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Cover picture Voting in the December 1990 elections, in which the FIS was deprived of its victory. (Photo: *Africa Events*)

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The Algerian Civil War
1990-1998

WITH A PREFACE BY
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Columbia University Press
New York

in association with the
Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Paris

DT 295.6 .M3713 2000

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THE WAR LOGIC OF THE ISLAMIST ARMED BANDS

From 1994 onwards the expansion of the Islamist armed bands[5] seemed irresistible, because they won the sympathy of the ex-FIS voters, who saw them as defenders of the Islamist cause. But the dynamics of the war, which ensured the supremacy of the 'Emirs' over the Islamist elected representatives, had effects on the structuring of the armed groups. The first generation of fighters, considered as heroes, protectors and avengers in their home areas, were succeeded by bands whose activities ran counter to the interests of the 'cause'. Forced to extract resources from their environment to remain in the field and consolidate, they were reduced, after the flight of the richer inhabitants, to extortion from petty traders. Masters of the communes that previously supported the FIS, the armed bands had to come to terms with contradictory interests in the running of their 'Emirates'. The flight of the military entrepreneurs led to disorganisation of the districts, aggravated further by the halting of *trabendo* due to Western countries' restrictive policy on issuing of visas.

The 'Emirs' were obliged, in order to live up to the standard they set, to embark on a policy capable of offering services similar to those offered by the military entrepreneurs. Consolidation of an armed group from then on depended on its 'Emir's' ability to protect the resources of his commune and increase the wealth accumulated in the urban guerrilla campaign. The time spent by the 'Emirs' on this task diverted them from their initial objective: the fight against the regime. The Islamist armed bands' concentration on taking power at the local level turned the Islamist communes into battlefields – which did not harm the regime, as the local people were so ill-disposed towards it.

The 'Emir' and the Model of the Military Entrepreneur

A local guerrilla war. While the FIS Islamist militants following the standard of the AIS (Armée Islamique du Salut)[6] saw the heroes of the war of

[5] The Islamist armed bands were groups of young people of the districts who came together 'spontaneously' and claimed to be acting in 1994 in the name of the GIA (Groupement Islamique Armé). In order to distinguish them clearly from that guerrilla faction, we call them simply armed 'groups' or 'bands'.

[6] In July 1994 the militants of the former FIS created the Armée Islamique du Salut. The AIS became the fourth faction, after the MIA, MEI and GIA, to embark on guerrilla war against the regime. Those armed organisations are analysed in Chapter 9.

liberation as their model to emulate, for the 'Emirs' of the autonomous armed groups of the Algiers region, who claimed to be fighting in the name of the GIA, the symbol of success and the model of the 'perfect fighter' was the military entrepreneur. However their activity is understood, the 'Emirs' of the armed bands were more interested in recasting the social relationships of their areas in their own favour than in fighting the regime with a view to replacing it by an Islamic state. Their war logic was in that respect opposed to that of the guerrillas of the maquis, whose personal histories and field of action led them to aim at erecting their structure at the national level. Analysis of the acts of war carried out by the armed bands shows, when placed in the local context, that they were far from wanting to destroy the regime, but rather aimed to take over the running of their local areas. Their methods disconcerted even sympathisers with the former FIS, who did not always understand their motives for killing agents of the state in the communes:

> 'The pity of it is this – why don't the Moudjahidin, instead of killing our policeman, the district policeman, get together and five hundred of them march on the Presidency and kill them all there? I don't understand why they don't do that. Isn't it possible to do that? Better that than everyday a skirmish here, another there, I assure you, that way they'll be gone faster.' (Kader, unemployed college graduate, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

Criticism of the armed bands' methods of fighting was related to their apparent inadequacy for the declared objective of overthrowing the regime. Those methods were to prove even more inadequate when turned against economic targets in areas of ex-FIS sympathy. Once enthusiasm for a rapid victory of the 'Islamists' in 1992-3 had passed, the sympathisers, who had fervently backed the MIA in 1993, grew tired of the neighbourhood Moudjahidin's guerrilla campaign from the end of 1994. The regime's resilience, linked to the increase in its financial resources, made daily murders of policemen seem pointless. And the policy of the 'Emirs', whose field of action was mainly in the communes previously run by the FIS, did not at all weaken the regime's ability to act – because, of course, the regime's economic and political resources were not located at Les Eucalyptus, Chararba, El Harrach, Baraki and little places in the Mitidja. So why should those places be turned into guerrilla terrain? The places where the symbolic seats of power were located – Hydra, El Biar, the Algiers city centre – were, by contrast, spared guerrilla violence, at least until June 1995, when the bomb attacks began.[7]

[7] According to a (not exhaustive) survey of the press, between January 1995 and February 1996 at least 16 car bombs exploded in the Algiers region, the bloodiest being that of 30 January 1995 at the Algiers central police station, leaving 42 dead and 286 injured. *El Watan*, 1 Feb. 1995.

This contradiction between the declared objectives (the overthrow of the regime and the creation of an Islamic state) and the methods of action (guerrilla attacks in underprivileged communes) was the result of the 'Emirs'' determination to take the place of the military entrepreneurs, the real holders of local power. That aim, not admitted but ardently pursued, was a reflection of their own social background, which kept their sights trained on the success that group had obtained through the liberation war. In contrast to the 'militants of Islam',[8] socialised in political struggle at the universities and mosques, the 'Emirs' were outside the religious arena until they joined the *jihad*. They were marginal people, workers, former *trabendistes*, and, in the image of a certain sort of active, cunning and resourceful young people, were free from family and inherited ties of all sorts. Their identity was developed not from political allegiance but from social background and living experience: the neighbourhood, the suburbs, sport and *trabendo*.[9] Paradoxically the 'Emirs' of the armed bands, in spite of appearances, were very far removed from the Islamic militants. The latter were fascinated by the Gulf states and felt contempt for the Western countries, although they had the means to travel there and many had studied there; in contrast to ordinary young people, who were fascinated by the West, they liked travelling in the Muslim countries.

Portrait of an 'Emir': Saïd the sheet-metal worker

These contradictions and paradoxes are illustrated by the example of an 'Emir' of Les Eucalyptus, Saïd the sheet-metal worker. At the head of 50 to 60 Moudjahidin coming from the residential districts of the commune in 1993-4, Saïd the sheet-metal worker reigned over his territory which he had known since his childhood. Until 1993 Saïd was a skilled worker with the merchant navy. Trained as a mechanic, on his shore leaves he did odd jobs in private homes: welding, water pump repairs, etc. Hence his local nickname of 'Saïd the sheet-metal worker'. At the time when the FIS was winning the municipal elections, in June 1990, Saïd had the reputation of a drunkard, his merchant navy job giving him easy access to liquor. But his elder brother, an FIS activist, was preaching the benefits of observing Islamic teaching in the district. He called for patience towards his younger brother and told the activists of an earlier hour that 'when he succeeded in bringing his brother back to Islam, then it would be easy to bring all Algeria back'.

[8] For that form of Islamism, see Gilles Kepel and Yann Richard (eds), *Intellectuels et militants de l'islam contemporain*, Paris: Seuil, 1990, 285 pp.

[9] The ties of solidarity uniting the Emirs with their districts recalled in some ways the 'urban asabiyyât' analysed by C. Cahen among the *shabâb* (young people) in Muslim society in the Middle Ages: 'Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du Moyen Age', *Arabica*, VI, 1, 1959, p. 51. However, that comparison does not lead us to conclude that there was a specific form of contestation in the 'Muslim city'.

In 1993 Saïd the sheet-metal worker, home on leave, heard that his elder brother had not escaped the round-up of organisers and activists of the FIS. From that moment onwards the inhabitants of the district saw him no longer, except for a few moments' glimpse of him shouldering a Kalashnikov. In the space of a year he became the 'Emir' of several districts, his authority was uncontested, and the fury with which he attacked patrols aroused the fervour of younger people:

> 'One day the soldiers entered the mosque with their shoes on, they said they were looking for a terrorist. They had not had time to leave when a J5 van rushed towards them, the rear door opened and Saïd the sheet-metal worker with his Moudjahidin got out with the *klach* [Kalashnikov]. They slaughtered them. How could they dare to enter the mosque with their shoes on?' (13-year-old schoolboy, 1994)

The 'Emir', in the urban setting, appeared like a protector and avenger for those who were trapped in the logic of breach with legality and felt they were potential victims of the security forces. He and his comrades in arms moved in small groups of three or four people around a well defined space watched by spies who informed them about the coming and going of soldiers and civilians. Besides men in arms the group included people who were assigned other tasks. The secret war that they waged obliged them to keep and maintain as many hideouts as possible. The survival of an armed group depended a great deal on its relationship with its environment, especially on the possibility of getting food and accommodation from families without running risks.

The 'Emir's' social ascent gave him notoriety equal to that of the military entrepreneur, his model. In the south-eastern suburbs of Algiers the military entrepreneur, like Hadj Sadok whose career was described earlier (see Chapter 2), organised the economic and social transactions of the housing estates, employing *trabendistes*. After he fled in 1992 the *trabendistes* went over to the service of Saïd the sheet-metal worker. Besides his role of protector, the 'Emir' had a duty to maintain client networks, to get effective logistical support in his war effort; for the strength of the armed group did not lie in the number of its fighters but in the range of people serving it. So it was natural for the local *trabendistes* to go over to his service. Technically unemployed, because of the conjunction of two events – their employer's departure and France's restrictive visa policy – they found in Saïd's *jihad* an enterprise able to solve their difficulties.

The path followed by Saïd, whose enlistment in the armed struggle at the local level was the result of his brother's death, should not lead to any generalisation about the causes of enlistment. But the sociology of the local 'Emirs', while it cannot be properly studied in view of the difficulties of collecting information about their histories, makes it possible nevertheless to suggest some hypotheses on the basis of examples. For example, the awarding of the 'Emir' title aroused feelings of envy: there

was no lack of envy and jealousy among those who did not get the title while they were convinced they had the necessary qualities. Even so, those who had the title were convinced that they were truly leading the *jihad*: their commitment was not due to simple rational economic considerations that could lead them to use the armed group's budget for their own personal purposes. However, those who were already using violence and cunning as a means of acquiring goods before the start of the civil war in 1992 found that they were well placed, through their experience of life, to compete successfully for the title of 'Emir'.

The extreme diversity of motivations of the 'Emirs' means that the idea of 'enemy of God' (*Adu Allah*) varied from one group to another, and this altered the targets to aim at. The 'Emirs' heading a group consisting of some students preferred to choose as targets people from cultured circles, considered as 'apostates', and concentrated on murdering intellectuals, teachers and journalists. Sometimes the enemies were professional rivals, and they killed or destroyed what they knew best, such as the school in their district. As for Saïd the sheet-metal worker's group, it was made up of *hittistes* who were mainly engaged in guerrilla war against the security forces. Journalists and academics living in Les Eucalyptus were able to stay there until 1995, not without fear it is true. At Batna in the Aurès mountains Ahmed la Crosse's group attacked 'ex-combatants' (numerous in that region) and women above all. Murderous madness could also guide the actions of some 'Emirs'. The Munchar ('the Saw') group, which specialised in cutting up victims taken off trains on the Algiers-Oran line, was another example of the diversity of the methods used by the 'Emirs', inherent in the ambiguity of their personal lives. The 'Moh Jetta' and 'Napoli'[10] groups in the Upper Casbah specialised in the kidnapping and murder of men of religion. In view of the purely local rational considerations that determined the targets and methods of the 'Emirs', the 'militant of Islam' who was motivated by the political conviction of the need for an Islamic state had no course left but to join the maquis – that being a war machine in the hands of Islamist revolutionaries whose political and military objectives went beyond the local objectives of the district warriors.

Fascination and respect for the 'emirs'

The ranks of Islamist armed groups and the 'Emirs' leading them have been constantly replenished because of the positive, respectful view of their activities in their social circles of origin. In spite of the murderous acts they committed, the 'Emirs' or their groups remained no less attractive. Their actions which those who condemned them saw as criminal or irrational

[10] According to the weekly newsletter *TTU Monde Arabe* (11 Oct. 1996) Amar Yacine, alias Napoli, has been accused of the murder of several French people, including the television journalist Olivier Quéméner, killed in 1994.

were, on the contrary, always justified and respected by their sympathisers. But in the spring of 1994 the petty traders, students and *trabendistes* distanced themselves from the cause of the 'Emirs', because of the opportunities offered by the regime. The armed groups, particularly in the urban setting, from then on found supporters only in a pool consisting essentially of people humiliated by the arbitrary behaviour of the security forces or made desperate by the high cost of living; such people found revenge – for a veryshort time – in the armed bands. The members of the armed groups, and the 'Emirs' in the first place, conferred value on their identity through the figure of the Moudjahid, and ensured an enviable standard of living for themselves through the work of redistribution implicit in the running of a group in an aggressive environment.

The 'Emir' of an armed group, autonomous or in a 'joint venture' with the guerrilla operations in the interior, embodied – alongside football stars, Raï stars and the popular leaders of the FIS (Ali Benhadj, Abassi Madani) – a new type of hero. The certain death that awaited him glorified his image and testified to his courage; the title of 'Emir', which had an international resonance, transformed the social progress of an anonymous individual into the career of a 'public enemy number one'. The local 'Emir', hunted down by the security forces, aroused pity even among those who condemned him, for everyone saw him not as 'God's madman', but as the living embodiment of a despair bringing forth destructive energy. The discovery at sunrise of an adolescent of 15 to 18, riddled with bullets, with 'more bombs in his pocket', made people forget the crimes he had committed the day before. For behind the title of 'Emir' could now be seen the child of the neighbourhood, brother or close relative of an activist, the delinquent only just released or an adolescent who had disappeared more than a year before, now ending up like a wreck in a suburban alleyway. The place he left vacant was immediately filled, as longing for revenge spurred on a member of the victim's family or a childhood friend of his.

In this short cycle the principles of Islamism did not have time to get assimilated. Here there was a contrast with the maquis where instructors, *jihad* professionals, provided all-round training for a 'Muslim fighter'. For the urban Moudjahidin, guerrilla reflexes were most important. With experience from the consolidation of the conflict, they had adequate bases for their war effort. However, the security forces also were continually refining their repressive apparatus. The respect accorded to the status of 'Emir' was, at the symbolic level, due to the political system's low output of 'stars', 'heroes' and other successors to the 'historic figures of the 1954 revolution'. Some social strata among the youth, as in other countries, identified with violent 'heroes', greatly popularised by the film industry. Before glorifying Abdelkader Chébouti the sympathisers of the armed bands were fans of Schwartzenegger, Bruce Lee, Rocky and other cinema stars.[11]

[11] The influence of cinema heroes on the conduct of young fighters is a phenomenon

However, that fascination would not have had any practical effect if the 'Emirs'' enterprise had not also led to many very lucrative activities. That is why the economic context in which the armed bands developed is of key importance; it makes it clear how, following an ostensibly religious cause (the *jihad*), the struggle was a response to the social disorganisation of the districts and became a means of laying hands on money so as to provide for local people hard hit by unemployment and the high cost of living. In 1992-3 the groups broken up by the security forces were composed to a great extent of students, workers, even technically qualified people. From 1994 adolescents and criminals became predominant. The ideological motivations of the former faded away, to be replaced by mobilisation for social reasons (revenge-seeking and survival strategy) and economic ones (seeking to profit from resources redistributed by the 'Emirs'). Nonetheless, the conflict was not cast rigidly in the mould of a contest between 'Islamist delinquents' and security forces. Following the trade liberalisation begun in 1994 the armed bands were a way for the most deprived to accumulate funds that were instantly reinvested in trading, through the formation of import-export companies.

The way the armed groups developed underlines the permanent redirection of their activity in accordance with the environment. Depending on the period, the 'Emirs' offered the following services: social revenge in 1992-3, protection in 1993-4, accumulation of 'capital' from 1994. For these different services people of different social and economic backgrounds were mobilised: the predominant student element of 1992-3 was weakened (students joined the AIS maquis in the rural areas), giving way to marginalised groups (criminals, humiliated people). The way in which the armed bands developed from their emergence in 1992 was complex even so.

It is therefore simplistic to view this war enterprise as a fight against an 'impious' regime that interrupted the parliamentary elections of December 1991-January 1992 – especially as a guerrilla campaign in the interior took responsibility for that activity. The political and ideological objectives assigned to the armed struggle were adulterated by economic criminal activity and social revenge-seeking, which – much more than study of the ideologues of revolutionary Islamism – lay behind the armed dissident movements.

How the 'Emirates' were run

The local organisation of the armed bands. The spread of violence, linked to the emergence of the Islamist armed bands and intense repression, drove the richer inhabitants out of the suburbs of southeastern Algiers from 1994. The military entrepreneurs' families left behind 'Dallas style' villas and ware-houses emptied of their machines, to return to their *douars* of origin in the interior, especially in the east of Algeria. During this period those buildings were illegally occupied by the Moudjahidin, when they were not sold off to individuals at rock-bottom prices because of the collapse of the property market in those places. The 'Emirs' could not escape, any more than the military entrepreneurs, from the problems of disputes linked to landed property and illegally occupied land.

There had been a dispute related to effective ownership of some land in the Mitidja since independence. Some families exhibited property titles dating back to the nineteenth or early twentieth century, mentioning their rights over parcels of land bought or confiscated by French settlers. Soon after independence the land was nationalised, and it was only from 1986 onwards that property titles were given.[12] As was mentioned in Part I, land was sold to individuals by those families without legal authorisation. Many other parcels of land were awarded to former guerrillas of the war of liberation, as a reward for service, in the Mitidja but also in their *douars* of origin. The institution of a land registry in the other regions considerably reduced the number of disputes arising from the exact demarcation of everyone's property. But this did not happen in the Mitidja, and 'anarchic' building considerably reduced the room for manoeuvre for development policies. When the building of roads and even motorways was held up by the presence of illegal dwellings along the route, this illustrated not a management failure in housing policy, but the absence of a single authority responsible for allocation of sale and property rights. The contesting of local government property rights over certain plots of land by families holding pre-nationalisation (pre-1962) property rights led to a proliferation of lawsuits.

Those disputes intensified after 1992 because in certain places (Les Eucalyptus, Chararba) families of military entrepreneurs were in dispute with families discredited after independence because of collaboration by some of their members with the French authorities. Land belonging to families of Caïds was nationalised in 1963, but their descendants never stopped claiming ownership.[13] That phenomenon, probably a marginal one, was said by the regime, in its statements on the war, to be one of the reasons for the Islamists' violence. The Islamists thus appeared as if they were

observed in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as shown in the work of P. Richards, 'Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone: a Crisis of Youth?' in O.W. Furley (ed.), *Conflict in Africa*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1995, pp. 134-70.

[12] The process of 'acquisition of property in agricultural land' was begun in 1983, but only in 1986 was it speeded up with the privatisation of the DAS (Districts Agricoles Socialistes). See J.-C. Brûlé, 'Attentisme et spéculation dans les campagnes algériennes', *Maghreb-Machrek*, no. 139, 1993, pp. 42-52.

[13] H.A. Amara has emphasised that the privatisation of land from 1986 constituted 'a return to the situation prevailing before 1971 (the agrarian reform), to the land statutes and division of property inherited from the colonial period...The restoration of land to the big families of Caïds and Bachagas favoured by the colonial administration shows the extent of the reversal made by the political class...for all that the re-establishment of the situation before 1971, after twenty years, was not easy...' 'La terre et ses enjeux' in P.R. Baduel (ed.), *L'Algérie incertaine*, Paris: Edisud, 1994, p. 191.

manipulated by families trained by the colonial regime for intermediate positions (Caïd, Bachagha, Agha) and then, after independence, condemned to exile, death or silence.

The regime's denunciation of a collusion of interests between the 'terrorists' and the Harkis[14] – because young men from those families were to be found in some armed bands, even among the 'Emirs' – caused a shock on the other side of the Mediterranean; however, it made sense in some localities or regions where military entrepreneurs were confronted with rights that pre-dated their ownership. In this situation the *jihad* was denounced as the 'revenge' of yesterday's losers.[15] However, such denunciations are interesting in another way: they revealed the extent to which land ownership was intrinsically linked to a war situation. The Caïd families profited from the colonial regime in their struggle against neighbouring tribes in competition for management and obtaining of property.[16] After the defeat of the colonial regime, those families met the same fate as the tribes they had weakened, the beneficiaries being the military entrepreneurs. The civil war starting in 1992 reopened those wounds and showed that those weighty disputes had not yet been settled, because both sides used the war – and hence the armed bands – as much as they could in their confrontation strategy.

The flight of the military entrepreneurs probably aroused hope among all those who had been contesting their authority or even their legitimate presence in certain places. The occupation of land by the 'Emirs' and the collapse of the property market produced an economic 'boom' in those disadvantaged areas. However, it was to a great extent the petty traders who made the most of the situation. They bought up the pool of houses sold at low prices (emigrants' houses notably), using the same opportunity to place their money in a safe fixed asset to escape extortion. What new balance of forces is to follow in those areas? Will the 'Emirs' succeed in definitively taking the place of the military entrepreneurs? That will be one of the issues at stake in the post-civil war era.

Development of the economic order. The flight of the military entrepreneurs did not mean that they abandoned their landed or business property, as is

[14] For example, Djaffar el Afghani, GIA 'Emir' from September 1993 to February 1994, was a 'son of a Harki' who lived in Nice until 1977. A member of the Daawa wa Tabligh since 1982, he left for Afghanistan in 1989 and returned to Algeria in 1992. He was credited with 138 murders and 283 attacks on public property. The Emir of the West, Kada Benchiha, accused of the murder in September 1994 of two French surveyors, was 'also the son of a Harki' according to *El Watan* (1 March 1994).

[15] This recalls a comment by Julien Freund: 'In countries where the revolution has triumphed, violence is justified as the indispensable instrument to safeguard revolutionary gains and hold would-be counter-revolutionaries, reactionaries etc. pitilessly in check, *Utopie et violence*, Paris: M. Vivien, 1970, p. 128.

[16] C. Etablet, *Etre caïd dans l'Algérie coloniale 1835-1912*, Paris: Ed. du CNRS, 1991. 380 pp.

clear from the testimony of a former employee of Sheikh Lahcen, who has returned since 1993 to a village in the Constantine region:

> 'The Sheikh, when the *boulahya* (the bearded men) won the elections, began to send lorries to take the equipment away. The warehouses have stayed empty since then. My family and I live on the ground floor of the house, that way we keep an eye on it in case things change. But every month someone from the family comes to see if all is going well, because the Sheikh does not want to sell.' (Security guard, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

The private sector entrepreneurs, as well as the wholesalers, had no private protection staff until 1994; that was why a certain number abandoned their too exposed warehouses in places in the Mitidja, to move to the inner suburbs of Algiers or even their *douars* of origin. The military entrepreneurs, owners of many 'villas plus warehouses', moved without too much difficulty. Sheikh Lahcen, living in the Mitidja with his large family, first moved to one of his numerous villas in the vicinity of Algiers in 1992, and then left the region in 1993. The purchase of land and construction of outsize villas was, during the 1980s, a common preference of that social group.

Sheikh Lahcen, who specialised in wholesale distribution of consumer goods, was a favoured customer of the state corporations that manufactured tinned tomatoes and fruit juice, and a favoured importer of foreign consumer goods. A well known wholesaler, he left his *douar* in the Hauts Plateaux at independence in 1962 to settle in one of the numerous houses abandoned by the 'settlers'. Like many of his generation with a considerable fortune to his name, he took part in the war of liberation, not as a combatant but as the person responsible for supplying certain maquis in the Aurès, although he was then less than 20 years old. Driving a van and later a lorry, throughout that period he travelled all over Algeria; this was with a view to establishing networks as varied and as geographically dispersed as possible. But, he said, it was 'with the Jewish community'[17] that he established the best relations. He was to keep up his links with some wholesalers whom he valued particularly, established in Marseilles and Tunis.

Coming from a region badly shaken by the repression after the Sétif uprising in 1945,[18] Sheikh Lahcen has retained from that time accounts of the deaths of some of his family. His youthful involvement in the war of liberation was the consequence of that memory of war. The contacts he made then, at great risk, were to establish almost fraternal links with a certain number of chiefs of the interior guerrilla campaign. Their children became like his own, and vice versa. But at independence he left his native region and did not dare to go back to see his home *ghourbi*. Algiers became his city; abandoned

[17] See the chapter 'La Révolution et les juifs algériens' in M. Lebjaoui, *Vérités sur la révolution algérienne*, Paris: Gallimard, 1970, pp. 110-24.

[18] On the events of 8 May 1945 see B. Mekhaled, *Chroniques d'un massacre: 8 mai 1945: Sétif, Guelma, Kherrata*, Paris: Syros, 1995.

in 1962 by its French inhabitants, it was invaded by all those who, like him, were fleeing their past in search of a new life. In Algiers he, the son of a peasant, became through his participation in the war the friend of senior dignitaries of the state, including one of Houari Boumedienne's ministers.

After independence he made profitable use of the maquis supply networks. The economic disruption that accompanied the ALN guerrillas' coming to power enabled all those who, like him, were in a position to provide supplies to the cities to acquire positions of influence.[19] Those private traders in the service of the independent state retained, throughout the Boumedienne period, a monopoly of private imports of consumer products. They were also partners in the distribution of locally produced goods over the national territory. In fact they never entered into competition with the state import and distribution networks; a sort of share-out of imported products was established, with those bringing in considerable profits (vehicles, electronic products, machine tools, pharmaceuticals) remaining in the hands of leaders of the regime. The private sector concentrated on products for everyday consumption, with low added value. The influence of those traders remained nonetheless considerable; they amassed colossal fortunes, at a time when the French franc was exchanged for one and a half dinars at the official rate. Sheikh Lahcen invested mainly in real estate and had about ten 'Dallas'-style houses built, a distinctive sign of wealth. However, those traders were quickly overtaken in fortune and influence by a new type of economic actor, a product of the period of Chadli Bendjedid's presidency: the speculator. In Sheikh Lahcen's view the speculators were none other than those of his comrades in arms who had chosen to join the state institutions.

The nationalisation of oil and gas in 1971 and the 'oil shocks' of 1973 and 1979 augmented the state's revenue; military officers and senior civil servants were in charge of managing the increase in the oil price. The unconvertibility of the dinar gave considerable power to political personnel who held foreign exchange and readily speculated on the informal foreign exchange market. Resale of foreign currency to individuals like Sheikh Lahcen, at a rate higher than the official one, created a parallel market which continually expanded. Using their control over the currency the speculators developed a policy of massive imports of consumer goods, which weakened the private traders, drowned in the variety of imported products. Only solid friendships at the top levels of the administration allowed certain traders to keep their market shares safe from the emergence of rivals. However, the traders of the '54 generation saw themselves relegated in fortune and influence to the position of 'rich traders', well behind the speculators. The latter were transformed by the overlapping of the public and

[19] M.E. Benissad estimated that between 1962 and 1965 Algiers, Oran and Constantine accounted for 90 per cent of the wholesale trade turnover. *Economie et développement de l'Algérie,* Paris: Economica, 1977.

private sectors and exchange control into *nouveaux riches*, in fact into 'millionaires' according to Sheikh Lahcen and public rumour.

Following the drying up of state revenue due to debt servicing,[20] the speculators invaded the private sector.[21] The abandonment of the state apparatus at the end of the 1980s was a result of the carving up carried out by the speculators. George Corm notes: 'On coming to power through the Hamrouche government, in the autumn of 1989, the reformers found foreign exchange reserves at a very low level, about $800 million.'[22] From 1992 onwards the government instituted a 'war economy' to respond to the challenge of Islamist violence; state imports became scarce, which allowed approved traders and agents to make new profit margins, especially in distribution. With the dwindling of the state's resources between 1991 and 1994 military officers established a monopoly over management of revenue, because of their involvement in the repression. Owing to their determination to reorganise and modernise the repressive apparatus, possibilities for embezzlement of public funds dried at their source. However, from 1994 the rescheduling of the debt and the introduction of a market economy gave the traders a new lease of life, thanks to the resumption of the policy of importing products. But 'competition' set in because private and public actors were obliged to accommodate the interests of the army and also those of the new economic actors, the armed bands. Those bands were, in addition, sought after by all the economic actors, with a view to reducing or diminishing their rivals' resources as much as possible, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Having suffered a decline in the 1980s, the renowned trader Sheikh Lahcen found new vigour in the civil war. The time when he and others monopolised imports had passed, but the war had the merit, in his eyes, of levelling inequalities. Speculators, traders and state enterprise managers were obliged, in order to survive, to show imagination in the face of the 'Emirs' and guerrillas who were ready to destroy or disrupt their activities. In that game Sheikh Lahcen had some winning cards. Besides the fund of sympathy which the private sector got from the Islamists, he had experience valued by the 'Emirs', his past was of the sort that they respected. His exile far from the suburbs was disastrous for his staff, who lost their jobs, and

[20] The total debt, which was $16 billion in 1984, rose to $26 billion in 1989. Debt servicing payments rose during that period from $5 billion to more than $7 billion in 1989, then $8 billion in 1990.

[21] A. Brahimi has written: 'The supplementary budget for 1990 adopted by the ANP [Assemblée Nationale Populaire] in July legalised "*trabendisme*" by authorising international hawking involving resale to the state, on the domestic market, of imported goods. That budget also authorised approved agents and wholesalers to import consumer goods, capital goods and goods for industrial use for resale to the state.' *Stratégies de développement pour l'Algérie*, Paris, Economica, 1991, p. 319.

[22] G. Corm, 'La réforme économique algérienne, une réforme mal aimée?', *Maghreb Machrek*, Jan.-March 1993, no. 139, p. 22.

it obliged the armed groups to try vainly to provide the services he had offered. From the beginning of the civil war Sheikh Lahcen had nothing to complain about, no crime was committed against his family, still less any act of sabotage against his property. His 'villa-warehouses', although uninhabited, were respected by successive 'Emirs' and the security forces avoided stationing troops nearby, as they could provoke a clash with the armed bands and lead to damage to the Sheikh's property.

These 'big men'[23] have been passing through the civil war without too many accidents. The armed groups, in spite of their ardour, do not seem in a position to supplant them. For that they would need to unleash terror sufficient to make the military entrepreneurs flee for good, just as the departure of the settlers in 1962 contributed to the accumulation of wealth by Sheikh Lahcen. So far only intellectuals, journalists and officials have been leaving Algerian territory, leaving positions which the 'Emirs' have not been planning to take.

Economic determinants of the GIA's consolidation

The groups calling themselves Islamist benefited in 1992 from the enormous pro-FIS electorate. But it has to be recognised that in failing to maintain that asset, they let it decay. That failure was due to the demarcation of the 'Emirs'' territory and the organisation of their kingdoms. For the young men of the communes run by the FIS in 1990-1 had, independently, been engaged in many forms of contestation since 1988. The 'Emirs' thus had a political legitimacy derived from the interruption of the elections process in December 1991-January 1992 and the policy of repression.

Overpopulation and poverty: handicaps to consolidation of the GIA. The carving up of the communes by the 'Emirs' and their bands was, however, altered during the conflict with the security forces. The residential districts inhabited by young men sympathetic to the FIS and MIA until 1993 were a reservoir of recruits for the '*djamaat*' (Islamist groups). However, the latter could not take root in localities that were too deeply impoverished, where economic resources were rare and communication routes had no strategic importance – especially since the halt in armed attacks on banks, due to the creation of private security firms,[24] stemmed major inflows of liquidity.[25] The scarcity of economic resources weakened the armed

[23] On the 'politician-entrepreneur or big man' see J.-F. Médard, 'L'Etat patrimonialiste', *Politique Africaine*, no. 39, 1990, p. 31.

[24] Executive decree 94/65 of 19 March 1994 authorised private companies to ensure the security of public or private agents.

[25] A gendarmerie report published on 16 Nov. 1993 mentioned that 191 armed robberies were estimated to have been committed during the first half of 1993, representing 41.6 million dinars: *El Watan*, 17 Nov. 1993.

groups, as they were obliged to meet some operating expenses: logistics, food, lodging, vehicles, arms, and charitable spending (allowances for families of martyrs, financial help for acquisition of property, 'purchase' of military service exemption cards).[26]

Prosperity of the communes and vitality of the armed bands. The permanent establishment of the armed bands in areas like Chararba, Baraki and Les Eucalyptus is explained not only by extreme ardour for waging the *jihad*, but also by the abundance of financial resources due to the high proportion of petty traders whose business was expanding. To that was added geography hospitable to guerrilla warfare, because of the absence of an urban development plan. The maze of streets, a handicap from the architectural point of view, became an asset for the local Moudjahidin, who knew the smallest corners of their territory backwards. Similarly, main roads filled with vehicles favoured protection rackets and explained the proliferation of 'fake checkpoints'. Those urban zones, bordering the Blida Wilaya, were in close contact with guerrilla groups established in the neighbouring mountain ranges (the Chréa and Meftah Massifs). The MIA instructors found no difficulty in training adolescents in urban guerrilla war between 1992 and 1993; their maquis, in the Meftah mountains, was only 40 km. away. That environment favouring consolidation of urban guerrilla war probably explains why those three municipalities produced a certain number of prominent Moudjahidin.[27]

The extreme difficulty faced by the 'Emirs' in consolidating their positions in the inner suburbs of Algiers (Mohammadia, Bach Djarah) is explained by the absence of those geographical, social and economic characteristics. Although overpopulated, those areas did not allow an Islamist group to extract sufficient resources for its activity, as the local people were much poorer. The armed bands consolidated their positions in the most economically dynamic zones; that dynamism might be derived from the informal economy or illicit dealings. While the inner suburbs were in the forefront in the riots of October 1988, the outer suburbs, much too remote, remained on the sidelines. Since 1991 the reverse has the case. The outer communes of Algiers have been favoured by the armed bands who have taken advantage – besides the features mentioned above – of the

[26] According to *Algérie Confidentiel*, no. 72, Thursday 26 April 1996, the charge was said to be 300,000 dinars (25,000 francs). The military administration was apparently not to be outdone in profiting from the civil war, for the charge before the war was 5,000 francs; thus the GIA's threats against national servicemen multiplied the price of exemption cards by five.

[27] The most famous being Abdallah Yahyia, member of the commando which hijacked the Air France Airbus on 24 December 1994. He originally came from Les Eucalyptus, just as Abou Khalil Mahfoud (Mahfoud Tadjine), a close companion of Mohammed Allal (second 'Emir' of the GIA), came from the Château Rouge district in Les Eucalyptus.

absence of effective military-police infrastructure in areas considered less dangerous because of their distance from the centres of power (the heights of Algiers, Hydra, El Biar). The Casbah and Bab el Oued remained high-risk places,[28] but the violence there was more like common-law crime. Groups of criminals, on which a strong security forces presence lives parasitically by managing the drugs and burglary markets, resumed their activities for the benefit of the Islamist guerrillas. The extreme difficulty faced by the guerrillas in conducting their operations without risk in the centre of Algiers obliged them to make contracts with groups of criminals who undertook, in return for generous payment, to carry out missions assigned to them (murder of a particular person, moving a vehicle filled with explosives, shadowing people etc.).

These differences among the Islamist communes mean that one cannot speak in a generalised way about the armed bands' territory. Only resource-rich zones far from the centre of Algiers became real enclaves where the 'Emirs' consolidated their positions, on the lines of the armed bands in Brazzaville such as the 'Sharks' and the 'Cobras'.[29] The armed groups represented and defended the interests of social groups whose political loyalties and social origins varied. For in contrast to the extreme difficulty of identifying the authors of crimes in 1992 and 1993, the emergence of the armed bands rationalised the violence. When a territory was forcibly taken over and run by the Moudjahidin the local people had something like a feeling that order had been restored. The Moudjahidin appeared in broad daylight until 1994, even until 1995 in some areas, impelled by the need to manage their 'kingdoms'. Control of the south-eastern Algiers communes by armed adolescents bearing the GIA standard created an imagined frontier dreaded by all those who did not live there.

Protection and predation. Demarcation of an armed group's territory followed economic considerations: the boundaries of the 'kingdom' were indicated by the petty traders subjected to protection rackets by members of a group in the name of the same 'Emir':

'I was sitting down reading the sports newspaper, I was listening to music when two young men entered the shop and said, "Turn off the radio!" I turned it off and as I got up, I saw the *klach* they were carrying, then I understood that they were Moudjahidin. They told me to have no fear because I was a good Muslim. They told me I must give help to fight Tâghout.[30] I said I had no money, what I earned was just enough to feed

[28] The Islamist group headed by the Emir named 'Flicha' (from the French *flèche*, arrow – because of his ability to escape from security forces' ambushes) is still active.

[29] Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga, 'Milices politiques et bandes armées à Brazzaville. Enquête sur la violence politique et sociale des jeunes déclassés', *Les études du CERI*, no. 13, April 1996, 32 pp.

[30] Tâghout was the name given by the Islamists to the state; it was taken from the Koranic vocabulary applied to the Devil. It meant above all, in the lexicon of the Islamist movements,

my family; then they said, "You give what you can", and in two days someone would come to collect the money, and they left.' (Brahim, petty trader, 35 years old, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

Protection rackets became general in 1993 and 1994 and involved all the economic actors in some communes.The armed bands, who had a monopoly of violence in 1993-4, used and abused that asset in parts of the wider suburban area of southeastern Algiers. This went so far that local counter-resistance emerged, through the formation of groups of 'patriots' and 'militiamen' in 1995. While the 'Emirs', in taking control of certain areas, partially put an end to the proliferation of groups of criminals (some of whom joined them), their economic organisation, which involved pressuring the local people, turned out to be much too heavy a burden to bear, in spite of the services rendered. After the flight of the military entrepreneurs and the sabotage of the few industrial production units the petty traders alone had to bear the burden of sustaining the armed groups.[31] From 1994 onwards they stopped supplying them automatically, so as to invest in new markets. This refusal was to lead to many killings of bakers, grocers, hardware merchants and jewellers, and hence to a new exodus in those trades, following the exodus of the military entrepreneurs, back to the home villages. The armed bands in this way lost the essential part of their financial resources; thus weakened, they plunged their districts into terror:

'They cut two young people's throats and placed their heads at the crossroads. That is no good, that. I think that if they go on doing that, people won't be with them any more. Let them kill the others, the thieves (criminals and political leaders), but they shouldn't cut people's throats... They cut you up into pieces as if you were a sheep. I tell you, people are going to turn against them if that continues.' (Petty trader, 40 years old, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

The imbalance between the activities of protection and predation led to a change in the attitude towards the 'Emirs' among the people, and especially on the part of the victims. The armed bands no longer seemed like spontaneous groups for defence of the district but rather as Islamist businesses, made up of more and more dubious individuals. The empathy with the first 'Emirs' of the commune was gradually lost, to be replaced by a more pragmatic relationship; in place of the initial donations the Islamist bands introduced a war tax. Abdallah, a former FIS voter and a sympathiser with the MIA at the time it flourished (1992-3), recalled how the 'Emir' of Les Eucalyptus, Saïd the sheet-metal worker, enjoyed the local people's confidence at that time:

the Tyrant, the Oppressor, the 'false god' who is worshipped out of fear. The term became fashionable following the Iranian revolution, when 'Taghouti' meant the supporters of the old regime. On the effects of the Iranian revolution see Y. Richard, *L'islam chi'ite. Croyances et idéologies*, Paris: Fayard, 1991, p. 261.

[31] The burden was all the heavier because in 1993 an official property tax was added, to contribute to the support of victims of violence.

'Everyone gave, those who had some money gave plenty, others gave what they could, 100 dinars, 200 dinars, 500. When Saïd the sheet-metal worker's men passed people had no fear, even if they had a *klach* on their shoulders. Because everybody was with them.' (Abdallah, vendor, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

Not only were the first 'Emirs' known, they did not really need the local people's money, because they raised most of their resources by robbing banks. But from 1994 that became highly risky because of the security guards recruited on a massive scale in the banking sector. Above all, the 'Emirs' encountered competition from the formation of guerrilla organisations in the maquis, also looking for financial resources. From then on every Islamist group had to protect its territory, and especially the traders working in it, so as to shield them from the demands made by rival 'Emirs'. The donations from 'petty traders' stopped and, because of the proliferation of Islamist groups, the 'Emirs' were forced to go from door to door to show their presence.

The petty traders became the object of numerous 'visits', which were sometimes fatal for them when several 'Emirs' were active on their territory, for then they were called upon to pay for the upkeep of several groups. They preferred to see their local area guided by one single 'Emir' for as long as possible, which would allow them to pay up only once and to the same armed group. The services rendered by the people to their 'Emir' were also intended to spare them from the emergence of new 'Emirs' with bigger financial demands, or even the takeover of a commune by a guerrilla faction, which could turn the commune into a battlefield. The success of the armed group thus depended on its leader's ability to maintain local resources. To do that he had to protect those who were funding him from threats of extortion from other groups. But systematic decimation by the security forces led to the arrival of new groups who made new financial demands on the petty traders, arousing their exasperation, even terrorising them when they refused to pay. In addition the people did not know these new fighters, sometimes strangers to the commune, who were wanted by the security services for acts committed in other places. The southeastern suburbs of Algiers had a reputation for dissidence in 1992, and so they attracted young people waiting to leave for the maquis in the Meftah area. From then on its people were more and more involved in the conflict. Chemists and doctors were, because of the services that they could render, very much sought after, and this led to their flight:

'It does not give me pleasure to leave my work, but it's impossible to work now. One evening I had a visit from three individuals, they introduced themselves as Moudjahidin, one of them was injured and they wanted me to treat him. But if the army had seen those men in front of my house, they would dynamite it, kill me and throw my family into the street like dogs. I have nothing to do with their war, I'm not on one side or the other, that's why I left. That war does not concern me.' (Chemist, 1993-4, Algiers suburbs)

The steady exodus of those economic actors was the second of its sort: after the military entrepreneurs, the liberal professions. There then remained only those who, like the petty traders, made their living from their homes which served as places of business. The Islamist groups from then on focused on those economic actors and subjected them to a war tax which very quickly took the form of a protection racket.

Wasting the FIS electoral capital

One effect of the emergence and then consolidation of violence was a breach in the ranks of the FIS electorate. In our sample FIS voters and sympathisers more than 30 years old – skilled unemployed people, petty traders or workers – ceased from 1994 to identify with the actions of the armed groups in the cause of an Islamic state. Assailed by terror, like the proclaimed targets of the GIA (civil servants, policemen, etc.), they cast the *djamaat* out of the Islamist fold. They had voted for FIS candidates in the June 1990 municipal elections and the parliamentary elections of December 1991 mainly from determination to put an end to the FLN-state.

Dissension among Islamist voters on the policies of the 'Emirs'. The armed bands' war against the regime, far from harming it, brought poverty and terror to the FIS voters, except for the traders integrated into the enrichment network; they, after the flight of the military entrepreneurs, were for a moment the main group with capital available. As has been shown, they bought up villas being sold off cheap at that time, and improved their profit margins thanks to the end of price control. However, there was a reverse side to these advantages; those economic actors were the only ones capable of keeping the armed groups going. While the first generation of 'Emirs' in 1993 had the traders' sympathy, the new claimants in 1994, much younger, aroused suspicion and fear. This was for a very simple reason: the age difference between the armed bands and the former FIS voters fed mutual ignorance. Between a petty trader of thirty five and an 'Emir' of thirty, a certain amount of complicity was possible, because their backgrounds had much in common despite the differences. Between an 'Emir' of sixteen and a trader twice his age, very little connection could be made – which did not mean that, when a connection was made, it could not prove lasting.

The age difference between members of the armed groups and former FIS voters was related to differing political *imaginaires*. From 1992 onwards the war encouraged the creation of new heroes, 'martyrs' who had fallen in battle; the district 'Moudjahidin' produced a world of sensation in which violence, death and fear were the central features. No attention was paid to the political dynamic set in motion by the rise of the FIS between 1989 and 1991, or to the political 'stars' of that time. The political field, generally speaking, seemed surrealistic, the speeches by senior Islamist figures abroad were unknown, there was even sometimes complete ignorance

about the historic figures of the FIS. Sofiane, younger brother of Abdallah – the newsagent arrested and tortured just after the halting of the elections – was for two years a passionate supporter of the cause of the Moudjahidin. He adopted the ideas of older people who considered the 'Islamists abroad' as 'false' fighters. He and his friends followed closely the dismantling of the FAF[32] and the arrest of its leaders; they had been surprised to learn that leaders of the GIA could live in Paris:

'The "Islamists" in France, they don't count for anything. The man who Pasqua [Charles Pasqua was the French Minister of the Interior at the time] said was the so-called chief in France, he's just nothing, here, he's worth nothing, perhaps it's Pasqua who gave him the job! But anyway, all those who ran away, they have nothing more to do with the Moudjahidin. Because abroad they talk, they talk, that's all. To create the Islamic state we need Moudjahidin here, not over there.' (Young man of 16, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

His ignorance was such that he admitted later that he knew nothing about the political action of Sheikh Sahraoui, one of the co-founders of the FIS. That gap between the former FIS voters' identification with the imprisoned leaders (Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj) and the armed bands' identification with 'Emirs' killed in battle increased their mutual incomprehension. In addition, the increasing role of strangers among the Islamist bands in the communes previously supporting the FIS could eventually lead the former FIS voters, if not to fight against them, at least to inform against them. Because in fact the Islamist bands waged a real war against those who, like the FIS elected representatives and sympathisers, were in some ways representative of the Islamist cause. But it was mainly from the regime's side that FIS activists suffered the most severe reprisals; the armed bands only had to defeat the last local claimants.

Selim, convinced of the 'just cause'. However, not all the former FIS voters rejected the violence of the Moudjahidin. In the view of a certain number of them, close to the social background of the fighters in the armed bands, those fighters were not the bloodstained killers described by the press or by traders subjected to their extortion. Their actions were rather imbued with 'justice', because their victims were not 'infidels' but 'torturers'. Thus murders of policeman, soldiers or informers were very rarely condemned, quite the contrary; those former FIS voters who sympathised with the Islamist bands justified their support by speaking, in response to any mention of the violence of the 'Emirs', of the repression by the security forces.

[32] The Fédération Algérienne de France (FAF) was the organ of the FIS in France. Under the chairmanship of Dja'far El Houari, a student of Statistics, it distributed a bulletin, *Le Critère*, until it was banned by Charles Pasqua, French Minister of the Interior, in November 1993, when many of its sympathisers and militants were arrested. See G. Kepel, *A l'ouest d'Allah*, Paris: Seuil, 1994, p. 293.

For those who believed in the cause of the armed bands, the Moudjahidin were on the right path:

'They don't do any wrong against Muslims, what they say in the newpapers is not true. One day, a Moudjahid had to kill an inspector who lived in a housing estate; his accomplices described what the inspector was like and at what time he left home with his son each day. So he waited in the estate, but the inspector looked out of his window and saw that that young man was not from the area, he alerted his station; meanwhile a man with his son left the block where the inspector lived, the Moudjahid thought it was his target, he fired three bullets into his head and escaped quietly in front of bystanders. When he learned that he had made a mistake he went to the victim's widow, he went on his knees and wept, he told her, "We are fighting in the path of God, and if you do not forgive me, I shall go to hell. Ask me for anything you want and I shall give it to you." He wept like a child although he is a Moudjahid, because of his mistake, since he feared God.' (Selim, clothes dealer, 28, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

Like Selim some former FIS sympathisers remained convinced of the just cause of the 'Emirs'. They refused to see any objectivity in the national and international media, which they accused of bias and contradiction. In Selim's eyes the armed groups were only redressing the balance of forces; the inspectors, all-powerful just a short time before, were now an enticing target for the Moudjahidin who, through their actions against those police officers, were identified as 'avengers' by some adolescents and young men scarred by beatings in police stations. However, an additional factor explained the determination to eliminate policemen and inspectors. In contrast to the soldiers and gendarmes living in barracks, policemen lived in the same residential housing estates as the armed groups. The daily killings of policemen during the 1992-4 period were aimed at ridding the 'kingdom' of people standing in the way of the 'Emirs' – especially as the inspectors had networks of informers among many traders, even though those were former FIS voters. Knowing and supplying an inspector was for petty traders an asset for smooth operation of their business. By eliminating the police or forcing them to regroup in places at a distance and thus better protected, the armed bands deprived the local population of any possibility of collaborating with the police. As for the gendarmerie posts, like the barracks, their relationship with the local people was much too superficial to be effective.

The strategy of systematic elimination of policemen and inspectors from the 'kingdoms' of the 'Emirs' further exposed the gap between the latter and the better-off former FIS voters. While Selim thought their killing was justified because they refused to resign or join the Moudjahidin, his employer thought their strategy was absurd:

'Ah Hababek, what good does it do to kill the policeman at the crossroads? He's a poor chap with a pistol which perhaps doesn't even work! What has he done? They kill him not to fight the regime, but to take their place, that way they do police work themselves, that's the truth. They kill people of our district, that means the police know the others [the armed bands] well.' (Proprietor of a clothes shop, 1995, France)

The former FIS voters, like Selim's boss, thought the real targets were not the 'poor policemen' or the national servicemen, but the 'big shots', the 'high ranking people' – those were the people who had responsibility. According to him the armed groups did nothing or too little against them – that was why he did not support them but did, in spite of himself, pay the 'war tax' to the 'Emirs'. Other people who had voted enthusiastically for the FIS in the municipal elections of June 1990 and the parliamentary elections of December 1991 started, like Walid, to make a discreet but real exit from Islamism.

Walid: from Islamist passion to apathy. Disillusioned and disgusted – that is how Walid, a 39-year-old native of the southeastern suburbs of Algiers, appears. Member of a large family, son of the proprietor of a small car repair yard, he looked on the conflict tearing his country apart with disillusion, and notably held out no hope of political change. Having got his baccalauréat through *archoua* (corruption) and begun studies out of disgust with a mechanic's job, Walid embarked on studies of economics and accountancy during the 1980s. He wanted to settle in the United States or Canada after his studies, as he was convinced that the 'system' was unreformable. But then Walid was surprised by the extent of the riots of 1988 and fascinated by the emergence of the Islamist opposition in 1989. The formation of the FIS in March 1989 and its victory in the June 1990 municipal elections aroused in him an enthusiasm for Algeria, the country he was getting ready to leave. Having practiced little as a Muslim until then, he became an assiduous practicing Muslim and, while not wearing the *kamis*, wore a wisp of a beard as a distinguishing mark and a sign of belonging. The Islamic state heralded by the FIS vistory in the parliamentary elections in December 1991 was seen not as the restoration of an Islamic golden age but as the realisation of a longing: for the punishment of the regime.

The interruption of the parliamentary elections, the banning of the FIS in March and the unleashing of 'total war' decreed mutually by the warring parties aroused ambivalent feelings in Walid. In 1992-3 Walid remained convinced that an agreement between 'the army' and the FIS was being sorted out. Disappointed with the failure of that theory, like many ex-FIS sympathisers and militants who expected an army-FIS alliance to take over from the FLN-state, he supported the first armed actions conducted by the MIA; he saw its fighters as 'avengers' against the 'thieves' who had stolen the December 1991 election victory. During 1993 his close relations feared that he would join the ranks of Abdelkader Chébouti's fighters. His grievances against the regime and his 'disgust' at the attitude of so-called democratic countries led him to hope for a victory for the Islamists. The emergence of the armed groups in 1993 increased that hope. Paradoxically, it was during the year 1993-4 that he wore the *kamis* every Friday, during the collective prayers, despite the risks involved. Confronted with the radicalisation of

military and warlike conduct on the part of the warring parties, Walid hardened his conduct and attitude in daily life, his family life included.

Even though he reached the conclusion that only by joining an armed group could he appease, channel and express his revolt, it was the opposite that happened in 1994. Endless murders and outrages in his commune drowned his fury in 'disgust' which made him lose his bearings in his thinking and environment. His joy in the 1989-91 period gave way to an atmosphere of madness and murder in which he was nearly carried away. According to one of his younger brothers Walid intended to join a maquis but, from fear of death or of reprisals against his family, he gave up the idea:

'When they halted the elections, that began to make everyone afraid, Walid talked only of the maquis. We were afraid he would go...but as he stayed, he made war at home: why does so-and-so not go to the mosque? Why do people watch the state television? Why this and that? As for girls, they were not to be mentioned any more. He spoke only of the Moudjahidin and the *jihad*, nothing else interested him. But thank God, one day he stopped talking about those things and told his mother he wanted to get married.' (Walid's brother, Algiers suburbs, 1994)

Walid's withdrawal into his private concerns was due to the absence of a rallying point for Islamist guerrilla war. In his desire to turn his feeling of revolt into action Walid found, between 1992 and 1994, only a collection of armed groups whose members were constantly replaced because of the repression. Besides the absence of a centralised national structure there were also extremely cruel acts of war against human targets, against whom the accusations of crimes were not always convincing. Walid's progress from joy to revolt and then disillusion explains why the Islamist guerrilla campaign was deprived of that type of man and was manned by very young people socialised not by the FIS but directly by the armed groups. The voters and sympathisers of that party, like Walid, seem – according to other research – to have been led into strictly private religious practice and a totally disillusioned view of the world.[33] Their political dream ended with the civil war and their avoidance of active participation in the conflict drew them further away from the newly emerging political-military actors, the Moudjahidin.

The organisation and management of the kingdoms of the 'Emirs' were accompanied by terror practices that were all the more unendurable when one did not share the Moudjahidin's political and military aims. To the feeling of insecurity present during the year 1992-3 was added a climate of terror arising not from violence, which was mastered and taken on board by the people, but from the ritual of death. The year 1994, and especially the month of Ramadan, plunged the people into daily mourning; everyone knew of the death of someone close. The cemeteries of Algiers were

[33] M. Vergès, 'Les héros n'ont pas de préoccupations de ce monde' in R. Leveau (ed.), *L'Algérie dans la guerre*, Brussels: Complexe, pp. 71-87.

continually the scene of speeches over the dead and expressions of sympathy. Until then the war had not been faced by the great majority, who expected that an agreement among the warring parties would free the local people from their perilous position as a stake in the fight for *kursi*. Now it settled down for a long stay.

The Ambiguity of 'Total War'

The security forces (army, police, gendarmerie) and the Islamist guerrillas succeeded, amid very obvious chaos, in consolidating their war machines. The strategy of 'total war' decreed by the GIA was being applied, and President Liamine Zéroual[34] responded, in his speech in October 1994, with the objective of 'total eradication' of the armed groups. All the pseudo-moves for negotiation and discussion, in which a certain number of observers believed, were only delusions serving to divert attention from the real civil war getting under way.[35] But such a determination for confrontation had some political sense, for in declaring 'total war' on either side, the warring parties took on the task of closing off the political field, already damaged since the interruption of the elections in January 1992. The GIA, and with it all the armed bands in the wider suburban area of Algiers, embarked on systematic elimination of the surviving activists and organisers of the FIS[36] and declared its determination to wipe out the Armée Islamique du Salut (AIS).[37] On the other side, when an opposition agreement claiming to put forward a credible alternative was reached in Rome, the regime responded

[34] Liamine Zéroual was born on 3 July 1941 in Batna, capital of the Aurès. He took part in the war of liberation in the ranks of the ALN. In 1975 he became Commandant of the Ecole d'Application des Armes de Combat at Batna, and in 1981 he took over command of the Académie Inter-Armes at Cherchell. Promoted general in 1988, he was appointed ambassador to Romania following disagreements with the Chief of Staff, General Nezzar, and President Chadli Bendjedid. Against all expectations, on 30 January 1994, the Haut Conseil de Sécurité (HCS) 'entrusted' him with the Presidency. *Le Nouvel Afrique Asie* no. 54, March 1994.

[35] A. Rouquié has commented that 'even more than the elections, the "dialogue", its promises and its uncertainties were an integral part of the war. In the political wars in South America, good use of talks – geared for effect but also popular – was indispensable for conducting an overall strategy.' *Guerre et paix en Amérique latine*, Paris: Seuil, 1982, p. 289.

[36] Kamar Eddine Kharbane, a founder member of the FIS in exile in London, said in an interview that the GIA was responsible for 'the murder of Azzedine Biaa, former head of the FIS bureau at Blida; Nacer Tétraoui, former head of the Ouargla bureau; the famous Sheikh Mohamed Saïd, former head of the FIS Provisional National Bureau; Abdel Hamid Bouchi, very well known in the Casbah district; and Nassr Eddine Tourkman, Chairman of the FIS bureau at Médéa.' *Al Hayat*, quoted in *Courrier International*, May 1996.

[37] 'As they have not put an end to their unhealthy state of mind and their corruption on earth, it is our duty to fight them...and to conclude we tell our brothers that our struggle against the AIS is a duty.' GIA communiqué, *Al Hayat*, 10 Jan. 1995.

by accusing its promoters of seeking to internationalise the crisis and of being the political accomplices of the armed groups.[38]

The effect of these overall strategies was to spread terror at the local level. 'Total war' waged by the armed groups and the security forces targeted the infrastructure and the environment. Priority was given to acts of sabotage and destruction of the enemy's potential. That was why, from 1994, frontal attacks on barracks and police stations declined, while killings of soldiers, national servicemen and members of soldiers' families continually multiplied. The armed groups aimed in this war not at the collapse of the army, but at its isolation. The idea was to turn the army into a 'bunker' cut off from its surroundings. With that aim national servicemen were hunted down, their leaves became useless because they could not take leave; how could one return to one's family without risk? The mass slaughter of young national servicemen and the security forces' reprisals against suspects during 1994 in Chararba and Baraki were among the consequences of 'total war':

> 'It's the desert here now, there are only children and old people out of doors now. The army did a clean-up job, people saw hell here. Since then everyone else has gone to the maquis, or just anywhere, anyway you don't see young people any more. Even the press has spoken about it.[39] Here the security forces, they go to your house, and if they find a young man, they arrest him straight away, they think all the young men around here are Moudjahidin.' (Hussein, worker at a state enterprise that was burned down, Algiers suburbs, 32 years old)

An effect of 'total war' was to extend the notion of the enemy well beyond the actual warring parties. In Baraki, Chararba and Les Eucalyptus direct clashes between armed groups and the security forces were much fewer in number than acts of sabotage, murders and reprisals. The security forces, condemned to a labour of Sisyphus, increasingly targeted the Moudjahidin's environment, because the Moudjahidin were able to survive only because of that environment which had remained friendly to them. The terror which set in was itself an instrument of war, because it aimed at encouraging people to enlist in the ranks of the warring parties; people joined one or other war machine out of fear of being a floating target, without protection; the terror encouraged the use of 'protective violence'.[40] The objective of

[38] Through its ambassador in Rome, Benali Benzaghou, the government denounced 'interference in internal Algerian affairs' and the 'plot' seeking to internationalise those affairs. *La Tribune*, 26 Nov. 1994.

[39] The weekly newspaper *El Alem es Siyassi* ('the political world'), in July 1994, published a major feature on the desert-like state to which some communes of Algiers had been reduced.

[40] Jean Leca has written, 'Violence can be thought of as being originally not the effect of the passion for domination or destruction, but the effect of fear of being dominated or destroyed.' 'La "rationalité" de la violence politique', *Les Cahiers du CEDEJ*, 1994, p. 19.

'total war' was to turn every individual into an enemy. Those who did not join the ranks of one or other of the adversaries felt the most helpless:

> 'When you go to work, on the way you are afraid of something happening to you – a stray bullet, bandits killing you or robbing you for nothing, you don't know what, but you're afraid. At work you're afraid for your family, there are people who enter homes and rape young women today, it's incredible what is happening to us, unthinkable. That's happened to several families, it's worse than death if that happens to you, you can't live any more. So when I'm out of doors I long to go back home and once I'm back, I live with anguish that something may happen, because what could I do?' (Ali, restaurant waiter, Algiers suburbs, 35 years old)

Ali, who voted FIS in the municipal elections in June 1990 and the parliamentary elections in December 1991, did not understand how Algeria could have tipped over 'from heaven into hell'. Today, he can see nothing left of that 1989-91 period, which he describes as a 'golden age'. A prisoner of the 'total war', he seeks above all to survive a conflict in which he feels no part. A practicing Muslim since his adolescence, he did not need any political party or armed group to tell him what Islam is or what its benefits are. Disgusted and disheartened by the FLN-state, previously he saw the FIS as the best 'revenge' against those who had diverted the 'people's revolution' to their own advantage. After being momentarily tempted by the idea of emigrating to Canada, where one of his brothers was studying, he preferred to stay in Algeria, not out of nationalist feeling, but because it fell to him to provide for his family. For him, as for many former FIS voters and sympathisers of his age, the violence of the armed bands claiming to fight in the name of the GIA was that of wartime adolescents 'fearing neither God nor man', not heeding the risks they ran. Those adolescent Moudjahidin, however, did not have the time to assess the consequences of their actions, as their life expectancy was so short.

6

NEW WAYS TO MAKE BIG MONEY

Since 1992 only sound and fury have been heard from Algeria. Murders of intellectuals, journalists, civilians and men of religion lead one to think that all the economic and political actors are suspended from duty. But while the dynamics of the *jihad* have affected the Islamist armed groups and aroused paradoxical logics of war against the regime, the same is true of the economic actors, who have been establishing strategies of survival and balance between the two warring sides. This is especially necessary as they have had to react to changes in the country since 1994: the creation of a market economy on IMF recommendations has disrupted their businesses, because new opportunities for highly lucrative business have emerged. The civil war has not been leading necessarily to the ruin of economic players from the public and private sectors; on the contrary, violence seems to be accelerating procedures for accumulating wealth. So in parallel with the confrontation between the security forces and the armed groups, an economic war is developing, involving prominent local citizens, entrepreneurs, petty traders, senior government officials, and newcomers such as the 'Emirs'.

The war and its protagonists, far from confining themselves to the armed conflict, are inextricably mixed up with economic and political developments. The privatisation policy adopted by the regime since 1994 was instantly taken over by the participants in the civil war to their own advantage; this has led to a 'plunder economy'[1] in which prominent local people, 'Emirs' and military personnel have been laying hands on new resources and maintaining the level of violence in that way.

The other side of privatisation: destruction of the state sector

The ambiguity of the GIA's policy of destruction. The activities of the GIA armed bands are not limited to the armed struggle against the security

[1] In Africa 'the plunder economy' is exposed in privatisation processes: 'Privatisation of the economy can be understood in a wider sense; it does not only involve transfer of state enterprises to private players; it can also involve the acquisition, creation and capture of markets by other means, on the part of players with connections to the government but operating privately. In that sense privatisation of the economy is on a massive scale today and is in reality the dominant way in which the plunder economy operates'. J.-F. Bayart, S. Ellis and B. Hibou, *La criminalisation de l'Etat en Afrique*, Brussels: Complexe, 1997, p. 58.