of national reconciliation.

What could have been done? It is not easy to speculate about the political game in Algeria because of its opacity. We are used to hearing about divergent views between the generals and the successive Presidents these last 10 years: one has been killed by his bodyguard, two have resigned....

However we can suggest 3 ideas that are lacking in the government approach:

- Abandon the top-down approach and adopt the participatory development paradigm. Conducting a referendum can be considered as a consultative process but Algerians need to go through many other steps like collaboration, and then empowerment of all stakeholders in order for them to have their say in decision making.
- No stakeholder should be excluded, including former members of the FIS
- Make accountability, truth and justice the true cements of the national reconciliation: in fact even if the society does not prosecute the perpetrators, parents of victims may be attracted by vendetta and do justice themselves. This is already taking place.

Algeria is going against the international trend, as represented by the UN stance vis-à-vis terrorism. The Security Council has published a list of terrorists including 20 Algerians. According to the reconciliation law, some of them might benefit from this law while the UN is asking all member countries to prosecute them;

	PERPETRATOR	FACILITATOR	AGAINST THE REFEENDUM
AIS	1992-1997	2005	
GSPC	1992-	2005 ?	
PARENTS OF VICTIMS		ONFVT ²⁶ (FLICI)	300,000 VOTING NO TO THE 2005 REFERENDUM PARENTS OF VICTIMS REFUSING THE CHARTER DJAZAIROUNA (BLIDA) LADDH
CITIZENS: OAPP		2005	

Table 3. Positions of key players regarding the reconciliation referendum

²⁴ Liberte, <<Le référendum n'est qu'un jeu politique>>, dimanche 16 octobre 2005, p. 6

²⁵ Ligue Algérienne des Droits de l'Homme/ Algerian League for Human Rights

²⁶ Organisation Nationale des Familles Victimes du Terrorisme/National organization of Families of Victims of Terrorism

It is worth noting that some perpetrators are now playing a facilitation role. It is also important to underline the fact that organized families of victims are divided on the referendum process.

	Contributing factor
Positive changes Less violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of fighters by security forces • Some religious scholars recently outlawed terrorism
Negative changes Increased delinquency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth unemployment
Status quo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion • Emergency state still in effect after 10 years and no change is on the agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eradicators vs. dialogists in the government • Media

Table 4. Positive and negative changes during the period 1992-2005

The struggle against terrorism should not conceal the fact that the majority of youth did not join the fighting, although they provided most of its foot-soldiers.²⁷ Unemployment is the main youth problem, followed by vocational training as the 1991 Youth survey showed. After more than 10 years of all-out war against armed groups, youth are still being recruited. The most urgent task of the government is to provide them with jobs and training. With the huge amount of extra-revenues from the recent rise of the oil price, Algeria could totally re-pay its external debt and get rid of the IMF-World Bank conditions, especially those related to job creations. If the government fails to do so, the country will have to go through a long period of violence even if terrorism is over: delinquency is already on the rise in Algeria.

Unfortunately, the oil-rentier state of mind makes decision-makers think only of easy solutions for difficult problems. Me Farouk Ksentini, chair of the CNCPPDH,²⁸ recommended compensating the families of the disappeared up to <<1 million Dinars (~US \$13,800) plus a death certificate to close the file.>>²⁹

²⁷ Kouaouci, A. 2004 <<Population Transitions and Violence in Algeria>>, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9(2):14-27

²⁸ Commission Nationale Consultative de Promotion et de Protection des Droits de l'Homme/National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

²⁹ Luis Martinez, loc cit, p23