POLITICAL IMAGINATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER: ALGERIAN ISLAMISM AS A CASE STUDY

Claire Heristchi

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Political Imagination and the Struggle for Power: Algerian Islamism as a Case Study

Submitted by: Claire Heristchi
For the Degree of: PhD in International Relations
Date of Submission: 31st August 2001
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Date: 10/5/02

Claire Heristchi

I was admitted as a research student in September 1996 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in International Relations; higher study for which this is a record was carried in the University of St Andrews between 1996 and 2001.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Claire Heristchi
This dissertation is concerned with the case study of Algerian political Islam in the contemporary era. The central research question addressed here is two-fold. First, the question of whether political Islam constitutes a radical ideological break with the Algerian political lifeworld is asked. The political imagination of Algerian Islamism is analysed in its historical and political contexts to unearth areas of rupture with dominant forms of political imagination, but areas of hybridity and of complicity with such formations are also highlighted. Thus, the main contention of this thesis is that the discursive relationship between Islamist political formation and that of their opponents in the political sphere is complex: Islamist political imagination is oppositional to the state, but it does not escape the discursive tools for legitimation present in the existing lifeworld. Secondly, the consequences of this argument for our understanding of the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s are addressed. It is argued here that political imagination is one of the key loci where political contest has been played out in the contemporary Algerian setting. The confrontation between the regime and political Islam is the most up to date example of a struggle for power that necessitates the monopoly over the legitimising tools of history and culture. More importantly, this framework questions the notion that the state-Islamist confrontation in subsequent years can be explained in a binary fashion (Good vs. Evil; Rational politics vs. Irrational theocracy). In fact, this confrontation over political power is consistent with existing patterns of political competition in postcolonial Algeria.
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Dedicated to:

David, Andrea, Ellie, Paul and Zana - and lately, M.L.

And, In Memoriam,
Guy Casaril (1933-1996)
Foreword

Even when I remind myself that this is no more than a dark corner of a colonial city most people have never heard of, I cannot help the way my thoughts run. I cannot help but think about power, about authenticity, and the uselessness of being a writer.

Ronan Bennett The Catastrophist

The political is in essence philosophical and personal. Writing about democratisation, human rights, the politics of identity - or simply about difference, about an always problematic "Other" - puts the author's personal beliefs, their experience of life and their philosophical outlook on life at the centre of their work.

I believe that being half-European and half-Middle Eastern has shaped the way I look at my subject, and the motivations for doing this project. I also believe that, as a French citizen of mixed background, dealing with Algeria, I come with a certain amount of baggage - perhaps, it could be argued, too much baggage. But, in contrast to the common wisdom pointed out by Alistair Horne, a Briton writing about the Algerian Independence War, I would like to think that French people can write about Algeria in a way that is not 'colonial' or patronising or simply apologetic. There are notable exceptions to 'Orientalist' writing on Algeria in France. Also, a new generation of French scholars (who have neither lived through the war, nor colonial defeat) have produced insightful, challenging, and balanced hypotheses on a variety of issues concerning a country which they have chosen to study out of interest, not hegemonic necessity.

That being said, the emotional and intellectual gaps between as different cultures as the French and the Algerian are noteworthy and their interconnections are complex and fraught with ideological pitfalls. My own evolution in this regard is non-typically French, but French nonetheless. I remember growing up in a family characterised by cultural métissage in a society where people of Middle Eastern background (and especially North Africans) are still too often pointed out as undesirables. I remember reading about the declaration of human rights and the Enlightenment at school, also a typical French experience, and I remember how much it shaped my own beliefs. I remember the personal experiences which gave those convictions meaning, and a certain 'coming of age' with regards to the contradictions of France, a land of asylum and a model of human rights, but also a land burdened by a colonial past and an often racist present.

I cannot pretend I would have written in the same way if I had been a Muslim and/or an Algerian, if I had been simply French, or on the whole, if I had lived a different life. The question here is whether this is a problem, or an opportunity.
Chapter One
Introduction

At the moment we are seeing an epochal transition. The current conflicts [in North Africa] are no longer simply over tactics or various strategies for modernization. There is now a struggle for control of the very concepts of political life, for control over the way people think about politics, and the way we can talk about polity and society. What we are seeing now in this crisis of authoritarianism is the battle for hegemony over discourse. If you can control the words, you can control the polity.

John Voll 'Sultans, Saints and Presidents'

1.1 Introduction: The Research Questions

It took three passengers jets crashing into the World Trade Centre in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. on 11th September 2001† to bring Islamist politics to the forefront of the political agenda of the International Community. By comparison, the brutal civil war opposing the Algerian regime to its Islamist opposition throughout most of the 199os received little media attention and virtually no international pressure from institutions such as the United Nations for a peaceful solution to be found. Such a discrepancy can of course be explained in part in terms of where the violence took place and who the victims were, demonstrating once again the power of the media in shaping our degree of moral attachment to specific events in world affairs. More widely though, these differences can be seen to illustrate a more subtle point: that Islamist politics are neither as new, nor as straightforward a phenomenon as the recent attacks in the United States seem to suggest. In fact, one of the great dangers of 'the post-September 11th world', would be that we should to translate our sense of moral outrage at the atrocities into a simplification of the dynamics and multi-faceted features of Islamism as a new form of 'blind terror'. The amalgamation of the suspected al-Quaida attacks with wider patterns of Islamist political and social behaviour is tempting, but facile. It is tempting because al-Quaida attracts citizens from many Middle Eastern states and the Muslim diaspora, and because al-Quaida is indubitably one of the faces of contemporary political Islam.

† A fourth aircraft crashed killing all passengers, crew and hijackers before reaching its destination.
Yet this amalgamation carries clear dangers — for both academics and practitioners. For academics, the temptation lies in taking on a political agenda of revenge for the 11th September attacks and ignoring the primary tasks of the academic endeavour: explanation and understanding. These tasks imply going deeper into accounting for Islamist violence than a policy of 'eradication' or 'liquidation'. Not all Islamist groups take on violence and terrorism as their tactics in the political sphere, and those who do are unlikely to abate their commitment to violent strategies in an atmosphere of retribution. Understanding the logic of violence in the context that it requires provides no justification for the violence itself, but it is the pre-requisite to any policy that deals effectively with Islamist violence, and that learns to value the political contribution Islamist politics makes to Middle Eastern politics aside from violence. This goes against the 'hawkish' policy of the US and their allies in Europe which combines armed attacks on al-Quaïda forces and 'those who abide them' with the demand for support by states in the Islamic world in this 'war against terror'. But what kind of assistance might this be? Beyond help in locating and dismantling al-Quaïda cells, lies the question of what to do about Islamism more widely. Authoritarian regimes in the region have had the pressure to respect the human and political rights of their Islamist opposition effectively removed, and now have a free hand to clamp down on Islamist movements at home, and as well as non-Islamist forms of opposition. For policy-makers, on the other hand, the added danger of a slippery slope into interventionism without restraint in the region is one risk that cannot be ignored. September 11th provides a unique opportunity for the United States to have a free reign in decisively acting on a variety of regional issues (such as the fate of Saddam Hussein), but this cannot come without costs.

Given this context, now is perhaps not the most convenient time to produce an analysis of political Islam that could be interpreted in some quarters as 'sympathetic'.

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*This echoes a statement made by the academics working for the Harvard Centre for Middle Eastern Studies in the wake of Sept 11th. They state their shock at the tragedy but point out that "As scholars and educators, however, we have a responsibility to move beyond the passing of moral judgement, and towards a calm and well-informed understanding of the causes and conditions which underlie this horrific event... we are confident that we know enough to stress to those in government involved in the ongoing formulation of policy that indiscriminate military action by the US and her allies will inevitably result in the deaths of more innocent human beings and further escalation; and this will guarantee future terrorist attacks rather than prevent them". See CMES statement at [http://www.fas.harvard.edu](http://www.fas.harvard.edu)*
A dissertation concentrating on the complexity of Islamist politics in Algeria – a state where Islamists have been implicated in violence – comes at a time where the political climate may not welcome an account where the Islamists are not depicted as the representatives of simple ‘Evil’. Is it worth it, or even possible, to resist the voices of ‘eradication’ when these have become so dominant and pervasive? Even though the research and writing involved in this dissertation began a long time before the attacks in the United States took place, the relevance of the type of work produced here is all the more salient because of current concerns with political Islam. Arguably, now is the most important time to investigate the context and relevance of Islamist politics within states, regionally, and globally. More than ever before the questions: “What is political Islam? What is it fighting for, and why?” are of prime importance. The central research questions addressed here reflect these concerns in a fundamental way.

This dissertation analyses the contemporary forms of political Islam in post-colonial Algeria in the context of the Civil War of the 1990s. As such, it does not aim to provide a full account of the civil war years and explain its mechanics per se. Instead, it hopes to recast our current knowledge of such events in a wider historical and theoretical perspective to better understand the significance of the confrontation for power that has underpinned the Civil War. The main focus of the central research questions will be placed on the issue of political imagination as expressed through discourse, an area that has often been politically controversial. Here, the analytical tools and theoretical stance offered by critical studies in general, and postcolonial studies in particular, prove invaluable. The construction of identity in the postcolonial setting through the use of history, founding myths of the nation, and cultural tools for legitimation help frame the analysis of the place of political Islam in wider patterns of political discourse, values and symbolism, the lifeworld.

First, the question of whether political Islam constitutes a radical ideological break with the Algerian political lifeworld is asked. Is political Islam a revolutionary movement that threatens the political integrity of the Algerian state? Do its political programme and vision for a new society represent a genuine alternative to

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3 This may sound tempting once again, but one can legitimately ask whether such initiatives are really likely to reduce the anti-American feeling in the region, or even provide genuine help to the region in
postcolonial patterns of governance? Does the Islamist political imagination really escape the discursive tools for legitimacy present in the existing lifeworld? Islamist politics will be differentiated here from the broader phenomenon of Islamic politics to refer to a specific set of political and social movements whose principal concerns are "temporal and political". These movements are oppositional to existing regimes in the region insofar as they plan to establish an Islamic State and use the shari'a (Islamic Law) as the basis for governance. Yet, their political programmes seldom question existing state boundaries and economic principles in place, and as such, they "do not uncritically reject modernity; they are trying to reformulate it and regulate it, using the discursive terms of the Islamic heritage". The political imagination of Algerian Islamism is analysed here in its historical and political contexts to unearth areas of rupture with dominant forms of political imagination, but areas of hybridity and of complicity with such formations are also highlighted. Thus, the main research agenda of this thesis is an analysis of the complexity of the discursive relationship between Islamist political formations and that of their main opponent in the political sphere: the Algerian regime.

Secondly, the consequences of this line of inquiry for our understanding of the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s are addressed. If the political imagination of Islamists in Algeria is tied to that of established patterns of political imagination, the notion that the state-Islamist relationship can be explained in a binary fashion (such as Good vs. Evil or Rational politics vs. Irrational theocracy) is undermined. One must ask as a result what the meaning of the Civil War is in this context. Is this confrontation over political power consistent with existing patterns of political competition in postcolonial Algeria? If this is so, the confrontation between the regime and political Islam could be seen as the most up to date example of a struggle for power that necessitates the monopoly over the legitimising tools of history and culture.

democratising.


5 Joel Beinin and Joe Stork. 1997. "Introduction", p. 4. The full context and problematic elements of definitions of political Islam will be dealt with in depth in chapter three.
These are undoubtedly ambitious questions that a dissertation alone cannot hope to fully answer. Still, it is my hope here that this analysis will contribute to the debates concerning the Algerian Islamist movements, and more widely, to those on the place and meaning of political Islam. With these aims in mind, I now turn to the particulars of the research project undertaken here, the main arguments put forward, and a consideration of methodology and sources.

1.2. The Research Project

In essence, political Islam as a subject of study eludes purely theoretical or empirical approaches. On a theoretical level, political Islam sits rather awkwardly with the broad concepts of 'religion' and 'politics', because it is, almost by definition, necessarily both and strictly speaking neither, as our definition of political Islam, developed in chapter three, illustrates. Moreover, it cannot be simply interpreted as a nationalist movement in Gellnerian terms, or amalgamated with observed trends in religious revivalism in the post-Cold War world. While this 'renewal of the politics of identity' as a reaction to a particular project of modernity provides an adequate starting point for understanding the context of the growth of these movements, it conveys little precise information about political Islam itself, and especially about the diversity of its forms. On an empirical level, the information we can gather on the evolution of each group in each case throughout the region is immense, but there are no obvious, all-encompassing conceptual frameworks through which we can analyse and categorise these trends. Consequently, this dissertation takes as its primary foci both the conceptual and the empirical dimensions of political Islam, as it can be assumed that both areas can and ought to be researched further.

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1.2.1. The Parameters of Research: Political Imagination in the Algerian Polity

The analytical scope of the dissertation is limited to one main case study, that of colonial and postcolonial Algeria and it places its emphasis on the political processes in which Islamist movements partake. The time period under scrutiny starts with the French colonial era ending in 1962 and the post-independence era that has ensued, with a special focus on the 1988-1998 decade. This period features as a ‘coming of age’ for many Islamist groups and parties with political ambitions who, through their explicit challenge to existing regimes, have had to deal with the political consequences of this challenge through democratic processes, bargaining and violent struggle. What Martinez has identified as the Algerian ‘Civil War’ (starting in 1992) is a particularly confusing period about which analysis is difficult to conduct. Still, the contest between Islamists and the Algerian regime constitutes a fascinating expression of wider contests over political ideas in the region which are worth examining in detail.

Within this general frame, this dissertation investigates a very specific facet of the Islamist challenge in Algeria. It focuses on the level of political ideas that underpin Islamist-state and Islamist-society relations which a special emphasis placed on discourse and identity-building. More precisely, this dissertation aims to look at the political imagination of Islamist movements in Algeria. What is meant here by political imagination is the sum not only of political themes forming the Islamist discourse on politics, or the specific doctrinal slants of each Islamist group, but also the underpinning political, religious and cultural values ingrained in Islamist political culture. In this sense, a political imagination is the combination of a political memory of the past, its interpretive discourse on the present, and its utopia for the future.

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10From an anthropologist perspective, Gilbert Grandguillaume argues that Islam is more than a religion: it is a form of culture which touches upon the religious, but which also allows the believer the shape and give meaning to their socio-political environment, to open up specific identity bearings. Gilbert Grandguillaume. 1982. "Islam et Politique au Maghreb" in Olivier Carré (ed.). *L'Islam et L'Etat dans le Monde D'Aujourd'hui*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
It should be remarked early on that both political imagination and political culture are essentially contested concepts, for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the contest over what these terms mean and how they can be applied make their use problematic, albeit often necessary to an understanding of the symbolic, ideological and cultural aspects of politics. On the other hand, while these concepts help open a window into the world of ideas and values, they also run the risk of narrowing down analysis to a purely culturalist argument - where the social and economic causes of political outcomes are unnecessarily obscured. More alarmingly however, culturalist arguments are easy prey to largely ideological analyses using cultural traits as a means to substantiate a view of the Muslim world which oversimplifies complex cultural-political ideas and relationships at best\(^\text{11}\), and which presents essentialist and pejorative, if not racist, clichés at worst\(^\text{12}\). There is something inherently problematic in presenting a culturalist line of argument which can be summarised as Muslim/Middle Eastern/Arab politics are X (unstable, authoritarian, etc.) because of cultural reasons Y and Z (for instance, Islam). No culture - or political culture - lends itself to such straightforward explanations, and Middle Eastern political cultures are no exception. It is not only essentialist and inaccurate to assume that Middle Eastern countries, because of their religious or cultural backgrounds are bound to a small range of political outcomes, but is also patronising\(^\text{13}\).

Still, and despite these risks, the 'political imagination' dimension of political Islam and the patterns of political culture it is part of, are essential features of any coherent understanding of such movements. Indeed, while any political movement is ingrained

\(^\text{11}\)A 'better' example of an application of such an approach to the specific context of political culture as a vehicle for democratisation is illustrated by Elie Kedourie's *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, a short treatise attempting to untangle the dominant traits of an Arab political Culture. Kedourie attempts to provide a survey of the experience of democratisation in region, and concludes that democratic efforts in the region have failed because democracy was a foreign import ill-suited to those societies where "autocracy and passive obedience prevailed" and because 19th Century "enlightened absolutism", a well-suited import, helped reinforce "the native autocratic tradition" (pp.103-104). Elie Kedourie.1994. *Democracy and Arab Political Culture.* London: Frank Cass.

\(^\text{12}\)See for instance the consistently shocking views of Daniel Pipes: "The soul of Islam is a battleground. On the one side, one can find the moderate muslims who accepted Western rules, who are keen to learn from the outside world, who support the idea of democracy and who wish to become integrated in the International Community. On the other side, one finds the fundamentalists - who are suspicious, who are the proponents of strong regimes, who easily reject foreign influence", in Daniel Pipes. 1995. "L'Islam: L'Option Turque" *Politique Internationale.* 68(summer), p. 271.

\(^\text{13}\)The Orientalism debate, developed in chapter two, illustrates this problem in relation to Middle Eastern studies.
in such a web of meanings, political Islam is a particularly salient case of a set of social movements articulating cultural, religious and political themes. Thus, the level of ideas that underpin political attitudes and events is seen as a dimension of analysis which complements a more structural understanding of such developments (such as economic, social and policy-related events). In the case of political Islam in Algeria, for instance, the development of contemporary Islamist movements has been explained as one of the consequences of the growing economic crisis, social tensions and political legitimacy crisis experienced since the mid-1970s. By contrast, Nabile Fares argues that the current crisis in Algeria is not due to a prolonged socio-economic crisis but to cultural problems linked to a distinctive historical baggage. A focus on the political imagination of Islamists allows for these two views to be considered in tandem. It helps explain why popular discontent was framed through an Islamist resurgence. Without an economic and political crisis, the development of contemporary political Islam may have been doubtful; but without the pool of symbols and ideas that underpin political Islam, dissent may have grown in a different direction, or directions. It is this facet of Islamism that this dissertation concentrates its analysis on.

Moreover, the complexity of this imagination is an element of analysis worth emphasising here on two grounds. First, and given the potential pitfalls outlined above, it can be argued that understanding Algerian Islamist movements requires a detailed and nuanced analysis of the various ideological, cultural, political and religious themes present in the Algerian political-cultural web. Both on the level of doctrine and in the ways that political relationships are acted out, a vast number of symbolic representations and ideological strands are not only the means of communication among actors, but also the symbolic prize for which those actors compete. Second, this approach is seen as useful because the study of Islamist movements tends to be approached, not from the perspective of ideas and discourse, but either in solely religious terms (through historical-theological studies), as

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16 As recent riots in Kabylia seem to confirm.
terrorism\textsuperscript{18}, or from a structural perspective (emphasising elements of socio-economic or political crisis\textsuperscript{19}). As mentioned above, a consideration of the structural underpinnings of political Islam is essential, but only if it is matched by a discussion of the ideas that shape the polity in which they evolve. Sole focus on the reactive dimension of political Islam obscures the proactive, and ideologically innovative, nature of political Islam and the dialectic relationship that characterise the communicative exchange between Islamists and the state. In other words, saying that political Islam is crisis-born does not imply that it is crisis-bound. As such, political Islam and its supporting political imagination are active players in the Algerian political-cultural web.

The first focal point of this dissertation is this Algerian political lifeworld and the political imaginations that compete in it. A lifeworld is seen here as a common political-cultural web, comprising of myths, discursive forms, ideology, symbols and interpretations of culture, religion, historical baggage and policy. This term, articulated by Jürgen Habermas in his discussion of the possibilities of communicative action among individuals, can be seen as a common conceptual pool from which individuals and groups derive the leitmotifs of their political-ideological discourse:

The lifeworld forms a horizon and at the same time offers a store of things taken for granted in the given culture from which communicative participants draw consensual interpretative patterns in their efforts at interpretation\textsuperscript{20}.

Here, the elements of the lifeworld are common to dominant and alternative forms of political imagination - but their meaning and their use remains an area of contest among such articulations\textsuperscript{21}. In the context of Algeria, various elements of the political

\textsuperscript{21}Larry Diamond, in discussing political culture also argues for the study of specific subcultures as opposed to trying to encompass the feature of a national political culture. See Larry Diamond. 1993. "Introduction: Political Culture and Democracy" in Diamond (ed.) Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
lifeworld are the underpinning influences to the political and cultural relationships that political Islam partakes in. In particular, the symbolic element of political belief and action is crucial as it is not only a central political determinants, but also a determinant of political identity, itself a central feature of both Islamist politics and dominant forms of political discourse. The fact that much of the Islamist critique of the state focuses on legitimacy of government and political values articulated in terms of a particular claim over Algerian political and ideological history illustrates this point\textsuperscript{22}.

In addition, one should recognise that trying to account for the entire lifeworld of the Algerian polity, or even to provide a full picture of the Islamist political imagination is conceptually illusory and over-ambitious. As a result, it is not the aim of this dissertation to tackle such problems fully but to select specific elements of political imagination which have strong explanatory power in the context of Algerian Islamist movements so as to open up a new area of investigation in this field. Overall, this dissertation attempts to delineate the parameters of the Algerian Islamist political imagination by focusing on the historical development of contemporary political Islam, its oppositional character, and its ideological, and symbolic undercurrents. The research focus of this analysis can be narrowed down to three main tasks:

- **The Context**: the historical development of political Islam is delineated and framed within the wider framework of the colonial legacy and postcolonial developments characterising Algeria. In turn, the economic, social and political setting are analysed to give a closer idea of the context in which specific Islamist groups have evolved and how these groups interact with other political actors. Here the relationship between Algerian Islamist movements and the state is defined as an area of ideological contest and confrontation.

- **Political Imagination and the Contest for Power**: the tenets, themes and symbols of the main Islamists groups in Algeria is elaborated on to draw an overall understanding of what the main themes of an 'Algerian Islamist political

\textsuperscript{22}This view stems from a belief in the importance of the ideological history of Algerian politics - a theme explored in chapter six. For an overview of the contest over historical 'truth' as legitimization, see the work of historian Benjamin Stora. A useful summary is provided in
imagination' entails. With this delineation in mind, the contest for power between Islamists and the state is interpreted in a novel way to integrate the question of political discourse as an arena for power struggle. Worth bearing in mind here is the protest dimension of Islamist discourse. Additionally, the ways in which Islamist and the state communicate with each other symbolically is investigated with a special emphasis placed on violence as a means of articulation of the contest between Islamists and the state.

- **Political identity as the linchpin to a common lifeworld:** the inherent connection between the Islamist identity, formation and claims and a broader understanding of identity within the polity is closely explored. Starting from an analysis, in context, of the historical development of political identity in Algeria with special reference to the colonial era and its aftermath, this analysis looks at how Islamist identity constructs respond to the requirements of a certain common identity framework. The idea of an Islamist political identity is developed not solely in religious terms, or in isolation from the 'real' world Islamists experience and interpret, but as an intrinsic part of a larger web of identity motifs in which they are claimants, challengers and innovators. In other words, this analysis will attempt to use the question of identity as a bridge between the Islamist opposition and the state whose legitimacy it claims for itself. Thus, areas of hybridity and mimicry act as a counterpoint to the previous investigation of the oppositional nature of the Islamist political imagination.

### 1.2.2. Central Arguments

This thesis only proposes conclusions concerning Islamist movements in Algeria, its case study. However, the questions raised by the analysis of Algerian Islamist movements should hopefully inform the discussion of Islamist groups and parties elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa - or at least generate debate concerning the political and ideological dimensions of political Islam elsewhere. This

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section, in turn, only briefly summarises the main arguments developed in this dissertation and does not attempt to substantiate them at this point.

Firstly, it is argued that Algerian Islamist movements are embedded in political and ideological currents of the Algerian polity. As such, Islamism is neither a historical aberration nor a set of phenomena divorced from contemporary political, socio-economic and cultural developments. Not only does Islamism in Algeria interact with other political and cultural actors in the polity through established channels of communication, including violence; but it also formulates its political and religious-cultural claims within an existing web of symbols, values and practices which are historically-based and articulated in ideological, religious and cultural terms and reflected in institutions, attitudes and social practice. While Islamism often articulates these themes of political imagination in a different way to that of other political actors, especially the state, it does not embody a radical ideological break from existing articulations of politics - the Algerian political lifeworld. It is only an alternative to the dominant political imagination actualised by the state and legitimated through nation-building processes since independence.

Secondly, and in the Algerian context, this political lifeworld, in which different ways to imagine politics compete, draws on a specific indigenous set of values, symbols, historical precedents, founding myths, norms and practices. These influences, which are argued here to function in conjunction with structural causes such as economic and social pressures, are the function of a number of social, political and cultural processes bound to the Algerian experience of the political, including:

- The mixed legacy of the French colonial era which affects not only the political structures and ideologies of political actors, but also the formation of political and moral identity.
- The legacy of the decolonisation era, a key historical moment acting as the generator of founding symbols which are key constituents of nation-building processes, and which in turn shape legitimacy and representation patterns, as well as broader political relationships.
- Postcolonial governmental patterns governed by centralisation, populism, army control of the state, Arab nationalism and rapid linguistic restructuring through forced Arabisation, primarily in the Boumediene era.
• An ambiguous relationship towards cultural métissage in relation both to the former coloniser and to ethnic/cultural differences within Algeria.
• Third Worldist themes of postcolonial development, and the political, cultural and emotional responses to actual development.

In turn, the Islamist political imagination articulates these common themes according to its interpretations of their significance and of possible solutions to perceived political, social and cultural problems or shortcomings. Islamic history, holy scripture and jurisprudence are obviously of strong resonance at the level of meaning attribution. But other, more contemporary regional and indigenous influences are also at play in the way this political imagination is articulated. Suffice it to mention here that the ideological input of late 19th and 20th Century Islamist ideologues - and especially the work of Sayyid Qutb - is reinterpreted for the Algerian political and ideological context. Tied to this new discourse is the lived situation of individuals in terms of their own experience of the political, be it poverty, repression or hope.

Thirdly, this overlapping lifeworld connecting the Islamist alternative and its 'opposing' dominant discourse is then argued to put into question a unitary understanding of 'Islamism' and 'the state' in this context. The nodes of tension as well as commonalities in the political imagination of dominant and alternative political-cultural forms point to patterns of exchange and communication as well as contest, and suggest that political deuteragonists also have a role to play in the formulation of the political imagination. It also refocuses the ideological questions raised in this discussion in identity terms for all participants. It is argued that the contest between Islamist and the state in Algeria is not simply about political power, but it also encompasses its companion: legitimacy - articulated through discourse, and a strong signifier of identity for groups and individuals. While this analysis does not claim to fully encompass such articulations, it highlights major points of contrast and commonality between the Islamist and state identity claims.

This analysis allows us to reframe the understanding of the contemporary Algerian Civil War in the terms outlined above. Particularly, the symbolic values of various moves on the chess board of political struggle for power are outlined as an attempt to
overcome the preconception that violence in this setting is random, one-sided, or simply a form of collective madness. Here, the meanings of such violence are investigated are part of a complex dynamic which has real and symbolic stakes, and real and symbolic victims. On the other hand, the philosophical question of whether the way in which political Islam in Algeria 'imagines' politics can be reconciled with other existing, or potential imaginations of the political is raised. Beyond considerations of power acquisition (which are indeed crucial), political Islam's struggle is one for the redefinition of Algerian political identity, a struggle where various postcolonial definitions of the political compete for supremacy. Thus, I will go further than Luis Martinez' focus on an 'imaginary of war' to explain the dynamics of the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s. Martinez is right in pointing out the pitfalls of a culturally essentialist framework for understanding the crisis24 (especially when this involves drawing out an understanding of Algerian politics as necessarily characterised by violence). Like Martinez, I emphasise the interplay between the struggle for power in the Algerian polity, and the historical legacy which provides the inspiration for this struggle. To him, this 'imaginary of war' is the common element linking the aims and strategies of the actors involved in the conflict since it creates a tradition where violence is seen as a legitimate mode of accumulation of economic resources, political power and prestige25. He states:

In this perspective, the civil war constitutes a political and economic operation aimed at the accumulation of resources... Because it breaks the state monopoly on violence, the civil war is accompanied the by the privatisation of violence leading the private accumulation of economic resources26.

I hope to further this point by emphasising an area of analysis which Martinez does not dwell upon: that of political identity. The crisis of the Algerian polity is about governance and the conception of the state27, but this observation does not end at our assessment of violence. The problematic relationship between the state and the Islamist opposition denotes a greater malaise in the ways in which the postcolonial Algerian state, nation and identity have been built and continue to be built. I put

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great emphasis on the connection between the production of political discourse as part of political contest for power and legitimacy, and the identity components of the political lifeworld in Algeria. Through this prism, I intend to show that it is around the notion of the 'political', broadly-speaking, that internal security issues are framed. As a result, this thesis identifies as the most important obstacle to long-term conflict resolution in Algerian politics the re-evaluation of the way identity claims relate to each other in the political lifeworld on the one hand, and how this lifeworld is articulated on the whole, on the other.

1.3. The Rationale in its Academic Context

From this overview, many of the threads linking and contrasting this dissertation to the recent literature on Islamism in Algeria (and elsewhere) have become apparent. Yet to fully show the rationale for this type of project, an overview of the academic debates which affect 'the Islamist question' is pertinent here.

1.3.1. The Centre and the Margin

The spectre of an uncontrollable 'Green Threat' permeates many of the discussions of contemporary political Islam. This view has been inspired and reinforced by instances of what has been coined 'fundamentalist' violence in the Middle East in recent years (most notably, with Hezbollah and Hamas violence towards Israel). Indeed, the spectre of violence has clearly appeared in the background of most discussions of Islamism since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Fuelled by the media, images of blood-thirsty, crazed Islamic fundamentalists committing horrific acts of terrorist violence against innocent civilians haunt the collective consciousness of the public in Europe and North America. Political Islam has come to symbolise a new, post-Cold War, threat in absentia of anything else to fear. This is, of course, only part of the story: International Relations as a field has come up with a number of potential challengers to the Soviet Union's title of 'Evil Empire' besides the Islamic threat. But such problems, best exemplified by the idea of the 'rogue state', share a sense of unease and uncertainty with regards to the perceived ideological fluidity of life after superpower rivalry. This is a question of disciplinary focus, but it is also a
more theoretical debate, and one which goes to the heart of current thinking in International Relations. Thinking about a phenomenon like political Islam, I would argue, implies asking certain questions about the nature of security and world order in the post-Cold War world, but it also strikes at the heart of a clash between different visions of the future of the discipline, and of the methodologies used to underpin different projects in International Relations research.

Indeed, the study of political Islam cannot be considered to be marginal in International Relations in general and with Middle Eastern studies in particular. However, the way in which it has been approached in the literature, as chapter three investigates, shows the propensity of the discipline to construct a reading political Islam that is almost systematically geared towards risk assessment. In fact, most of the Western literature on Islamism has focused either on its potential/actual lack of compatibility with democracy\textsuperscript{29}, human rights\textsuperscript{30}, women's rights\textsuperscript{31}, or on the possible threat it poses to the Middle East or the 'West'. In this sense, political Islam is seen to matter to International Relations insofar as it is (potentially) disruptive and deviant from the norm (i.e. rogue). The dynamics characterising the relationships between Islamists and other political actors in their own environments have been, until very recently, ignored by the literature. In the same vein, the differences at both the doctrinal and tactical levels among Islamist groups and parties have often been


overlooked and are only beginning to be accounted for\textsuperscript{33}. Admittedly, recent work on Middle Eastern politics has often taken on board these considerations in tackling the analysis of political Islam. The complexity of the political environments in which Islamists operate has been widely acknowledged, and is beginning to become the subject of serious inquiry\textsuperscript{34}. Clichés of bearded \textit{mullahs} and veiled women brandishing semi-automatic weapons have given way to a somewhat more realistic and nuanced understanding of Islamism as a political and social force\textsuperscript{35}. By looking at political Islam in its political context, the central issues underpinning the motivations of Islamists, as well as those of the state and other political forces have come to the fore in terms which are not strictly religious\textsuperscript{36}.

Despite this greater inclusion of context though, the working assumption of this type of literature remains tied to security issues related to policy-making. In that sense, while political Islam is now more at the centre of International Relations analysis, it remains fundamentally marginalised in the way that it is approached. The aims and assumptions underpinning security-based analyses effectively exclude the possibility of critically engaging with Islamism as a political player. By contrast to such dominant, security-based, and sometimes ideological, constructs on political Islam, this dissertation emphasises that, as a meaningful and valid form of political and social expression, political Islam deserves our attention \textit{in those terms}\textsuperscript{37}. As a result, the analytical project presented here attempts to provide a critical alternative to either assuming that political Islam is a threat, or focusing one’s analysis on whether

\textsuperscript{33}A good example is Martin Kramer (ed.). 1997. \textit{The Islamism Debate}.
\textsuperscript{36}See Francois Burgat. 1997. "Ballot Boxes, Militaries and Islamic Movements" in Martin Kramer (ed.) \textit{The Islamism Debate}. p.35. Also, Rodinson argues that an ethical-religious ideology alone can alter the ethnic and political dynamic of a state or a culture only partially and unilaterally (pp.47-49). Instead, he argues that the dynamics of Muslim societies cannot be explained by a verse of the Quran or religious doctrine - and hence are not ‘exceptional’. See Maxime Rodinson. 1993. \textit{L'Islam: Politique et Croyance}. Paris: Fayard. p.113.
\textsuperscript{37}Esposito and Voll argue that "These [Islamist] movements represent the emergence of a major credible political and social alternative or orientation". John L. Esposito and John O. Voll. 1996. \textit{Islam and Democracy}. p.6.
it could be. Critical methodologies allow for an analytical standpoint where it is possible not to share the values, the faith or the vision for a better future put forward by Islamists, but to still understand what they fight for, and what they fight against. These ideals are meaningful, and they imply means and results which are temporal and varied. The story only begins with these first assumptions though. Indeed, that political Islam is politically meaningful is self-evident - or at least it should be -, but the conceptual and methodological choices implied by this assumption are not.

1.3.2. Middle Eastern Studies meets Postcoloniality

This dissertation brings in both a historical dimension to the analysis of continuity and change in the identity dimension of politics in the postcolonial states of North Africa, and an analysis of the place of political identity, framed through political discourse and political competition for power. This is a complex setting where conceptual models overlap and where multi-causal explanations often have more relevance and accuracy than models which privilege one set of explanatory factors at the expense of all others. As a result, the basic context for our discussion is wide and implies a focus which is original but which also pays tribute to the vast array of academic pieces dealing with political Islam.

In the first instance, it is perhaps wise to point to the unique position of the case study this dissertation chooses to investigate. Algeria, along with the rest of North Africa, is often amalgamated into a broader conception of 'the Middle East' by analysts of history and contemporary politics. This is for cultural and well as political reasons, and a choice which this work does not aim to question. This being said, Algeria remains an African state that shares more features with the rest of the continent than is often acknowledged. This analysis will illustrate this point by taking up the question of postcoloniality and its relationship to the growth of social/political movements such as political Islam. Algeria's postcolonial status is one that brings our analysis closer to that of the politics of new states emerging from the post-war wave of decolonisation in Africa and South Asia (both regions which have inspired a vast range of analyses and concepts, especially in recent years). In this instance, the questions of independence and nation-building, of ethnic 'coherence' (and thus potential irredentism), of development and of regional as well global relationships
with other states will be seen to be of importance. These issues, in turn, have figured at the forefront of the literature concerned with the politics of post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa and India fairly systematically for instance, but are often made less explicit in works concerned with Middle Eastern politics. Clearly, most, if not all, analysts of the Middle East would agree that the issue of colonial interference into the political process (especially in terms of nation-building and economic development) is one that is both relevant and significant. Still, this dimension often remains dwarfed in relation to issues such as political economy (in relation to oil-producing states), questions of political legitimacy, and, most importantly, the analysis of conflict. Perhaps paradoxically, the idea of a colonial legacy, and the possibility of neo-imperialism by Western powers, are relevant to all these issues. In our present case, my aim will be to disentangle the ramifications of this dimension, through a conceptual framework which marries the aspects of political Islam which have been raised by the literature on Middle Eastern politics with the analytical insights brought about by recent debates concerning postcolonial studies and its critics.

Algeria is a particularly good candidate for this exercise as it combines both strong postcolonial features (and a legacy of colonial presence which is both noticeable and extensive) and marked commonalities with the rest of the Middle East in terms of its state structure, economic resources and relationships, and culture. Algeria's Middle Eastern status in this regard is in little doubt: it displays most of the political traits which are characteristic of the region, an issue worth expanding on briefly. If considered as a unit, the Middle East can be first seen to be a site of conflict between nations, in the Gulf for instance, and of entrenched irredentism. However, the dynamics of conflict in the region, and especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, should not be allowed to obscure the common issues which these relatively new states have to face. Here, not only is the idea of regional state system featuring hierarchy in terms of power and potential co-operation one that currently displays much fluidity, but such a possibility is often also undermined by the lack of state consolidation by individual 'members'. Economic co-operation among oil states is notable, but on the whole, the Middle East does not display the patterns of internal and regional stability

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seen in Europe for instance\textsuperscript{39}. The causes and levels of such an instability are multiple and intertwined; suffice it to say that contested borders and sovereignty figure prominently in this equation. Coupled with internal instability fuelled by both internal ethnic heterogeneity and regional identity constructs such as Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islam, these areas of dispute have created a climate where state and nation-building have often proven a tricky endeavour\textsuperscript{40}.

The colonial/imperialist dimension can be identified as a significant factor in this set of problems of course: after all, these states have often only won full formal independence since the Second World war, making strict comparison with current levels of European integration one that is perhaps unfair. More importantly though, both territorial problems and issues of development (and to a certain extent governance) have their roots in patterns of external dominance and exploitation which can be traced back to the colonial era. Arbitrary boundaries are a factor, the birth of Israel a contentious but relevant example. Overall, the most striking feature of this legacy remains in the area of international political economy, and its consequences for patterns of governance. Economic penetration and control by 'the North' is a feature of the Middle East shared with the rest of 'the South', albeit with the special dynamics brought about by oil trade. The links and potential co-operation among regional powers is weak due to the fragmentation of economic solidarity brought about by global patterns of trade, privileging strong unilateral links between patron states in the North and client élites in control of natural resources in the states of the South. Such a pattern brings the creation of powerful comprador classes in various Middle Eastern states, often leading to growing economic inequalities reinforced by lack of state accountability in democratic terms. Crises in legitimacy of the state in times of economic crisis can therefore be linked, in broad terms, to the structure of the global economic system and the place the region has in it\textsuperscript{41}.


\textsuperscript{40} On ethnic issues in the Middle East, see Milton Eastman and Itamar Rabinovich (eds.). 1988. \textit{Ethnicity, Pluralism and the State in the Middle East}. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.


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The question remains as to what the place of political Islam in the region might be given these general circumstances. The contemporary wave of political Islam can be seen to be region-wide in its development, with initial signs present as early as the 1960s, and with its first notable impact in the mid-1970s in most cases. In the 1980s and 1990s, the growing sophistication and popular appeal of political Islam as an alternative to the political status quo are evident, as is the progressive maturation of the Islamist challenge to the state. In this confrontation, Islamist groups and parties have emerged as movements contesting state power, its underpinning legitimising claims and the existing political and economic structures imposed from above (as well as foreign interference). Beyond these similarities, the character and importance of Islamism in the region seem to vary considerably. The view that Islamism is primarily a form of political and social expression tied to contemporary Middle Eastern societies implies that political Islam is not monolithic in nature, but a varied phenomenon that changes over time and according to evolving political, economic and social circumstances. As Graham Fuller advocates:

First, Islamic movements are considerably diverse from state to state... Second, Islamic movements are evolving... Third, the conditions themselves under which Islamist movements are evolving are diverse, and exert major impact on the character of emerging Islamist movements... Fourth, the phenomenon of Islamist movements is as integrally linked to local politics as almost any political party in the Muslim world could be42.

This also indicates that despite the connotations of its name, political Islam has more to do with contemporary politics than cosmic ideals or religious practice. As a result, one can argue that political Islam is one of the possible expressions of the political and socio-economic patterns dominating the region as a whole, and not just the reflection of an understanding of Islamic culture and identity.

On the whole, few, if any, states in the region have escaped the Islamist challenge, and even religiously conservative states such as Saudi Arabia have had to deal to political and cultural opposition in these terms. Algeria in this picture stands as

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perhaps the most extreme example of the Islamist-state confrontation. Like many states in the region, it is a postcolonial state where democratic deficit, coupled with a growing economic downturn since the 1970s has led to crisis in state legitimacy in the 1980s onwards. In our case, such a moment of crisis crystallised with the 1988 food riots which precipitated rapid political liberalisation, the involvement and initial success of Islamists in the pluralist experiment of the early 1990s, and the abrupt end of this experiment in January 1992, leading to the progressive disintegration of the state-Islamist relationship and the advent of Civil War. This is by and large the ‘worst case scenario’ when imagining the potentially explosive combination of economic and political crisis, rapid democratisation and intense competition between the ruling elite (and especially the army) and the Islamist opposition. As such, this case study provides the backbone to an understanding of the difficulties in reconciling democratising trends with the actual prospect of shifts in the balance of power within Middle Eastern societies.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the Algerian case study, while commonly discussed in French academic and media circles, has never figured prominently on the research agenda of those Middle Eastern scholars in the English-speaking world interested in the issue of governance. The exceptions to this rule are noteworthy in terms of the quality of the work produced, but they are few and far between. The Civil War in Algeria in the last decade has gone some way in redressing the balance to include North Africa into studies of Middle Eastern politics in the English-speaking world in a more explicit and systematic fashion. For instance, the UK media was prompt in focusing on the degenerating security situation in Algeria, and both analytical and fair in its treatment of this case. The fact remains that Algeria remains the privileged territory of French-speaking scholars based either in France or in North Africa. On this perhaps more mundane level, this dissertation hopes to bridge the gap between the French-language literature on Algeria with the extensive analysis of political Islam in the rest of region produced by scholars working in English.

1.4. Methodology

Methodologically, this project bears only some resemblance to the majority of studies of political Islam and of Algeria in the field of political science. This choice is partly
theoretical - as chapter two illustrates - and partly the result of the evolution of the field over the past ten years. The philosophical dimension of this work is limited in its scope and concentrates on the theoretical and methodological implications of the philosophical stance adopted here: that of a critical hermeneutic approach to social science. On the other hand, the choice of this somewhat unusual approach is motivated, and stimulated, by recent directions taken by academic publications with regards to political Islam, and in particular with regards to Algerian Islamism. Indeed, the past few years have seen a flourishing literature focusing on the political dimension of Islamism, and on nationalism and civil society in the Middle East, invade the conceptual space previously monopolised by analytical themes such as the 'Islamic threat' and the religious dimension of Islamism in the region. This change of emphasis is interpreted here as a positive - and necessary - step, which this dissertation contributes to. On the other hand, and with regards to the literature pertaining to Algerian Islamism in particular, this dissertation attempts to fill existing gaps in the literature rather than overthrow existing hypotheses. As chapter three illustrates, the majority of works produced in this field in recent years have contributed to our understanding of political Islam in a significant way, but somewhat selectively. The majority of works have focused on explaining the 'rise' of contemporary Algerian Islamism, the roots of the Civil War, and the political (and geopolitical) dimensions on the crisis. Furthermore, most of these projects share a set of methodological tools, which, even if implicitly, reflect a commitment to a certain idea of the social science project: that of positivism.

By contrast, this dissertation attempts to approach the issue of Islamism from a different methodological perspective rooted in a belief in the usefulness of conceptual, theoretical and methodological pluralism. What is questioned here is the ability of positivist studies of political Islam to provide a comprehensive understanding of political Islam. Such comprehensiveness, it is argued, comes from exploring the complementarity of, and dissonance between, the positivist approach with its 'alternatives'. More specifically, this dissertation defends a critical hermeneutic framework to investigate the type of political imagination that underpins political Islam in Algeria, a dimension of the phenomenon that is seen as

one largely ignored in the literature, and which is not easily amenable to positivist methodologies. The critical hermeneutic standpoint allows us to go beyond the structural causes of contemporary Islamism in Algeria or an explanation for its struggle with the state. It allows us to look at the problem from the perspective of a struggle between different visions of modernity, different political languages, symbols and political imaginations, and political identities. Here, the participants in this struggle are most prominently Islamists and their political opponents (who often share more values and aims than is commonly acknowledged).

On a methodological level, critical hermeneutics is translated as one possible direction in which post-Orientalism, as an alternative set of assumptions regimenting the conduct of social science inquiry in the field of Middle Eastern studies, can be taken. Starting with Edward Said's very influential *Orientalism*44, Bryan Turner's excellent *Marx and the End of Orientalism*45, and the fierce debate which still rages twenty years after the publication of these works, it is possible to identify a number of points of contention among scholars in terms of methodology, focus of analysis, terminology and assumptions which lie at the heart of the Neo-Orientalist/Post-Orientalist divide. Principally, these are matters concerning authorship in research - objectivity, attitude towards the 'object' of inquiry, analytical assumptions by the author, etc. While these are worth elaborating on in detail (a task which chapter two performs), the main contention put forward here is that there is an intrinsic connection between the anti/post-Orientalist 'impulse' and the methodological solutions put forward by critical hermeneutics. As an expression of the interpretive social science, post-Orientalism questions the objectivist leanings of political analysis and advocates a more contextualised approach to knowledge acquisition. On the part of the observer, post-Orientalism expects a self-analysis of one's assumptions and prejudices, but it does not ask the observer to quit her/his critical endeavour altogether.

In turn, dealing with the questions raised by the Orientalism debate is seen here as a prerequisite to understanding Islamism, as François Burgat argues46. In particular, the issue of objectivity in research is one that Burgat identifies as the inherent

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stumbling bloc to our 'encounter' with political Islam - one which is argued here to be at least partially overcome through a critical hermeneutic research programme combined with an in-depth case study analysis. By focusing on the need to understand both the motivations of the Islamist ideologues and constituency and their interpretation of the lifeworld, this research attempts to critically engage the Islamist 'paradigm' on its own terms. Through post-Orientalism, the pitfalls of research identified by Said can be largely overcome, as critical hermeneutics displaces the analytical discourse on political Islam to a respectful and analytically fruitful endeavour.

Beyond this research platform, this dissertation engages in a set of theoretical debates from a postcolonial perspective as practical avenues for carrying out post-Orientalism as a research project. Postcolonial studies is a rich and inter-disciplinary perspective mostly used in the field of cultural studies. It is a recent academic development which can be linked, broadly speaking, to the advent of postmodernist, poststructuralist and other 'deconstructivist' research projects. In the English-speaking world, the birth of the postcolonial studies project is most strongly linked to the Subaltern Studies Programme in India. The aims of this new school of thought on historiography and cultural studies has been to deconstruct the dominant academic discourse on India, and to theorise, as a counterpoint, on the postcolonial condition prevalent in states such as India. Three authors can be seen here as the key players in shaping the aims and structure of this endeavour: Gayatri Spivak, with her work on the subaltern condition and authorship (and her more recent work on postcolonial studies and philosophy), Homi K. Bhabha, with his focus on the nation, and Edward Said once again with Orientalism. The contribution of each of these authors will be analysed in more detail later on, but it worth pointing out straight away that Edward Said's presence as one of the 'forefathers/mothers' of postcolonial studies is no coincidence. Both Said and Spivak are well versed in continental philosophy and deconstructivist projects in particular. Central to their project, and to subsequent analyses in the field of postcolonial studies is the central question raised by hermeneutics: what is authorship, who speaks as the 'subject' (and for what purpose?) Even within the postcolonial studies community, the answers to this question have been varied.

Here, the debates raised in the field of postcolonial studies will help us articulate our interpretive framework to the context of Middle Eastern studies. This will be done in two main ways. Firstly, this field posits the postcolonial condition as one where academic analysis is problematised. From this standpoint, moving beyond Said's critique of Orientalism implies drawing out a research project where the question of agency is renegotiated between the author and the subject to create a third space of analysis where the limitations of positivist approaches are overcome. Critical hermeneutics helps us bridge the gap between deconstructing positivist approaches and the need for critical analysis on the other hand. To complement this, postcolonial studies are used to draw out the practical implications of this theoretical stance by delineating the parameters for this academic encounter. Secondly, and on a more mundane level, postcolonial studies is a field where the basic historical tenets of the colonial era were first put into question in a fairly systematic manner. Applying post-Orientalism to 'the field' means questioning the premise that the colonial era had *civilising components* for its subjects, or even that this era has come to an unproblematic end since the advent of formal independence for most nations in the Postcolonial World. When looking at the political sphere in contemporary Algeria, we are in a position where being a postcolonial state is a determining factor to the analysis of political relationships in the contemporary setting, to patterns of state and nation-building upon independence, and, at the most basic level, to the very conception of the political. Postcolonial studies enable us to integrate a deconstruction of the colonial factor in politics into our analysis of the postcolonial condition. Through this framework, being a postcolonial state means more than having gained formal independence after an era of colonisation. It implies possibilities and limitations which are unique to this condition.

On a more practical note, postcolonial studies will help determine the central conceptual tools that will be used in our analysis of political Islam. Using concepts such as discourse, political imagination, identity and hybridity brings resonance to the ultimate aim of postcolonial studies, that is adding complexity to our understanding of the postcolonial Orient by facilitating greater access to the voices of postcolonial subjects. Here, both Islamists and the ruling elite in Algeria will be seen as postcolonial subjects *par excellence* and, as a matter of course, the ways in which
power struggle and the contest over political, cultural and religious legitimacy are articulated will be analysed to unearth the indigenous ways in which the political lifeworld is articulated.

Still, it is worth pointing out from the outset that many of the concepts and arguments produced from the postcolonial perspective remain widely contested, both within and from outside the field. How important the 'colonial dimension' really is, the possibility of giving voice to the marginalised subject and the contradictions of the postcolonial project in terms of resistance and empowerment are all areas of fierce debate. The importance of postcolonial studies to this work will thus need further development and qualification in chapter two.

1.5. The Literature and Data

The discussion so far has touched upon a vast array of literature pertaining to the various themes raised in this work. Yet the question of choice of sources is one that requires further explanation, especially given the critical stance adopted. Three key questions are worth addressing here: where adequate sources come from, how to assess which sources are acceptable given the theoretical commitments made here and which types of sources to use (primary vs. secondary). By looking at these questions, the choices made here and the overall place of the dissertation within the field become clearer.

Firstly, sources emanating from the Middle East should be seen as equally relevant to those sources produced elsewhere. This means that the Orientalist tendency to marginalise work produced by 'indigenous' scholars can be avoided. That being said, it cannot be assumed that such 'indigenous' works are superior solely on the grounds that they are indigenous. Relying solely on work produced outside the region may introduce an ingrained bias, but so will blind nativism. The choice of sources will thus be based on the quality of the analysis produced, and its relevance, and the selection of a wide range of sources will be seen as important. Similarly, I will not rely on interpretive accounts of Islamist discourse only (even though these are crucial in some ways) and will instead go back to the original quotes by Islamists on a variety of occasions.
Secondly, the use of historical material on Algeria means that at least some of the sources used and analysed will belong to an Orientalist viewpoint, widely understood. How to approach this potential contradiction between the sources and the aims of the dissertation is not straightforward. On the one hand, the aim of this work is not, in the style of Said, to deconstruct the historical literature on Algeria to show its Orientalism (in some cases). On the other hand, should one argue that Orientalist sources on colonial history should be altogether discarded because of their bias for instance? Is it even realistic to expect that non-Orientalist material will constitute sufficient evidence to support a thesis since there is so little of it available? Or can Orientalist sources be seen as useful despite their bias, or even because of it? For instance, Charles-Andre Julien’s *Histoire de l'Algerie Contemporaine* displays many of the characteristics of classical Orientalism both in substance and in style: in particular the pre-colonial history of Algeria remains rather vague and the historical testimony used as supporting evidence privileges informants from the metropolis or colons themselves. Yet, one senses a genuine passion and sympathy for native Algerians in the writing style and content. And this account, even though partial in some ways, remains pertinent both in terms of the colonial world it vividly depicts (the omissions are just revealing as the inclusions), and the academic tradition it exemplifies47. The academic task of critical analysis can still proceed in this context. Thus, there is a case to be made that a critical distance from the text can allow the reader to make strategic choices with regards to the literature, even if it is biased, uneven, or too selective. Being inclusive rather than exclusive is the hallmark of the critical endeavour.

Thirdly, the question of authorship is one which postcolonial studies as a field is still struggling with. The Subaltern Studies component of the postcolonial studies ‘movement’ emphasises the need to re-introduce marginalised voices into academic discourse, especially when trying to undermine Orientalist accounts of history. This aim could be broadened to a wider postcolonial social science methodology focusing on the accounts produced by native informants as an alternative to dominant discourses on a particular subject. Here, this would imply the use of primary

resources on discourse by Algerian Islamists pitted against the secondary sources produced (by non-Islamists) in a biased way. In other words, the voice of the native informant could be used to undermine the generalisations and Orientalism of the Islamic Threat literature for instance. The subaltern standpoint will however be seen as ambiguous in the analysis of postcolonial studies developed in chapter two. Indeed, the question of whether the native informant’s voice can be mediated into academic discourse without distortion (through interpretation) is one that remains problematic. Reproducing an unedited account displaying no outside analysis would be the only way to roughly approximate a ‘native voice’ (even though some choices would always have to be made)\textsuperscript{48}. In that case one would then have to ask what the value of such a text might be. Giving a voice to marginalised subjects may be worthy in itself, but the academic endeavour has always gone beyond this task, and analysis inevitably puts the author at the centre of the text.

In addition, one could argue that, with the case study of Algeria, gaining access to and reproducing the discourse of Islamists in its primary form is not the most crucial aspect of critique since those material are easily available and already translated and reproduced in the academic literature. In fact, a number of publications have taken on this effort of documentation very seriously\textsuperscript{49} and Islamists themselves have been successful at spreading their message through a variety of media. The problem thus does not lie here with the inability of Islamists to have a voice, or for this voice to reach out. The problem is one of lack of critical connection between those sources which (re-)produce an account of the Islamist political discourse, and those analyses which make pronouncements on the overall value and meaning of the Islamist phenomenon. What Islamists have to say about themselves does not come into what we say about them to any great extent, as if those issues were unconnected. For instance, Marnia Larzeg’s “Islamism and the Recolonization of Algeria” talks of the Algerian Islamist political project as one that equates “political delirium”, but the particulars of this project are not analysed with in-depth reference to what Islamists themselves have to say about it\textsuperscript{50}. Abed Charef’s Algerie: L’Autopsie d’un Massacre is elegantly argued and critical, but the focus on the dynamics of violence itself means

\textsuperscript{48} Even translation has its pitfalls in terms of interpretation.
little analysis of what Algerian Islamism is about is produced. A short treatment of propaganda eventually leads to the conclusion that the Islamist project of the FIS was ‘objectionable’ and ‘dangerous’, but this needs to be substantiated further (the fact that there was a civil war is not sufficient in itself). On a different note, Patrick Denaud’s set of interviews and documents from FIS leaders, Algerie – Le FIS: Sa Direction Parle..., is an invaluable source of primary material relevant to any analysis of Islamist discourse in context. The unusual structure of discussion (with documents and information inserted by the author in between interviews of prominent FIS personalities) is fascinating, but only a short conclusion critically engages with the implications of the discourse produced in the text.

What these examples show is that, in the treatment of the Algerian Islamist discourse by the academic literature, the question of what the Islamist discourse is remains divorced from the wider context in which this discourse is inscribed. Not only is the relevance and meaning of Islamist discourse obscured by this abstraction, but the importance of discourse to our understanding of the Algerian political confrontation of the 1990s also lacks development. The sources mentioned above might be successful in highlighting many important aspects of political Islam in Algeria, and/or contributing to key debates in the field, but an important gap in the literature remains.

It is within this gap that this dissertation finds its place. The prism of postcolonial studies, despite its unresolved ambiguities, acts as a novel way to look at the existing literature on Algeria (be it secondary or primary in nature). As a result, most of the data and discussion that I will engage with remains secondary resource material. The originality of this work does not lie in the subject material it deals with or the data that it uses, but in the links between theory and existing data it builds to provide a novel interpretation of such sources. In other words, I am not producing a work

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giving voice to marginalised subjects, but critically examining the existing literature to engage with this marginalisation and to provide an alternative interpretation of the 'fragments of voices' produced in the literature.

1.6. Chapter Structure

The structure of the dissertation mirrors the aims, arguments and methodology outlined above in the following way. Chapter two, which presents the theoretical core of the thesis, develops an argument supporting a critical hermeneutic project and links this project to the Orientalism debate and its offspring, postcolonial theory - to which it is strongly related. Its starting point is placed on philosophical debates which affect the methods and assumptions of the social sciences, pitting positivist approaches against interpretive/hermeneutic ones. From this perspective, a consideration of the hermeneutic project is developed with a primary focus placed on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Here, the problem of critical appraisal is identified as the most contentious issue facing the application of a hermeneutic framework to the social sciences. In response, the works of Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricoeur are used to allow us to bridge the gap between interpretation and critique - and to introduce, in an interpretive way, the question of ideology. At this point, this largely philosophical discussion turns to the more concrete problems faced by Middle Eastern studies per se. By investigating the dominant assumptions which have historically underpinned Middle Eastern, Islamic and Oriental studies, this research attempts to link the above discussion with Edward Said's criticism of Orientalism and its surrounding debate. In this context, the question of ideology and research resurfaces clearly. The political commitments of researchers can be argued to be a primary influence not only on the questions which researchers ask but also on how they seek to answer them and which answers are then found. A critical hermeneutic framework is used here to address these problems. In conclusion, a list of key concepts this dissertation uses is drawn from an analysis of postcolonial studies.

Chapter three presents an overview of the phenomenon of contemporary political Islam, and of the problems that pertain to the study of such a complex and

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54 Indeed, we ought to go further than reproduction of discourse and look to the issues we analyse from a critical standpoint. But this task can only occur insofar as we have engaged in
ambiguous set of movements. First, the problems associated with defining political Islam are outlined in the current, post-Cold War context, with different definitions of Islamism being considered. Secondly, the chapter develops a conception of a political Islam which is tied to the socio-economic and political developments in each of the states in the Middle East and North Africa which have been affected by Islamist movements. Thirdly, this chapter explores the relationship between political Islam and the cultural and political world in which it functions by focusing on the Islamist relationship to various conceptions of the modern. Overall, this chapter hopes to contextualise our case study analysis into its national, regional and global contexts. More loosely though, this analysis hopes to provide a literature review of the work produced and the themes and debates raised by the study of political Islam in the region.

In turn, chapter four fully introduces our case study by drawing together the main elements of the ideological history of Algeria since the colonisation era, with special reference to the historical conditions surrounding the state-building processes of the Algerian state from independence onwards, with the ensuing socio-cultural, economic and political developments which have shaped contemporary Islamist activity in Algeria. Four historical periods are under scrutiny: the colonisation period, the independence war of 1954-1962, the post-independence period of nation-building, and the gradual erosion this ideal since the 1970s.

Chapter five concentrates on the Algerian Islamist political imagination, its interpretation and articulation of the lifeworld in context. As a starting point this chapter asks general questions as to how the Islamist phenomenon can be best understood, with the working hypothesis that political Islam can be seen to function as a social movement. To investigate such an hypothesis, the discursive components of the Algerian Islamist challenge to the state are outlined through an analysis of its oppositional discourse. Of primary concern are the ideological components of that discourse, primarily in its official forms with an emphasis placed on complexity and depth in discursive formation and with the elements of political imagination translated into political practice. Beyond this, political imagination in this setting is also seen to display elements of diversity, an issue that will be explored through the some depth with such issues.
study of different interpretations of the basic imaginary themes laid out by other groups than the dominant Islamist tendency in the 1990s, the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut).

After focusing on the original elements of the Islamist political imagination and its confrontation with dominant state discourses in chapter five, the next part of our analysis looks at areas of commonalty in these divergent political imaginations. The primary area of investigation in chapter six is the concept of political identity as an illustrative example of discursive continuity - and forms of hybridity and mimicry in the development of oppositional discourses to the state. The main aim of the chapter is to chart and analyse the historical evolution of the identity themes of political imagination in Algeria from the colonial era onwards. The development of political identity as the basis of a common political lifeworld is drawn on to explain the areas of consistency between the Islamist political project and previous attempts to monopolise legitimacy in the polity by nationalist forces, and subsequently, the post-colonial ruling elite. This framework, in turn, helps me reinterpret the current crisis in governance in Algeria in more nuanced terms.

Chapter seven presents tentative conclusions to this study, and it investigates, as a result, the practical and conceptual implications of the main arguments developed in this work. Two sections structure this discussion: firstly, and in the context of the Algerian recent civil war, conflict resolution techniques are investigated. Primarily, the processes of identity and state-building highlighted in this discussion form the basis of any reconciliation effort, and future state-building. My assessment of the prospect of long-term peace-building in the current political climate of Algeria remains however bleak. Secondly, and to go back to the general dimension of political Islam, the analysis produced here is extrapolated to the interaction between Islamist politics and the idea of the 'global'. This is a complex issue, but one that ultimately leads me to the conclusion that Islamist politics goes beyond the socio-cultural and political context in which it operates. It actively partakes the global conversation on Islam and its connection with 'modern' understandings of the political.
Chapter Two
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework:
Critical Hermeneutics, Post-Orientalism and Postcolonial Studies

In our theatres human beings
wondrously became other human beings.
Michael Ondaatje

2.1. Introduction

One of the principal aims of the introductory chapter of this dissertation was to convey an understanding of political Islam in context, and as a factor of the complexity inherent to Middle Eastern and North African political processes. Most notably, the unique place of Islamist politics in the region, and the social, cultural, economic and political structures and processes that different forms of Islamism highlight were identified as the primary foci of analysis. In the same vein, this chapter underlines the difficulties inherent to the study of Middle Eastern and North African politics, given the sets of research aims delineated in chapter one. These problems are manifest on three intertwined levels. At the most basic level, the so-called 'resurgence' of political Islam, its impact region-wide, and its future political and geo-strategic ramifications have not become fully apparent yet, making predictions and theory-building problematic at best. There are several possible explanations for this problem, the most obvious of which is that this 'resurgence' is too recent and diverse a phenomenon for accurate predictions to be made. Secondly, and more importantly however, the question of whether we have the analytical material and outlook(s) necessary for explaining, interpreting and theorising on a phenomenon such as political Islam remains debatable - and debated. By dealing with religious and/or political matters characterising foreign societies, a 'Western' scholarship on political Islam raises the issue of whether objectivity in research (let alone accuracy of the results) is a possible or, for that matter, a desirable outcome. This problem is central to the way political Islam has been approached academically since the 1970s, and falls within the larger context of the objectivity/subjectivity/inter-subjectivity debate at the forefront of Twentieth Century philosophy of science (and, by extension, social science).
Thirdly, and as a corollary to this question, conducting research on such slippery ground implies an examination of Middle Eastern studies as a field of inquiry, and thus of its constituent components - subject matter; choice of analytical categories, theoretical approaches, terminology, methodology, analytical assumptions; choice of sources, etc. A fruitful analogy here would be to imagine the discipline being gently coaxed on to a psychologist's couch so as to uncover, unravel and ultimately attempt to overcome the negative aspects of its 'intellectual and emotional baggage' - with an appreciation of the fact that the psychologist comes with her/his own baggage also. Indeed, as with any other academic discipline, current research on the Middle East is necessarily influenced by previous works on history, political economy, culture and religion of the region, and thus by the assumptions and theoretical approaches adopted in them. These assumptions, in turn, always carry a certain ideological weight, or outlook, which affects not only the way in which the subject matter is approached, but also what the expected outcome of the research will be. One can thus speak of an epistemology of Middle Eastern studies, featuring particular sets of assumptions, theoretical approaches and methodologies used in the literature on political Islam. The argument presented here is not that this 'baggage' needs to be erased altogether (it will be shown here that it cannot and should not be), but that sound social science scholarship requires self-reflection, and explicitness about discourse.

Correspondingly, the structure of this chapter is four-tiered. Firstly, and by way of introduction to the questions outlined above, the question of the place of philosophy in the social sciences is briefly outlined. From this discussion stems our analysis of the debate between the positivist and the interpretive/hermeneutic approaches to social science, privileging and eventually adopting an interpretive approach. Secondly, this chapter discusses, starting with an analysis of Edward Said's classic work Orientalism, the issues and assumptions underpinning the Orientalist approach, its possible criticisms, and what a post-Orientalist research project implies. Thirdly, the relevance, and originality of this approach is developed on by engaging with recent developments in the field of postcolonial studies, our central theoretical framework. Finally, a range of central analytical concepts arising from the debates and commitments outlined above will be developed on briefly.

Still, first and foremost, we need to answer the broadest question: where do we start from?
2.2. Epistemology and the Quest for Theoretical Tools

2.2.1 Setting the Scene: An idea of Philosophy in Social Science

In his controversial book *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, Peter Winch positions himself as a staunch supporter of a social science that heavily relies on philosophy as an epistemological and methodological guide, since, in his view, the fundamental concern of philosophy is the "question regarding the nature and intelligibility of reality". More specifically to our purpose, Winch's arguments are illuminating in two ways. Firstly, he introduces the idea that the social sciences cannot and should not attempt to live up to the Comtean ideal of positivist science. Instead, he argues that "any worthwhile study of society must be philosophical in character and any worthwhile philosophy must be concerned with the nature of human society". This is a fair, if rather vague point. Secondly, Winch points to the lack of contradiction between philosophical work and (social) scientific research when he states that:

Philosophy, for reasons which may be made more apparent subsequently, has no business being anti-scientific; if it tries to be so it will only succeed in making itself look ridiculous. (...) But equally, and for the same reasons, philosophy must be on its guard against the extra-scientific pretensions of science.

Whether social science (and even natural science) can live up to these scientific pretensions is a point that remains elusive in Winch's work, but it has been taken up before and after the publication of *The Idea of a Social Science* by various philosophers and social scientists. We are touching upon a vast and difficult question with this type of debate, one that is at the core of the philosophy of the social sciences. In fact, this dilemma is really about what we are supposed to be 'doing' as social scientists, what we are supposed to be looking for, and how we are supposed to proceed. Can we realistically assume that our sources as well as our own approaches are value free? Surely not, and I would argue, that such an outcome, if possible at all, is not one to be wished for. Can we, on the other hand, assume complete relativism? Or that all discourse is necessarily getting in the way of 'serious' analysis? Is there a

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2This Comtean ideal, which is developed in more detail later in the chapter is inspired by the work of the 'father' of sociology Auguste Comte who envisioned sociology as the most modern branch of the natural sciences where laws of behaviour could be constructed through the use of the scientific method. This ideal, in turn, has led generations of social scientist to aspire to the methodological reliability of the natural sciences without much success.
middle ground at all? And more specifically, how can we rephrase the overall question of philosophy's place in social science research in way that relates to our own methodological problems?

In essence, it can be argued that philosophy as a field, and the various debates that concern it, illustrate most of the dilemmas this chapter has to address, and on three intertwined levels - that of the philosophy of social science research, epistemology and methodology. Firstly, the inherent conflict between positivist and interpretive/hermeneutic social science methods (which is an intrinsically philosophical debate) can be said to underpin the overall process of research. Not only does it help us delimit our research aims and methodologies, but it also highlights what the author sees as worthwhile research. Secondly, reflexivity in the aims of philosophy and, more specifically the philosophical debate between modernist and postmodernist approaches to truth/discourse and objectivity point to the need to assess the foundation of our discipline, its terminology, its methods, theories, accepted truths, and assumptions. By questioning the conventional wisdom on the region (and on political Islam in particular), and by identifying dominant discourses and their operating assumptions, we can redraw a set of assumptions which might be more in tune with the overall aim of analysis. We can be more self-reflexive and more explicit about our own assumptions and methods. Thirdly, an attachment to the philosophical roots of social science allows for a methodological eclecticism which does not necessarily privilege the methods of the natural sciences. Instead, by being informed by the above debates, can attempt to highlight problems with what we consider to be conventional wisdom in our research strategies, and thus delineate greater scope for flexibility concerning method.

In this sense, philosophy has given our original questions about research methods and epistemology more depth and more complexity. Yet, now that we know what the issues are, the question remains as to how to go about addressing them.

2.2.2 Debates in Contemporary Philosophy of Science

Perhaps it seems odd to begin with a general discussion of the debates characterising the philosophy of science, but as we will see, such debates can be seen to go to the heart of the issues of epistemology and thus theory and methodology occupying us here, and thus provide the best possible introduction to our hermeneutic framework. Our place to start is the work of Karl Popper and three of his main critics, as this set of discussions can be seen to exemplify the main dividing epistemological lines between
two broad tendencies: positivism and its critics. This duality in turn, has, for historical reasons, bridged the gap between the natural sciences and the relatively newer field of social science.

Karl Popper himself prompted a revolution in the philosophy of the sciences by denying the importance of accretion in successfully establishing the validity of hypotheses. To him, it is the testing – i.e. the attempt to provide a falsification to working hypotheses - which is the most relevant test of validity. The overthrow of existing scientific 'truths' and their replacement by more valid, more sophisticated, hypotheses is the dominant process underpinning the idea of a scientific progress. Of course, Popper's own work recognised the difficulties associated with disproving theories (a problem shared by the idea of proving them beyond the shadow of a doubt): "In point of fact, no conclusive disproof of a theory can ever be produced; for it is always possible to say that the experimental results are not reliable or that the discrepancies which are asserted to exist between the experimental results and the theory are only apparent and that they will disappear with the advance of our understanding". At the time of the publication of Conjectures and Refutations, such a set of ideas proved significant in the field of the philosophy of science in the way that the issue of proof through the scientific method was articulated. Such ideas became quickly ingrained in the field to work as the most important supporting pillar to the idea of a unified positivist idea of scientific research, despite this acknowledgement of a certain notion of uncertainty. It is this aspect of research, on the other hand, that Popper's critics would develop on most closely.

For instance, Paul Feyerabend's critique of the unity of the sciences and, by extension, its influence on the research agenda of the social sciences is clearly at odds with the unified framework provided by Popper. For him, "Science is an essentially anarchic enterprise". In essence, the spirit of his work is to 'historicise' scientific endeavour and its method: "Neither science nor rationality are universal measures of excellence. They are particular traditions, unaware of their historical grounding". His famous slogan "Anything goes", is more ironic and denotes a more complex understanding of the dynamics of research in the sciences that it is generally given credit for. In fact, his main thesis is not one that questions the value of scientific

research per se, but one that aims at unsettling the methodological certainties of the philosophy of science interpreted in the positivist, Popperian sense. His main argument here is that:

... the events, procedures and results that constitute the sciences have no common structure; there are no elements that occur in every scientific investigation but are missing elsewhere. Successful research does not obey general standards - the moves that advance it and the standards that define what counts as an advance are not always known to the movers.\textsuperscript{10}

As a result, there is little reason for supporting the idea of a social science that follows the standards of rigour and rationality supposedly set by the natural sciences: in that sense, he separates natural science from social sciences and projects on each the ability to develop adequate methodologies independently.\textsuperscript{11} Instead, he argues for the use of pluralistic methodologies based on the acknowledgement that scientific theories are neither unified nor linear in their evolution towards 'scientific progress':

Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible (and even perhaps incommensurable) alternatives, each single theory, each fairy-tale, each myth which is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness.\textsuperscript{12}

The idea that science is not composed of a single body of knowledge - with evolving sets of hypotheses being improved through Popperian falsification - is one that is developed more closely by Thomas Kuhn, with perhaps a less radical, but just as pervasive agenda in mind. Kuhn's main thesis, in his famed Structure of Scientific Revolutions regards the issue of the mechanisms that underpin scientific progress. His ideas are far too complex to summarise in detail here, but for our purposes it is worth discussing the idea of incommensurability of paradigms mentioned in Feyerabend's quote above. For Kuhn, the 'sciences' function as a conglomerate of overarching paradigms which work remarkably independently from each other - each building on increasingly sophisticated sets of hypotheses, but not really engaging in tests and communication across boundaries.\textsuperscript{13} Most significantly, such

\textsuperscript{13} See the main arguments presented in Thomas Kuhn. 1962. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
incommensurability makes the process of refutation one that is difficult to put into practice in the context of a specific paradigm. Thus, for Kuhn:

> The transition from criticism to commitment marks the point where progress - and 'normal' science begins. For him, the idea that on 'refutation' one can demand the rejection, the elimination of a theory, is 'naive' falsificationism. Criticism of the dominant theory and proposals for new theories are only allowed in rare times of 'crisis'... For Popper scientific change is rational or at least rationally reconstructible and false in the realm of the logic of discovery. For Kuhn scientific change - from one 'paradigm' to another - is a mystical conversion which is not and cannot be governed by rules of reason and which falls totally within the realm of the (social) psychology of discovery. Scientific change is a kind of religious change.\(^{14}\)

What is to become more topical as we engage in the discussion of theory as it applies to our case study, and of note, is Kuhn's introduction of the idea of 'ideology' into contemporary philosophy of science. Here tests of validity are ingrained within a wider field than the Popperian project seems to acknowledge since "The criteria with which scientists determine the validity of an articulation or an application of existing theory are not by themselves sufficient to determine the choice between competing theories"\(^{15}\).

A third, and final type of commentary worth mentioning is Quine's sanguine critique of traditional forms of empiricism (and thus the idea of Positive Science) in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". There, he points to two major issues undermining the ambitions of empiricism and testing in terms of neutrality. Firstly, he questions the idea that observation produces a reliable, neutral picture of reality. Instead, he argues, there are no "brute facts" in the natural world that can be described without recourse to interpretation. Secondly, he challenges the assumption that the production of scientific facts can be abstracted from the theories generated to analyse them. Therefore, to him, it is inaccurate to view the use of testing method as a way to produce a stable understanding empirical truth.\(^{16}\)

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Overall, it is beyond the remit of this work to attempt solving this puzzle - and dilemma - between competing conceptions of the underpinning logic of scientific inquiry, and it is perhaps unwise to stray too far from the specific sets of theoretical problems occupying us here. Still this short overview works, in my mind, as an significant example of a point of engagement into the debates which characterise the ways in which social science is formulated and conducted, and by extension the research programme underpinning this dissertation. Such debates in the philosophy of the sciences raise issues concerning the idea of objectivity and unity in science. Without wanting to 'take sides' at this early stage - and having done little justice to the thought of each of our protagonists - it is still striking how the positivist ideal of social science remains grounded in an ideal research programme set up in view of the more Popperian view delineated here. There, a rigorous, if not ruthless, process of systematic falsificationism, through testing of hypotheses (i.e. the infamous 'scientific method') allows for a unified, linear (or quasi-linear) dynamic of progress. On the other hand, Quine, Feyerabend and Kuhn, despite their differences (which are too complex to summarise here), can all be seen as representatives of a position where standards of neutrality in the practice of research are viewed with suspicion, and analysed in terms, which in Kuhn's case, are almost deconstructive in character. If Kuhn, Quine and/or Feyerabend are right, even if only insofar as they expose the shakier foundations of a positivist natural science, it is fair to assume that a social science attempting to live up to those very standards in its analysis of the social world will not escape the same criticism. This is in essence the most salient strength of Feyerabend's critique: by stating that social science has the ability to stand on its own theoretical and methodological feet, he does more than critique the 'pretensions' of science. He opens up the possibility of flexibility and dialogue within social science in ways that go beyond the remit of his critique per se.

2.2.3. Positivism and its Discontents

Philosophers and theory-minded political scientists could say at this point that there is little new about such debates on truth and objectivity: Hegel and his followers struggled with such ideas, and the philosophical Establishment, long before Kuhn's rattling of Popperian self-evident truths. In fact, debates concerning the interpretation of a reality that necessarily escapes definitive, neutral, all-encompassing views goes back to issues raised by Aristotle. Despite such long-standing debates though, one of triumphs of the modern age would be the establishment of positivism as the dominant epistemological project of the natural and social sciences.
Positivism as an epistemological project finds its roots in the Enlightenment, with a special focus placed on the rational, unprejudiced appetite for discovery and classification of the natural, and later social, world in an almost encyclopaedic fashion. Such principles are now seen as the foundation of modern science and knowledge in a way that is often described as uncontroversial. But it should be noted that such a move had a revolutionary epistemological agenda aimed at disturbing established ideas of tradition and ideology - and prompted critiques both from a traditional point of view and from alternative perspectives upon its very creation. Martin Hollis points to J.S. Mill's *A System of Logic* as one of the first systematic attempts to draw out a practical positivist agenda for the pursuit of knowledge\(^{17}\). Most interesting in this example is Mill's use of the idea of logic to underpin a project destined at putting together a set of *laws* governing the human world. Thus, at this level, many different theories can be seen to fall under the rubric of positivism since it:

... embraces any approach which applies the scientific method to human affairs conceived as belonging to a natural order open to objective inquiry. That lets Comte, Durkheim, Weber and Marx all count as positivists and it is not uncommon to hear them grouped together under this general label\(^{18}\).

From this basic definition, we can derive two main versions of positivism which have been influential in the development of contemporary social sciences. First, Comtean positivism as applied to the social world has formed the basis upon which the scientific method made its transition into the epistemological centre of the newly-born social sciences:

Positive knowledge, so called to distinguish it from the theological and metaphysical conceptions of the world from which it emerged, yields a methodologically unified and hierarchical conception of science, based on causal laws of phenomena, derived from observation. The progress of knowledge is a process by which the individual sciences, each with its own distinct level of analysis, successfully attain the state of positive, scientific knowledge. 'Sociology' (the term is Comte's invention) is the last to achieve this status and provides the coping-stone for the entire edifice of science and the basis of a positivist morality and politics\(^{19}\).


Secondly, a more systematically empirical - and linguistic - version of positivism was developed by the Vienna Circle, under the term Logical Empiricism, where "propositions which could not be tested and verified were literally meaningless". In both cases, the main arguments proposed came under attack on the issue of what would prove a definite test of such validity given the complexity of the social world, and the difficulty in measuring 'it'. Still, the basic crux of such ideas has remained dominant in the formulation and aims of social science programmes: the importance and possibility of neutral testing of hypotheses, objectivity in authorship and unity between all sciences under the banner of logic of explanation:

As long as there has been a social science, the expectation has been that it would turn from its humanistic infancy to the maturity of hard science, thereby leaving behind its dependence on value, judgement and individual insight. The dream of modern Western man to be freed from his passions, his unconscious, his history, and his traditions through the liberating use of reason has been the deepest theme of contemporary social-scientific thought.

In practice, positivist social science can be defined as an attempt to analyse and categorise the 'social world'. From this rather vague definition, we can deduce the equally vague working hypothesis that within social science, the aim of political analysis has traditionally involved analysing and/or comparing different political or social systems or their components so as to reach conclusions concerning the characteristics and relative merits of each. This can definitely be seen as the case with early efforts in the field epitomised by a state-centered, institutional approach, and its emphasis on the comparisons between the structures of different political systems. However, this classical approach was challenged in the 1960s and 1970s by the American-led school of behaviouralism epitomised by the work of Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba (notably in the Civic Culture), Lucian Pye and with the

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academic journal *Comparative Politics*. With a focus placed on societies as opposed to political structures, the behaviourists attempted to uncover social processes through the study of attitudes and behaviour of various political actors in a way more formal studies could not. More specifically, David Easton's focus on political systems as the determinant level of analysis for comparative studies reinforced the behaviourist idea of a society (and ideas) - bound form of political life. Despite its dominance in the field of comparative politics, however, behaviouralism became increasingly challenged for its abandonment of the state-centric approach. Most notably with their *Bringing the State Back In*, Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol pointed to the centrality of the state as a social actor, redressing the balance once again towards more formal processes. Still, what these varied and evolving interests and foci all seem to suggest, is a shared commitment, in practice, if not always explicitly in principle, to a research agenda and set of methodologies aimed at producing a stable and systematised body of knowledge under controlled conditions.

First disturbed through Popperian claims that scientific knowledge claims can never be fully proved with supporting evidence, but only refuted, the logic of positivism has been subsequently questioned in a systematic manner by hermeneutics, critical theory and postmodernist and poststructuralist, thinkers, to the extent that the term "positivist" has now acquired a distinctively pejorative connotation in many circles:

Terms that were once used as proud self-descriptions have become mild expressions for derision - "positivist", "empiricist", "Hempelian", "objectivist", "hard-nosed", "analytical". The left brain, which once seemed to occupy all of cranial space has been relegated to a mere 50 percent in order to make a place for the right hemisphere, for whose activity there is growing respect. Even worse, in some quarters some researchers have abandoned the very notion of truth as regulative ideal, and mouthing exciting names ("Hanson", "Kuhn", "Feyerabend") they have hoisted the banners of either relativism or subjectivism.

By contrast to the project of explanation, the tradition of understanding (verstehen) developed as part of the German philosophical tradition spearheaded by Hegelian

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26Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol. 1985. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See chapter One in particular, by Theda Skocpol "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research".
critiques. Martin Hollis and Steve Smith summarise the basic dichotomy arising from this critique: the development in parallel of two distinct traditions in the social sciences: Explanation (epitomised by the search for causation in a way resembling the natural sciences) and Understanding (based on an insider's point of view and for the search of meaning in context). On the side of explanation, the rise of the scientific method and empirical analysis form a strong, and pervasive, basis for analysis. For the proponents of understanding, on the other hand, the rise of Historicism, the Frankfurt school, and more recently the blossoming of poststructuralist, postmodernist, and critical discourses are of note.

Overall, the critiques of positivism are too numerous to investigate in detail here, but to give an idea of the major epistemological issues which have prompted this work to opt for an approach based on hermeneutics, four main areas of critique are worth bringing up:

1. The social sciences cannot live up to the standards of research set up in the natural sciences (even assuming those match up the Popperian ideal) because of the specific characteristics of the social world, which can be summarised as complex, unpredictable, fluid, if not indescribable. The crux of the issue is whether applying the scientific method to the social sciences would provide accurate results: in a nutshell, such pragmatic difficulties are: "the complex and interactive nature of human attributes, the difficulty of measuring the ineffable, the policy or decision-making orientation of the social sciences, and the limitations of the experimental method in studying human and social affairs."

2. Following on from 1., one could question the usefulness of a theory that aims at being all-encompassing. As Pnina Werbner states:

Methodological silences are constituted by the gaps created by our scientific discourses, the remainder these discourses generate. As

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29 Martin Hollis points to four possibilities within the broad idea of positivism: objectivism, behaviouralism, naturalism and empiricism. There a thus different possibilities for positivism, specially if it is to be rescued from critiques. Martin Hollis. 1996. "The Last Post?" in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds.) *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.302ff.
Strathern points out, no representation however complex and apparently exhaustive, is ever complete; there are always, in principle, further gaps to be filled, described or explained\textsuperscript{32}.

3. Michael Root points to the issue of whether partisanship can be escaped in the framework of institutionalised research:

The social sciences espouse the anti-perfection principle when they preach value-neutrality and tell us that teaching and research in their field should be neutral regarding ideals of the good life... [but] Like institutional discrimination, partisanship in the social sciences does not depend on one's intentions but \textit{is written into the norms that govern the practice}\textsuperscript{33}.

4. Building on from this point, one could follow on the route of critical theory and ask difficult questions as to the role of ideology in positivism, despite its claims to neutrality, a point developed in detail by Habermas' work in particular - which will be expanded on later on. Habermas' "general thesis was that positivism had transformed epistemology, the theory of knowledge, into a mere methodology of science. In his historical discussion of positivism, Habermas attempted to recover the philosophical reflection which positivism had obscured: the way in which science was grounded in the fundamental interests in knowledge which set the conditions for possible knowledge of nature and society\textsuperscript{34}. In that sense, \textit{Knowledge and Human Interests} aims at unmasking a type of 'false consciousness' tying a specific production of knowledge to the reproduction of existing social inequalities\textsuperscript{35}.

These are only sketches of where criticism of positivism can go - and has gone. But because of the problems and limitations outlined above (and in conjunction with recent developments in the philosophy of knowledge), it is obvious to me that the approach of Understanding seems an attractive to prospect to investigate for our purposes.

\textbf{2.2.4. The Interpretive School.}


\textsuperscript{35} This an overall set of terms applied to the field of critical theory by Michael Root. See Michael Root. 1993. \textit{Philosophy of the Social Sciences}. p.7.
Hermeneutics, originally derived from the Aristotelian idea of *phronesis*, has been historically defined, refined and debated by a number of philosophers of the Continental tradition, including Hegel, Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Husserl, Betti, Gadamer, Heidegger, and Ricoeur\(^{36}\). Despite the sheer variety of what the various views from the hermeneutic school of thought encapsulate and imply, they all point to an interpretive approach which is radically different (and some would argue irreconcilable) to an understanding of the social science project based on positivist approaches\(^{37}\). Indeed, philosophers of the hermeneutic school of thought agree on a strong distaste for an epistemology of the social sciences attempting to mimic and eventually live up to the Comtean ideals of positivist science. By contrast, the hermeneutic approach argues that such standards of objectivity are neither possible, nor desirable\(^{38}\). For interpretive scholars, the failure of the social sciences to develop into the Comtean utopia is not due to "methodological immaturity, but reflects something fundamental about the human world"\(^{39}\). This project is of course clearly designed to undermine the positivist notion of neutrality:

Gadamer maintains that the natural sciences are the product of a tradition of interpretation and that their norms and standards are simply the 'prejudices' of that tradition. To hold them up as the muster of knowledge in general is thus to overlook the extent to which they are historically conditioned and moreover, to refuse to recognise the existence of other historically constituted norms and standards\(^{40}\).

Instead, interpretive studies attempt to refocus the aims of the social science project elsewhere: "The interpretive turn refocuses attention on the concrete varieties of cultural meaning, in their particularity and complex texture, but without falling into the traps of historicism or cultural relativism in their classic forms"\(^{41}\). They set out to provide a set of context-dependent methodologies for social inquiry. For them, social


meanings are neither objectively identifiable and codifiable, nor purely relative. Instead, they talk of inter-subjective meanings:

The actors may have all sorts of beliefs and attitudes which may be rightly thought of as their individual beliefs and attitudes, even if others share them... But what they do bring into [social] negotiations is the set of ideas and norms constitutive of negotiations themselves. These must be the common property of the society before there can be any question of anyone entering into negotiation or not. Hence they are not subjective meanings, the property of one or some individuals, but rather inter-subjective meanings, which are constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act.

In turn, inter-subjectivity implies that social research is necessarily interpretive, a consideration affecting both the aims and the methods of the social science project. Social science analysis occurs within a hermeneutic circle predicated upon the interpretive nature of the conversation that binds the author, the object of the study and the reader. Not only does the set of prejudices affecting the observer affect their research on the object, but there are no guarantees that the reader of the observer's text will not bring in his/her own prejudices in their reading. Thus, the inescapable nature of the hermeneutics circle lies in the inevitability of interpretation. The final, underpinning loop of this circle is that general rules of behaviour can never be extracted from the political/cultural/social world, as social values and practices are inherently tied to the self-formative practices of culture. For Gadamer, this umbilical chord that links the essence of human existence to tradition does not imply that all meanings are historically-fixed or traditional, as the term is commonly understood. Here, tradition itself is seen as multiple, contested, overlapping; it represent a constant reworking of historical truth, or at least of the struggle over legitimate control over its significance.

Despite such difficulties, interpretive scholars such as Hans-Georg Gadamer hope to build on the possibility of different outlooks and interpretation merging through what he terms the “fusion of horizons”, a process of mediated communication emphasising

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dialogue. Heidegger's radical focus on the ontological roots of interpretation provides a framework for hermeneutics many others have built on. That being said, the classical hermeneutics stance of Schleiermacher and Dilthey focuses more closely on issues of concrete research, in other words, on building an alternative set of methodologies for the social sciences. Gadamer, by contrast, has attempted to marry to ontological level of analysis with the practical problems of interpretation to produce the definitive handbook of hermeneutics, Truth and Method: "For Gadamer focuses on the 'fact' that the actual situation in which human understanding takes place is always an understanding through language and tradition, both of which have been manifest considerations in hermeneutical thinking."

From this short overview, we can derive three main ways in which hermeneutics is used here as the epistemological foundation for our research project:

- Firstly, the hermeneutics project, through its focus on interpretation as the necessary mediator between the object of study and the analyst (as well as the reader) identifies the main pitfall of positivist studies, and creates the discursive space for us to proceed with a project focusing on the gaps produced by the positivist analyses of our case study. Section 2.3. develops in more depth the importance of epistemology to the study of the Middle East. Suffice it to say here that questioning the objectivity of research on the Middle East and replacing this assumption with a general suspicion towards the narratives produced on the region is the foundation upon which this work can proceed.

- Secondly, the Gadamerian standpoint questions the practical limitations of the use of abstract methods: "Indeed one of Gadamer's principal contributions to discussions in the philosophy of political inquiry is that understanding is not and cannot be wholly governed by method". This points to the importance of context and the power relationships underpinning the production of knowledge, for instance, an issue taken on in the next section on critique.

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Thirdly, the focus on the production of discourse in politics and the question of opposition in the creation of tradition (and history) are key concepts which our analytical framework uses when taking on the tools of the postcolonial studies project - itself a modern variant of the interpretive stance.

Bearing such advantages in mind, one main issue with the interpretive standpoint remains salient. If, in hermeneutic terms, the issue of interpretation is unavoidable, then by what means does the researcher assess the validity of claims he/she is working with - and how does, by extension, the reader assess the quality of the work produced? By escaping the strict framework of explanation in positivist terms, is the interpretive stance doomed to relativism? Hollis and Smith argue that hermeneutics is "not particularly relativistic" since it does not claim that there is an infinite number of possible, or indeed adequate, number of interpretations. As our discussion above suggests also, relativism and inter-subjectivity are not synonymous, but the question of how different interpretations can be mediated, and the rules operating in the process of dialogue are not easily drawn out. Thus, the idea of critique - and of assessment within the hermeneutic framework - has been a concern of many interpretive scholars aiming at overcoming the common claim that relativism in interpretation undermines its viability as an epistemological alternative. This remains a tricky issue though, and one we need to develop on in more depth.

2.2.5. Critique and Interpretation

The question of critique can be said to characterise an alternative to the more ontological focus of Gadamer's hermeneutics. The critical dimension of such an interpretive framework is based on the work of post-Frankfurt School scholar Jürgen Habermas, a proponent of hermeneutics, but one mindful of the potential and actual limitations of the interpretive position, and of Paul Ricoeur. Critical Theory here cannot be defined as a unified field strictly speaking, but there is common ground

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48 Martin Hollis and Steve Smith. 1990. Explaining and Understanding International Relations. p.84.
among critical theorists in the defence of "the possibility of an independent moment of criticism". Indeed, Habermas' critical attitude assumes an interpretive social science project, but also attempts to overcome the weaknesses of that project, as identified by himself and the critics of hermeneutics. Habermas retains a "nearer affinity to the Kantian project for stating the conditions for reliability in knowledge", which leads him to argue that despite the interpretive nature of the social sciences, it is a worthwhile project capable of producing 'reliable' and 'stable' results. Habermas may question objectivism, but he remains a firm realist (in philosophical terms); in other words he does not question the existence of a reality 'out there', only the hegemony of scientific discourses in capturing it: "Scientism means... that we no longer understand science as one form of possible knowledge, but rather identify knowledge with science". In Knowledge and Human Interests, Habermas delineates three types of interests linked to three different epistemologies and methodologies for articulating them and thus producing knowledge: technical-instrumental (as applied to the natural sciences), historical-hermeneutic (defined in Gadamerian terms), and critical (as applied to the social sciences). In this way, Habermas attempts to overcome the explanation/understanding dichotomy, or rather, the specific circumstances of the critical moment in the social sciences, to build a third category marrying the two. Thus, for Habermas, the positivist project is not to be disregarded altogether since the issue at stake "is not technical reason as such but universalization, the forfeiture of a more comprehensive concept of reason in favor of the exclusive validity of scientific and technological thought". By contrast, he looks at the field of hermeneutics as the locus for the human interactions underpinning possible forms of emancipation, since, to him, "Individuals act within a matrix of intersubjective meanings". Furthermore, while he acknowledges that capturing a stable sense of a reality (or at least a certain class of object or actions within that reality) is a difficult endeavour - full of ideological preconceptions, and interests -, he asserts that a degree of common, intelligible concepts that make the

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subject/object communication possible. Our interpretation of 'reality' is thus context-bound, but not unintelligible:

Hermeneutics must assimilate the dialectic of the general and the individual that determines the relation of objectivation and experience and comes to expression as such in the medium of the 'common'. If this is so, then understanding itself is bound to a situation in which at least two subjects communicate in a language that allows them to share - that is, to make communicable through intersubjectively valid symbols - what is absolutely unsharable and individual. Hermeneutic understanding ties the interpreter to the role of partner in dialogue.

Habermas focuses on the interests which have come to shape these traditions and hopes to use his critique of ideology to create a common language as mediatory tool in emancipation from such constructs. Hence a greater critical emphasis on the power underpinnings of the production of knowledge than Gadamerian hermeneutics. But this implies him bridging some of the gap with positivism, insofar as this common language is predicated upon the idea that such dilemmas and questions can be disentangled and solved through the use of reason in Kantian terms. This gesture solves some of problems of interpretation highlighted above, but his enterprise has also been seen as problematic, or at least ambiguous, in its attachment to the legacy of modernity. For Jameson, this commitment works as Habermas' greatest contribution:

We are indebted to Jürgen Habermas for his dramatic reversal and re-articulation of what remains the affirmation of the supreme value of the Modern and the repudiation of the theory, as well as the practice, of postmodernism. For Habermas; however, the vice of postmodernism consists very centrally in its politically reactionary function, as the attempt everywhere to discredit a modernist impulse Habermas himself associates with the bourgeois Enlightenment and with the latter's still universalizing and Utopian spirit. With Adorno himself, Habermas seeks to rescue and to recommemorate what both see as essentially, critical and Utopian power of the great height of modernism.

But for stauncher critics, Habermas flirts too closely with the Kantian ideal of ethics, or he fails to deliver a third way in communication in any significant sense: "While the idea of unconstrained discourse as the regulative principle of discourse is important, it is not apparent that it generated criteria that actually aid the resolution

of disputed between competing theoretical systems or value positions\textsuperscript{61}. Still, on the whole, his contribution and views are eclectic, and have remained significant, for the main part in terms of his critique of ideology - where instrumental reason, based on positivist methodologies, has come to justify elite interests at the expense of self-reflection and its emancipatory potential. For our purposes, it is this specific aspect of Habermas' critical hermeneutics which is of use for our purposes. In a way, this focus works a rejoinder to the general aims of the postcolonial studies project in the self-emancipation from domination that his revision of the Frankfurt School hopes to bring. There is thus an evident link in his work between a philosophical project linked to the possibility of critical studies and a political project inspired by the vagaries of 20th Century continental European history\textsuperscript{62}.

The fact remains however that the issue of critique within the hermeneutic project needs to be systematically addressed in the context both of ontology and of the practical dimensions of dialogue through research. Here Gadamer and Habermas can be seen as useful of course, but neither systematises the practical relationship between ontology and the question of the text. In other words, we need to look at the idea that it is within the project of hermeneutics that mediation through critique can be drawn out. The most prominent supporter of such an endeavour is French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. At the heart of his work the traditional dichotomy between explanation and understanding - with the dualism in terms of philosophical underpinnings this implies - is systematically questioned. For him, both participate in the hermeneutic endeavour in dialectic relationship: "By dialectic, I understand the view that explanation and understanding would not constitute mutually exclusive poles, but rather relative movements in a complex process called interpretation"\textsuperscript{63}. Ricoeur points to how this applies to the field of historical analysis, and concludes that this dialectic relationship can be characterised in the following way: "Understanding precedes, accompanies, closes, and thus envelopes explanation. In return, explanation develops understanding analytically"\textsuperscript{64}.

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\textsuperscript{62} Influences on Habermas' thought are multiple in this regard. Adorno and Horkheimer (and the Frankfurt School in general) are notable, but so are Karl-Otto Apel, Marx, Freud, and the legacy of the ideological struggles affecting Germany during and after World War Two (especially national socialism and communism).


\textsuperscript{64} Paul Ricoeur. 1978. "Explanation and Understanding" in Charles Reagan and David Stewart (eds) \textit{The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur}. p.165.
The originality - and ambition - of Ricoeur's hermeneutical stance lies in its marrying the project of Husserlian phenomenology with the interpretive epistemological stance of Schleiermacher and Dilthey) and the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger\textsuperscript{65}. In that sense, he follows on from the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, yet at the same time, his approach places greater emphasis on the explicit uses of critical thinking as part of interpretation:

Ricoeur's position, which is shared with his dialogue partner in hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, is that language in which both our abstract thinking and our concrete experiencing assume definite shape and are determined as thought or experience of something and not another thing. Understanding is the process that synthesizes the perceiving-experiencing on the one hand and the thinking on the other\textsuperscript{66}.

Debates with Gadamer on the 'Conflict of Interpretations' and ways to bridge it where surprisingly good-natured and constructive - in fact their work was seen by both as quite "complementary"\textsuperscript{67}. In fact, Gadamer's hermeneutics can be seen to inspire Ricoeur's own stance: "...I think even the conflict of interpretations could have a resolution. For the critique of ideologies, psychoanalysis, and every radical form of critique should be and needs to be integrated into this basic process of social life - a way which I call (in a manner I find satisfactory) hermeneutical"\textsuperscript{68}. Ricoeur develops this issue to derive the possibilities of mediation in the conflict of interpretations, a slightly different slant on Gadamer's fusion of horizons, more closely anchored in the practical dilemmas of modernity. But the priorities are the same, even if Gadamer's assessment of the prospect of fusion is less optimistic. He thus embeds a critical

\textsuperscript{65} David E. Klemm. 1983. The Hermeneutical Theory of Paul Ricoeur. Toronto: Associated University Press. p.15. the meeting point between hermeneutics, phenomenology and Heidegger's ontology in Ricoeur's work can be summarised thus: "My problem will be exactly this: what happens to an epistemology of interpretation, born of a reflection on exegesis, on the method of history, on psychoanalysis, on the phenomenology of religion, etc., when it is touched, animated, and, as we might say, inspired by an ontology of understanding?" In other words, his works is focusing on the problem of interpretation in understanding as a mode of being. Paul Ricoeur. 1974. The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics edited by Don Ihde. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.p.7.


moment within the hermeneutic endeavour⁶⁹, or element of 'productive distantiation' - with overall process implies engaging with cultural traditions and critically reinterpreting them⁷⁰. In that sense, Ricoeur hopes to build a bridge between Gadamerian Hermeneutics and the critical necessity highlighted by the work of Jürgen Habermas⁷¹.

Of note with Ricoeur is the importance of the text as primary locus for the hermeneutic project: "The dominant problematic is that of the text, which reintroduces a positive and, if I may say so, productive notion of distantiation. In my view, the text is much more than a particular case of intersubjective communication, it is the paradigm of distantiation in communication"⁷². This, in turn, makes Ricoeur's hermeneutics one that is linked to the poststructuralist project, but not in a fully deconstructive way - in fact, his strategies work as a counterpoint to deconstruction⁷³. He defines the hermeneutics project in quite precise terms: "Hermeneutic then is simply the theory that regulates the transition from structure of the work to the world of the work. To interpret a work is to display the world to which it refers by virtue of its 'arrangement', its 'genre', and its 'style'"⁷⁴. Thus, for him,

...the main problem of hermeneutics is that of interpretation. Not interpretation in any undetermined sense of the word, but interpretation with two qualifications: one concerning its scope or field of application, another its epistemological specificity. As concerns the first point, I should say that there are problems of interpretation because there are texts, written texts, the autonomy of which... creates specific problems; these problems are usually solved in spoken language by the kind of exchange or intercourse which we call dialogue or conversation. With written texts, the

⁷¹ The differences with Critical Theory, though, are still notable: "While hermeneutical philosophy sees in tradition a dimension of historical consciousness, an aspect of participation in cultural heritages and reactivation of them, the critique of ideologies sees in the same tradition the place par excellence of distortions and alienations and opposes to it the regulative idea, which it projects into the future, of communication without frontiers and without constraint". See Paul Ricoeur. 1974. "Ethics and Culture"p.248.
discourse must speak by itself. Let us say, therefore, that there are problems of interpretation because the relation writing-reading is not a particular case of the relation speaking-hearing in the dialogical situation\textsuperscript{75}.

But how can this conversation be mediated in a practical sense? The critical aspect of Ricoeur's hermeneutics becomes most apparent here, with the possibility for establishing "a circular, practical, and concrete relation, between the sort of participation which is the soul of historical consciousness and the sort of distanciation which is the soul of every critical philosophy"\textsuperscript{76}. The key tool for achieving this critical choice between interpretations remains the vaguest part of his argument though: "Perhaps we should say that a text is a finite space of interpretations: there is not just one interpretation, but, on the other hand, there is not an infinite number of them. A text is a space of variations that has its own constraints; and in order to choose a different interpretation, we must always have better reasons"\textsuperscript{77}. The 'better reasons' are an interesting turn of phrase: are they based on the use of Reason, or on mediated communication through dialogue? And then, through which means are such criteria for differentiation achieved? Such is the crux of the critical problem for hermeneutics.

2.2. Endpoint: Beyond Ricoeur?

The analysis of the various strands of hermeneutics summarised above suggests that there is no easy answer to the problem of interpretation, and no straightforward avenue for reconciling hermeneutics and the question of critique. That being said, such efforts, however imperfect, still underlie a general uneasiness with the objectivist standards of positivism. In terms of epistemology, the final choice, and our endpoint, is thus that the interpretive project matches most closely the problems and dilemmas in analysis that dissertations such as this one have to face. Ricoeur's questioning of truth in the production of historiography\textsuperscript{78} and Habermas' critique of ideology are cases in point\textsuperscript{79}. Also, it is worth pointing out that from this general level

\textsuperscript{79} On the uses of Critical Theory, see S. Leonard's assertion that they key component and application of the field lies the argument that: "All social discourse is historically and contextually specific, which in essence means that it originates in and is addressed ... to a
of analysis, several avenues for building a theoretical framework are still open to us: postmodernism, and poststructuralism, cannot be seen as equivalent to the interpretive impulse as such. They are historically and politically distinct phenomena, despite their common philosophical roots. Still, at heart, the postmodern school of thought in political science can be seen as politically reactionary to dominant discourses, as exemplified by Feminist critiques of such discourses. Therefore, on certain levels these two approaches can be seen as complementary, on others, divergent. In the context of Middle Eastern studies though, the option that our theoretical approach will embrace is one linked to the specific questioned raised by critique, most notably with the Orientalism debate.

2.3. Epistemology, or Epistemologies, of the Middle East?

2.3.1. The Orient In Social Science Research

The traditional form of study of the Middle and Far East, or Orientalism, predates the development of social science as a discipline (and its relevant methodologies) by several centuries. Through trade, wars of conquest, explorers and poets, the history of the Orient has become intertwined with ‘our’ history, that of a divided Europe; and the multiple realities of the Orient, or rather its changing realities, have become familiar clichés. Yet, the clichés of today’s Orient, as depicted in the popular press and television, are not ones of dark princes and mysterious harems, but ones of poverty, squalor, religious intolerance, and a proclivity for terrorism. The Middle East (including North Africa) is arguably the theatre for widespread conflict. It also constitutes, with the rest of Africa, South America, South Asia and part of the far East, what can still be loosely termed ‘the Third World’, and is thus facing economic and political developmental challenges. Finally, it is the theatre for widespread societal change where, since the mid-1970s, political Islam - a certain vision of religion and socio-political order - has developed a mounting challenge to existing political orders, with often disastrous political consequences, as exemplified by the specific set of social and political interests. See Stephen Leonard. 1990. Critical Theory in Political Practice. Princeton (N.J): Princeton University Press.


Algerian civil war. However, the Orient, has much more to offer to the social scientist than this impressionist rendition. In fact, it is because the societies in the Middle East are undergoing such changes that today’s Orient is anything but a cliché.

Indeed, the contemporary Middle East challenges the way scholarship in the Anglo-Saxon and Continental European traditions has theorised on this region and has attempted to make comprehensive analyses and predictions. The relatively recent development of contemporary forms of political Islam is a case in point. The logic of Weberian sociology has been turned on its head when the middle classes of many Middle Eastern states do not attempt to make authoritarian regimes more pluralistic or democratic to satisfy their capitalistic interests, but instead congregate with the urban poor to push for an Islamist political platform which Western observers cannot but see as ‘fundamentalist’ and feudalistic. We equally fail to explain the advent of political Islam through a grand theory on post-Cold War changes. A world-wide resurgence of ethnic and religious-political groups since the ending of the Cold War has been widely observed in the media and academic publications. However, no ‘Clash of Civilisations’ theory has successfully explained the reasons underpinning the internal changes in Middle Eastern societies political Islam signifies and announces (after all, Middle Eastern politics do not revolve around Western concerns alone, a point which seems to elude grand theorists such as Samuel Huntington82). Culturalist explanations also provide facile, and only partial answers. The ‘political cultures’ of various Middle Eastern societies, a term originally coined by the behaviourist school of comparative studies in a rather different context, becomes often confused with a simplistic, Eurocentric view of Islam and Middle Eastern societies83.

On the other hand, Orientalism remains quite difficult to define since it includes many disciplines, methodologies and spans centuries of Western scholarship. In fact, it represents more a set of assumptions and epistemology common to a variety of disciplines than a discipline in itself. As a tradition of scholarship, Orientalism encapsulates centuries of academic and journalistic writing on art, literature, architecture, poetry, history, politics, studies of religion, anthropology, and more recently, what we term social science. Thus, when it comes to the Orient, the academic tradition of Orientalism can easily be encapsulated into the ethos, methods

82 Furthermore, the so-called resurgence of the ‘Green Menace’ predates the ending of the Cold War by two decades and thus cannot be logically explained by it alone.

83 This type of explanation can also run the risk of fuelling ‘Clash of Civilisations’ arguments which derive from a culturalist slippery slope the idea of an unchanging, monolithic and menacing Orient. The influence of culture in general and political culture in particular, to the phenomenon of political Islam, is in fact much more varied, particular to specific societies, and embedded in contemporary socio-political realities than a purely culturalist argument would suggest.
and aims of social science. Indeed, the commonalities between the disciplines making up Orientalism and the social science project concerning the Middle East, besides the proximity of their objects of study, is to uncover an 'Islamic world' as it applies to politics, religion, culture, etc. The guiding principle of this type of analysis is historicist, if not culturalist, in nature; the explanatory power of Orientalism lies in its focus on classical Islam and its cultural forms as the determinants of the historical development of the Orient, including modern Middle Eastern societies. Essentially, Orientalism is based on an epistemology which is essentialist, empiricist and historicist. The essentialist assumption is present in the notion that 'Islam' is a coherent, homogenous global entity, and also in the decline thesis where Islam is seen as declining because of some flaw in its essence. Social and political decline is a consequence of some historically ever-present element - authoritarianism, the lack of autonomous oppositional groups or laws, slavish adherence to formal custom or the failure of ruling institutions (...) In this historicist approach, the dynamic history of Western civilisation, punctured by constant, progressive revolutions, is contrasted with the static history of Islam in which popular uprisings are merely an index of despotism and decay.

Thus, through Orientalism, an understanding of various events, phenomena and structures characterising the Middle East can be built on the cultural and religious elements of classical Islam. In the 19th and 20th Centuries, Orientalist studies grew with the development of social science. Comparative studies between European and Middle Eastern states, their political structures, religions and customs came to highlight striking differences among political and social systems and open new areas of learning. Indeed, the classical Orientalist view of history and political science allowed for the development of the first chairs in Islamic studies in the West, now followed by the growth in the study of the Arabic language, Quranic studies, and classical Islamic history. This is an obviously positive occurrence with the net growth of a field out of practically nothing: language, history, art, politics, culture, religion, architecture. Yet, despite these analytical advances, the underlying assumptions of Orientalist thinking remained largely unchanged. The birth of anthropology in particular and the development of modern social science methodologies only worked to reinforce the assumption that Orientalist writing carried an implicit, Enlightenment-bound form of objectivity. Similarly, the Orientalist assumption that the Orient was largely a "unified system, one characterised by stationariness, lack of social change, the absence of a middle class bourgeois culture, and the absence of a

civil society" was shared by both Karl Marx and Max Weber\textsuperscript{86}, whose ideas were extremely influential on the birth and development of social science as a discipline.

This methodological \textit{status quo} became increasingly challenged in the mid to late 1970s with, in particular, Marshall G.S. Hodgson's \textit{The Venture of Islam}, the first attempt, in the English-speaking world at least, to integrate an in-depth, generalist account of the history, and culture, of the Islamic World with the view that:

One of the most serious levels of historical scholarship - where the human relevance of major cultural traditions is at issue, such as that of religious or artistic or legal or governmental traditions, or even that of whole civilization - historical judgement cannot be entirely disengaged from the basic commitments of enquirers. Indeed, it is not necessarily desirable that it should be: the very issues can arise only as we are humanly deeply engaged\textsuperscript{87}.

But most forceful, and well-known, in this vein is Edward W. Said's \textit{Orientalism}, and neo-Marxist critiques of Orientalist writing, which questioned the very foundations of the study of the region among Western scholars, and the motivations underpinning their contribution to the field. Western objectivity, the unified, coherent nature of the Muslim World, and the conclusions reached by various scholars regarding that world all came under scrutiny, with an implicit challenge to what can be termed as the 'dominant' discourses on the Middle East. It is in these rather critical terms that Orientalism can be best defined and understood - and that the whole question of self-reflection in the field can be most succinctly and efficiently approached.

\section*{2.3.2 Orientalism and Beyond}

\textit{Orientalism}, Edward Said's landmark critique of the methods and assumptions employed by the scholarship dealing with the Orient, fundamentally changed the direction and outlook on the Middle East in International Relations scholarship. Primarily, the argument developed by Said emphasised the importance of assumptions scholars make in their academic discussions of the Orient, and how these assumptions become ingrained in the academic and political discourses on the Orient. Consequently, Said's approach both highlights the critical importance of analytical assumptions to the direction of analysis, and sets out the pitfalls of social science research on the Middle East. In this sense, the questions Said raises in


Orientalism underpin the analytical assumptions of this study and thus deserve close attention.

The main goal of Said's study was to question the self-proclaimed objectivity of Western knowledge about the Orient. To him, Orientalism was more than a field of study, it was:

... the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views on it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism (is) a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.88

Through a textual analysis of both founding and relatively recent Western scholarship, Said identified the distortions the uneven power relationship between the West and the Orient had imposed on Orientalist writing. His dismissal of the objective validity of Western scholarship was, in a sense, grounded in the belief that the "closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put it more circumspectively, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put into political use, is an important but extremely sensitive truth"89. Yet, more importantly, this view reflected Said's assertion that while Orientalism said little about the Orient itself, it provided an accurate insight into the nature and forms of Western domination over the Orient90.

In essence, Said's critique questioned the foundations of Western knowledge of the Middle East, leading to a fierce debate over both the objectivity of Western scholarship in this field and the authenticity of knowledge in general in terms of representation91. This also mirrored feminist, postmodernist and poststructuralist rejections of dominant discourses and histories92. However, the groundbreaking nature of Said's work should also be put into its proper theoretical context. In one way, it is indebted to Foucault's connection between power and the building of knowledge (and thus discourses)93. Indeed, Said's preoccupation with the demystification of Orientalist historiography finds strong resonance in the framework...
of analysis set up by Foucault's work on societal mechanisms of 'Othering' and his views on the role of the intellectual in de-centering the discourses which underpin such societal processes:

The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticise the ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth ... it is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time. The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself. Hence the importance of Nietzsche94.

Said's approach has echoes of such a view, even though it can hardly be seen as radical in its implications95, or be termed 'Nietzschean':

The central point in all this, however, as Vico taught us, that human history is made by human beings. Since the struggle for control over territory is part of that history, so too is the struggle over social and historical meaning. (...) What makes all these fluid and extraordinarily rich actualities difficult to accept is that most people resist the underlying notion: that human identity is not only not natural and stable, but constructed and occasionally even invented outright.96

This theme of historical construction - and struggle over the control of historical validity is a central - but sometimes too implicit - theme of Said's work; beyond cultural imperialism, there is a series of processes in the construction of human knowledge which needs examining in more depth. In fact, Said acknowledged later on the interpretive epistemology underpinning his project, especially in the context of the critical components of his methodology with regards to textual analysis:

... as with aspects of what Vico calls the world of nations, the Orient and the Occident are facts produced by human beings, and as such must be studied as integral components of the social, and not the divine or natural, world... Far from being a crudely political apprehension of what has been called the problem of Orientalism, this is in reality a fact basic to any theory of interpretation or hermeneutics.

Similarly, the role of the popular media in constructing a certain politics of truth is apparent. In this sense Said's work shares the preoccupations of American political thinker Noam Chomsky, particularly in his work on the Vietnam War and American Foreign Policy towards Central and South America. Chomsky's scepticism towards the self-proclaimed political truths of those in power - and his overt criticism of the ways in which political and security priorities of the US Government warrant the manipulation of the truth - add a more conceptual dimension to Said's own arguments. On a wider, and more theoretical note, Said's analysis should be seen as an important piece in the development of scepticism with Orientalist discourse. But it is by no means the only analysis produced at that time, and in fact draws heavily on previous analyses of the colonial condition in particular. Said's originality lies in its breadth of research and use of textual analysis derived from literary criticism. From a different, but complementary perspective, Bryan Turner's Marx and the End of Orientalism, published in the same year as Said's Orientalism, effected a similar type of critique, but in a narrower, and arguably more thorough, manner. The target of Turner's analysis is the Marxist-historicist paradigm and the dichotomies on the Orient traditionally produced by it. One by one, Turner disentangles the contradictions of this discourse, and manages to produce an eloquent de-centering of

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98 Covering Islam in particular echoes of the themes raised in Noam Chomsky's Manufacturing Consent. See100 for full ref.
100 Said acknowledges this when he states: "... what I said in Orientalism has been said before me by A.L.Tibawi, by Abdullah Laraoui, by Anwar Abdel Malek, by Talal Asad, by S.H. Alatas, by Fanon and Cesaire, by Pannikar, and Romila Thapar, all of whom had suffered the ravages of imperialism and colonialism, and who in challenging the authority, provenance, and institutions of the science that represented them to Europe, were also understanding themselves as more than what this science said they were". In Edward W. Said. 1984. "Orientalism Reconsidered". p.17.
dichotomies. Still, the most important aspect of Turner's contribution to Said's perspective is to go further than the deconstruction of discourse. For him:

The criticism of Orientalism in its various forms requires something more than the valid but indecisive notion that at its worse Orientalist scholarship was a rather thin disguise for attitudes of moral or racial superiority and thereby a justification for colonialism... The end of Orientalism requires a fundamental attack on the theoretical and epistemological roots of Orientalist scholarship which creates the long tradition of Oriental Despotism, mosaic societies and the 'Muslim City'.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that beyond the study of the Orient, Said's arguments work as rejoinders to developments in social theory (itself indebted to Continental Philosophy, unsurprisingly) on identity and the Self-Other relationship. For instance, Iver Neumann's *Uses of the Other* extrapolates, from a similar set of philosophical influences, a type of argument referring to representation of the 'East' in European discourses of politics. His conclusion can work equally well for our purposes here, when, in reference to the work of William Connolly and Zygmunt Bauman, he states:

The 'East' is indeed Europe's other, and it is continuously recycled in order to represent European identities. Since the 'Eastern absence' is a defining trait of 'European' identities, there is no use talking about the end of the east/West divide in European history after the end of the Cold War.

Thus the importance of representation, cultural boundaries, and the negotiation of the self/other relationship highlighted by Said work equally well in more theoretical discussions, in the case of Turner, and in different contexts, in the case of Neumann.

2.3 Limitations and Legacies

With this strong, if not explicit, connection to poststructuralist critiques of objectivity, and despite its powerful argument, Said's approach has been often criticised, on three main grounds. Firstly, his critical approach of the power-knowledge nexus left little room for concrete political solutions or alternatives to dominant discourses. Indeed, if Said - and Foucault - are right, then there is little chance of overcoming the tendency for scholarship to reflect power relations, to be

102 Bryan S. Turner. 1978. *Marx and the End of Orientalism*. P.85. For Turner, in conclusion, the analytical tools of the Marxist paradigm have the potential for building such a critique.
genuinely objective, or even to take into account scholarship from the Orient. Indeed, for Foucault, this is probably unavoidable. This problem is a serious one, which many studies, including this one, attempt to accommodate if not overcome through opening up assumptions to scrutiny, using hermeneutic methodologies, and using more sources originating from the Middle East. It is thus through 'Cross-Cultural Encounter' that post-Orientalist scholarship starts its own academic journey - but despite all good intentions, these are very high, if not impossible, standards of scholarship to fully meet.

Secondly, Said's quasi-conspiratorial theory was described, at best, as useful but "excessive"105, and, at worst, as completely false, paranoid and incomprehensible106. This form of criticism, which, once again, is levelled against postmodernist/poststructuralist and postcolonial scholarship, can often be very personal, since Said's work itself is very critical of those who are subsequently reviewing his work. Beyond this battle of egos lies an important issue however. To what extent is the wilful exploitation and domination of the Orient taking place by Western scholars? Are scholars willing participants in this process? Or are they merely guilty of 'bad scholarship' (by using too narrow a range of sources, and not practising enough common sense in assessing these sources and thus reproducing their biases)? This question extends beyond considerations of degrees of 'guilt' in this regard, they guide us in discerning where to look for prejudice in scholarship: assumptions, terminology, categories, methodologies, etc.

Thirdly, the framework that Orientalism provided to a new generation of scholarship was in a sense ambiguous because it left open the possibility of 'relativism'107 in scholarship and risked privileging 'indigenous' as opposed to 'alien' discourse, in terms of 'authenticity'. In fact, Said's work has often been misread in this way. Nevertheless, this distorted view carries the implicit assumption that Oriental, as opposed to Orientalist - scholarship is necessarily more accurate and more objective, thus opening the door to a form of reverse Orientalism108. Beyond Said's own rejection of this over-simplification and distortion of his work however, this view can be challenged as illogical and perversely anti-academic. While Said has a point in

107This, in turn, implied that the bias identified by Said could be used by regimes in the Middle East to legitimise authoritarian rule and to reject Western criticism in these terms.
questioning the self-proclaimed objectivity of Western scholarship, it does not imply that non-Westerners will be objective or accurate, or not interested in using knowledge to further power interests. Said's point is one of the inclusion of context in scholarship: context of the subject (the author) and thus their prejudices, and context of the object of study. In that sense, Said's argument if pushed to its logical extreme implies that there is no privileged, objective place to construct analysis from. If anything, Said should stand accused of risking relativism, not reverse Orientalism. But should this fresh accusation stand? Or is this a form of inter-subjectivity the kind of common sense approach advocated by Marshall Hodgson? By acknowledging the interpretive nature of scholarship on the Orient (even to criticise it), Said achieves more than deconstruction, he opens the door to 'encounters' with the Oriental Other which can be based on this inherent inter-subjectivity\textsuperscript{109}.

The above criticisms, and the ways in which they have been addressed by post-Orientalist scholarship, form a valuable debate, which has led and still leads to thought-provoking outcomes. However, these (sometimes valid) points should not detract from the complex legacy of Said's high profile set of critiques\textsuperscript{110}. One could argue that beyond the deconstruction of classical works on the Orient, there is little relevance to current scholarship on the Middle East by Said's work. Here, two points related to our aims are worth pointing out. Firstly, and beyond the critique of Orientalist scholarship, Said provides us the tools for deconstructing any historiographical production, including that of nascent postcolonial states and that of dominant forms of political imagination (and their challengers). Secondly, it is perhaps unwise to assume that with the publication of Said's \textit{Orientalism}, the field of Middle Eastern studies would be instantly 'purged' of its central vices. In fact, parallel to the development of post-Orientalist analyses (by Middle Eastern and Western scholars), the field has remained strangely resilient in its espousal of themes such as Oriental despotism. Such themes have become more sophisticated in their presentation of Middle Eastern societies, looking for instance at problems of civil society and democratisation (issues that concern us here), but as Yahya Sadowski points out:

The thesis that Middle Eastern societies are resistant to democratization had been a standard tenet of Orientalist thought for decades, but in the 1980s a new generation of Orientalists inverted some of the old assumptions and employed a new

\textsuperscript{109} The idea of Cross Cultural Encounter is developed on later.

vocabulary which allowed them to link their work to a wider, international debate about the relationship between ‘civil society’ and democratization. These updated arguments sought to prove not only - as neo-Orientalist Daniel Pipes put it - that ‘Muslim countries have the most terrorists and the fewer democracies in the world’, but that they always would. In turn, this kind of critique could be said to be applicable to the discourse produced on contemporary political Islam, especially in the context of ‘Clash of Civilisations’ arguments, an issue taken up in more detail in chapter three, where dominant constructs of political Islam are put into question. I only need to allude to the description of Islamist forms of contest as backward, narrow-minded and by definition antidemocratic. These are difficult questions to address sensitively, but looking at the Islamist alternative as one lacking in depth and relevance, and lacking the attributes which could qualify it as a legitimate political player only reproduces the Orientalist frameworks for understanding the shape of politics in the Middle East.

All in all, the most important legacy of Edward Said’s work for contemporary Middle Eastern studies remains in the area of discursive critique. His marrying of an epistemological stance that is both interpretive and critical in character with the practical deconstruction of dominant discourses on the Orient opened the door to the creation of a whole field of critique concerned with the connection between colonising power and forms of knowledge bound to the colonial endeavour. Inspiring the growth of postcolonial perspectives in this precise sense, with the help of Gayatri Spivak, Said’s ambitious critique allowed for a theoretical and practical discussion of the colonial and postcolonial condition from the perspective of the ‘native’. By way of deconstruction, he achieved the possibility for the construction of alternatives.

2.4. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.4.1. Postcolonial Studies

By now, it should be obvious that an interpretive epistemology permeates much work produced to ‘de-center’ or deconstruct dominant discourses on the Middle East. Also, the overlap between different types of analyses from a postmodern, poststructuralist,

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and Marxist critiques is apparent in the field of social theory and beyond. Still, for our purposes, postcolonial studies, itself an application of the epistemological stance and critique of Orientalism outlined above, is the most relevant theoretical standpoint with applicability to our case study.\footnote{There is more overlap between postcolonial studies and postmodernism than many scholars on each side of the divide would like to acknowledge. Barker et al argue that the links with poststructuralism are closer. For differences, and forms of hostility (briefly), see Francis Barker et al (eds.). 1994. Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory. Manchester: Manchester University Press. pp.3ff.}

This dissertation is mainly concerned with the place of the political imagination of Islamist politics vis-à-vis dominant discourses on the political in a case study where the colonial dimension, and its consequences in terms of nation-building and representation are of note. Algeria is indeed part of the Middle East, but our theoretical understanding of the issues affecting governmentality in formerly French North Africa cannot be detached from the colonial encounter that postcolonial studies tackles. In fact, the use of postcolonial studies and other 'alternative' critical methodologies to the context of the analysis of North Africa (and especially history) is of particular relevance here. For instance, Burke argues that the marginality of the Maghrib in academia, where it is often not considered to be 'properly' Middle Eastern, make it particularly well suited to such critical methodologies:

For the first time, it is possible to imagine North Africa not in terms of what it is not (African, Arab, French), but rather as a site from which to interrogate the dichotomous forms of identity and historical understanding which derive from the history of modernity. Today, in a different historical moment, that of the 'posts' (colonial, modern, Cold War, Gulf War, structuralist) the 'lacks' appear in a different guise: as marks of hybridity, alterity and liminality, sites of resistance and contest.\footnote{Edmund Burke III. 1998. "Theorizing the Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghrib" Arab Studies Quarterly. 20(2). pp.6.}

Theoretically, this relevance to the Algerian case study manifests itself at the level of its focus on representation, in terms of history and in terms of identity in particular. Its aim is to theorise historicity, to de-centre it, and to assess the dialectical relationship between political power (in colonial and postcolonial situations) and the construction of identity (for the self and for communities) through history. It is thus my hope that postcolonial studies helps us produce a set of analytical concepts which would match the post-Orientalist standpoint set out in the previous section.
Postcolonial studies is a recent phenomenon inspired, in different ways, by the work of Said, that of Gayatri Spivak, but also Homi Bhabha and the subaltern studies group on Indian historiography headed by Ranajit Guha. It remains a vast and disputed field touching upon literary criticism, social studies, geography, history, philosophy and political science. At the most general level, three main aims of postcolonial studies are most often quoted in the literature:

1. To deconstruct and rewrite colonial history in ways that empower the colonised population in terms of their history (by dismantling civilising myths, and giving native informants a voice principally). This implies a view of historical endeavour as being one emphasising multiplicity of accounts;

2. To provide a critical analysis of the postcolonial condition given the colonial legacy in various terms, and therefore, in Guha's terms, an exposition of the failure of postcolonial nations to 'come to their own' by overcoming the legacy of colonialism;

3. To 'de-center' scholarship on the postcolonial world, to give marginalised scholars as well as subaltern subjects a voice.

These aims are not necessarily contradictory, but they imply slightly different visions for what postcolonial studies can achieve: are our aims simply to redress academic partiality and to explore perspectives on the modern world from a different perspective? Or should we aim to make postcolonial studies a tool for cultural and political emancipation? Ideally, one imagines that these aims should go hand in hand.

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115 On this variety, see Stephen Slemon. 1994. “The Scramble for Postcolonialism” in Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (eds.) De-scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality. London: Routledge. Some authors have disputed the usefulness of this field on the ground that it presents too vague a set of research aims, or that it is too plagued by internal dissent to actually get on with the business of analysis. See, for instance, Russell Jacoby. 1995. “Marginal Returns: The Trouble with Postcolonial Theory” Lingua Franca Sept/Oct. pp. 30ff.
But why should the colonial dimensions matter so much, now that most colonial 'possessions' have been reclaimed by the native subject? Or, as Bill Ashcroft et al. would put it: "Why should postcolonial societies continue to engage with the imperial experience? Since all the post-colonial societies we discuss have achieved their independence, why is the issue of coloniality relevant at all?". Two aspects are worth bearing in mind here as a response. Firstly, colonialism may be over but alternative forms of domination subsist. Secondly and most importantly for our purposes, the condition of postcoloniality may imply the reproduction of colonial practice in terms of surveillance, governance and representation by the postcolonial state.

Here, a definition of the postcolonial condition could well be that: "... postcoloniality can be best thought of as a form of contestatory/oppositional consciousness, emerging from either pre-existing imperial, colonial, or ongoing subaltern positions". The issue of subalternity thus goes to the heart of the postcolonial studies project and is worth pausing on. Ranajit Guha defines subaltern as "a name for the general attribute of subordination" along various lines including race, class and gender. As a field, subaltern studies focuses on historiography as a privileged site to identify patterns of control over the production of historical knowledge by elites. Postcolonial studies takes this critique on board and applies its insight to the production of colonial as well as postcolonial knowledge (and the connections between the two) in a more systematic way. In that sense, postcolonial studies marries a subaltern critique of historiographical production with the spirit of Edward Said's wider critique of Orientalism. That being said, there are tensions inherent to the ways in which the subaltern consciousness is to be recovered, if it is to...

121 This term is originally derived from Gramsci who uses it to "refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes". See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. 1998. Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies. London: Routledge. p.215.
122 See his preface to Selected Subaltern Studies for more detail. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak (eds.) Selected Subaltern Studies.
124 Neither field is a subset of the other strictly speaking; there is a large degree of overlap theoretically but foci can vary - subaltern studies can deal with non-postcolonial situations while postcolonial studies can approach other issues than subalternity.
bypass essentialist reconstruction, a point raised by Gayatri Spivak\textsuperscript{125}. She describes the problem of subaltern consciousness in terms of method:

To investigate, discover and establish a subaltern, or peasant consciousness seems at first to be a positivistic project - a project which assumes that, if properly prosecuted, it will lead to firm ground, to some \textit{thing} that can be disclosed... Yet even as 'consciousness' is this entertained as an indivisible self-approximate signified or ground, there is a force at work here which would contradict such a metaphysics. For consciousness here is not consciousness-in-general, but a historicized political species thereof, subaltern consciousness ... there is always a counterpointing suggestion in the work of the [subaltern studies] group that subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the elite, that it is never fully recoverable, that it is always askew from its received signifiers, indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive\textsuperscript{126}.

From this, we can deduce that the questions of interpretation, recovery and representation underpin the central dilemma in the treatment of the concept of the 'colonial': ... "at the heart of this concern with theory is the problem of representation: how is it possible to write about another culture, about the Other in a colonial situation, and to present such a representation of three dimensional, flesh-and-blood people in the pages of a two dimensional text?"\textsuperscript{127} This is inherently an interpretive task, and one which has the ambition to unearth gaps in the production of history, based on, as John Hawley would put it, an “unacknowledged hermeneutics of suspicion”\textsuperscript{128}.

As a result the postcolonial position puts us in a situation where we have to confront "the deep, the profoundly perturbed and perturbing question of our relationship to others - other cultures, other states, other histories, other experiences, traditions, peoples, and destinies"\textsuperscript{129}. This problematic relationship - this encounter with the Other - is crystallised through by violent cultural assault that long-term colonialism implies, and more subtle patterns of intercultural penetration and hybridity inherent to colonial rule. Deconstructing such complex mechanism is part of the analytical


aims of the field. For Abdul JanMohammed, the key cultural issue in colonisation is linked to this notion of 'Othering':

If every desire is at base a desire to impose oneself on another and to be recognised by the Other, then the colonial situation provides an ideal context for the fulfilment of that fundamental drive. The colonialist's military superiority ensures a complete projection of this self on the Other"130.

Here, the contribution of postmodern theory to this framework should not be altogether excluded insofar as it treats the idea of 'Otherness' in a similar way to postcolonial studies. An example of such an overlap could be, for instance, Zygmunt Bauman's association of the idea of the 'stranger' with the actors excluded by modernity, and those elements which are deligitimated and silenced through modernity's strive for Sameness131. Close to the surface in this type of analysis is a consideration of power - and the ways in which representation underpins dominant discourses in political and cultural terms:

Subaltern studies is about power, who has it and who doesn't, who is gaining it and who is losing it. Power is related to representation: which representations have cognitive authority or can secure hegemony, which do not have authority or are not hegemonic. Gayatri Spivak formulated the problem concisely: If the subaltern could speak - that is, speak in a way that really mattered to us - then it wouldn't be subaltern132.

Foucauldian thought is of critical importance in the same way that it underscores the deconstructive elements of Said's own analysis of Orientalist discourse, especially his theorising of power relationships and representations. Postcolonial studies is therefore linked to the development of poststructuralist formulations of discourse analysis and can be seen to be grounded in the Foucauldian "project of the genealogical analysis of modernity"133. But, as Spivak points out in this regard, this legacy is mixed:

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Although Foucault is a brilliant thinker of power-in-spacing, the awareness of the topographic reinscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions. He is taken in by the restricted version of the West produced by that reinscription and thus helps to consolidate its effects... The clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university, seem screen allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism.  

Another way in which postcolonial studies overlap with and complements the deconstructive endeavour of poststructuralists is linked to the work of Jacques Derrida. There is an inherent, if diffuse, relationship between the aims of Derrida's critique of Western metaphysics and the postcolonial theory of Spivak (she translated Of Grammatology). Here it is the issue of deconstruction of dominant forms of representation that is most relevant. For Derrida: "To 'deconstruct' philosophy is thus to work through the structured genealogy of its concepts in the most scrupulous and immanent fashion, but at the same time to determine, from a certain external perspective that it cannot name or describe, what this history may have concealed or excluded, constituting itself as a history through this repression in which it has a stake." So we are looking at a double focus: widening the scope to include marginalised voices while accounting for the power strategies and their links to discourse production inherent to the colonial encounter:

By this I mean a project of understanding that delves into the history of colonialism not only to document its record of domination but also to track the failures, silences, displacements, and transformations produced by its functioning; not only to chronicle the functioning of Western dominance and resistance to it, but to mark those (subaltern) positions and knowledges that could not be properly recognized and named, only 'normalized', by colonial discourses.

In practice, such a standpoint is best illustrated by Homi Bhabha's analysis of the discursive strategies of colonial rule. Colonial discourse, he argues, is:

... an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a 'subject peoples' through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited. It seeks authorization for its strategies by the production of

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knowledges by colonizer and colonized which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated. The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.\textsuperscript{137}

Such a type of deconstruction of discourse in the analysis of historiography, in turn, points to two trends: discourses produced as a result of the subjectification of the colonized populations, and \textit{strategies of resistance} to that subjectification developed over time.\textsuperscript{138}

\textbf{2.4.2. Critiques and Legacy}

Our overview of postcolonial studies above is broad, and perhaps does not account strongly enough for the deep disagreements which confront scholars interested in theory and praxis in this field. Here, I only want to highlight some of the principal qualms with the analytical principles outlined above so as to clarify my own position with regards to the field and its applicability to the case study analysed here.

The first, and most common criticism of postcolonial studies is based on a question of terminology, and focuses most strongly on the implications of terminological choices. Shohat suggests that the term ‘postcolonial’ is problematic insofar as it assumes that colonialism has been overcome through the use of the prefix ‘post-’.\textsuperscript{139} At face value, this is a critique that is easy to overcome: most scholars in the field have convincingly argued that it is because the transition to postcoloniality is problematic that postcolonial studies is a relevant tool of analysis. Thus, the prefix ‘post-’ signifies the ambiguity inherent to the postcolonial condition. ‘Post-’ encompasses a chronological sequence of events, and marks a significant, defining, historical moment for the societies concerned. What it does not do is suggest that such a transition is automatic, or unproblematic. That being said, the underlying tension highlighted by such a critique is not so easily dealt with, an issue best put forward by Anne McClintock. For her, the focus on the postcolonial is problematic because as a marker of difference, it does not overcome the primacy of the European standard. In that sense: “If the theory promises a decentering of history in hybridity, syncretism, multidimensional

time and so forth, the singularity of the term effects a recentering of a global history around the single rubric of European time\(^{140}\).

This is indeed an insightful critique in terms of the dangers of postcolonial theory's emancipatory aims. Still, from an analytical perspective, there is a case to be made for postcolonial theory not being the end-result of postcolonial emancipation, but a starting point in theorising subalternity in general and the postcolonial condition in its multiple forms in particular (including the importance of power in regimenting the production of historical discourse)\(^{141}\). The emancipatory power of such an endeavour is less obvious from the outset, but the main contribution of postcolonial theory may still remain to theorise the possibilities and limitations of the postmodern condition in terms of this power dialectic. Wanting to escape terms which are bound to 'the rubric of European time' or established dichotomies is a valuable endeavour, but there is also a critical place for the analysis of the power underpinnings of the construction of colonial/postcolonial history.

On a related note, Annie Coombes highlights the danger of the celebration of hybridity through the use of curatorial strategies such as postcolonial studies. For her, it risks putting all forms of diversity and hybridity on a homogeneous level, without properly theorising the power relationships which underpin the production of such discourses:

> Nevertheless, one thing we should have learnt by now is that it is not enough to imagine the voluntarist disposal of the complex ideological frameworks which have existed for so long in Western cultural and scientific institutions for the appraisal of non-Western material culture, if the power relations which have facilitated such easy categories remain intact and unexposed\(^{142}\).

This is echoed by Terry Eagleton's critique that postcolonial thought deals with cultural difference, but does not theorise economic exploitation closely enough\(^{143}\). The risk highlighted here that of describing dualities without overcoming them, especially when in fact the centre/margins relationship is one that mutates over time. Perhaps what these critiques suggest is the difficulty in giving subalternity a voice independently of dominant European constructs through postcolonial theory. Here,

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a whole array of analyses focusing on power relations has made its way into postcolonial studies. Chandra Mohanty, for instance, discusses various ways in which the centre/margin dichotomy is negotiated in various settings, and how its boundaries can be seen to overlap, or how new spaces outside the dichotomy can be opened up\textsuperscript{144}. More theoretically, Spivak, through her analysis of the contribution of Foucault and Deleuze to the field, argues that a poststructuralist perspective alone does not sufficiently address in a critical manner the question of ideology\textsuperscript{145}. As a result, she uses explicitly Marxist tools of analysis along with deconstruction. In a way this is a rejoinder to Habermas and Marxist critiques. On the other side of the equation though, Robert Young sees, by contrast, the Marxist influence on postcolonial theory as detrimental because “Marxism, as a body of knowledge itself remains complicit with, and even extends, the system to which it is opposed”\textsuperscript{146}. Spivak recognises this potential problem, but argues for a form of ‘strategic essentialism’ where the critical aspects of Marxist are selected as analytical tools without recourse to the foundational aspect of Marx’ views on the Orient, for instance\textsuperscript{147}.

This problem of analytical tools - and of the relationship of postcolonial studies to Marxist critiques - goes even further, with Aijaz Ahmad’s critique. Firstly, he notes and emphasises uneven and diverse patterns of decolonisation, with specific consequence for the postcolonial patterns of resource distribution\textsuperscript{148}. The essence of this point is the danger of homogeneity in the treatment of the postcolonial condition by scholars. A second, and more damaging, point from Ahmad’s Marxist standpoint is that he seems to suggest that the term postcolonial puts colonialism at the centre of the historical evolution of material relations, when colonialism is the reflection of broader patterns of modernity, a more fruitful locus of analysis\textsuperscript{149}. Consequently, he argues that postcolonial theory’s focus on hybridity and movement merely reflects patterns of global capitalism\textsuperscript{150}. Dirlik in turn, takes this point further to argue that as

\textsuperscript{150} See Aijaz Ahmad. 1995. "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality".
a result, postcolonial theory is complicit to such patterns, and that its foci are symptoms of dominant motifs of globalisation.\textsuperscript{151}

The accusation of complicity with neo-imperialist forces, one way or another, has plagued debates on postcoloniality. Here, I acknowledge the strength and relevance of this perspective, but once again, the critical aspect of political studies is supposed to be the locus upon which distanciation from dominant discursive patterns occur. This last issue, while important, is also of less relevance to our aims, since our focus will not be placed on the dynamics of the colonised/coloniser relationship (before or after independence) to a great extent, but rather on the ways in which issues of governance are affected by the postcolonial condition internally.

Overall though, we remain confronted with the recurring question: What is postcoloniality? Is it a discursive formation limited to previously marginalised academics,\textsuperscript{152} or does it have the tools for producing alternative analyses of the colonial world and of the possibilities and risks of the postcolonial condition? I would argue here that it is necessary to move on to the issue of postcoloniality itself in order to move on from such debates. It is in this aspect of subalternity that my main criticism of the field resides. The idea of giving the 'subaltern subject' a voice remains controversial and over-ambitious. The challenge of the subaltern school in India in terms of historiography was just as much about their subalternity in the academic field than anything else; the endeavour was about giving them, their ideas and their theoretical constructs a 'voice'. The problems highlighted by Spivak in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' remain just as significant. Involving testimony from native informants and stepping away from politically motivated academic renditions of the colonial/postcolonial world (as a way of overcoming Orientalism, for instance) form a solid basis for academic scholarship. But the voice put forward in my academic world remain predominantly mine - maybe a glimpse of other voices can be perceived there, but these are by definition distorted by the editing and analytical choices that I make to put my own arguments forward. It is perhaps in the very nature of authorship to have one dominant voice after all.

Nevertheless, postcolonial studies as a field is valuable to our specific analytical aims despite these critiques and debates. Our main areas of investigation are linked to the


dialectic linking colonial and postcolonial forms of governance (divergence, hybridity and complicity) as the basis for contemporary constructs of the Algerian political lifeworld. As a result, our study is tied to an idea of postcoloniality where 'post' does not imply an unproblematic chasm between colonial and postcolonial times, but a problematic connection affecting both the coloniser and the colonised in terms of identity building - and eventually, the power relationships affecting postcolonial peoples. This is particularly useful insofar as it helps us analyse the production of discourse, and strategies of resistance to dominant forms of discourses. It is in this way that postcolonial studies differs most markedly from postmodernist accounts and offers us novel critical avenues, as argued by John Beverley:

...I find it useful sometimes to see both subaltern studies and cultural studies as connected to that 'incredulity to metanarratives' Jean François Lyotard offers as a definition of the postmodern: that is, the crisis or erosion of notions of modernity based on Eurocentric historicism and a positivist epistemology and end/means rationality supposedly embedded in the operations of the market, the state and the corresponding forms of academic disciplinarity. The difference is perhaps that where Lyotard gives 'incredulity to metanarratives' the form of a project that can and must take place within the space of globalization ... subaltern studies might be seen instead as an effort to articulate against that which is hegemonic in globalization something like what has been called (although I do not much care for the term) a 'postmodernism of resistance'153.

In laying the foundation for theorising upon the complexity of the Postcolonial Condition where the legacy of colonial times is pervasive and often subtle is thus the greatest legacy and importance of this field, since, more often than not:

The newly independent nation-state makes available the fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly... 'Colonialism' is not just something that happens from outside a country or people, not just something that operates with the collusion of forces inside, but a version of it can be duplicated from within154.

2.4.3. Conceptual Framework

Taking on this legacy, and developing a set of conceptual tools based on such insights and suited to our analytical aims is thus our endpoint. Such concepts are applied in each relevant chapter. What I want to do here is to summarise the main ways in

which the postcolonial framework of analysis matches the perspective on political Islam employed in later parts of this dissertation. The postcolonial perspective is seen here as critical in four main ways:

1. This standpoints emphasises the importance of the colonial past as a 'formative experience' in terms of political identity, and thus helps us define the patterns affecting the transition to and elements of the postcolonial condition.

2. The methodology of postcolonial studies allows us to focus on the decentering of dominant discourses of the nation as a strategy for analysis, and to look at the control over the production of historiography by the postcolonial state for political purposes in particular.

3. Postcolonial studies provide us with the vocabulary for articulating the question of discursive representation and to account for the complexity of postcolonial identity-building. Such a conception, "mobilised by postcolonial politics" is varied and goes beyond the remit of ethnicity "in a plurality of contested arenas" where "postcolonial strategies improvise multiple shifting identities".

4. The field, especially if understood through the analytical prism set out by Gayatri Spivak, emphasises cultural hybridity and heterogeneity as well as considerations of power, allowing for a practical application of critical hermeneutics.

These strategies often echo the deconstruction of Orientalist discourse; here I will juxtapose this methodology with the analysis of the strategies of the postcolonial state in reproducing such patterns as the basis for governance.

Firstly, it should be pointed out that a significant part of the construction of political identity and the imaginary of the nation in the postcolonial setting hinges on questions of representation. This is a key issue in the production of dominant discourses by the state of course, but it is also a privileged discursive site for contestatory forms of discourse. Political identity formation itself is seen here as a complex, ongoing process characterised by both the appropriation of historical constructs in practical terms and the necessity for boundaries and exclusion as part

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356 Spivak put great emphasis on this issue, for instance: "Let us take seriously the possibility that systems of representation come to hand when we secure our own culture - our own cultural explanations". See Gayatri Spivak. 1999. A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. p.173.
and parcel of self-definition. In the latter’s case, Chantal Mouffe’s work on the formation of political identity can be seen to exemplify this issue of positionality in terms which are not far removed from Said’s: differentiation from the other inherently implicates a negation of the other. In this sense at least, our understanding of the ‘political’ in a postcolonial context should thus take into account the fact that:

Looking at the issue of identity in this way transforms the way we think of the political. The Political can no longer be located as present only in a certain type of institution, as representative of a sphere or level of society. It should rather be understood as a dimension inherent to all human society which stems from our very ontological condition.

In the postcolonial setting, the question of identity in nation-building is of course of primary importance, since it is the handling of legitimising tools of governance which dominate the relationship between postcolonial élites and potential opposition groups in civil society. In postcolonial terms, the dominant issue underpinning such claims on legitimacy is based on the needs for authenticity as a means to overcome the legacy and structures of colonialism: "The demand for a rejection of the influence of the colonial period in programmes of decolonisation has invoked the idea that certain forms and practices are ‘inauthentic’, some decolonizing states arguing for a recuperation of authentic pre-colonial traditions and customs." Such a use of cultural aspects of identity within the realm of postcolonial politics, in turn, relies on the process of appropriation mentioned above. Homi Bhabha, for instance, highlights the difficulties associated in representation of the past in these circumstances:

The enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory.


but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic\textsuperscript{160}.

Postcolonial politics are thus strongly linked to the construction of a nationalist discourse designed to capture the imaginary of a past ‘Golden Age’. It is Homi Bhabha, once again who develops on the close proximity between the imagination of the nation and the production of discourses, or narratives in \textit{Nation and Narration}:

It is the project of \textit{Nation and Narration} to explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation... If the ambivalent figure of the nation is a problem of its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, its wavering between vocabularies, then what effect does this have on narratives and discourses that signify a sense of ‘nationness’: the \textit{heimlich} pleasures of the hearth, the \textit{unheimlich} terror of the space or race of the Other; the comfort of social belonging, the hidden injuries of class; the customs of taste, the powers of political affiliation; the sense of social order, the sensibility of sexuality; the blindness of bureaucracy, the straight insight of institutions; the quality of justice, the common sense of injustice; the \textit{langue} of the law and the \textit{parole} of the people\textsuperscript{161}.

Partha Chaterjee’s \textit{Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World} opens up the use of the concept of the nation in a similar way to look at the ways in which political identity becomes inscribed in political discourse and institutionalised in way that carries ambiguity\textsuperscript{162}. The relationship to the discourse of the former coloniser can be seen here as influencing the creation of postcolonial discourses on the nation and corresponding institution despite the emancipatory rhetoric of national liberation in ways that are varied, complex and dynamic. For our purposes, we will see the identity dimension of political imagination in a way that involves interpretation, selection, mediation and silencing, issues explored in more detail and in context in chapter six. Overall, several key trends mark the transition to postcoloniality and thus patterns of nation-building, ideological tenets, and parameters for political competition in ideological terms: rupture, competition, mimicry/complicity, hybridity. It is those concepts that our main analytical chapters explore with regards to the oppositional political imagination of Algerian Islam and its relationship to dominant forms of political imagination inscribed by the postcolonial state. This is an extrapolation in analysis between the colonial/postcolonial transition theorised upon by postcolonial


studies to the experience of political competition within the framework of postcoloniality.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has been structured as a journey from the more general to the more particular, and from broad questions of epistemology to a choice of conceptual tools. The links between critical hermeneutics and post-Orientalism are epistemological in nature, but they also denote the need to find practical application to the question of interpretation and the difficulties of critique. As a field, postcolonial studies is seen here as useful, but in many ways, each of our conceptual chapters will attempt to apply the above concepts to a novel situation, and for purposes which may not have been at the forefront of theories of the postcolonial as set out above. In that sense, chapters five, six and seven, take on theoretical issues to apply them to a new context in postcolonial studies, matching the traditional aims of historiographical study with an engagement with the reality of postcolonial rule.
Chapter Three
Defining Islamist Politics

3.1. Introduction

Partly because it enjoys a high media profile, and partly because of the violence it is often associated with, political Islam is, as a matter of course, a contentious field of study. In this sense, an introduction to Islamism in general - encompassing both definition and context - lies at the basis of any coherent understanding of a specific case study of political Islam (for our purposes; that of Algerian Islamism). Accordingly, the aims of this chapter are to 'place' political Islam geographically and politically, and to provide a comprehensive discussion of the definitional problems associated with this phenomenon - and their implications for analysis. The structure of the analysis developed here reflects these aims. Starting with a consideration of political Islam's place in the post-Cold War world (and thus a brief discussion of the literature debating this point), this chapter critically engages with the mainstream definitions of political Islam - especially the amalgamations that the terms 'fundamentalism' and 'Islamic terrorism' imply. As a result, it attempts to refocus both our definition and our analytical foci when considering Islamist politics. As an alternative, this chapter highlights the main characteristics of political Islam - as a region-wide phenomenon. These include the political and social dimensions of the phenomenon and its place in the modern world. In this sense, our definition aims to suggest where a more comprehensive understanding of political Islam may lie, and to delineate signposts as to analytical prisms which are relevant to that understanding. In turn, these general considerations are designed to provide the background for the overview of contemporary Islamism in Algeria developed in Chapter Four.

3.2. Political Islam in the New World Order

With the ending of the Cold War, the media and academe based in Europe and North America have discussed at length, with varying depth, but always a sense of urgency, the idea that religion and ethnicity (as opposed to secular ideology) would shape the new international order and be the cause of future conflicts among states, if not within states. The initial debate between those, like Francis Fukuyama, who saw the

1 Chapter Five will go further in its treatment of political Islam in Algeria, to make a case for defining Islamist politics as social movements.
post-Cold War world as characterised by the triumph of Western Liberal democratic ideals in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union\(^2\), and those, like John Mearsheimer, who asserted that a new world order would, in the absence of superpower dominance, be fraught with internal religious, ethnic and territorial strife, set the trend for what has become one of the central debates in International Relations since the end of the Cold War\(^3\). Fukuyama argued that religion as a political force would only assume residual importance; Mearsheimer, on the other hand, warned scholars and policy-makers that the Cold War would soon be missed for its systemic stability and predictability\(^4\).

Subsequent developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina, former Soviet Republics in Central Asia, Rwanda, Chechnya, Somalia, the former Zaire and now Kosovo, to name but a few examples, have demonstrated that Mearsheimer's prophecy captured the fragmenting implications of the end of superpower supremacy. In fact, the globalisation of the discourse on democracy identified by Fukuyama has been matched by an opposite trend featuring the reaffirmation of localised cultural, ethnic and religious practices and values exemplified by a vast range of ethno-nationalist and religious-based movements in various parts of the world, including former communist countries, Europe, the United States, the Muslim world, Africa, South Asia and Israel\(^5\). At the root of these challenges lie a range of socio-economic, political and cultural aspirations which vary widely, but which invariably encompass a deep dissatisfaction with perceived dominant cultural and political values (or the absence thereof) often embodied by the state, law, and other established modes of social

\(^2\)In his article "The End of History?", Fukuyama argues that the Western system of liberal democracy has acquired a universally recognised value, having triumphed over competing ideologies (namely communism). At the root of this explanation lied Fukuyama's conviction that previous forms of government such as communism and fascism are fatally flawed, and that, on the other hand, liberal democracy corresponds to an "end point of mankind's ideological evolution". See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", The National Interest 16, Summer 1989, pp.3-18. Underpinning this argument is the issue of whether democratic systems are indeed more peaceful (and thus superior). For a discussion of the issue of democracies fighting one another see John Mueller, Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War. Basic Books: New York. 1989.


\(^4\)Furthermore, Fukuyama argued that the possibility of an ethnic or religious "comeback" was peripheral to the more central issue of the goodness of liberal democracy itself. See Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man. New York: Free Press (Macmillan). p. xxi. In this sense, he failed to see how religious revivalism would question not only the need for Western-style democracy, but would also undermine our understanding of 'liberal democracy' as a universal good.

\(^5\)Examples of such vehement rejection of dominant cultural patterns can range from the revival of local languages and dialects, with, for instance, the Celtic language in Great Britain (and Breton in France) being taught in schools and finding their ways on various television programmes, to the secessionist movements which have accompanied the disintegration of the former Soviet Union in 1991.
organisation. Furthermore, identity-based forms of revivalism in the post-Cold War world have succeeded in going beyond the mere rejection of the political and cultural status quo to actively advocate radical change, as well as mobilise popular support to participate in the political process to that effect, and propose challenging alternatives to existing political structures. The Islamist challenge to a Western-centric, uni-linear model of modernisation (and modernity) is but one example such revival. Yet, the question remains as to whether these phenomena constitute a new trend in International Relations which heralds an era of internal wars and virulent nationalism (as the evidence from the first decade of the post-Cold War era seems to suggest). One could ask, on the contrary, whether these trends and problems were also present during the Cold War, but were either dwarfed by ideological superpower rivalry, or simply not the focus of analysis by the academe.

In this context, the possible resurgence of an 'Islamic threat' has become one of the most prominent leitmotifs of International Relations research, as well as the media. Indeed, popular images of a growing 'Islamic threat' or 'Green Peril' replacing the 'Red Menace/Evil Empire' as the new global challenger to Western liberal ideas and states have accompanied the growing media exposure of Islamist movements in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere. Despite strong evidence supporting the thesis that contemporary forms of political Islam began their 'revival' from the mid-1970s onwards, the resurgence of Islam in politics has been largely perceived as a distinctively post-Cold War, direct, threat to peace and stability for the states concerned and regionally. Additionally, this resurgence has been seen as threatening to Western interests and security in demographic, political and even civilisational terms. The possibility of a 'Clash of Civilisations' between a monolithic 'World of Islam' and an equally monolithic 'West' has consequently become an issue of great debate among scholars. Headed by Samuel Huntington, the proponents of this thesis have emphasised the history of conflictual relations between Muslim/Middle Eastern

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6 The consequences of neo-nationalism in the Balkans (especially Serbian nationalism) on the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and more recently Kosovo constitute grim evidence supporting this thesis.
8 In fact, the understanding of resurgent Islam as a post-Cold War phenomenon is misleading because it overlooks one of the most important events marking Islamic revivalism, the overthrow the Shah in Iran by an indigenous Islamic Revolution in 1979. An 'Islamic State' thus predates the advent of the Cold War by a decade.
and European powers, the ideological opposition between Islamist politics and liberal democratic principles, and the Islamists' vehement rejection of Western values and influence. This evidence has been used to argue that the revival of Islam as a political force is on an inevitable collision course with the West\textsuperscript{10}. The detractors of such an approach point to the diversity and complexity of politics in the Middle East and the Maghrib to highlight the essentialist nature of culturalist arguments of this type and to warn Western policy-makers of the dangers of self-fulfilling prophecies\textsuperscript{11}.

Indeed, Huntington's argument, while provocative, assumes the existence of unitary, and internally harmonious, 'security blocs' and indeed underplays conflict within the Middle East (and in the West for that matter)\textsuperscript{12}. It is culturally essentialist in that it assumes that the cultural commonalities of the Muslim world's peoples will necessarily outweigh their differences and that this 'Muslim World' is interested in confrontation with the West also for cultural and historical reasons\textsuperscript{13}. Yet, for all its ambiguities and problems, Huntington's alarmist call has succeeded in opening a Pandora's box of Western cultural anxieties which strike at the heart of both Western political identity and of its academic ways of grappling with the 'outside world' - issues which are far from unproblematic. In turn, the debate surrounding "The Clash of Civilizations" denotes a profound shift in analytical emphasis away from a clear confident position crystallised in an ideological, and strategic opposition between liberal democratic capitalism and communism - which ignored the decolonised Third World or used it as proxy. Instead, it has moved on to more localised problems of nationalism, ethnicity and religion - in other words, questions of political identity-building - which cannot be easily understood, let alone controlled.

Thus, one of the central challenges of the 'New World Order' has been this attempt to grapple with the 'reassertion' of a decolonised Third World, a Second World in transition and groups at the fringes of First World societies resisting easy

\textsuperscript{10}See Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilisations?".
categorisation. On a deeper level still, this post-Cold War anxiety has put into question our understanding of what constitutes the political realm. Including the aims and activities of religious, politico-religious, or ethno-nationalist movements in the spectrum of political analysis seems unavoidable, but it implies the mental, if not emotional, acknowledgement of the intrinsically political nature and relevance of these movements not only to their societies, but also to this 'New World Order'. In this sense, one needs to assume that:

... if we are going to look at these movements; however strange, aberrant or fanatical some of them may seem to us, we have to take seriously both what they are saying and the alternative societies they are trying to build in response to the confusion they feel in a world from which landmarks have disappeared. Our working hypothesis will be that what these movements say and do is meaningful, and does not spring from a dethronement of reason or from manipulation by hidden forces; rather it is the undeniable evidence of a deep malaise in society that can no longer be interpreted in terms of our own traditional categories of thought.

In essence, this view questions not only the assumption that ethno-nationalism and 'fundamentalism' are absurd phenomena which remain independent of historical and socio-political contexts, but it also challenges the corollary to this assumption - namely, the view that all ethno-nationalist and political-religious groups are inherently backward. The case of Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa is a striking example. With political Islam, the overlap between religion and politics has too often been seen as an unintelligible step backward in civilisational development implying intolerant, violent societies, a stereotype which has been reinforced by symbols of fanaticism conveyed from contemporary developments in the Muslim World. Most notably, Khomeini's Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, and the subsequent anti-Western rhetoric of the Iranian regime (with, in particular, the death sentence proclaimed in a fatwa against British author Salman Rushdie for his *Satanic Verses*) have worked to perpetuate, if not institutionalise, the image of an inherently violent and anti-Western political Islam. The fear of a terrorist Islamic 'fundamentalism' was initially fuelled by a wave of hostage-taking, hijacking and bombing activities in the 1980s, most notably by the Lebanese Hezbollah. By the 1990s, such attacks on Western targets started moving beyond the Middle Eastern

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16 even though Western fears and paranoia of the Muslim world, its religion and its power date back to the Crusades and have been inherent to the Orientalist writings on the region in a variety of fields. See Edward Said. 1995 (1978). *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
theatre with, for instance, the first attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City in 1993 (which was allegedly sponsored by Osama Bin Laden) and the wave of bombings in Paris by the Algerian GIA groups in the mid 1990s. Furthermore, the 11th September suicide attacks and the resulting ‘War on Terrorism’ have all reinforced the idea of a political Islam that acts as a destabilising force in politics, if not as a catalyst for violent struggle, both locally and regionally.

It should be pointed out however, that framing our understanding of political Islam in an 'Islamic threat' debate, or purely in terms of violence or terrorism, binds us to seeing its manifestations in isolation from the political and socio-economic environments which frame its struggle. It prevents us from accounting for its diversity, and precludes an appreciation of the complex dynamics of change which characterise Islamist politics. In fact, and despite common goals such as the creation of an Islamist state, Islamist movements can be most strikingly described through the sheer diversity of their political ideology and aims. These range from democratic to theocratic, top-down or grass-root oriented, peaceful, violent, revolutionary, inspired by Marxist-Leninist ideas, inspired by extreme right-wing ideas, broad in scope, narrow in scope, utopian, messianic, apocalyptic. In addition, the range of their activities is equally diverse and include running for political office, terrorism and guerrilla warfare, the provision of welfare services and education, religious teaching and preaching, pastoral care, banking, grassroots consciousness raising, peaceful political protest, the infiltration of existing trade unions and professional associations, the provision of humanitarian aid to the victims of natural catastrophes, black market activities, drug trafficking and intimidation. Furthermore, one should not forget that violence committed by Islamist groups has been only episodic in some cases, and widespread in others. Examples include terrorist attacks on tourists by Egyptian Islamists (which tend to be episodic, but high profile and high-casualty-oriented) to the Algerian civil war (which combined various patterns of violence including structural violence, human rights violations, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, abduction and intimidation, political assassinations, all committed by a variety of political actors including Islamists and the state). In this sense, the attitude of Islamist militants towards violence has varied according to local circumstances and has changed over time.

3.3. Political Islam: A Definition

Given such variety and complexity, a number of issues can be raised from the outset concerning the use of the term political Islam in any analytical piece of writing. Firstly, one must ask whether it is accurate to depict political Islam as the mere application of the tenets of Islam to the political sphere. Is Islamism the political expression of Islam, or is it an interpretation of the message of Islam and its application to the world of cultural/religious ideas and politics? Secondly, this issue is compounded by the fact that Islamists do not always call themselves Islamists, but often good Muslims, better Muslims, if not the only Muslims. This self-description is often accompanied by the claim to be a 'true follower' of Islam as opposed to a 'follower of an interpretation of Islamic principles to be applied to a specific set of socio-political and cultural circumstances' (which would tend to summarise how analysts would see them). As a result, there is a gap between how Western analysts describe the phenomenon at hand and the ways in which Islamists see themselves. This raises the question of whether it is possible to describe an ideology, or a set of political movements using different labels and explanatory tools (if not world views) to those who are its protagonists. Thirdly, and as a result, the very nature of the religion-politics nexus in the case of Islam and political Islam needs to be problematised somewhat. Can Islam indeed be seen as din wa-dawla (often translated as 'religion and state'), thus making politics an intrinsic part of religion? Or is the connection between political aims and religious principles in Islamism tied to the specific historical and political conditions in which it has arisen, thus making political Islam intrinsically distinct to Islam?19?

3.3.1. Islam and Islamism

I will argue here that the religious practices and beliefs of most Muslims are indeed varied and are not equivalent to the ideology, goals and strategies of Islamists. While all Islamists are Muslims, not all Muslims are Islamists. The distinction between the term Islamic and Islamist is thus important in that it avoids making inaccurate generalisations which are discriminatory to those Muslims who are not

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Islamists, and to those Islamists who may object to being assimilated to other, non-Islamist, Muslims. In addition, it should be noted that assimilating political Islam to Islam as a religion easily runs the risk of oversimplifying our understanding of both phenomena. At best, such confusion precludes a contextualised view of Islamism which would take into account both its historical and its socio-political contexts. At worst, this can lead to an essentialist view of Islam based on a culturally deterministic and monolithic understanding of the political processes in the Middle East and more generally in the Muslim World. Finally, this distinction allows us to discriminate between the condemnation of the violence of some Islamist groups and that of Islam in general.

Arguably, political Islam is both a lot more and a lot less than Islam. It is a lot more because it has been shaped by historical, political and socio-economic forces which lie beyond the religious text; and it is a lot less because its outlook and principles are far less universal in scope than the religious principles of Islam. That being said however, both political Islam and the religion of Islam are complex phenomena with diverse expressions, and their history and meaning are intertwined in some important ways. While the Islamic sacred texts (from the Qur'an to the shari'a, and with the Hadith-based Islamic jurisprudence) outline, often in detail, the acceptable principles of law and government, these principles have been interpreted and applied in different ways historically, across the Sunni/Shi'i divide and from state to state. As Simon Bromley reminds us:

Historically, then, 'Islam' has had no unitary nature, and therefore it cannot be understood either as an enduring, recalcitrant tradition, a cultural form operating to block other social and historical

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24 In fact, as Fred Halliday points out, large number of Muslims do not live in the Middle East (e.g. Pakistan, Nigeria, Indonesia), and many non-Muslims (such as Christians) live in this region. The 'Muslim world' and the Middle East are thus not equivalent terms. Fred Halliday. 1995. Islam and the Myth of Confrontation. p.30.
determinations, or in terms of the theological power of the clergy based on an unchanging doctrine. As a form of religious identification and a culture of signification, 'Islam' remains rooted in broader sets of social and material practices, and thus its changing forms must also be related to the historically given organisation of economy and polity.

In turn, the relationship between the Islamic clergy and secular political power centres in the Muslim world has been a tumultuous one historically, and has shifted between mutual support, competition, and outright antagonism. Nazih Ayubi points to the historical support for political institutions and rulers by the religious establishment of various Islamic nations through the legitimising force of Islam. By contrast, Islam has also served as a legitimising tool and factor for unity in revolt or revolution against 'unjust' rule. For instance, Islam was used by Algerian nationalist forces as an anti-French rallying call during the Algerian Independence War, demonstrating its power as a unifying force against colonial oppression. In this sense, the connection between religious and political power in the Muslim World is an obvious one (indeed, a similar connection could be drawn for European politics and Christianity), and it is also "perhaps also true that the Islamic tradition has been invoked and manipulated differently by various people for the sake of safeguarding their own interests and objectives in times of crisis and predicament. Additionally, what this parallel also highlights is the importance of religious legitimacy as a symbolic, legitimising, force in the political sphere. As Aziz Al-Azmeh has pointed out, the Middle Eastern state has been a critical instrument of Islamisation since the 1970s, as it used the religious card not only to sideline left-wing opposition parties, but also to reinforce its own fledging control over the public sphere. Contemporary political Islam illustrates this trend, but also interprets the religion-politics nexus in a novel way.

Islamist movements have posed an ideological challenge to existing regimes by using a religious frame of reference to criticise dominant political and cultural norms.

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29Saddam Hussein has also been known to use the Islamic 'Jihad' card to rally the Arab World against the US-led coalition during the Second Gulf War, with mixed success. For a detailed study of the Islamic component of the Algerian revolutionary rhetoric, see Monique Gadant. 1988. *Islam et Nationalisme en Algerie*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
Here, Islam can be seen as an inspiration to political Islam insofar as it offers the basis for the cultural and political identity which Islamists share. It also provides the basis for the political ideas and motifs through which they gather public support and around which they draw a platform for challenging existing power structures and ideologies. But the Islamist ideological constructs also draw from secular sources for inspiration, and they are dependent on political and cultural trends for their evolution: "the Islamist discourse, in its different manifestations, histories, conditions, and ideological pronouncements, is a distinctive intellectual formation that must be located within the broader context of Arab intellectual history that has been weltering with all sorts of discourses, both secular and religious". While they are based on religious ideals, they are concerned with the realities of political power. In this sense, Islam exercises a subtle, pervasive influence on Islamism, but it does not hold a monopoly on such an influence. In Fred Halliday's words,

Islam, like culture and history, becomes a reserve on which the promoters of new identities can draw. But as an ideological interpretation so in the fostering of ethnic identities, the choice and character of identity is determined by contemporary and secular forces, not by religion itself.

What Halliday points to here is the need to avoid essentialist interpretations concerning the role of religion in politics, especially, when the issue of political identity comes into play:

It is never valid to present 'Muslim' as a term of ethnic identity. This is either a stereotypical projection employed by those who have sought and still seek to dominate or exclude people of Islamic origin, or it is an equally spurious claim made by people within an Islamic community who seek to exercise authority over a special group by advancing their particular interpretation as the sole legitimate and authoritative 'Islam'. Other identities - social, ethnic, linguistic and national - all play their part.

Thus, 'Islamism' is seen here to apply to a range of contemporary social and political movements which are part of a political spectrum of ideas and activities. These are, at least in part, qualitatively different to that of the religious practice of the Islamic faith, and as a political phenomenon, it cannot be explained through the prism of religion alone. Instead, a highly selective and very innovative ideological

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interpretation of Islam provides the basis for an alternative to the status quo, whatever its current forms\textsuperscript{36}. As Beinin and Stork argue:

... today's Islamist thinkers and activists are creatively deploying selected elements of the Islamic tradition, combined with ideas, techniques, institutions and commodities of the present and recent past, to cope with specifically modern predicaments: political, social, economic, and cultural issues that emerged in the Middle East as a result of the expansion of the world capitalist market, the colonization of important part of the region by England and France, the formation of new territorial nation-states, the rise and decline of secular nationalist movements, the frustrations and failures of economic development, the reformation of gender relations, and the hybridization of culture and identity in the course of the wide range of contacts and interactions among Europeans and their cultures and the peoples of the Middle East... Many of the solutions political Islam offers have no specific historical precedent in Islamic tradition\textsuperscript{37}.

This range of interpretations, in turn, is highly dependent on the ideologues and leaders of Islamist movements who make the choices as to the emphasis of the doctrine, and whose interpretation of Islam is coloured by their political and personal experience\textsuperscript{38}. In sum, political Islam is a political phenomenon, since it is predicated upon an ideology, involved with other actors in political processes, and trying to seize power to affect political change\textsuperscript{39}. Correspondingly, its relationship to the polity - the state, its institutions and official political processes - lies at the core of its evolution. Thus, even if Islamists assert that they do not distinguish between religion and politics, our analysis of political and religious motivations underpinning Islamism must do so.

3.3.2. The problems with Fundamentalism, Radicalism, Militantism and other Qualifiers

' Islamic Fundamentalism' has been of the terms most commonly used to define the contemporary resurgence of Islam in political sphere in the media and by

\textsuperscript{38} Ibrahim Abu-Rabi. 1996. \textit{Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World}. See in particular chapters 4 and 5 which contextualise Sayyid Qutb's intellectual contribution in his professional and personal experience.
\textsuperscript{39} For an analysis of political Islam in those terms, see, for instance, Laura Guazzone (ed.). \textit{The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Arab World}. 

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academics. Its implications as a concept, however, have been widely debated among scholars, and most have now abandoned its use for terms such as Islamic or Islamist politics, Islamism, Islamicism, Islamic activism and Islamic radicalism. Indeed, the term 'fundamentalism' is misleading because it has been associated in the media with images of violence and often equated with terms such as fanaticism, extremism and terrorism, thus denoting a pejorative, reductionist view of political Islam. Suffice it to say here that violence is only one of the possible facets of Islamist politics - and that non-violent Islamist groups exist throughout the region. There are also abundant examples of Islamist groups performing 'social' functions of charity, education, spiritual guidance, and disaster relief, with the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Palestinian Hamas, the Egyptian and Jordanian Muslim Brothers, and the Algerian F.I.S. as prime instances. These examples are particularly telling given that it is precisely those groups which have been the bêtes noires of both regimes in the Middle East and Western observers.

Moreover, the Protestant origin of the word fundamentalism suggests a literalist attitude toward the holy scripture and a belief in its inerrancy and in a number of fundamental precepts. This vision is both too broad and too narrow: on the one hand all Muslims believe in the inerrancy of the sacred text; on the other hand, the importance of political activism as the main feature of political Islam, and its relative ideological paucity and flexibility, is largely underplayed by such a definition. Yet, most importantly, the term 'fundamentalism' obscures the innovative nature of contemporary Islamist ideology and its methods. In other words,

... the terms 'revival' and 'fundamentalist' are misleading, since both refer to trends within a religion. This Islamic current [i.e. contemporary forms of political Islam] involves not a revival of religious belief, but an assertion of the relevance of this belief, selectively interpreted, to politics.

By contrast, the terms Islamic Revivalism, Reformism and Radicalism, developed in Youssef Choueiri's Islamic Fundamentalism approximate more closely the reality of

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political Islam insofar as they convey the cyclical nature of the resurgence of Islamic movements in the political sphere historically, with an appreciation of the original nature of contemporary forms of political Islam due to their unique intellectual and political contexts. Choueiri emphasises this cyclical theme to provide a historical background to Islamism to contextualise its relevance, while respecting its innovative elements. For him, the Islamic Revivalists of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century primarily worked to undermine mystical versions of Islam. On the other hand, the Islamic Reformists of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century attempted to reverse perceived Islamic decline by revising traditional Islamic outlooks and practices and infusing them with Western political thought and structures. Finally, contemporary Islamist groups, which he terms 'Islamist Radicals', have challenged Westernised elites and the state, and promoted the idea of political Islam as a self-sufficient ideology capable of forming the basis for a 'truly Islamic' government. It is those radicals who, in the contemporary setting, have developed the structures and rhetoric that is commonly termed 'Islamic fundamentalism'.

Does the term 'Radical Islam' best define this phenomenon though? It strongly supports a view of political Islam that is politically militant and does not equate Islamism to traditionalism or literalism. In this sense, this distinction performs the important task of 'historicising' political Islam - it acknowledges its deep roots in Middle Eastern societies, and allows us to identify both areas of historical continuity and of innovation. However, like 'fundamentalism', the term 'Radical Islam' remains a rather vague category because it assumes that all Islamists and their supporters are radicals - a term which carries ambiguous meanings. In addition, this term implies that these 'radicals' can be distinguished from more acceptable 'moderates', a neat distinction which neither reflects the reality of patterns of political allegiance within social movements nor explains what constitutes radical as opposed to moderate behaviour. Are these 'radicals' radical because of their commitment to affecting radical political change, or because they use radical methods (or both)?

45 Youssef Choueiri. 1990. Islamic Fundamentalism. Introduction. for more detail, see Ibrahim Abu-Rabi. 1996. Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World. pp.6-12. One should point out that, despite these themes of continuity, contemporary Islamism is not an unproblematic "continuation" of revivalism or reformism; in fact, "the literature of Islamic resurgence is highly critical of both". in Abu-Rabi, p.38.
46 The term 'radical' itself is problematic, as illustrated by its Oxford dictionary definition, the adjective 'radical' being defined as "of the roots of roots; fundamental" or "far-reaching; thorough" or "advocating thorough reform; holding extreme political views". But, is political Islam concerned with fundamentals, far-reaching change, or extreme political views? These definitions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they are not synonymous.
In the same vein, Ibrahim Karawan attempts to address this problem in his definitional framework in *The Islamist Impasse*\textsuperscript{47}. He differentiates between militant and political Islamists, a slightly different formulation of the radical/moderate distinction used in the contemporary setting\textsuperscript{48}. Here as elsewhere, such a divide is seen in both ideological and tactical terms, mainly to establish clearer boundaries between violent and non-violent Islamists. To Karawan:

Militant leaders ... combine ideological purity and deep contempt for political compromise with a keen sense of urgency for direct Islamic action... Militant Islamists believe that their primary obligation is to act as dedicated fighters against states which they see as embodying contemporary 'ignorance' - *jahiliyya*. Militants reject the current political and social order entirely: they aim to wage a war of attrition against the state for as long as it takes to overthrow it. In the process, they hope to produce a constant stream of martyrs to sustain and increase radical fervour\textsuperscript{49}.

On the other hand, Karawan defines political Islamists in the following way:

Political Islamists believe that violent struggle is futile and self-defeating, and reject the assumptions of urgency advocated by militants. Political Islamist groups include the MB (the region's oldest such organisation), the *Front Islamique du Salut* (F.I.S.) - until the Algerian regime banned it in 1992 - and the parliamentary activities of *Hizbollah* in Lebanon and the *Hizb al-Islah* (Reform Party) in Yemen. The appeal of political Islamism extends beyond the marginal elements in urban society to the educated middle classes... Political Islamists pursue two key strategies to achieve their aim of an Islamic state: they establish socio-economic institutions (schools, clinics and day-care centres); and they take part in elections whenever possible, even when no change in a country's political leadership is in prospect\textsuperscript{50}.

At face value, this distinction avoids assimilating all Islamists to one model, but does it successfully capture both the essence and the diversity of political Islam? Here, the problems with 'fundamentalism' resurface, with a choice of terms which is neither particularly accurate nor particularly neutral. All Islamists are concerned with political problems and political power, and they are all active in trying to affect political outcomes. Thus, they can all be defined as 'political' Islamists and 'militants'.

Moreover, the distinction that Karawan makes between those ready to compromise (or who see the futility of violent action) and their more extreme counterparts is artificial in several ways. Individuals and groups are diverse in their aims and means, but Karawan neglects to mention the changes that the doctrine and tactics of Islamists undergo over time due to their dynamic relationships to political actors and events. Indeed, as has been pointed out by two commentators on regional forms of political Islam, there is little point is dividing Islamists into 'acceptable' and 'non-acceptable' categories (i.e. militant/extreme vs. moderate) since moderation and extremism can only be defined against the political processes that foster them. As is demonstrated by their research, Islamist movements are not the prisoners of their own discourse and tactics: these are intrinsically linked to their ability to negotiate their access and integration into existing power structures. In the case of Hezbollah, both a 'militant' and a 'political' wing of activity coexist, largely as a result of the changing socio-political context of Lebanese politics, where Hezbollah supporters can now have access to official channels of power through elections. On the other hand, the supporters of the disbanded Algerian F.I.S. - itself a loose coalition of various Islamist and Islamic groups - have chosen various tactics for coping with the ending of the democratic experiment in early 1992. The G.I.A. groups, along with other violent and non-violent groups, are, in part at least, the product of these political changes. Therefore, the boundaries between 'extreme' and 'moderate' can and do shift in a variety of settings over time. Also, a distinct or covert overlap between violent and non-violent wings of the same Islamist organisations are a common occurrence, which is well illustrated by the cases of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas.

In this sense, the terms 'militant' and 'radical' Islamism illustrate the fact that there are inherent definitional problems pertaining to the concept and its internal diversity which cannot be easily overcome, if they can be overcome at all. Yet, more importantly, the definitional problems outlined above illustrate that in many ways, the difficulty in defining political Islam resides in our willingness to make it fit into pre-existing conceptual categories it is ill-suited to fit. Describing political Islam as extremist, radical or fundamentalist is necessarily inaccurate and often derogatory, and the question of whether political Islam is anachronistic or revolutionary is itself a reflection of such misconceptions. Instead, our definition ought to acknowledge both

53 See the work of Magnus Ranstorp.
these inherent difficulties and the fact that these difficulties exist for a reason. Substituting the term 'political Islam' for 'fundamentalism' amounts to nothing more than political correctness if the way in which we understand 'political Islam' and envisage studying it do not change as well. Therefore, our definitional task is double: it involves finding an adequate term, and changing the parameters for using that term.

3.3.3 A Working Definition

The most common term which has been used in the recent literature is Islamism or political Islam. Designed to detract from the pejorative connotations of 'fundamentalism' and to translate the inherently political nature of this phenomenon, this term has gained wide acceptance and has been seldom criticised. As illustrated by its extensive use in this chapter, this term is the one preferred in this analysis on the following grounds:

- The terms 'political Islam', 'Islamist politics' and 'Islamism' do not carry intrinsically pejorative assumptions.
- While Islamism is too vague a term (it does not qualify the relationship between politics and Islam), it does take on the political dimension of the phenomenon, thus making it possible for us to study it in those terms, and in context. Additionally, it suggests that such movements cannot be reduced to violence (or terrorism) and irrationality.
- The term 'Islamist politics' is a particularly accurate one, as it conveys the diversity and fluidity of this phenomenon. Arguably, one should talk of political Islams as opposed to political Islam. As Hilterman pointed out, "the various 'branches' of the Islamist movement show intriguing variations across Arab societies, suggesting perhaps that they are not branches as much as parallel movements bearing the same name." Perhaps then, the best way to deal with such a diversity is to define political Islam as nebuleuse Islamiste (Islamist nebula), a term coined by the French academic literature on political Islam.
- The term Islamist politics can be applied at both macro and micro levels of analysis: general observations concerning the political, religious, or cultural

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54 Nikki Keddie has been the precursor to this change in terminology. See Nikki Keddie. 1986. "The Islamist Movement in Tunisia" Maghreb Review 11(1).

55 "Political Islams" is somewhat problematic as a term given that the plural "Islams" is grammatically incorrect.


relevance of political Islam do not necessarily exclude micro analyses of the diversity of the phenomenon by looking at specific groups.

As a result, the political movements this dissertation investigates are simply termed Islamist movements, groups and political parties. Their ideologies and their manifestations are termed political Islam, Islamist politics or, generally speaking, Islamism. In turn, uncovering what these terms actually imply in the contemporary Algerian context is, to a large extent, the aim this analysis.

Overall, Islamism can be seen as a historically distinct political-religious phenomenon with cultural, religious, social and political expressions, and which is neither bound to traditional forms of Islam or to scriptural literalism. As an ideology, it sees its interpretation of Islam and Islamic law as the most comprehensive and only legitimate guide to government. Thus,

The term 'political Islam' is associated here with the goal and related political programme designed to establish a worldwide Islamic order. This goal has been pursued on two related level: one challenging the status quo within Muslim countries and the other representing an increasingly transnational network of contacts aimed at establishing a 'Pax-Islamica' (literally Islamic peace) across the Arab and Muslim world.

As a self-proclaimed alternative to secular nationalism, liberal democracy, socialism and capitalism, it is opposed to Western influence, it aims to undermine existing regimes, and it sees political activism as a religious duty. As a political movement, its objective is to seize political power to effect radical socio-cultural and political change. In terms of policies, Islamism carries a conservative agenda emphasising the importance of Islamic Law as the main source of legislation and affecting issues ranging from distributive justice, to public mores and a range of issues that are bound to the specific environments in which it operates. As a region-wide movement, it is both fragmentary (i.e. bound to its specific environment) and versatile in its rhetoric and choice of tactics. But, most importantly, because it is a full-fledged political actor, it changes over time through interactions with other political actors. Thus,

In discussing political Islam, we must move beyond the explication of texts and the biographies of intellectual figures to examine the local circumstances and historical particularities of each movement,

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which often turn out to be more substantial than a simple conception of 'Islam' in opposition to secular politics.

Yet, before this analysis moves on to an analysis of such a case study, a consideration of the contexts in which the term political Islam should be used — and a discussion of the analytical foci which are implied by this definitional problematic - are in order.

3.4. Refocusing the analysis of Political Islam

So far, this analysis has pointed to the fact that Islamist groups and parties can and should be seen as contemporary political and social movements which act in the context of various national and regional structures and within the international political arena. Notwithstanding the strong religious and cultural components that Islamist politics imply, our focus needs to be firmly placed on that context if we are to successfully map out the main feature of this multifaceted phenomenon, and thus to ultimately better understand its religious and cultural components. The analytical focus should be placed on "a historical examination of the articulation of Islamic political movements with the surrounding social structure, state formation, competing ideologies, and exogenous forces such as colonialism and the world market". The aim of this section is thus to substantiate the claim that, given the specific political circumstances in which they operate, Islamist movements constitute a indigenous form of protest, and a political alternative to existing power structures and ideologies. In turn, there are various aspects to that claim, which will be investigated systematically. These include:

- The socio-political contexts of political Islam and their influence on its rise as a region-wide phenomenon (and, in particular, political Islam's relationship to the state);
- Its place in existing power structures and political processes;
- And its relationship to modernity as a political construct and the modern world as a lived social reality.

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3.4.1. Political Islam in Context

Many authors have justly demonstrated how distinctive forms of social, political and economic hardship have underpinned the growth of Islamist groups in the region since the mid-1970s. Their analyses of the growth of contemporary Islamism have established a connection between disaffection with the political system, socio-economic hardship and religious resurgence. R. Hrair Dekmejian's conceptual model in *Islam and Revolution* exemplifies this trend. Dekmejian's framework for understanding the underpinning dynamics of political Islam emphasises the dual importance of historical context and current socio-economic and political trends to explain the allure of such an ideological alternative. He thus links in context with ideology (and leadership) as the leading factors in the success of the Islamist 'recipe' (see Figure 3.1.).

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This approach has been echoed by recent accounts of political Islam - both in general terms and in case study analyses. Perhaps Beinin and Stork summarise this dynamic best when they state:

All these movements draw strength from the widespread deficiencies of the postcolonial states in the Middle East: massive corruption, overreliance on coercion, and the failure of Arab socialism in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria - and a comparable form

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of state-led development in Turkey - to produce sustained development... These failures have coincided with the collapse of various secularist, nationalist, and leftist political projects, leaving the field of opposition politics more or less open to Islamists.  

As a result, political Islam is interpreted as "distinctive mode of response to major social and cultural change introduced either by exogenous or indigenous forces and perceived as threatening to dilute or dissolve the clear lines of Islamic identity, or to overwhelm that identity in a synthesis of many different elements." In addition to this crisis environment, several historical factors are crucial to this "response": colonialism and neo-imperialism are framed in a historical interpretation of oppression and decline, most poignantly exemplified by the creation of Israel and, in particular the defeat by Israel in 1967. This is not the only case study worth mentioning in this regard however, as one commentator of South Asia remarks:

To assume that fundamentalism is merely linked to religious issues is, in the Indian case at least, to elide issues of class, the after-effects of colonialism and the protest of the marginalised against the institutionalised system of privileges.

In this context, the rise of protest movements such as Islamism can be inscribed within the broader framework of decolonisation and its consequences.

In essence, these approaches are useful in accounting for the 'reactive' dimension of political Islam, since it focuses on 'Historical Anchors' and a 'Crisis Environment' as explanatory factors for the rise of contemporary Islamist movements. However, this type of approach pays little attention to 'proactive' dimensions of Islamist politics and thus risks underplaying an essential dimension of the equation: the ideological depth and the complexity of Islamist doctrine. According to such a model, Islamist ideology can easily end up being defined almost by default, as an ideological ersatz featuring just criticism of the state, but still politically hollow. The often vague religious terminology and imagery used to frame this criticism seem to yield little practical relevance, particularly from a Western perspective.

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71 For an example on this type of focus, see Marnia Marzeg. 1998. "Islamism and the Recolonization of Algeria" Arab Studies Quarterly 20(2 -Spring). In her analysis of the
as an ideology stems largely from the fact that, along with many Islamists and their constituency, analysts persist in analysing Islamist doctrine in a political and ideological vacuum, through the religious prism of its rhetoric, when other ideological influences are also at play. More than a 'theatre of operation' for Islamists, the political world and its ideological currents lie at the core of the formulation of Islamist doctrine.

As a consequence, Dekmejian's assumptions regarding the individual motivations for adhering to the Islamist ideological alternative can be altered to take into account the fact that political Islam is more than a social-spiritual refuge, or a source of comfort in a difficult, unpredictable world:

Table 3.1. The Appeal of the Islamist Alternative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dekmejian's model</th>
<th>Amended Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Islamic fundamentalism bestows a new identity upon a multitude of alienated individuals who have lost their social-spiritual bearings</td>
<td>Islamist ideologies articulate political alternatives to existing political orders and cultural mores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It defines the world-views of the believers in unambiguous terms by identifying the sources of good and evil</td>
<td>They provide incisive critiques of current state structures and behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It offers alternative modalities to cope with the harsh environment</td>
<td>Islamist politics often provide practical help <em>in lieu</em> of the state as well as spiritual assistance to societies in crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It provides a protest ideology against the established order</td>
<td>They provide a protest ideology against the established order and provide the ideological justification for carrying out political protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It grants a sense of dignity and belonging, and a spiritual refuge from uncertainty</td>
<td>They provide opportunities for political expression and empowerment as well as spiritual guidance at the individual level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It promises a better life in a future Islamist utopia</td>
<td>They promise political change in morally, culturally, and religiously legitimated terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Bearing this qualifier in mind, this view of the reactive dimension of political Islam has now gained wide acceptance and has led to insightful analyses depicting the

Algerian case study, she emphasises the 'nihilistic' aspect of Islamist discourse. For a full discussion of this paper, see chapter five.

*See chapter five on ideological sources, and complexity in political imagination for our case study.*

complex dynamics which characterise the relationship of Islamist movements to other political actors, and in particular, the state.

3.4.2 Islamism and the State

For Charles Tripp, various forms of Islamism are "responses to encounters with particular forms of power of which the state may be the most public and symbolic repository. The goals and methods of the organisations associated with the reassertion of Islamic values in political life are to a large degree shaped by the structures of imagination and power appropriate to the state". In this sense, the rise of contemporary political Islam is intrinsically linked to the various legitimacy crises characterising Middle Eastern and North African states, and consequently, its various forms and evolution are predicated upon the social, political and economic conditions which define this crisis. In this setting, analysts such Nazih Ayubi have been accurate in defining the relationship between the state and Islamist groups as inherently oppositional:

... the quest for authenticity and the quest for participation, have in reality expressed themselves in the form of a confrontation between the Islamists and the State. For it is precisely the modern secular State which - in their view - has caused the alienation while failing to provide the political and economic opportunities. Given this perspective, it is not easy to mistake the distinctly anti-statist colouring of the Islamist discourse.

In keeping with Tripp's and Ayubi's conclusions, Islamist groups and political parties can be defined as political groups which are the product of specific set of political structures and relationships, and which have defined themselves in oppositional terms to existing forms of power embodied by the state, in religious, cultural, ideological, moral and political terms and according to their own political project. This oppositional character manifests itself at the level of doctrine formation, in the choice of tactics in dealing with the political world (especially in terms of acquisition of political power), and in the overall dynamics guiding political relationships between Islamists and other political actors. This being said, "the assumptions and concepts of the nation-state underlie, implicitly or explicitly, most modern Islamist ideologies". Islamist politics thus, while challenging the power of the state, do not

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attempt for the most part to question the existence of states per se. In many ways, the strategies for articulating politics fit into existing patterns of political behaviour and rhetoric. Overall, this type of approach 'brings the state back in' to the analysis of political Islam (along with other political actors which are linked to the Islamist-state connection). It is the substance of the challenge of political Islam to the state - in religious, moral and ideological terms - rather than its forms (violent or not, successful or not) that constitute the linchpin to our understanding this phenomenon.

Overall, it can be said that the interaction between Islamists and other political actors within and outside power structures have highlighted the deeply challenging nature of political Islam to the political and cultural status quo of the societies in which it operates. By proposing a full-fledged alternative to existing political structures and the loci of power within those regimes, political Islam has proved to be on a collision course with the state, and in many cases it has proved to be regimes' most formidable (and sometimes sole) opposition. On the other hand, the growing confidence, maturity and popularity of Islamist political parties and movements in the Middle East and North Africa, which have been accompanied by a timid and ambiguous process of political liberalisation throughout the region, have raised the prospect of - and have sometimes led to - the involvement of Islamists in the democratic process, most notably in Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, and Jordan. This involvement (through elections, charitable and welfare associations, professional unions and other channels) has resulted in a variety of state responses ranging from violent repression (for instance in Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria) to co-optation (attempted, often in conjunction with repressive measures in Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan) or inclusion in existing democratic processes (with the notable example of Turkey).

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78 This argument on duality, and ambiguity, will be substantiated for our case study in our main analytical chapters.
79 For a set of short case studies depicting the dynamic between the state and its Islamist opposition, see John Esposito. 1992. The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality? Chapter Four.
80 The case of Algeria is the most obvious one, but Islamist opposition has also made significant inroads elsewhere (especially in the Maghreb) and have overtaken Leftist and Liberal opposition groups in terms of size and popularity. Esposito, among others, has showed that Islamism has moved from a peripheral position on the political chessboard of Middle Eastern societies to articulate more mainstream opposition. John Esposito. 1994. The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality? pp.22ff.
81 Examples here of increase in elections but raise doubts as to how meaningful the changes they imply are.
In this sense, it can be argued that Islamist groups and political parties have proven to be not only embedded in the political process as full-fledged actors, but also to be the actors setting the political agenda against the state. For instance, Algerian Islamists in the late 1980s and early 1990s, organised around the F.I.S. coalition were the fiercest (and best organised) critics of the lack of state legitimacy, and its inefficiency and corruption. In the aftermath of the 1988 food riots and the violent response of the regime, the F.I.S. effectively monopolised the discourse for political protest and articulated a political programme of reforms demanding greater political pluralism through a process of democratisation, as well as economic and social reform. In turn, it is through this largely oppositional programme that Algerian Islamists managed to gain mainstream support at the grassroots level, as reflected by their local elections' victory in June 1990 and promising elections results in the first round of the aborted 1991/1992 legislative elections. Similarly, Islamists in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, among others, have put forward coherent and often just criticisms of the state, despite the lack of political sophistication the common Islamist slogan "Islam is the solution" seems to suggest. In fact, it would be injudicious to define Islamists purely in terms of their political slogans given the inherently oppositional nature of their political outlook. It is, in many ways, the problems that they highlight through their political challenge to the state that confer them their political relevance and strength.

Furthermore, the relationship between political Islam and the realms of political power is not necessarily translated into direct confrontation for access to official, and formal, channels of political representation. For instance, the success of Egyptian Islamists in having effectively replaced the state in its welfare functions at the local level (in terms of charity, education, social and medical provisions, etc.) and its successful penetration of most prestigious professional associations (including the Egyptian Engineering, Bar and Medical Associations) confirm political Islam's ability to capture the grass-root and middle class level of political legitimacy, and power. This ability, in turn, conjures up images of an unofficial Islamist state functioning within a larger state. Here, there is mixed evidence supporting the viability of such an Islamist alternative. Indeed, on the one hand the accession to power of an army-Islamist coalition in the Sudan, the political and social control of the Taliban forces in Afghanistan, as well as the continued political strength of the Islamic regime in Iran

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84 See chapter four for greater detail.
86 Rosefsky Wickham coins the term "state within a state" on p.130.
(arguably the closest example of an Islamic state by Islamist standards) illustrate that the Islamist alternative is de facto a realistic possibility, albeit a controversial one\textsuperscript{87}. Still, the particulars of an Islamist-defined Islamic state are themselves a problematic issue, as the connection between the shari'a and effective policy-making in terms of internal political problems, law and economic policy and well as foreign policy is far from straightforward.

3.4.3. Islamism and The Political Process

In addition to power considerations, the Islamists' interaction with the state in various Middle Eastern states has often raised issues concerning the nature of the state and political processes which go beyond the scope of the Islamist political agenda. In particular, the substance of the Islamist critique of state policies and legitimacy fits into broader patterns of state-building affecting the structure of civil society, its strength and its role, and thus the prospects and possible types of democratisation - a set of phenomena which, until recently, was analysed in isolation from contemporary protest movements such as political Islam\textsuperscript{88}. The prospect of meaningful democratisation in the Middle East remains a thorny issue at best\textsuperscript{89}, especially with the added prospect of Islamists gaining power through elections despite being largely perceived as antidemocratic forces\textsuperscript{90}. As Bill and Springborg show,

Fundamental questions of identity, authenticity, and legitimacy continue to plague the region. As the winds of democratization gust unevenly across the world, most Middle Eastern governments still resist transforming their political systems and maintain power

\textsuperscript{87}Whether Iran is an example of an Islamic state as envisioned by Islamists is a debated issue among Islamists themselves and in the Western literature on the subject. See, for instance, Olivier Roy. 1994. \textit{The Failure of Political Islam}. London: I.B.Tauris. and Sami Zubaida. 1997. "Is Iran an Islamic State?" in Beinin and Stork (eds). \textit{Political Islam}.


\textsuperscript{89}The lack of democratic foundations in Middle East should not be assumed to be solely due a Middle Eastern cultural exceptionalism in this regard - as Charles Issawi argued, it is the presence and control of French and British colonial powers in the region that prevented the growth of such foundations. See Issawi. 1956. "Economic and Social Foundations of Democracy in the Middle East" \textit{International Affairs} 32.

\textsuperscript{90}For a balanced view of this issue, see Gudrun Krämer. 1997. "Islamist Notions of Democracy". in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.) \textit{Political Islam}. 

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through incremental reform, selective coercion, and economic inducement. Genuine political participation remains a distant goal. Nonetheless, there has been movement as defensive political leaders increasingly announce constitutional reform, electoral processes, and the formation of a wide variety of consultative parliamentary bodies91.

The Islamist issue takes special importance in this context, and in several ways. Firstly, democratisation represents one of the principal legitimising tools of the nation-state, and has also become, despite early rejection, one the main agendas pushed by Islamists as a means of ensuring their participation in the political process and as a way to challenge what they perceive to be the regimes' lack of popular (and religious) legitimacy. Secondly, the issue of inclusion of Islamists into the democratisation process raises a number of issues relating to the nature of democracy in the Middle East. Arguably, Western liberal democracy has traditionally implied a set of principles and codes of conduct complementing a set of structures and a form of government92. The vehement rejection of Western political and cultural forms by Islamists has raised alarm concerning the commitment of Islamists to uphold democratic principles if elected, raising the spectre of autocratic - and in fact theocratic - regimes93. In a nutshell, the 'Islamist dilemma' lies between excluding the Islamist opposition from the political process at the risk of creating double standards with regards to the freedom to participate in representative government (and thus undermining democracy), and including Islamists and running the risk of letting them win a legitimate victory by 'Western' standards, only to subsequently uphold undemocratic principles and law, if not to cancel democratic processes altogether94.

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92 In his discussion of democratisation in the Middle East, Jean Leca defines democracy thus: "The meaning of 'democratic rules' usually takes on, prima facie, a legal-organizational dimension: the legal existence of political parties and interest groups and their integration into a constitutional legal order. But is also has a normative dimension, the core of which is pluralism...that is to say that no single group or party enjoys a monopoly on the political truth. Pluralism thus entails tolerance, acceptance of majority rule, limited government, and protection of basic rights. The term 'democratic rules' also has a power dimension: the sharing of power within the system, the emergence of different centres of power, and the accountability of power-holders to elected representatives and to public opinion". Jean Leca. 1992. "Democratisation in the Arab World: Uncertainty, Vulnerability and Legitimacy" in Salamé (ed.) Democracy without Democrats? p.49.
94See Laura Guazzzone, "Islamism and Islamists in the Contemporary Arab World" in Laura Guazzzone, ed., The Islamist Dilemma, p.22. One should thus beware of explanations which rely on the 'essence' of religion to make generalisations about the political outlook of a civilisation. See also Gudrun Krämer. 1994. "The Integration of the Integrist: a Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia" in Ghassan Salamé (ed.) Democracy without Democrats? In the case of Algeria, Lahouari Addi joined an echo of protest against the participation of Islamist in elections on the grounds that a working democracy requires committed partners. Lahouari Addi. 1992. "Islamicist Utopia and Democracy" in Charles
Thirdly, the evolution of Islamic and Islamist discourse on democratisation has raised the issue of whether Western democratic systems are applicable or appropriate to the Middle East, and have paved the way for the development of Islamic, if not Islamist, interpretations of political representation and political legitimacy which are neither what current Middle Eastern states practice nor what the West advocates.

Here, the question of whether principled democracy necessarily implies that free and fair elections should occur along the Western democratic model remain a controversial one. It is possible to conceive of a 'principled' form of democracy based on other principles than those implied in the Western liberal model, Islam being as worthy an actual/potential candidate as any. Still, acknowledging that there is, in principle, no reason for Islam to be incompatible with democracy does not imply that Islamists are necessarily democratic in their outlook, or even that Middle Eastern societies are democratic. Here, the question of whether Islamists work within democratic systems logically precedes the question of whether they can be democratic themselves, and an adequate answer to the first question is a precondition to dealing with the second. While the question of whether Islamists can or should be included in the democratic process is a fascinating and important one, its treatment must come with the acknowledgement that most regimes against which they operate also lack political legitimacy and meaningful democratic credentials. In this sense, the issue of democratisation puts the political agenda of both the Islamists and existing regimes into question, and highlights the particulars of the political culture of the societies in which these relationships are taking place. As Kedourie puts it, the category of 'democratisation' is thus quite problematic:


Not only are different Islamist groups and parties defining the application of the shari'a in different ways, but Western misperceptions of the Islamist political programmes and their own views on the categories and preconditions that underpin political dogma in general somewhat skew their interpretation of the potential/actual effectiveness and relevance of Islamist politics.

As Ghassan Salamé justly states, "a Muslim would have difficulty in accepting the his religion legitimizes nothing but authoritarianism, even if he admits that Islam has in effect been taken as an obligatory point of reference by innumerable non-democrtic regimes and parties throughout history. Someone who is both a good Muslim and a good democrat is not an aberration". Ghassan Salamé. 1994."Introduction: Where are the Democrats" in Salamé (ed.). 1994. Democracy without Democrats?. pp.3-4.

To complicate matters further, one can identify a clear state double-speak on democracy in the Middle East. The fact that Western liberal democratic models cannot be seen as inherently universal opens the door to non-democratic practices to be labelled as 'differently' democratic. Issues of definition are thus of prime importance since the line between democracy and non-democracy, while difficult to define, exists.

This is an issue of great debate - can the Middle East be considered an exceptional case where political culture forms an obstacle to democratisation? Ghassan Salamé, among others, questions such exceptionalism as opening the door local apologists to reject democratisation
... democracy is an ambiguous and equivocal word which can easily be exploited in double-talk, and which, taken on its own, is incapable of giving one an appreciation of the complex of ideas and institutions which serve as a specific against despotism and a safeguard for political freedom. It is safer, more exact, and more intelligible to speak rather of constitutional and representative government. From this context, the state-building processes which underpin each of the societies concerned need to be discussed in more depth. In particular, the widely debated importance of a civil society as the pillar for the development of a democratic civic culture is cast into new light when civil society expresses itself through Islamist politics. The compatibility a democratic, pluralist political culture with a political culture based on religious principles is far from obvious (a problem which is further compounded by the problems associated with analysing the cultural or religious elements of politics in the Middle East from a Western perspective). The extent and meaning of political relationships at the more informal level of civil society is also a indicator of the types of, and change in state-society relations, given that election results are not necessarily the most reliable sources of information regarding civil discontent and protest. As a result, the question of whether Islamist politics constitute a religious, or a conservative, or even a nationalist force in civil society is the key to understanding the mechanisms for social protest in Middle Eastern societies. Moreover, the contents of Islamist forms of social protest are indicative of problems in state-building specific to the postcolonial Middle East, and articulated to reflect local political and social conditions. The range of Islamist political promises and criticisms of the state covers practical issues of legitimacy in representation, inefficiency and corruption to match moral and symbolic expectations and principles. The distinction between these two dimensions is analytically important, as these reflect intertwined facets of the state-building process. On the one hand, the

in the name of "authenticity" (see footnote 91). See Ghassan Salamé. 1994."Introduction: Where are the Democrats?" in Salamé (ed.) Democracy without Democrats?, pp. 1-3
100 Muhammad Muslih and A. Richard Norton have argued that civil society is often under-developed in the Middle East due to existing relationships of clientelism. See Muhammad Muslih and Augustus Richard Norton. 1991. Political Tides in the Middle East. New York: Foreign Policy Association. p.11. Could political Islam be seen as a force which can transcend such ties and create an opening for such a civil society? As Gudrun Krämer has pointed out, "The demand for human rights, participation and democracy comes from across the political spectrum, from the nationalist and secularist Arab left... to the broad Islamist movement that over the last two decades has emerged as a dominant voice in intellectual and political life", in Krämer. 1992. "Liberalization and Democracy in the Arab World" Middle East Report 22, p.23. Overall, our analysis of political Islam as a social movement illustrating the possibilities for civil societies can be seen to problematise this concept in a fundamental way.
The pragmatic dimension of the Islamist agenda underlines structural problems in the articulation of political power. These can be institutional (with lack of representation or authoritarianism), at the level of practice (with corruption) or based on the political vision of individuals (Ataturk's secularisation policies in Turkey are an example). On the other hand, the Islamist political project (an Islamic state, the re-Islamisation of society, the rejection of Westernising cultural influences) outlines a genuine alternative in the values that underpin state-building as well as nation-building. It touches upon issues of political and moral identity, and how these translate in the political process through individuals and institutions.

The relationship between (religiously based) morality and politics in political Islam is another, related, contentious topic, and thus worth addressing, even briefly. As a starting point, one observes that Islamist movements have not actively sought to eliminate political institutions altogether in order to amalgamate politics to a religious-based morality, as it has often been argued. So far, Islamists have been willing to be politically active within the confines of existing states and through official political channels when permitted to do so\textsuperscript{101}. Arguably, "by and large they accept the territorial and political framework of the existing states and their economic foundations, which have been shaped by the legacy of European interests in the Middle East"\textsuperscript{102}. Still, Islamist doctrine both advocates the creation an Islamic state and promotes the idea of a unified, stateless Islamic ummah. The ambiguity is thus double: are Islamists advocating the creation of theocracies (which they would perhaps base on the Iranian model\textsuperscript{103}) or are they calling the very notion of the state illegitimate? Are Islamists playing the political game for instrumental reasons or is representation (through the principle of shura - consultation) the keystone to the very notion of political and religious legitimacy for Islamists? Islamist movements across the region have been reluctant to fully clarify their position in this regard, and, arguably, part of the Islamist appeal lies in this ambiguity\textsuperscript{104}.

\textsuperscript{101} Furthermore, Islamists have often framed their discourse in state-bound terms – e.g. "Tunisian Islam" rhetoric of Shaik Hamid al-Nayfar. Quoted in Joost Hilterman. 1997. "Introduction to Part Five" in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.) \textit{Political Islam}. p.311.
\textsuperscript{103} Sami Zubaida highlights the internationalist and nationalist strands of political Islam in Iran. see Zubaida. 1997. "Is Iran an Islamic State?". in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds.) \textit{Political Islam}. p.105ff.
\textsuperscript{104} The roots and importance of morality, and especially moral legitimacy, is crucial to Islamists, and this issue will be addressed in the case of Algerian Islamism in Chapter Five.
3.4.4. Islamist Politics and Modernity

The equation of the austere Islamist political agenda and its rejection of 'Western values' has often been equated with traditionalism at best, and the longing for a feudal society at worst. This misreading of the nature of contemporary political Islam challenges both the Islamist ideology and its historical origins. Ideologically, Islamist politics differ radically from most traditional Islamic scholarship in their insistence on political activism and in their opposition to state power. In the same vein, the historical resurgence of Islam as a political force has been concerned with undermining the influence of Sufi orders and other mystical versions of Islam. Contemporary political Islam has challenged the traditional orders' political passivity, thus fundamentally challenging the power and legitimacy of traditional Islamist clerics (ulema). Thus, we need not oversimplify Islamist political thought and objectives as anachronistic or traditionalist. Indeed, the Islamist world-view is composed of both traditional and contemporary elements, in the same way that it is composed of religious and political components with the production of a hybrid political discourse this implies. An example of this lies in the notion of Islamic Banking, a model for banking which attempts to reconcile the ethical requisites of Islam (concerning usury in particular) with the necessity of participation in the global economy. In addition, and as Olivier Roy argues, the didactic manner in which the Islamist intelligentsia develops its religious knowledge and its extensive use of new technologies have led to traditional channels within Islam being bypassed and to the production of a new, fragmented discourse that is "more imaginary than theoretical". Hybridity is more than ideological in nature here: it involves the tools of the Western culture such as the internet being used in a countercultural manner, and across boundaries.

Overall then, dealing with the question of modernity is more than a definitional endeavour, since the relationship between political Islam and what we understand as the modern world has helped define Islamist movements' aims, as Abu-Rabi has justly pointed out for the case of Egypt:

106 More details on this point in the specific context of Algeria in chapter four.
107 For a discussion of this controversial topic, see Karen Pfeifer. 1997. "Is there an Islamic Economics?" in Beinin and Stork (eds.) *Political Islam*.
109 in the case of Algerian Islamism, an example of an internet site dedicated to activism can be found at http://www.bakoone.i2. com/fis.html. The site address for the FIS supporters in the UK has changed over the years, presumably for security reasons.
Reacting to Westernization and its various cultural and political forms and expressions, Islamic resurgence, in the form of the Islamic Brotherhood Movement, aimed, from its very beginning at finding the al-hall al-islami (Islamic Solution) - a famous slogan of all Islamic organisations - to the problems of alienation, education, economic organization, and social justice in society\textsuperscript{110}.

In fact, the question of whether Islamism represents a rejection of modernity, an expression of modernity, or a post-modern ideological current lies at the core of our understanding of what political Islam stands for and whether it poses a genuine challenge to the 'West' in ideological and cultural terms. But firstly, we need to elucidate what we mean by modernity and how it applies to political Islam.

Central to the conception of modernity dominant among social scientists is the 'secularisation thesis' whereby industrialisation leads to a decline in the influence of religion over time, as exemplified by the Industrial Revolution in Europe and as argued from the 1950s onwards through the medium of 'modernisation theory'\textsuperscript{111}. Here, modernisation can be defined as "the process by which historically evolved institutions are adapted to the rapidly changing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man's (sic) knowledge, permitting control over his environment, that accompanied the scientific revolution"\textsuperscript{112}. In addition, Anthony Giddens delineates four main institutions that characterise modernity thus understood: industrialisation, capitalism, the concentration of military power, and the control, or surveillance, of the social realm - all of which constitute the building blocks of the transition from traditional societies to modernity\textsuperscript{113}. This process is aimed at the progressive undermining of the traditional bases of knowledge (cultural, political and religious) and thus the "institutionalization of doubt"\textsuperscript{114}.

Can this analysis be transposed to other regions of the world where a similar revolution was forestalled by colonialism, however? Ernest Gellner is but one analyst who has questioned the validity of this thesis, or at least challenged its universal applicability by remarking that:

... the secularization thesis does not apply to Islam. In the course of the last one hundred years, the hold of Islam over the minds and

\textsuperscript{111} For an overview, see Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori Muslim Politics. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press. pp.22ff.
hearts of believers has not diminished and, by some criteria, has probably increased. Such an observation is not easy to dismiss; it is indeed evident that the influence of Islam has not diminished throughout the region, even in states, such as Atatürk's Turkey, where concerted efforts to 'modernise' were accompanied by deliberate attempts to secularise. And if we are to take the contemporary development of Islamist movements throughout the region as an indicator of strength of religious feeling, one cannot but acknowledge the remarkable resilience of Islam to the pressures such 'modernisation-secularisation'. From these observations, analysts have attempted to account for the special role Islam may play in resistance to modernity thus understood. Bill and Springborg for instance see socio-economic factors as crucial to the development of state structures in the Middle East. Yet, they still argue that Islam itself can work to impede nation and state-building given its universalist outlook and its structural implications for social stratification. Islamic universalism is described here as a "two-edged sword" which promotes a community of believers while creating "a continuing disjunction between the theory of Islam and the practice of the nation state". The Muslim nation transcends the territorial boundaries of states, making the task of state-building arduous politically. In terms of societal structures of governance, Islam proves equally problematic for Bill and Springborg. Sovereignty by the ruler(s) rests not with 'the people', but with God, to whom both the rulers and the people are accountable. This goes to the heart of political legitimacy in the ruler-ruled relationship: Islam creates a framework that goes beyond the full control of the political process through the mechanisms of the state alone. Finally, they point to the significance the relative lack of integration of religious orders in Islam in the absence of development of civil society institutions. Ernest Gellner also takes on this issue to argue that Islam can impede the growth of an independent bourgeoisie capable of fostering political and economic modernisation. In both cases, it is the singularity of Islam as a religion and as a

120 James Bill and Robert Springborg. 1994. Politics in the Middle East. pp.48-49. They also point to the consolidation of the power of the Sultan as a means to gain greater control by rulers historically.
121 James Bill and Robert Springborg. 1994. Politics in the Middle East. p.51. They recognise that religion alone is not responsible for this.
model for social life and organisation which has taken the Muslim world on a
different route to that of Western modernity. Both arguments point to the social
and political consequences of the cultural values of Islam, a difficult case to prove
decisively, but one which raises the important question of whether Islam is
compatible with such an understanding of modernity.

Yet, perhaps the explanation for such a resistance lies not primarily with Islam itself,
but in the very way the modernisation thesis articulates the relationship between
modernising trends and tradition. Eikelman and Piscatori point to the importance
of tradition as a "profound vehicle for evolutionary and revolutionary change" with
special reference to the Middle East. Additionally, it is possible to criticise this
standpoint as putting forward a rather uni-linear (dare we say Eurocentric?) view of
what the scientific - and economic - gains of modernisation are supposed to bring to
the spheres of culture and politics. Is it so difficult to imagine a pattern of
modernisation which does not only preserve the influence of religion (and tradition in
general), but which is actually also underpinned and promoted by them? Rightly or
wrongly, it is precisely the aim of Islamist movements to promote such a model for
achieving modernisation.

Indeed, if we take modernity to mean models of governance and political-economic
forms of organisation, as well as moral codes and cultural influences inspired by the
Western model, then most Islamist movements would proclaim themselves to be
opposed to modernity. Two definitional problems arise from such a limited
framework however. On the one hand, being anti-Western (assuming that there is a
united comprehensive political-cultural entity known as the 'West') does not
necessarily imply being anti-modernity, simply because modernity itself is far too
complex a phenomenon to be summarised in such terms. Here, Islamists have been
adamant in their support of the technological and scientific gains of modernity - it is,
in their view, the lack of morality characterising Western-style modernity that is
essentially questionable. Such morality can only be provided through the
framework of Islam, or more specifically through the revival of the cultural and

\[123\] for a detailed critique of the applicability of modernisation theory to the Islamic world, see
and Development: Religion and Socio-Political Change. Syracuse (NY): Syracuse University
Press. pp.5-10.


\[125\] for a nuanced and intelligent discussion of this problem, see Davison chapter one. Andrew
Haven: Yale University Press. See also Carl Hallencreutz and David Westerlund. 1995.
"Introduction" in David Westerlund (ed.) Questioning the Secular State. The Worldwide

political attributes of a historically constructed 'Golden Age' of Islam (generally seen to include the lifetime of the prophet Muhammad and the first four Caliphs)\(^{127}\). This is an innovative interpretation of modernity where modernisation in scientific and economic terms is coupled with an emphasis on the preservation of traditional modes of thought in terms not only of religion (to counter to secularisation thesis), but also in terms of the moral functions and characteristics of the state. In this sense, describing political Islam as traditionalist is more inaccurate than wrong.

On the other hand, and more importantly, being anti-Western does not imply escaping modernity altogether. The very fact that Islamist groups seek political power and legitimacy as well as international recognition as a force in politics implies that their forms of political activity, violent or not, do not contradict existing patterns of political activity. As a result, it can be said that political Islam is not anti-modernity \textit{per se}, but anti-Western, following an Islamist vision of what the 'West' stands for. Arguably, the overview of the causes and context of political Islam presented in this chapter shows that Islamists movements, like nationalism, are the product of the modern age and one of its most innovative actors today. Indeed, I shall argue here that Islamism cannot stand outside modernity, as the ideological hybridity which characterises it prevents it:

Islamists do not uncritically reject modernity; they are trying to reformulate it and regulate it, using the discursive terms of the Islamic heritage\(^{128}\).

It is one of the many facets of the modern age \textit{precisely because} of its opposition to dominant understandings of modernity framed in the political opposition to colonialism and neo-imperialism on the one hand, and as a challenge to existing patterns of state building and power on the other.

Following Davison, we can argue that "there are multiple possibilities for modernity and secularism"\(^{129}\), and that the modern age is not one of uni-linear progress, but one where different models of what constitutes the 'modern' are contested. Davison's own definition is a useful starting point in this regard - both for a critique of existing frameworks for understanding modernity, and as an alternative to them. He states:

\(^{127}\) The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs' rule followed the death of Muhammad in 632 and lasted until 661AC. For more details on a perceived Golden Age followed by decline, see Ibrahim Abu-Rabi. \textit{Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World}. Chapter One.


Multiple modernities do exist (in past and present), are meaningful in the lives of many people who participate in the politics of modernity, and must be understood as such. We need to understand modernity differently and seek to understand others as they understand themselves rather than exclude them from modernity, even if they might appear to exclude themselves (philosophically and ideologically). Modern or not, political actors of radically alternative ideological orientations participate in and are shaped by the politics of modernity, and their significance in that context should not be devalued under any set of criteria

Some authors have gone further than Davison in their critique of dominant understandings of modernity, pointing out, in Foucauldian terms, the power relationship between those included in and those excluded from modernity. Susan Harding, quoted in Davison, develops on this dialectic. For Harding, modernism (to be understood as a Western construct of modernity) actively distorts the representations of traditional forms of beliefs and practices (including those of religion) to secure a historical and political legitimacy over them in the name of Reason. The language of modernism is one that aims for neutrality, objectivity, and analysis in order to mask the relationship of domination it supports. Here, the 'excluded' are defined as obscurantist, fundamentalist, or fanatical (to be neatly opposed in a binary fashion to the enlightened and tolerant character of modernism). Modernism creates its Others but as Harding points out, these are still central to its formulation:

Bible-belief is not an invention of modern discourses, but fundamentalism is. Fundamentalism is a part of modernism's history, not outside of it, alien and anachronistic.

'Fundamentalism' (of the Islamist kind and others) is critical to Western understandings of modernity as it is the norm against which it is defined. Excluding Islamism from modernity is thus a dangerous exercise and one which excludes the many possibilities of modernity which Jürgen Habermas has periodically reminded us of, and to which Davison alludes in his definition. In summary, we can thus see that dealing with the problematic of political Islam's relationship to modernity raises

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more questions than it answers, despite the obvious attachment of Islamists to tradition. Even in broad terms, we can see here that Islamism cannot be easily excluded from modernity or opposed to it - a point which I hope to deal with in more detail throughout a more detailed analysis of the Algerian case later on.

The question remains as to whether political Islam is more than a manifestation of modernity and one of the precursors of a postmodern age. While the issues of whether postmodernity actually exists, and of whether we live in a post-modern world are themselves hotly debated, the place of political Islam is this 'postmodern world' is even more problematic than Islamism's place in modernity. This question has not been dealt with in the literature on political Islam in great detail with the partial exception of Akbar Ahmed's work on Islam and postmodernity, an approach which is not without its ambiguities. By seeing the 'Islamic resurgence' as a cultural challenge to the dominance of Western (and mainly American) cultural norms, icons, and vision of progress, Ahmed successfully articulates the increasing frustration of many with a monolithic, globalised version of happiness and consumer satisfaction. For Ahmed, this form of protest ties in with other marginalised voices, mostly from post-colonial societies, reclaiming the legitimacy of their patterns of development, cultural norms, and discourse. Arguably, political Islam displays some postmodern qualities in those terms because it articulates protest against dominant political discourses in religious-cultural terms. Yet, whether political Islam itself can be seen as the flag-bearer for a wider Islamic cultural and religious revival remains to be seen. Indeed, political Islam may represent previously marginalised voices, but it does not necessarily champion the expression of marginalised voices in general. In this sense, political Islam remains tied to the conditions of modernity once again, and particularly to modernity-bound forms of struggle for discourse legitimacy. Thus, while it is neither a traditional nor a traditionalist form of political expression, its position as a postmodern cultural pioneer remains ambiguous.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has raised a number of themes and arguments which, by way of a conclusion, are worth summarising. With the starting point of the academic context in which political Islam has evolved over the past few years, this chapter has

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134 Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan. 1994. "Islam in the Age of Postmodernity" in Ahmed and Donnan (eds.) Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity. p.11. Ahmed and Donnan go as far as acknowledging that the conceptual ambiguity surrounding postmodernity is "part of its allure".

highlighted a number of preconceptions and fallacies which surround the study of this diverse phenomenon. Moving away from a conception of a political Islam that can be simplistically amalgamated with intolerance and terrorism, this analysis seeks to present a more contextualised vision of Islamist politics. In this sense, focusing on the political, economic, socio-cultural and historical elements of specific cases of political Islam is seen as more analytically fruitful. This task is arguably ambitious however; the diversity and complexity which this discussion aims to unearth imply that a comprehensive overview of all aspects of all Islamist movements would require an encyclopaedia rather than a chapter. My aim was thus somewhat more modest: to problematise our conception of political Islam with regards to its place in the International System, in the ideological and political chessboard of the Middle East, and in the modern world. From these questions I hope to derive a contextualised set of answers, by focusing more closely on one case study to facilitate clarity and precision in analysis. Chapter four thus aims to analyse the case of Islamist movements in Algeria in those terms.
Chapter Four

History and the Islamist Movement Algeria: An Overview of Context and Evolution

4.1. Introduction

Whether through the media or in academic publications, images of contemporary Algeria are ones of a society at a turning point - politically, economically and culturally. It is important in this context to review the origins of the current political situation to contextualise the dilemmas and problems faced in the wake of the Civil War. Chapter four is the first of three analytical chapters concerned with the Algerian political lifeworld and the way in which Islamist movements relate to it to achieve their aims. It performs the relatively straightforward task of establishing the links between the historical evolution of ideology in 19th and 20th Century Algeria and the development of contemporary Algerian Islamist movements. In addition, this chapter aims to apply the overview provided in Chapter Three to the Algerian case study.

This chapter follows a chronological structure, highlighting the most important facets of colonial and postcolonial politics underpinning the growth of political Islam. Firstly, a section on historiography highlights the pitfalls and traditional problems associated with historical analysis, especially in the case of Algeria. Secondly, a number of key points concerning the colonisation process and colonial history are made as a backdrop to nation-building - and the place of Islam in it - in the postcolonial era. Thirdly, an ideological history of Algeria since colonisation is drawn, with the principal aim of linking various historical events, and political actors to ideological currents. This connection is established to help pinpoint the origins of various ideological themes which underpin the Algerian political lifeworld in general and that of political Islam in Algeria in particular. Here, the legacy of colonisation - and of the decolonisation process itself - are seen a crucial components of the lifeworld, but other influences are also unearthed. Particular emphasis will be placed on the post-1988 events, including the main events shaping the Civil War. By way of conclusion, this chapter offers a short overview of the principal

\[1\text{In the rest of North Africa, for instance, various regimes have been more successful in containing their Islamist opposition. The example of Morocco is telling in this}\]
characteristics of the Islamist current in Algeria in historical context.

Overall, the discussion developed here can be tied back to the central research questions addressed in the dissertation in two ways. First, this chapter acts as a critical introduction to the history of Algerian Islamism in its context — with special emphasis placed on the evolution of Islamist thought vis-a-vis colonial and postcolonial political developments in Algeria. This is the foundation upon which the central arguments developed in further chapters will be based. Secondly, looking at Islamism as a postcolonial phenomenon requires inquiring about the connections between the foundational themes of the Islamist political imagination and the way in which the articulation of political rights and governance has evolved since colonial times. More specifically, this chapter makes reference to the evolution of governance as a result of decolonisation to establish a connection between the growth of Islamism and its political context. Questions of political and economic crises are worth tackling of course (and this has been done convincingly elsewhere), but the ways in which the state actually fostered the growth of contemporary Islamist movements directly and indirectly through policies pertaining to political culture also ought to be integrated into the discussion. Political imagination does not function in abstract from the political lifeworld it is derived from. Predominant ideas of the time, such as the promotion of Arabisation as a cornerstone for postcolonial identity, have helped shape the Islamist phenomenon in Algeria.

4.2. Historical Origins

4.2.1. A Note on Historical Writing

Writing a historical chapter presenting the main events of Algerian history since the colonial era seems an easy task - in view of the enormous amount of material produced on this subject by historians, political analysts, sociologists, as well as the memoirs produced by the various political actors of the contemporary era. Still, it should be pointed out from the outset that any such 'historical overview' implies a definite, pre-established set of analytical aims which not only assist the selection of adequate material but also foster and reflect a specific interpretation of Algerian history. Indeed, chapter two...
has argued that social science is a project bound to interpretation of the material by the researcher (and of the end-product by its reader). Thus, history, like all social science/humanities disciplines, implies the use of prisms as a means of selection, an inevitable process that considerably reduces the scope of the analysis. While this is true of history in general, it is particularly applicable to the historical analysis of Algeria, a field in which ‘truth’ has been fiercely contested:

There is a historiographical debate over colonial Algeria which mirrors the personal and private one, a debate which revolves essentially around the nature and consequences of French colonialism in Algeria. The end of French rule and the beginning of Algerian independence are still so close, achieved in such a violent paroxysm of decolonization and national liberation, that the literature on Algeria suffers from the bane of so much contemporary history: too much personal polemic and not enough dispassionate analysis, too much in the way of historical myth and too little historical fact, too much reading the present into the past and too little consideration of the past on its own terms.

Our first acknowledgement should thus be that the ‘historical chapter’ of this dissertation forgoes the illusory safety of ‘description’ and ventures, by choice and by obligation, onto the more difficult terrain of historical analysis. As is connoted by the title of this chapter, this analytical approach limits itself to one facet of the recent history of Algeria, that of the evolution of the ideological underpinnings of the Algerian political lifeworld and the place of Islam, Islamic revolt and Islamism in it. This implies that a number of historical impasses have been made. In turn, the choice of such an approach has been motivated by two factors: firstly, by the fact that the aim of this historical chapter is to provide the background for a specific analytical focus (that of the place of Algerian Islamism in the political lifeworld), and secondly because outstanding historical work on 20th Century Algeria has already been produced, making such an endeavour partially redundant. Overall, the imprint of the postcolonial studies project (our dominant analytical tool) lies in the choice of tracing the origins of the Islamist movement in Algeria in the context of the evolution of broader ideological, political, socio-economic and cultural forces dating back, but not limited to, the experience of colonialism. More importantly though, the postcolonial studies standpoint helps us re-articulate our analysis of Algerian history to problematise the construction of colonial and nationalist histories to emphasise


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heterogeneity, competition and division, but also complicity, continuity and compromise in terms of power relationships among dominant political players, including the Islamic/Islamist 'factor' in Algerian politics:

Today, our view is shaped by an awareness of multiple agencies and divergent power relations - not just colonial, but also of indigenous élites and subaltern groups, men and women, urban and rural, and inter ethnic (religious and linguistic) domination and subordination. It is tempting to say that postcolonial histories differ from nationalist and colonial ones in that the latter are homogeneous and teleological, whereas ours are aware of multiple causalities and multiple agencies3.

This historical task is vast and goes beyond the remit of one chapter. Still, the issues of multiplicity in agency, the difficulties and positioning of historical knowledge, and the complexity of the ideological and discursive background the contemporary history of Algerian political Islam are all considered key features of this overview.

4.2.2. Historical Background

Even though the history of Algeria begins a long time before the French invasion of 1830, historical analyses tend to begin their exposition at that date, for two main reasons. Firstly, Algeria did not exist as a 'state' (strictly speaking) before it was conquered and 'unified' by the French4. Whether or not that unification strictly followed the ethnic and cultural lines of a pre-existing 'Algerian nation' is an interesting question, albeit one fraught with ambiguities5. But one thing is certain, we cannot easily conceptualise Algeria as a single unit before colonisation, a problem which has dogged the analysis of pre-colonial times and has led to this important chapter of Algerian history to be systematically underplayed. Secondly, there has been a tendency, perhaps associated

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4 In fact, Algeria only became formally a state upon independence, but that is hardly unique: very few states existed outside Europe at the time, and arguably the concept of a state emerged from Europe, perhaps paradoxically at the same time that colonialism became the norm. In addition, one should be careful not to conclude from this that pre-colonial Algeria was not a nation simply because it was not a state - this type of argument has often been put forward by Orientalists to justify colonisation. See David Prochaska.1990. Making Algeria French. p.2.
5 These issues of boundaries are common to most post-colonial nations in Africa. The arbitrary nature of state formation during the Age of Empire has ramifications still felt widely on the African continent. Concerning Algeria, the case of the Western
with the absence of such an unproblematic unity to Algerian historical development, to assume that the history of pre-colonial Algeria was static and thus not particularly relevant. This problem can be associated to the fact that much of the early historical work on Algeria was conducted by French Orientalists whose work carried a pacifying and legitimising political agenda. As a justification to the French conquest of most of North Africa, historical writing at the time emphasised themes such as the importance of bringing modernity and civilisation to this 'backward' area of the world, and underplayed the pre-colonial characteristics of Algerian history. Qualified as a 'traditional society' (meant in the worst possible way), and seen as the product of the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Algeria was thus reified into the mirror image of the conquering, civilised colonial power. History defined through such a binary opposition turned Algeria into a society that begged to be conquered. Whereas France was seen to yield superior power and civilisation, Algeria was qualified in passive terms as an object of conquest by successive empires. To French Enlightenment, one could oppose a lack of cultural sophistication, a lack of military power, a lack of economic and political development. In that sense, 'history' indeed only started when France reached the Algerian shores, as a rich culture became only the prelude to the real existence of Algeria, as it became French.

Contemporary authors on the subject have pointed to alternative sets of analyses of the history and sociology of the consequences of colonisation. David Gordon thus divides the academic corpus into four camps - the Orientalist discourse of the 'Ecole d'Alger', a group of Muslim scholars reinterpreting history from an Islamic perspective (and as native informants) around the 1930 period, liberal colonialists of the 1930s onwards who were sympathetic to the Algerian plight for independence, and, during and after the independence war, an Algerian Nationalist/French Marxist cluster which developed on

[Sahara is an interesting case in point.]

[6 This school is remembered as L'Ecole D'Alger and dominated the discourse on Algerian history until independence, and with a quasi-monopoly on that discourse until 1930. David Prochaska lists the following historians and social scientists as the figureheads on this movement: E.F.Gautier, George Marçais, Christian Courtois, Roger Le Tourneau, Stéphane Gsell, Claude Martin, Julien Franc and Pierre Boyer. See David Prochaska. 1990. Making Algeria French. p.1-2.]


the work of their Islamic predecessors. The historical accounts derived from such a
diversity point to two main orientations in academic writing: one that mainly sees French
colonialism as a positive influence on Algerian society\(^9\), and one which questions both
those benefits and the very idea of a *mission civilisatrice*:

The anti-colonialists rebute this view, arguing that even if the French are
primarily responsible for laying the groundwork for a modern society, a
vastly disproportionate amount of the benefits accrued not to the
Algerians but to the French. Even more important, these historians
point out that the effects of the French presence on Algerian society and
culture - the systematic neglect if not outright attack on the Islamic
religion, the refusal to provide for Arabic education, the progressive
impoverishment of the Algerian *fellah* (peasant), the expropriation and
exploitation of the best arable land and forests, the destruction or
coopetration of the indigenous elite - were nothing short of catastrophic.
The Front de la Libération Nationale (FLN) goes still further and charges
that the French were guilty of depersonalization, deculturation, enforced
resettlement, and in some cases even of genocide\(^10\).

The question of Orientalism is therefore one that is far from implicit in the study of
Algerian history. The political underpinnings of much of the work produced on the
subject have long been acknowledged. In more recent times, the historical writing on
Algeria has foregone many of the problems associated with the classic Orientalist
literature on the subject, but Algerian history has remained a deeply contested and
political field. The first casualty to this phenomenon has been pre-colonial history. Very
few attempts have been made to reconstruct the history of those times and the effect of
colonisation from the 'native informant's' point of view, to use Spivak's turn of phrase.
The practical limitations to such an endeavour are obvious: the length of time since the
events took place and the lack of material make this task of reconstruction arduous. On
the other hand, drawing together a picture of such a period carries its own political risks:
is the pre-colonial period a Golden Age of freedom and civilisation from which nativists
can draw to conceptualise their vision of a post-colonial future freed from foreign

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\(^9\) An interesting example of Orientalist literature dealing with the benefits of
colonisation is Leon Blondel. 1838. *Nouvel Apercu sur L'Algerie. Trois Necessites on
Afrique: Conserver - Pacifier - Coloniser*. Delaunay. The title of the publication says
it all with clear priorities being identified as retaining colonies, pacifying, and
colonising them thoroughly. This work makes no apologies for the use of
colonisation as a means to further French interests. The subtext of the piece is of
course deeply unequal with the colonised population seen as benefiting from French
involvement.


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influence? Perhaps simply flipping the coin from a systematically negative interpretation to that of a perfect society is also an imagination of the past which oversimplifies reality and too easily lends itself to political manipulation\textsuperscript{11}. As chapter six analyses in more depth, the use of history for political purposes in the postcolonial era has proven one of the strongest pillars supporting elite rule. In that sense, in postcolonial times in Algeria, history has not only been under surveillance\textsuperscript{12}, but also a factor in the maintenance of existing power relations, as a factor in control and surveillance. The question remains as where our starting point should be in our analysis of the historical origins of political Islam, if we are to successfully navigate between the Charybdis of Orientalist discourse and the Scylla of nativism.

An exhaustive analysis of this period would perhaps obscure the present aims of the analysis, but several points are worth mentioning in any case. What is now known as the Berber minority was originally the dominant cultural and ethnic entity populating most of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. As Gillespie points out, the Berber culture of the time displayed both socio-political organisation and cultural sophistication. In fact, "to the strong loyalties of the tribe, the Berber added individualism, democratic participation in internal affairs and fierce opposition to foreign invasion"\textsuperscript{13}. The Maghrib's position in the Mediterranean made it a privileged target for invasion by the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Visigoths, the Arabs and the Ottomans over several centuries, and thus the Maghrib constituted a prime theatre for cultural métissage of which the Arab language and the Islamic religion were the most pervasive, but not sole, examples. The Ottoman rule over Algeria, while tumultuous, lasted over three hundred years, until French invasion began on 5 July 1830\textsuperscript{14}.

Prior to colonisation, Algeria did not function as an independent state, but was under the

\textsuperscript{12} For the use of that term and a development on these ideas, see Gilles Manceron and Hassan Remaoun. 1993. D'Une Rive a l'Autre: La Guerre d'Algerie et la Memoire de l'Histoire. Paris: Syros. Chapter Two "En Algerie, l'Histoire sous Surveillance".

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rule of the Ottoman Empire with the status of Regency of Algiers. Such a rule was coming under increasing pressure due to a steady financial decline in the fortunes of the Ottoman province, in the context of general crisis in the Empire. The question of the settlements of French debts to the Dey of Algiers became the focal point of the disputes between the French authorities and the Ottoman Empire at that time. These remained acute and the source of much mutual resentment despite wide and tumultuous political changes in France in the first two decades of the 19th Century. Matters came to a head with the now famous diplomatic incident of the "coup d'eventail" whereby the Dey, Hussein, is said to have slapped the French Consul Duval with (or without) the help of a large fan on April 29, 1827 after a protracted argument concerning diplomatic relations between the two nations, especially with regards to the matters of unsettled debts by the French. Whether this incident worked as an excuse rather than a catalyst remains uncertain, but the insult nevertheless left King Charles X prepared for retaliation at the first available opportunity. Instability in Europe prevented him from taking direct action for a further three years, after which he announced that, as an act of revenge on the "barbarian power", military action would be taken to "restore French honour" and ultimately make gains for the cause of Christianity. The crusading overtones of this statement are notable here. More widely, early historians have highlighted the international context of this dispute in an era of imperial expansion. Augustin Bernard notes that wider considerations of competition in Africa with England prompted the invasion. That being said, this enthusiasm was somewhat measured given the price incurred by previous efforts at colonial rule. Thus,

When France took the first important step in 1830 toward a new colonial cycle in her history, she had been familiar with the problem of colonial administration for a long time. The French overseas possessions, much of which had been lost in the wars with England, had once comprised one of great mercantilist empires of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

French administrators were aware of the difficulties associated with invasion and colonial rule, and it is only with confidence in their military capabilities that further development of the empire was considered feasible at that time. Pragmatic considerations for France (in terms of its relationship to Algeria and its situation in Europe) were thus critical to the policy that ensued. That being said, while the fact that Ottoman-controlled Algeria was predominantly Muslim was not the main reason why colonisation occurred, an inherent sense of the civilisational superiority of Christian France made the process far more palatable than it would have been in different circumstances.

4.3. Islamism in Historical Context

4.3.1. Islamism and the Colonial legacy

The Islamist movement in Algeria is one that is rooted in the Ulemas movement, and previous to that, Islamic movements of revolt against colonisation. The history of Algerian Islamism thus starts at least as far back as 1830, with the progressive assimilation of Algerian territory into the French colonial empire by force. The history of colonial times and that of Islamism are thus entwined. The effect of the presence of the French was understandably direct, through the complex processes of colonisation, which would be near absolute, for the next 132 years, leaving a legacy that is still deceptively pervasive long after Algeria gained its formal independence. Colonisation has military and political components of course. But perhaps more importantly, foreign rule implied the domination over and manipulation of culture and of social structures including local government, schools and the family. Religion and language quickly became the keystones

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19 Raoul Girardet goes further to argue that the later part of the 19th Century, after the first new wave of colonisation including Algeria, a "militant doctrine of colonisation" developed in France as a result of early successes. See Raoul Girardet. 1972. L’Idee Coloniale en France de 1871 a 1962. Paris: Livre de Poche Pluriel. p.43.

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of the attempted destruction of existing kinship ties and identities. Concomitantly, the colonial aim was to reconstruct a new identity for the native Algerian population\textsuperscript{21} – one where the needs of colonial rule would be accommodated while the civilising mission of French rule would become the vehicle for new dreams and identities. Several salient points are worth mentioning here.

Firstly, one should not assume that French invasion was met by passivity and acceptance by the native population. The war of colonisation was a protracted and bloody one – and it was followed by a long period of revolt which had to met by force\textsuperscript{22}. Islam, in turn, was a key factor in these revolts. Most notably, Amir Abd al-Qadir led a historic battle against the French from 1832 until his surrender in 1847, under the banner of Islam\textsuperscript{23}. His rhetoric specifically emphasised the religious motivations for his struggle and the establishment of an independent state which would be Muslim. Of note in this setting is the fact that Islam, which had been implanted in Algeria since the 7th Century functioned as the strongest point of ideological reference, as well as the basis for national identity for the vast majority of natives, proving an effective counterpoint to French cultural and political domination\textsuperscript{24}. The idea of political action in Islamic terms, a proto-Islamism, thus originated from a position of cultural, political and military resistance.

Secondly, this revolt against colonisation was compounded by French uncertainty as to the gains to the Empire Algeria would bring, given the large financial and human costs incurred in the first few years of colonial involvement:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21}The term ‘native’ here refers to the colonised population of Algeria. Many colons would later be native of Algeria themselves (and feel about Algeria as their - French - homeland). Thus, being a native would thus become a complex affair. On the other hand, ‘native’ here is not used with the negative connotations it has often been associated with either (i.e. native=backward). The distinction between colons and natives is made for the purpose of clarity only.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} In Kabylia, for instance, revolts in 1857 and 1870-71 set up a culture of resistance to invasion.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} For an early and sympathetic portrait of al-Qadir in the French historical literature, see Augustin Bernard. 1930. \textit{Histoire des Colonies Francaises.} pp. 227-247. For an in-depth historical account of al-Qadir’s resistance to French invasion, see Wilfrid Blunt. 1947. \textit{Desert Hawk: Abd el Kader and the French Conquest of Algeria.} London: Methuen. That being said this account deals with the issue of resistance to colonialism in an uneven tone, which is reminiscent of classic Orientalist texts at times.
\end{itemize}
The conquest of Algeria was a long and difficult process. Geographical obstacles challenging progress from the North to mountainous regions, the untamable hostility of patriotic forces inspired by an intransigent Islam, deadly diseases and tactical errors all explain the length of the process and the human losses incurred.25

Also worth noting in this regard is that patterns of invasion were initially characterised by relative lack of long-term planning: occupation was only partial, due to revolts but also because of the lack of commitment to take over territory which may not be of use for colonial purposes. Most significantly, the occupation of Algeria in the early years of rule was dominated by a military element, leading to ruthless repression of revolts and the absence of civilian authorities to administer law and order. Additionally, settlement by colons was not controlled by metropolitan France in a rigorous way, leading to uncontrolled settlement patterns and relative lawlessness with a large degree of colon control early on, almost as if the military occupation and civil government were unrelated events. The cost of such of a policy (or lack thereof) would be paid in human terms by the native population. The legacy of these early years of oppression would be mixed: for reasons of personal safety many native Algerians would forgo overt revolt for the years to come, but the battle-lines between the imposed French culture and the authentic (and increasingly idealised) native and Islamic culture were drawn.

Thirdly, a number of legal measures designed to administer the colon/colonised relationship were established over the years, with consequences as to the actual status of the native population. These were mostly geared towards land reform and native status under the law, but at every turn, colon resistance to assimilation and equal rights, and their influence in the metropole, made gains for the natives futile. In fact, even those laws designed to protect the native population were used to further undermine their position. Several key turning points are salient here:

- The policy of cantonnement in the 1850s following the transition to a civilian government through the bureaux arabes "pushed out the semi-nomadic tribes from

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27 For a summary of these patterns, see once again Charles-Andre Julien. 1964. *Histoire de l'Algerie Contemporaine - Vol 1.* chapter three.
a considerable part of their former territories and restricted most of them to large but segregated Arab-Berber preserves"28. Large-scale land reform granted the vast amounts of land to the new settlers, at the expense of the local tribes.

- The senatus-consulte of April 22, 1863 tried to overcome this problem somewhat by drawing more explicitly a law on property as it affected the native population. The senatus-consulte was originally designed to help formalise the ownership of whatever land had been left to native Algerians. However, this had unforeseen consequences: the rules of ownership pertaining to families rather than tribes made it easier for colons to buy small plots of land from Muslim owners for a low price to increase the size of their properties. In societal terms, it also contributed to the further erosion of traditional ties, leading to "widespread political and social changes with the dissolution of tribes"29.

- The senatus-consulte of July 14, 1865 was the first formal attempt at creating a legal framework for integration of natives, and regimented their status under the law. Here, Algerian natives would be able to come under the jurisdiction of Islamic law if they kept their Muslim status, but also they had the alternative of assimilating into the French way of life and be granted citizenship, but only on the precondition that they reneged on Islam. This piece of legislation was originally introduced with the hope of integrating as many Algerians as possible30. Needless to say, such a move backfired, since there were very few takers of French citizenship under such conditions31, even with the added pressure of colons using the special status of Muslims as an excuse for discrimination under the law. Still, policy in the 1870s continued in the direction of assimilation, framing France's role in Algeria as one of mission civilisatrice32.

- The Code de L'Indigenat, established in 1881 formalised the discrepancies in legal rights between colons and natives. This constituted a "humiliating regime of

31 The Jewish population took on this opportunity to gain citizenship on the other hand.
exception" containing provisions for prosecuting Muslims under French laws for offences ranging from failing to take on compulsory fire-fighting duties to speaking to European civilians and officials disrespectfully. More alarmingly, the Code was used to prosecute individuals deemed undesirables, often with the concurrent use of the laws to exonerate colon excesses\textsuperscript{33}.

These policies would contribute to a system of governance that made the integration of the native population impossible. Beyond this, they perpetuated and reinforced a bipolarity between the French and the Muslim identities which would not be lost on the native population. The senatus-consulte of 1865 \textit{de facto} inscribed the 'Muslim' status as one that had political undertones and repercussions. Being a Muslim under French law became synonymous with being unable to gain the political and judicial privileges of the \textit{pieds-noirs} colons. Native Algerians had to choose between being French and being Muslim: they could not be both. In this sense, it was the French authorities that institutionalised Islam's political meaning as an alternative to the colonial model at that time. That native Algerians would later reject the French model - and presence - in terms relating to Islam stems in part from this process.

A fourth area of importance is the unique status of Algeria in the French empire. Unlike its neighbours Tunisia and Morocco which were conquered under mandate of protectorate, Algeria suffered comprehensive colonisation involving large scale population movements, the complete restructuring of the political and judicial system, the destruction of local schooling, the imposition of new cultural norms, the disempowerment of Islamic order and, eventually, the incorporation of Algeria into French territory. With the acquisition of the status of region (three \textit{departements} in total), Algeria became France. This understandably created a strong sense of ownership for the French authorities, and the long-term settlement of a large and varied European population made the withdrawal from Algeria unthinkable.

That being said, Algeria remained a dual society: underneath the veneer of this regional status lied a colonised population with a status and sense of identity that remained

ambiguous. Natives spoke French and those who attended French-run schools were taught the finer points of French culture, but this assimilation remained uneven in its results. Algeria was French but were Algerians French? The evidence suggests that many natives from generations that had known nothing but colonisation would live their identity in hybrid fashion. The Young Algerians movement would for instance argue for greater political rights for natives through the ideal of liberty advocated by the French Revolution. The French presence was not questioned, but the lessons the Revolution were learnt and reinterpreted for a new setting. The coloniser was caught at its own game of socialisation. On the other hand, a remarkable resistance to cultural penetration and assimilation also persisted among many. This came in part from the legal status of Algerian natives under the Code de l'Indigenat. But added to such limitations were uneven patterns of integration in terms of education, political representation, land reform, tax, administrative and legal rights, with projects for positive reforms for the native population systematically undermined by the colon population.

This setting provided the impetus for the establishment of a tradition of cultural resistance in Algeria over the colonial period. Jean Ganiage notes that opposition to French rule remained as strong, if somewhat more muted, in the early 20th Century as it had upon colonisation. Here, Islam was never far from the surface as a motivating factor for questioning French (and thus un-Islamic) rule. The oppression of the Algerian religious establishment (which was at the time of invasion disparate geographically and diverse in terms of religious practice) led to religious reform in the long term, but also ultimately led to the commitment to the struggle for independence in Islamic terms. The turn of the Century saw the progressive but definite growth in demands for greater political rights on the part of Muslim Algerians, leading to the development of a multi-stranded movement for independence in the inter-war period. Original attempts at

34 Jean Ganiage. 1968. L'Expansion Coloniale de la France. pp.286ff. Ruedy summarises this phenomenon as such: "It had taken the Europeans half a century to overcome the Algerians' determined but perennially disunited military resistance. The assured maintenance of the occupation for another seventy years by institutionalising a system of legal discrimination that kept the native majority in a position of permanent inferiority. The major elements of that legal edifice were civil, political, juridical and fiscal inequality". See John Ruedy. 1992. Modern Algeria. p.86.
greater political emancipation had been framed within the framework of continued French rule, but upon the failure of the reformers to gain concessions, later movements would distanciate themselves further from the ideal of integration.

The second stage in the development of Islamism in Algeria is notable at this juncture. As Al-Ahnaf, Botiveau and Fregosi show in their discussion of contemporary political Islam in Algeria, *L'Algerie par ses Islamistes*, the Islamist movement in Algeria started as a “state of mind” before it developed as a movement, and later political parties. While Al-Qadir had proposed a model for resistance to French invasion in Islamic terms (perhaps the initial “state of mind”), the independentist movement led by Adbelhamid Ben Badis, the Ulema Association (*Association des Oulemas*), would set up an organised movement marrying the religious components of Islam and the political imperatives of the 1930s. This was a slow evolution, but an unmistakable stepping stone in the development of an Islamist political imagination. The original platform of the Association was explicitly apolitical: it emphasised the need for reform in religious practice in Algeria, both with individual believers and established religious institutions. Islam was dominated at the time by religious orders centered around local centres of worship of individual saints.

The Ulema Association’s first aim was one of reform and unification of Islam. However, beyond this commitment to purify Islam from maraboutism (through reform, or *Islah*) were aims which had inherent political ramifications: the unification of Algerian people under the banner of Islam, the promotion of Arabic language, and the defense of an Arabic culture. Four key concepts are key to understanding the social and political appeal of such a model: ummah (nation), cha’ab (the people), watan (the homeland),

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and *quawmiyya* (nationality). Inspired by the *Salafiyya* school of Islam, the Ulemas placed the current political struggle of Algerians into a broader religious context. These themes, in turn, would lie at the core of the Islamist point of view for years to come.

In the 1930s, the movement would spread from the Constantinois region to various local branches in rural areas. According to Jacques Berque, this process would lead to a new form of Islamic practice – along a *Jacobin* model – which would mediate the differences between traditional rural areas and the urban centres. The Ulema template would prove popular to both urban and the rural Middle Classes and Lower-Middle Classes. In turn, the Association would come in direct competition with another political movement for emancipation led by Messali Hadj. Both would prove critical to the rise of a distinctively populist political platform, but Messali Hadj would capture the hopes of disenchanted youth and gain the upper hand in the *Front Populaire* years, when compromise with the French still seemed possible. The followers of Ben Badis would bide their time, and become critical in the emancipation struggle that followed in the 1950s, and later in the competition over the control of the postcolonial state. Ben Badis' ideas would remain prominent among those willing to create and Islamic state in Algeria in the 1960s, and in the later years of Islamist renaissance.

Overall, the colonial period is one that can be characterised by uneven patterns of integration, with a dissonance between the aims of metropolitan France, and those of the colon population often at odds with regards to the status and right of natives. The particulars of this tripartite relationship, in turn were significant in shaping the nationalist movements of the early 20th Century. It is therefore in those terms that we can speak of a colonial legacy shaping the structures and aims of the postcolonial state, as well as influencing the birth of contemporary political Islam.

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45 The importance of the colonial legacy in Algeria is a dominant theme in much historical work. An example of such a focus is Yves Lacoste et al. 1960. *Algerie, Passe et Present*. For this type of argument see Benjamin Stora. 1991. *Histoire de l'Algerie Coloniale*. Stora states that contemporary Algeria is the result of a "colonial reality". p.6.
4.3.2. The War of Independence

Algerian nationalism entered its modern phase in the 1920s, but it is only after World War II that nationalist movements such as the PPA (Parti du Peuple Algérien) and its successor the MTLD (Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Democratiqes) found the means and the opportunity to organise large-scale revolt. The international context is of importance here. The participation of Algerian soldiers under the French banner in World War II created a generation of well-trained and experienced soldiers. The defeat of France and German occupation created a power vacuum in Algeria - and breathing space politically and culturally - for the occupied population, even though the lack of control by the metropole over the colon population led to noticeable reversals in the treatment of the local population (especially but not only the Jews). Most significantly, the war created the expectation that the sacrifice of Algerian lives for France was meaningful and that it would lead to greater political participation and rights for the colonised populations. When post-war France failed to meet these expectations, and in the context of the decolonisation of many parts of what was to become the Third World, the possibility of political uprising found new impetus. Most notably, the rise to power of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in Egypt in 1952 brought to the fore a new kind of pan-Arabic nationalism - and a thirst for empowerment which reached as far as the French protectorates of North Africa. The 1945-1954 period, as a result, is dominated by the growing confidence and unity of the nationalist movement in terms of its ideological commitment to emancipation, but also by the emergence of widely different views as to how this project could be achieved.

A series of attacks launched against institutions and members of the colonial administration on November 1, 1954 sparked a long, brutal and eventually successful independence war. The different phases of the war have been covered in detail

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46 Full-scale uprising did not occur until 1954, but early signs of rebellion were evident with the Setif uprising of 1945 which was met with disproportionate force, leading to 17,000 to 45,000 deaths (depending on accounts). See Manfred Halpern. 1948. "The Algerian Uprising of 1945" The Middle East Journal. pp.191-202.
elsewhere, but a short summary, and an overview of the themes which matter most to our analysis remains useful here. After the attacks of the 1st of November, it took both the Algerians and the French time to come to terms with the seriousness of the revolt, which remained limited to a small number of militants. It is only at the end of the year that the métropole sent more troops to cope with widening conflict. 1955 reflects this confusion with early FLN success met with ruthless repression by French forces while the ministry of Interior tried to draw up a rapid plan of reform for Algeria. 1955 and 1956 saw increasing political instability in French political circles with the weaknesses of the Fourth Republic becoming more apparent given the Algerian situation. On the 20th August 1956, the FLN convened at the Soummam Conference to draw a stronger political platform, sort out issues of leadership and plan for its political future in case of victory. Ideologically, this was a turning point for the party that showed, under the banner of CNRA (Comité National de la Révolution Algérienne) its unifying force and the bases of its future claims to political legitimacy. On the ground, however, the first years of the war were characterised by lack of revolutionary zeal on the part of many Algerians, and the difficulty of the FLN to broaden its appeal for a general call to revolution. The progressive amalgamation of most opposition groups into the FLN would remedy this to a certain extent, but the battle to convince the majority of Algerians of the necessity of independence at the price of armed struggle was far from won. In many ways, it is the stepping up of French repression of the insurrection, and the brutality characterising the now famous Battle of Algiers in 1957\(^{56}\), which changed these dynamics. The length of conflict helped create the setting for the growth of an independentist consciousness among Algerians, and the reported excesses of the French army - including accusations of widespread torture - made the case for independence stronger than ever.

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\(^{56}\) For a detailed and elegant historical analysis of the Battle of Algiers, see Alistair Horne. 1977. *A Savage War of Peace.* pp. 183ff. See also Pontecorvo's semi-documentary *La
This is not the only dimension of the conflict worth bearing in mind though: events and political decisions in France would also have a strong bearing on the shape and eventual outcome of the conflict. Successive governments had failed to solve the Algerian problem, and increasing criticism of the ends of and means used to keep Algeria French by the armed forces came under wide criticism by French civil society groups. At no previous time had the colon wishes been more at odds with political opinion in France - and such a division required the leadership and unifying force of both a head of government and of new institutions. The man for job was of course General de Gaulle, who drew up the framework for a new constitution that would enable him to have the freedom to operate on the ground and end the rebellion. Whether de Gaulle was prepared to let go of Algeria upon assuming his new powers in June 1958 is unlikely, but the possibility had become a de facto political reality. Like his predecessors, de Gaulle attempted to draw a programme of reforms, offered initiatives for amnesties and leniency for native combatants, and proposed a cease-fire to stop the momentum of the independence movement. He also made conciliatory, if ambiguous, gestures towards the colon population upon his visit. Despite these efforts though, the FLN rejected such measures, cornering de Gaulle into recognising the right of Algerians to self-determination in September 1959. The war was far from over however, since such a recognition couldn't be interpreted in any other way than betrayal by the colon population as well as powerful segments of the army making progress and sacrifices on the ground. A new phase of the conflict arose from this change of dynamics, notably with the creation of local militias and eventually the powerful OAS (Organisation Armee Secrete). From 1961 onwards, the OAS became a new participant in the hostilities, fighting both the Algerian independence movement in Algeria and the French government, with attempts on de Gaulle's life. For the FLN, the war against France, on the other hand, was not over. De Gaulle's suggestion that Algeria could be independent, and his treatment of FLN delegates as legitimate political interlocutors was contradicted in practice with continued army involvement. That being said, the political tide had turned against French Algeria both among natives and in French public opinion. With the OAS and the colon population increasingly isolated, the hostilities turned to terrorism tactics and a scorched earth policy on the part of the OAS, even the in the context of the Evian Accords of March 1962, which officially ended the war. Formal

Battaglia di Algeri (1965).
independence was officially granted in July 1962, in a continued climate of fear and revenge, and with the rapid departure of the colon population. The brutality of the war is of course notable, but so is the emotional sense of rupture brought upon by the war, both between Algeria and France, but also within Algeria and within France. Issues of internal divisions are of particular importance to the ideological evolution of the Algerian political lifeworld. Indeed, the independence movement, despite its strong roots, remained divided on the issue of tactics and aims well into several years into the conflict. Only one small wing of one independentist tendency (the PPA-MTLD) was responsible for the start of the insurrection with only nine key figures at its head. It would take several months to galvanise the rest of the PPA-MTLD constituency fully and effectively (originally 20,000 supporters in total), with the rest of the Algerian population still by and large divided on the issue of independence. Additionally, unlike many independentist groups, the branch of the independence movement lead by Messali Hadj would refuse to come under the banner of the nascent FLN, and in fact would compete for power and legitimacy within the insurrection for years to come under the banner of the MNA (Mouvement National Algerien). In fact, many of the early casualties of the war were due to infighting among native Algerians, either through attacks on members of the opposite independentist camp, or on Algerians collaborating with the French (or being too passive for the independentists' taste). Therefore, it is worth emphasising that the independence war in Algeria was neither spontaneous, nor united. It involved internal strife and violence deciding which tendency would take charge of the movement, and ultimately head an independent state (the FLN won, and Messali Hadj's contribution to Algerian nationalism over decades was officially erased from the memory of the new nation). Overall, the war was initially another native insurrection that

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53 Larbi Ben M'Hidi, Didouche Mourad, Rabah Bitat, Krim Belkacem, Mohamed Boudiaf, and Mostefa Ben Boulaid on Algerian soil; supporting the movement from Egypt were Mohamed Khider, Hocine Ait Ahmed and Ahmed Ben Bella.
54 Measures of unification and entente during the course of 1956 involved powerful groups such as Ferhat Abbas' UDMA and the Communist party.
55 This confrontation would last for almost as long as the war, from 1955 until 1962.
56 This would be exemplified by the ruthless elimination of collaborators with the French after the FLN victory.
57 See Benjamin Stora. 1991. La Gangrene et l'Oubli. Chapters 10,11 and 12 in particular on divisions within the independence movement, and their consequences for postcolonial nation-building.
broadened its constituency and scope over time and reached a momentum which ultimately could not be stopped. The divisions did not end there however. The dynamics of the war influenced changes in power among the leadership of the FLN first between internal and external leaders, and a few years into the conflict, from internal forces to a new military elite based at the frontiers. Common goals could not fully overcome power struggle within the FLN, explaining much of the competition and purging instincts of the FLN after independence.

What these different elements did have a common was a profound distaste for the inequalities and perceived hypocrisy of French colonial rule, and in particular the cultural aspects of colonisation. The aims of the movement reflected in the FLN critique of cultural problems associated with colonialism:

Colonialism has attacked the cultural and religious heritage of the Algerian nation, intent on depersonalizing the masses so as to exploit them further and to implement the policy of 'assimilation'... The results of this policy are characterized at present by the refusal to allow the teaching of Arabic in government schools and by many hindrances to free education\(^{58}\).

The great unifying force of the movement in this setting was the careful combination of two broad tendencies, seen as complementary: socialism and Islam. Most saliently, Islam was once again a key rallying call for cultural reassertion, it provided hope and a sense of pride, as well as a thirst for justice without compromise and a reason for self-sacrifice. The backing of the religious figures gave the FLN the moral legitimacy it needed and the spiritual vocabulary for armed struggle. Indeed, from the first attacks in 1954, the freedom fighters assumed the names of mudjahidin, 'the fighters of the faith'; they framed the obligation to rebel in terms of Jihad, and they adopted a rhetoric inspired from al-Qadir, adapted to a modern context. Such a strong religious resonance would hold great symbolic power in the postcolonial era. On the other hand, the FLN's attachment to socialism owed much ideologically to the communist doctrine of Mao Tsetung, and tactically to guerilla tactics developed in the Viet Minh in French Indochina, with the imprint of communism in terms of organisation\(^{59}\). This hybridity in designing


the aims of the movement, and the means to achieve them, was partially tactical (to accommodate different tendencies within the FLN, and to provide its armed branch, the ALN - Armée de la Libération Nationale - with effective tactical tools for warfare), and partially principled, since the combination of Islam and socialism seemed to encapsulate the desire for emancipation with the need for cultural authenticity. But tensions between the two tendencies were not to be easily overcome, both ideologically, and in terms of partisanship among leaders. In turn, the socialist content of the revolution, compounded by the FLN assimilation of or victory over rival groups, lead to its monopoly on political power and, most importantly, on political legitimacy. After the war, this would make the FLN party machine the only political player deserving to represent the Algerian people, leading to a near monopoly on political power in the postcolonial era60.

By the time independence was gained in 1962, between 500,000 and 1 million people had died as the result of the war, and the war had also led to strong economic and social restructuring, especially in the countryside. For France, the results would be equally devastating: the Fourth Republic had been brought to its knees, the issue of Algerian independence and of the war had torn French public opinion apart61, the overnight exodus of the colon population changed the political and social landscape of France irremediably, and Charles de Gaulle had almost been assassinated by some of its own citizens. But the Algerian population was at last free to form and consolidate an independent state. Still, the legacy of the war was one of unity and sacrifice but one which would come at a heavy price.

4.3.3 Four Key Postcolonial Periods

Our analysis leads us to the post-colonial era and the factors underpinning the growth of current Islamist groups per se. The social, economic and political factors outlined in this discussion emphasise long-term factors such as policies of Arabisation with more contingent factors relating to the socio-economic climate of the 1970s and 1980s. Here,

60 Benjamin Stora speaks of a conception of the nation tied to a vision of unity and thus a lack in dissonant voices on the path to postcolonial government. See Benjamin Stora. 1993. Histoire de la Guerre d'Algerie. p.44.

the failure of populist/socialist economic projects and social planning relying on strong oil prices to finance heavy industrialisation projects, and the failure of such projects to create the incentives for sustainable economic growth are notable. The neglect of the agricultural sector since independence made Algeria reliant almost exclusively on its oil and natural gas resources for revenue, and with devaluation of oil prices in the 1980s, much of the state's wealth dwindled, prompting heavy borrowing to meet domestic demands, and growing international debt problems. Many authors have pointed to the failure of authoritarian states to deliver economic growth as the root of political dissent and growing pressure from civil society for greater political pluralism. Algeria in the late 1980s is a textbook case illustrating such a trend with mounting social pressure in the wake of the failure of FLN-controlled regime to fulfil the conditions of its populist social contract. Such economic considerations - and their social and political implications are of great importance to explanations of the dynamics of the growth of oppositional social movements such as political Islam. With this borne in mind though, the question of why opposition to the state took the form of political Islam requires explanatory tools of a different type. For the purposes of this analysis, I rely on a chronological account of the phases of development - and roots causes - of political Islam in more detail to account for the specific ways in which political Islam interacted with the state. Political Islam is a region-wide phenomenon and there is little evidence to suggest that its effects should have been felt to any less degree in Algeria than anywhere else in the region. Still, the confrontation between Islamists and the state in Algeria took on a different - and more extreme - turn there than elsewhere, highlighting the unique setting in which Algerian Islamism took shape.

4.3.3.1. The Ben Bella Era: 1962-1965

The end of the war saw divisions within the FLN become fractures. In addition, the Islamic current, which had been a key source of support for the FLN, became increasingly sidelined. The presence of powerful competing ideas inside the FLN (principally socialism) ensured that a specifically Islamic state was never likely to be achieved.

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63 Most of the religious leaders of the time were purged from the party and replaced by
Nevertheless, Islam and Islamic symbols were still clearly present in the debate and the formulation of the new state. For instance, Islam became the religion of the state and the constitution stipulated that the president should be a Muslim. Politically however, the consensus built into the FLN party machine was one revolving around a developmental populist form of socialism\textsuperscript{64}, inspired by other socialist experiments, but also with the concern to be authentically Algerian in character, as expressed by President Ben Bella: "We want an Algerian socialism, born of our national experience, benefiting from the experience of socialist countries"\textsuperscript{65}.

The transition to postcolonial status implied the drawing of new bases for governance and an underpinning ideology that could articulate the importance of authenticity. Jean-Claude Vatin comments on the complex ideological makeup of the new state characterised by features strongly linked to combination of the "images of a glorified past", involving the "idealisation of pre-colonial authorities":

\begin{quote}
Liberated Algeria sings the praises of the \textit{djemaa} of its ancestors, of the \textit{khalifalik} and \textit{aghalik} of Abdel Kader, and in doing so it emphasises certain favourable aspects in a partial analysis which provides it with the fiction of a supposedly balanced and harmonious world... it shows the Algerians' wish to find their place in their on history, to see the past in terms of black and white, to discover pointers for their own ideology and to revitalise their roots\textsuperscript{66}.
\end{quote}

This process, in turn, was compounded by a strong official rejection of the possibility of neo-colonial influence - with Ben Bella's admission that such concerns created rifts within the party machine:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
That is the big question: Neocolonialism! When one asks us why we are divided after the CNRA at Tripoli, when one asks us what is the rift which opened in a group of men all united in the same faith to expel the oppressor, well then, I tell you that at the bottom of the dissension among us lay the question: what is our attitude toward neocolonialism? In other words, what is the ideological content of the Algerian revolution? I have asserted that neocolonialism is like the plague for us... Colonialism has been modernized, it has become more up to date, less crude; it has realized that the people cannot be dominated by the whip, by machine guns, by bloody repression. So it looks for other means, more progressive systems of domination: an enlightened colonialism, so to speak, based on a fictitious equality, with colonial peace hanging over our land and at the same time with economic and military domination of key points of our society. But this means a new form of slavery and oppression.

At the same time, Vatin points to the complex interaction between pre-colonial symbols and the reality of postcolonial administration, involving a large degree of similitude with colonial patterns - with the caveat of socialist ideology thrown in for good measure. Such confusion and hybridity carried over to policies pertaining to culture, and particularly language and education, especially with Ben Bella's grand project of Arabisation, which carried with it an attachment to pre-colonial socio-cultural constructs clashing with the reality of a state where little classical Arabic was spoken. Added to this was the context of a postcolonial sense of unease with regards to French culture leading to partial assimilation of French cultural norms on the one hand, and nativist overcompensation on the other.

On the ground, the main ideological construct of the party machine under Ben Bella would rest on an attempt to merge the two central concepts identified as the key to the postcolonial condition - Islam and socialism - into the framework of Islamic socialism. More mundanely perhaps, but just as importantly, single party rule legitimised and

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70 For an in-depth discussion of the principles of Islamic socialism and the popular debates revolving around it see Raymon Vallin. 1973. "Muslim Socialism in Algeria. in I. William Zartman (ed.) Man, State and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib. pp.50-64.
strongly related to the conception of post-revolutionary political needs of stability and legitimacy: in that conception,

... only the FLN, as the foremost revolutionary force of the republic, can guarantee this stability, and this by ensuring the conformity of the nation's policy to the orientation traced by the Revolution for all Algerian. On these grounds, the necessity of the party unique is firmly established.

In that sense, FLN defined itself as the political player with "the only mandate from the people that is possible in Algeria". This issue of importance to the development of civil society groups in the 1970s, since the development of political pluralism was stunted at the birth of state, both in deed, and through ideology. The anti-statist stance of opposition groups such as Islamist movements would be a visible result to this emphasis on complete control of the political lifeworld by the FLN from early on.

Still, this ambitious ideological project met with some resistance both within the FLN and with large segments of the population. The difficulty that the president had in convincing both the religious establishment and the general population of the value of his original construct led to criticism, concessions to the more religious wing of the FLN, and mounting unrest. The al-Qiyam association led the first Islamist campaign to undermine the state at that time. Influenced by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qiyam (The Values) articulated a conservative critique of the increasingly beleaguered government and contributed to its demise. Arguably, al-Qiyam can be seen as the first Islamist movement of the post-independence era, and an inspiration to the doctrine of later movements. At the heart of the association lay one of main nationalist figures of the time: Malek Bennabi, which may explain the legal status al-Qiyam would enjoy upon its creation in 1964. The aims of the movement were in line with Islamist programmes developed elsewhere in the Muslim world, but took on a specific meaning at a key period of Algerian history: that of the foundation of the state. The islamisation of society and preaching of Islam were most significant aspects of al-Qiyam's publication, Majallat.

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74 This is further developed in chapter five.
al-Tadhib al-Islami (Journal of Muslim Education). Emphasis was placed on the need to bring back the traditional values of Islam into Algerian society and the resistance to foreign ideologies threatening the authenticity of the Muslim way of life. This, in turn, would come hand in hand with pressure to create an Islamic form of governance on the part of the state. Al-Qiyam’s critique would thus be impregnated with the political and cultural realities of the time, as a reaction against the cultural influence of France during the colonial period, and in response to the creation of opportunities to influence the future shape of governance. In practice, the relationship of the association with the state degenerated quickly from high profile conferences to violent confrontation with left-wing trade unions and students, and condemnation by the left-wing intelligentsia. The movement’s religious doctrine antagonised secular elements of society. Its claims concerning legitimate rule under shari’a law and against foreign ideologies undermined Ben Bella’s attempt at promoting Islamic socialism. By the end of 1965, al-Qiyam had been disavowed by the state\(^\text{75}\), but other Algerian Islamist thinkers were ready to follow in its footsteps, Mahfoud Nahnah being a prominent example.

Such events were however not the main cause of the deposition of the Ben Bella government: internal divisions as to the ideological route to be taken by the postcolonial nation-state were of importance here, but most central to the shift in power from the historical leadership of the revolution to the external army factions which took over the final phases of the conflict reflected continuing divisions among the participants in the war of independence and struggle for the political spoils of war. In other words, the accession of Houari Boumediene to political prominence owes much to the shifting allegiances within the party in terms of political power\(^\text{76}\). This mixture of power struggle and ideological rivalry would form the foundation of the political lifeworld of postcolonial Algeria:

\[\text{Algeria terms itself a 'popular and democratic republic' and professes to follow a 'specifically Algerian socialism'. In fact these phrases mask an incoherent ideology never explicitly defined... and also never put into practice. They also conceal a continuing undercover struggle between elements influenced by secular, Marxist principles and others who would have Algeria give primacy to Islamic values. Finally, they hide the fact, since the coup of June 19, 1965, Algeria is a military}\]

\(^{75}\) It would only be officially banned by the Interior Ministry in March 1970.

\(^{76}\) For a similar argument, see John Ruedy. 1992. Modern Algeria. p.197.
dictatorship. On June 19, 1965, the army deposed President Ben Bella in a bloodless coup and the new leader and president Colonel Houari Boumediene gained control of the polity with the promise of political openness and cultural change. His legacy, like his predecessor's, would remain ambiguous however.

4.3.3.2. The Boumediene Era: 1965-1978

Despite Boumediene's stress of Islamic roots and his own religiously conservative background, his main agenda was not one of religious revival but rather one of nationalism. The Boumediene era was one associated with the rise of the postcolonial developmental dream, heavy industrialisation, land reform and cultural and linguistic change under the banner of a nationalist programme based on the socialist political ideas prevalent in the Third World at the time. It was a time of great economic achievements, especially in the 1960s, but not one where political liberalisation was put on the agenda. In fact, despite Boumediene's condemnation of his predecessor as a demagogue trying to undermine the aims of the revolution, his persistence in pursuing a policy of economic development in socialist terms is notable. He did little to liberalise what was now a military-controlled single party system. This was a common combination in the

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78 also spelled Boumedienne.
80 Boumediene was quoted as saying "The morbid deviations of personal power have profoundly changed our institutions....In trying to muzzle and tame the vital forces of the Nation, in hardening and freezing the governing bodies of the country, in hoping to create the myth of the 'providential man', the dictator deliberately violated revolutionary legitimacy". Two points are worth noting here: first, it is notable that Boumediene condemned his predecessor in terms of his failure to live up to the ideals of the revolution. This stance would lead to the traditional appraisal of political legitimacy of rule in terms of revolutionary ideas. Here, for instance, Boumediene states that his coup "was written in the historical logic of the revolution". Secondly, this stance did not mean any significant change in the process of institutionalising socialism in that revolutionary historical logic: "socialism is part of our national heritage". See Houari Boumediene. 1973. "The Third Anniversary of Algerian Independence", reprinted in I. William Zartman (ed.) Man, State and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib. pp.127-130. quotes from pp.127 and 128.
developing world corresponding to what is commonly termed a populist social contract where citizens 'trade off' their political rights for economic development and stability. Under the terms of this contract, the party machine aimed at incorporating most avenues for political expression through civil society and the few free options for political expression (such as the media and the mosques which went increasingly under the control of state bureaucracies)

The most significant aspect of the idea of legitimacy in governance during this time was the importance of army control of all aspects of the political process - with noticeable consequences on the way the post-independence political lifeworld came to be articulated and institutionalised:

1. There is no legitimacy outside the revolutionary symbols, groups, and policies. The Revolution is invoked by any government seeking to legitimize its incumbency, to which the opposition responds by decrying the betrayal of the Revolution and by promising a return to it.
2. The revolutionary war gave rise to a strong millennialist feeling, including immediate expectations for the fruits of the revolution.
3. If power in such a situation does not grow directly out of the barrel of a gun, it does grow out of the possession of a gun... The Army's role as guardian of the revolution gives it a primary task of safeguarding its own group interests.

The army had of course played a significant role in decolonisation, but the relative power of various army factions were underplayed by the rhetoric of the victorious FLN. These differences would remain apparent in the Ben Bella years, but not explicitly articulated. With the faction led by Boumediene coming into power in 1965, the role of the army would not diminish, on the contrary. The single-party structure of FLN would remain in place, but Boumediene would rely on the power of the military, and more specifically of the feared military run political 'police' (securite militaire), to keep in power.

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Opponents and potential replacements were eliminated, exiled or sidelined (some historic leaders of the FLN were still alive). The circle of members of the military in real control of the executive and judiciary remained small, but grew in significance, while more independent committees (such as the *Conseil de la Revolution*) dwindled. Key political supporters were kept under control through a share of the hydrocarbon profit share, but the lion’s share of the economic benefits of the new economy would be monopolised at the top of the power pyramid. It is no coincidence that Algerian heads of state are military men. Officially populist, the Algerian state would increasingly be ruled by the few, for the benefit of the same few. The themes of fidelity to the ideals of the revolution, adherence to the principles of Islam and socialist redistribution of goods grew increasing distant from the political reality of a military dictatorship.

Specifically with regards to political Islam, the 1965-1971 period was marked by the government’s success in controlling the growth a sizeable opposition based on Islam. Boumediene used a two-pronged approach of repression (when necessary) and incorporation (when possible) to prevent repeat performances of the *al-Qiyam* phenomenon. In this regard, Boumediene was infinitely more skilful than his predecessor in handling religious opinion towards his essential secular socio-economic and political programme. Despite these efforts however, the 1970s saw the progressive growth in power and confidence of nascent Islamist groups which were critical of state policy and behaviour. Two sets of events can be seen as catalysts in this regard. Firstly, the development of full-scale Arabisation programmes at all levels of education progressively changed the cultural landscape of Algeria, with specific consequences for the development of political Islam85. Such programmes were originally set up by the Ben Bella government in 1964 to apply to primary and secondary education; in turn, they became a priority for the Boumediene regime with mixed results. On the one hand, because the policy was not applied uniformly, it began to highlight and exacerbate class differences between poor rural Arabisants and elite Francophones. This gap applied both in terms of educational opportunities, and with regards to eventual access to career opportunities. Such patterns of class conflict would become more exacerbated as socio-

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economic problems became more acute in the late 1970s and 1980s, with the overlap between 'being Arabisant' and 'being Islamist' growing steadily. On the other hand, the educational needs of Arabisation required the rapid development of a teaching corps capable of using Arabic fluently in classroom situations. In the direct aftermath of the independence war, French remained the dominant language of education and the regime had little choice but to call upon foreign teachers. A large number of these immigrant teachers were Egyptian Muslim Brothers who brought more than language skills with them. The fact that policies of Arabisation brought (Islamist) Muslim Brothers from Egypt after independence was a cultural factor of importance since the ideals of Hasan al-Banna, and later Sayyid Qutb, were introduced into schools, and developed through university life as a result. It can thus be argued that Islamism was introduced directly into schools to a whole generation of children who would associate Arabic with authenticity and French with foreign domination and class exploitation. More generally, the political roots of an Islamist alternative were laid into the imaginary of a generation through the most powerful of communication tools: education.

Secondly, the state became actively involved in the development of Islamist activism in its management of the ambitious, but unpopular, programme of land reform dubbed the 'Agrarian Revolution' in the 1970s. Land reform under Boumediene implied the collectivisation of land ownership and the creation communal farms. Left-wing university groups nurtured by the regime as 'civil society' were to be the ambassadors of this programme. However, rural populations, and especially land owners, resisted the implementation of this policy, indicating a rift between the socialist wishes of the regime with the reality of rural life. Additionally, with the launch of the Agrarian Revolution as policy, the Boumediene regime managed to incense the Islamist opposition to a socialist (if not communist) political and economic agenda. The careful compromise between Islam and socialism had been upset. To many Islamists, socialism/communism was a foreign construct which had been developed in the Eastern bloc as a staunchly atheist political programme. While the Islamist viewpoint emphasised the importance of social justice and equality (a left-wing platform in some sense), it did so on religious grounds, and with the proviso that property rights should not come under attack. This programme was a step too far in the direction of socialism without, or even against, Islam.
Once the revolutionary plans of the regime proved too unpopular to implement, and in order to counter the left-wing youth groups that had become increasingly difficult to control, the regime used the Islamist groups to undermine the ambassadors of a policy now deemed embarrassing. Without having to lose face by abandoning its policy, the regime simply stopped advocating the Agrarian Revolution and let the Islamist groups in universities oust left-wing groups, sometimes violently. This had a profound effect on the future direction of the movement due to the power-play the regime enacted in response to growing popular discontent vis-à-vis such a programme. Here, the relaxed attitude of the regime toward nascent Islamist opposition groups in universities in the early to mid 1970s helped bury the disaster of the Agrarian Revolution and made sure that left-wing civil society groups never gained their own voice, and power.

It is evident that the subsequent growth of Islamism in Algeria was not anticipated by the regime as one which could not be ultimately controlled in a similar way. However, the consolidation of the Islamist ideal and its spread beyond the university setting went far beyond the expectations of the regime, an occurrence compounded by the growing crisis in political legitimacy of the state prompted by lack of social opportunities and a downward economic turn. These were inherently linked to state policies and clientelist networks institutionalised by the state. It is thus logical to assume that political opposition to the regime found fertile ground in an underdeveloped civil society in the late 1970s and 1980s. The prominence of Islamism as a contender for political power was only made obvious in the wake of the 1988 food riots, but the signs of its strength and popularity were visible long before the process of democratisation made legalisation as a political party, or parties, possible. The first signal of Islamism's hold on the public mind came through the growth of private mosques, especially in poorer urban areas, which by avoiding official channels of Islam, claimed their own niche in civil society. The development of a set of vibrant political debates and passionate preaching of self-taught imams literally opened up previously taboo discussions on state legitimacy in religious - and thus moral - terms. This process took time to take hold of urban populations, but the combination of social welfare activities at the local level and the provision of religious guidance proved a winning formula for various Islamist groups. At this point, no unified

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Islamist movement was noticeable. But the lack of overall guiding structures shouldn't obscure the variety of exchanges, influences and sometimes rivalry among imams, groups and mosques.

Overall, the 1970s saw the growth of radical political movements both in universities and through mosques. Still this movement remained timid compared to Islamist equivalent in Syria, Egypt and Iran for instance. The last few years of the Boumediene administration were also marked by the manipulation of various emerging civil society groups to consolidate state power, with an intricate web of shifting alliances making the state independent from any specific group. It is only after Boumediene's death in 1978 that the Algerian state, failing to meet its obligations under the terms of its populist social contract, lost control of public opinion in a significant way to the advantage of the Islamist movement. Still overall, it is noticeable that ideological contradictions continued to plague the political agenda of the state in the 1970s. The contradictions of Arabisation worked as an illustration to this rupture, but on the whole:

The problem of defining Algeria's identity within the framework of Islamism, Arabism, and Algerianism was made all the more difficult by the cultural rupture between the national political leadership and the rural or recently urbanized masses.

It is this ideological gap between the elites and civil society that Islamism learnt to excel at filling.

4.3.3.3. The Chadli Benjedid Era: 1979-1992

President Chadli spent the first few years of his political rule liberalising the regime's attitude to Islamist groups leading to their rapid development and their growth in confidence. From 1981 onwards, this activism saw the rise in violence by Islamist activists and their stockpiling of weapons, a trend which was met in November 1982 by

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88 Through natural causes (a rare blood disorder).
the arrest of some 400 militants and a new repressive phase which did little but strengthen the resolve and popularity of Islamists. In this increasingly volatile environment, the Chadli regime made some key concessions to the Islamist political agenda to retain control of political opinion. Overall, the influence of the movement seems to have grown steadily in the 1980s, most noticeably in the areas of dress and public social behaviour. On a national level, this progressive political and social empowerment became most evident through the successful social pressure applied on the regime to revise the Family Code to bring it in line with the Islamist interpretation of Islamic principles. In a surprisingly apathetic political climate, the 1984 Family Code curtailed women’s rights under the law in ways that could only be interpreted as a reversal of post-independence gains, especially in terms of custody rights and the right to divorce. It is arguable that such a move by the regime could be seen as an attempt to reclaim religious legitimacy from the Islamist opposition - or steal its 'moral thunder', so to speak. This is only one instance of the subtle power play between the regime and its opposition before 1988 though.

This climate was in turn underpinned by the growing crisis in the legitimacy of the state due to several factors. Firstly, Chadli’s lack of charisma (compared to his predecessors) and his government's legitimacy being put into question because of poor economic performance amidst accusations of widespread corruption all contributed to mounting civil unrest. Politically, this was underpinned by the growing alienation of the regime from public life. Islamism, at that time, was only one expression of an increasingly vocal and organised civil society. Furthermore, the growing economic inequalities stemming from clientelist networks siphoning the wealth produced through the exploitation of natural resources, coupled with rapid demographic growth, further undermined the

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93 On the issue of corruption in Algeria since independence, see Djillali Hadjadj. 1999. Corruption et Democratie en Algerie. Paris: La Dispute/Snedit. This a controversial source, but with many well illustrated points.
This crisis created a niche where Islamism could flourish and led to general social unrest culminating in the food riots of October 1988, which were not only a political turning point for the whole of Algerian political life, but also a beginning for the Islamist bid for political power. The riots highlighted the failure of the regime and the necessity of political liberalisation. They were also significant in that they were met by extreme violence by the army leading to an estimated 150-500 deaths (these numbers are widely disputed). The riots had economic and social underpinnings - but the violent repression of demonstrations by the army served to precipitate an acute crisis in state legitimacy and found political representation as a focal point for demands for social change. Several options were opened to the beleaguered Chadli Benjedid government at that time, even though political and economic concessions were unavoidable. Perhaps surprisingly, Chadli Benjedid opted for rapid and complete democratisation of the political system, the instigation of freedom of the press and the opening up of civil society to create the conditions for genuine pluralism. Noble as they may seem, such aims were underpinned by the firm belief on the part of the political elite that the ruling FLN could not lose a free and fair election, a conviction not shared by prominent members of the army.

After his formal 're-election' in December 1988 (he was the only candidate), Chadli introduced a new constitution which removed the monopoly on power of the ruling party, introduced a formal separation of the party from the state, allowed for greater freedom of expression (especially through the press), and introduced multiparty elections. This constitution was formally endorsed by popular referendum in February 1989. This process worked as the catalyst to the greater integration among rural and

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96 A number of good historical and analytical sources were used in this overview. For historical narrative see Michael Willis. 1996. The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History. Reading: Ithaca (Garnett). The Chapters on the post-1992 period were particularly useful. For an good analysis of the basic dynamic of the descent into civil war, Severine Labat. 1995. Les Islamistes Algeriens: Entre les Urnes et le Maquis. (Paris: Seuil) is useful, even though Luis Martinez' analysis in La Guerre Civile en Algerie is more sophisticated and up to date. See also Amine Touati. 1995. Algerie, Les Islamistes a l'Assaut du Pouvoir. Paris: L'Harmattan.

urban Islamist groups under one legal political banner. The Islamist response to liberalisation was the creation of the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut - Islamic Salvation Front), a loose coalition of Islamist groups that became finally endorsed as a political party by the authorities on September 16, 1989. Despite early signs that Islamists were not interested in democracy, the FIS lost no time and busily recruited supporters and mounted and extended array of information networks and charitable organisations in the run-up to the local elections of June 1990. The initial popularity of the FIS in the run-up to the municipal elections of the 12 June 1990 can be explained both in terms of ideology and as a result of tactical choices. The unifying rhetoric of the slogan 'Islam is the solution' captured the mood of the electorate. The systematic opposition of the FIS to the regime (with regards to issues of economic mismanagement, corruption, lack of moral legitimacy and foreign meddling) added relevance and poignancy to an otherwise vague political project. In addition, the involvement of the FIS supporters in grass-root social welfare and charity activities would win hearts, while rallying public support at the key election time would ensure votes98.

Bearing this in mind, it should also be noted that the scope and speed of the democratisation process led to the rapid legitimisation of a number of informal groups into political parties. The FIS represents a prominent but not unique example of such a transition from a diffuse set of groups and individuals into a full-fledged party aiming for access to official channels of power. The Kabyle dominated Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (RCD) also aimed to encapsulate an oppositional agenda in political and cultural terms. Other Islamist groups such as Hamas and En-Nahda also formed their independent political parties, albeit with less success than the FIS99.

President Chadli had argued that elections could not be "selective" and thus that Islamists could not be excluded from running on religious grounds. Still, he had not anticipated the election results that ensued. It has been argued that Chadli had struck a deal with Islamists to make the FIS upon its creation the logical descendant of the FLN,

most probably as a pragmatic way to co-opt the Islamist opposition into power-sharing. The elections and their aftermath were to be the test of that pact. Polls had suggested a comfortable victory for candidates of the FLN with the FIS as second place contenders predicted to gather around 25% of the vote. The results however, were a clear victory for the FIS with 54.3% of communal seats (853/1539) and 57.4% of wilaya (regional) seats (31/48), with most support coming from urban areas. This was compounded with a disastrous performance of the FLN, with only 28.1% of the vote in local seats and 27.5% of wilaya seats. Under a platform of economic reform, social and cultural change, the Islamists successfully reclaimed legitimacy from the ruling elite.

Understandably, the regime's attitude to the FIS changed in the wake of the FLN's dismal electoral performance. From accommodation, President Chadli Benjedid's strategy moved toward a policy of co-optation coupled with attempts at containment. The manipulation of the electoral process (whereby elections where delayed to allow the regime to modify electoral laws to disadvantage the FIS) and the withdrawal of funds from local councils to undermine the FIS' credibility were used a ways to curtail further FIS victories, but in the event of a FIS take-over after the elections, Chadli prepared himself for political cohabitation.

The record of Islamist in power at the local level is difficult to assess in these circumstances. The regime was also very apt at playing up on the fears of a theocratic dictatorship many Algerians felt vis-a-vis the FIS, often with good reason. Still, a number of patterns can be observed even through this limited experience. First, the success of the FIS in electoral terms touched a mixture of constituencies: including the large cities, middle-size cities, and rural areas stricken by poverty. For Severine Labat, it is this multiplicity that conferred on the FIS its dual identity as a social movement taking on the plight of the poorest, and a political party articulating the hopes of the upwardly mobile middle classes. This would suggest that the FIS drew its support from a varied social base, which is a success in itself. Secondly, the result of the elections brought noticeable

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change to the local councils concerned. Islamists in local constituencies did not revolutionise the political sphere overnight, but their focus on redistribution of goods and social welfare had positive effects (which explains the continued, if more abated, popularity of the FIS in later elections). Additionally, the most noticeable change was in the area of public mores, especially in sea-side areas, with questions of dress (such as bathing suits), music, and the consumption of alcohol in bars being put into question in several constituencies\textsuperscript{102}. More significantly, moves were made to end mixed education and impose Arabic as the sole official language in some instances\textsuperscript{103}. Both detractors and supporters saw these changes as precursors of things to come. All in all, therefore, it can be seen that elected FIS representatives lost no time and spared no effort in implementing an Islamist agenda on the ground. The results of such a commitment were also clear: those opposed to the Islamist political project only became more vehement in their opposition (on a variety of grounds, the libertarian one being the most clearly articulated). On the other hand, supporters of the FIS were inspired by these initial steps.

With the army officially withdrawing from political life in the FLN (while keeping tight control of the executive and judiciary), a further election victory in the legislative elections of the following year seemed inevitable. Yet the relative freedom of the president to handle democratisation should not obscure the army’s complete lack of support for a democratic outcome which could threaten their power, prestige and sizeable economic interests. Externally, cries of outrage at the possibility of a legitimately elected ‘fundamentalist’ party, denoted the unease many commentators felt at the unpredictable outcomes Islamism in power might bring.

Despite these efforts, and in the context of the continued failure of non-Islamist opposition groups to create a coherent alternative to it on a national basis, the legislative elections looked like another easy victory for the FIS. The first round of elections of December 26, 1991 confirmed such predictions with the FIS gathering 47.3% of the vote with 231/430 seats won on the first round, and the FLN plummeting to 23.4% of the vote. Notable also was the respectable performance of smaller Islamist parties Hamas (5.3%) and En-Nahdah (2.2%), taking the popularity of the Islamist political alternative clearly


\textsuperscript{103} See Michael Willis. 1996.\textit{The Islamist Challenge in Algeria}. p. 158.
over the 50% mark overall in the first round. Both the regime and some members of the secular opposition called for the abandonment of the second ballot, now that the prospect of an 'Islamic state' loomed closer than ever. The president was rumoured to have attempted to negotiate some form of political cohabitation with the future Islamist-dominated General Assembly. The army, however, did not share Chadli's enthusiasm, as they feared both loss of power and that Islamists would lead Algeria to economic and political disaster. On January 11, 1992 (only five days before the second round was to take place), and under considerable pressure from the army, President Chadli announced his resignation in a televised programme. He stated: "Given the difficulty and gravity of the current situation, I consider my resignation necessary to protect the unity of the people and the security of the country".

Responses to the halting of the second ballot of the December 1991- January 1992 legislative elections and the forced resignation of Chadli Benjedid correspondingly led to muffled condemnation (masking a sense of relief) internationally. Our analysis pointed to the almost certain victory of the FIS had the second round gone ahead, but should also highlight to the sizeable decline in the Islamist electoral performance in the first round by comparison to its stunning victory in local elections just 18 months previously.

4.3.3.4. the Civil War

The army's involvement led to the complete reversal of the democratisation process and establishment of a transitional army-controlled government, the HCE (Haut Comité d'État). Upon cancellation of the elections, the FIS leaders had cautiously condemned the end of the process, but no calls to arms or for a coup were made. Perhaps surprise had a part to play in this relative apathy. Alternatively, FIS leaders may have felt that, with its relative control of popular opinion, a deal in terms of power-sharing with the army could still be negotiated. In the few months that followed however, the FIS saw its status as a

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106 On the dynamics of the State/Islamist confrontation in the aftermath of the cancellation
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Violence in Algiers' suburbs (such as 'Les Eucalyptus') mounted as local Islamist caïds established veritable fiefdoms with relative impunity. Replacing the elected Islamist councilors on the ground, young Islamist militants quickly built on their popularity in suburban Algiers to intimidate the armed forces and police out of various pockets of territory. With this new power came the progressive growth of rackets and intimidation of the local population to keep gangs of young Islamists into funds. Violence against the police and army became common place, and delinquency became the hallmark of this new generation of Islamists. With older militants imprisoned or exiled, new groups found refuge in a lucrative way of life. The meaning Islamist political programme, in this atmosphere of violence and intimidation, was lost.

Local victories against the police in 1993 and 1994 underscored a wider change in the dynamics of the conflict where Islamist groups became increasingly alienated from their constituency and isolated from one another. Martinez also points to the progressive return of democratisation, under strict control of the regime, as the catalyst to the influx of international aid into the state's coffers. This helped financing the long-term establishment of a war economy and the creation of new clientelist networks to lure young militants away from the caïd way of life. The ensuing period saw the geographical broadening and deepening of patterns of violence. For the second time in less than fifty years, hillside camps or maquis were established in rural areas as strongholds for Islamist forces. Taking violence to the countryside brought new opposition to Islamism in the shape of former FLN combatants supportive of the regime, but also new ways of procuring support and resources. Patterns of violence also became increasingly random, or if not random, high casualty-oriented and directed towards 'civilians' caught up between opposite 'obligatory' allegiances. The degree of state involvement in such patterns has been widely debated but it is certain that the army itself

Search for a Civil Pact" Middle East Report 25, no. 192, pp.2ff.

113 Luis Martinez. 1995. "L'Enivrement de la Violence".
legal political party revoked, and its leaders and militants imprisoned. This move provoked few objections on the part of the Algerian population, even from those who had voted for the FIS. Many other oppositional parties welcomed the cancellation of elections because of fears of a theocratic government, including the RCD, and Et-Tahaddi (communist), as well as the influential UGTA trade union. With its hierarchical structure removed, the FIS coalition split into many groups reflecting existing divisions among party members. The democratic means for acquiring power having been discredited, the younger and more urban segments of the FIS tended to gravitate towards more violent groups wanting to spearhead a new revolution. This was countered by the 'old guard' of Islamism willing to adopt a more guarded approach involving consciousness-raising, political pressure through protest and appeals to the international community.

The split was more complex than this dichotomy between the followers of Ali Belhadj and those of Abassi Madani respectively seems to suggest though. Rivalry between groups resurfaced without the delicate power-sharing balance brought by the combined Madani/Belhadj leadership and in the absence of the promise of electoral victory as a reward for unity. Regional factions went their separate ways and exiled supporters and leaders interpreted the meaning of the crisis and the required steps to remedy the situation in widely different manners without an overall unifying framework of leadership. The full role of the regime in this process of fragmentation remains unclear, but under army control, the state moved quickly in the direction of open repression, selectively arresting local FIS officials and prominent FIS supporters. This show of strength may have explained the lack of public uprising in the early months of 1992, and led to the first violent acts of retaliation of the part of Islamist groups through political assassinations of representatives of the regime locally. Still, at this point, the regime was

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up on the agenda of European politics. That being said, the anti-Islamist reflexes of the French political elite were only reinforced through the use of violent means, proving counterproductive in the long-term both for Islamists in Algeria, and in terms of the integration of North African immigrants into French society in general.

1995 was also a turning point in the war with the state regaining the upper hand in the conflict, partially through the efficient use of international aid to carry out the military campaign and to provide alternative ways of gaining financial resources for potential young militants. The progressive co-optation of a new generation of Islamists could be put into place, but the results of such a policy were mixed, with an enfeebled but still varied form of Islamist armed opposition persisting. Elections were finally held on November 16, 1995, with Zeroual elected as president in less than pluralist conditions. Some opposition parties were allowed to run, including some smaller Islamist parties identified as 'moderate', but not the FIS. The fairness of the results of this election has been cast into doubt also, but without definite proof. In any case, Zeroual won the election convincingly with 61% of the vote, and a strong Islamist performance, with Mahfoud Nahnah's Hamas gaining 25.6% of the vote is also notable. This sharp rise in the popularity of Hamas denotes, in the absence of the FIS as a contender for power, the strength in political commitment of one quarter of the voters to the Islamist political agenda, regardless of the violence of the previous years and of the possible consequences. Islamism thus was not eliminated as a political project with the cancellation of the 1992 elections and the disbanding of the FIS. Despite much criticism and condemnation of this forced normalisation in the political landscape of Algeria, this election did herald a progressive return to democratisation with the inclusion of Islamists in government. This form of co-optation came to underpin the political strategy of the state with regards to the Islamist political agenda, while the military strategy on the ground focused on more radical aims. 1996 saw the introduction of the legal provisions needed to complement this set of policies with a new constitution curtailing opposition rights and banning 'radical' Islamists from political participation and office. This move was widely condemned by Islamists as well as the non-Islamist opposition, but with little effect. Finally, the ruling party reinvented itself to shed its tarnished image and complete the return to pre-1988 politics (with a democratic twist). The party of the regime would now be called the RND (Rassemblement National pour la Democratie), with a strong
became split on the issue of policy toward Islamism. What had now become a fully fledged civil war could be handled through negotiation, co-optation and some degree of power-sharing (as advocated by the 'conciliators') or though all and all 'eradication'\textsuperscript{116}. Regime behaviour in this regard appears rather erratic as different branches/factions of the armed forces carried widely different, if not opposite policies, on the ground.

On January 31, 1994 the appointment of General Lamine Zeroual as the new head of state (in view of a return to democratic elections) heralded a progressive return to normal relations with the outside world. In this setting, internal chaos continued despite a failed attempt to create a forum for negotiation at the Sant' Egidio colloquium in November 1994 - and the resulting Rome Accords of January 1995. Despite the presence of every opposition force at the negotiating table, and strong mediation, no result came of the colloquium in the absence of state support for a negotiated settlement\textsuperscript{117}. This tension between the idea of a return to elections and the refusal of the regime to engage politically with its opposition is telling - democratisation and cease-fire here would be solely on the state's terms. In reality, the stakes of the war rose to new levels in the course of 1994, with the GIA groups declaring 'total war' on the state, with the unambiguous response of Zeroual of 'total eradication' of Islamists on the ground. The GIAs remained, because of their amorphous structure, more immune to state repression in the short term than other Islamists.

Also, the hijacking of an Algiers-Paris Air France flight on Christmas Eve 1994 ended with the intervention of the French security forces and the killing of the four Islamists responsible. This would only be the first attempt to export the state-Islamist confrontation to France, who was accused of supporting of the regime diplomatically and in terms of training and information. Correspondingly, 1995 saw a wave of bombings (mostly in Paris) masterminded by Islamists, with the help of some members of the French-based Algerian diaspora\textsuperscript{118}. While the Islamists did not succeed in convincing the French authorities to sever ties with the regime, it did bring the Algerian civil war higher


\textsuperscript{117} For a good summary of the aims and state responses to this initiative, see Michael Willis. 1996. \textit{The Islamist Challenge in Algeria}. pp.340-346.

\textsuperscript{118} These came to halt in 1996 with the arrest of several militants and supporters.
Violence in Algiers' suburbs (such as 'Les Eucalyptus') mounted as local Islamist caïds established veritable fiefdoms with relative impunity. Replacing the elected Islamist councilors on the ground, young Islamist militants quickly built on their popularity in suburban Algiers to intimidate the armed forces and police out of various pockets of territory. With this new power came the progressive growth of rackets and intimidation of the local population to keep gangs of young Islamists into funds. Violence against the police and army became common place, and delinquency became the hallmark of this new generation of Islamists. With older militants imprisoned or exiled, new groups found refuge in a lucrative way of life. The meaning Islamist political programme, in this atmosphere of violence and intimidation, was lost.

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\*Search for a Civil Pact* Middle East Report 25, no. 192, pp.2ff.

113 Luis Martinez. 1995. "L'Enivrement de la Violence".


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careful not to alienate the majority of the population, being all too aware that a sizeable portion of the Islamist vote had been cast as a condemnation of the state more than a principled commitment to the Islamist ideal. Playing the shrewd game of the defender of liberty against obscurantism, the regime managed to keep international condemnation and scrutiny at a minimum (the first damning Amnesty International report on human rights abuses by the state, published in March 1993, did little to overcome this). By appealing to anti-Islamist liberals in Algeria, it also positioned itself as the 'least worst of two evils'.

Despite having limited means against the powerful army, many groups organised armed rebellion in response to mounting repression both quickly and effectively. The Islamists involved in violence moved beyond the rhetoric of 'older' leaders such as Abassi Madani towards a more reified quest for vengeance (for the death or arrest of relatives and friends) and local power and prestige. Four Islamist armed groups are identifiable here: the FIS-controlled AIS (Armée Islamique du Salut), Abdelkader Chebouti's Mouvement Islamique Armé (MIA), the MEI (Mouvement pour l'État Islamique) and the independent GIA groups (Groupes Islamiques Armés) characterised by a more amorphous structure composed of independent cells, and little political activity outside violent action. Their methods included terrorism and political assassination in particular. The GIA groups more specifically targeted governmental and administrative figures and foreign nationals (especially French ones) as well as cultural figures and journalists. But progressively, the targeting of armed groups extended to all those perceived to oppose the formation of an Islamic state. It was thus the electoral fiasco of January 1992 that lead to the fragmentation and polarisation of the Islamist movement\textsuperscript{110}, firing the first shot of the civil war\textsuperscript{111}. Notable also is the sheer monopoly on publicity for the Islamist cause by the GIA groups from early on, with other groups, apart from the powerful AIS, being progressively sidelined (but not eliminated). The rivalry between these groups, despite common aims, is also evident from early on\textsuperscript{112}.

\textsuperscript{110} This term is used by Severine Labat in Labat. 1995. "Le FIS a l'Epreuve de la Lutte Armée". in Remy Leveau (ed). L'Algerie dans la Guerre. p.87.

\textsuperscript{111} This observation should help us concur with Gilbert Grandguillaume's warning that blaming political Islam for the civil war at face value is simplistic and dangerous. See Gilbert Grandguillaume. 1998. "Comment a-t-on pu en arriver là?" in Mohammed Benrabah et al. Les Violences en Algerie. Paris: Opus. pp.7ff.

\textsuperscript{112} The ideological and tactical differences between these groups will be developed on in more depth in chapter five. On rivalry, see Arun Kapil. 1995. "Algeria's Crisis Intensifies: The
emphasis placed on legitimate democratic credentials and political representation. On the ground however, the 1997 round of elections continued to be marred by accusations of widespread fraud. The RND managed to seize 155 seats and thus victory in the legislative elections on June 1997. In October of the same year, it clinched 55% of local seats.

In the post-1996 period, violence started to subside progressively, with patterns of civil war becoming less prevalent, and with massacres being more episodic (even though still high casualty-oriented). Still, the overall dynamics of the conflict had now become apparent with a triangulation between Islamist violence, state violence and delinquency/crime developing over several years. In conjunction, this process brought about the evolution of specific patterns of economic gains linked to the civil war for all participants. The state created new clientelist networks to keep young people away from the Islamist way of life. Many Islamist groups, on the other hand, were reluctant to give up the racketeering and other-extra-legal activities that had brought them wealth, local power, and prestige. By then, the demands for democracy in the name of the FIS had become drowned into wider issues of societal breakdown. The relative victory of the regime with regards to power retention made such issues all the more redundant.

The last event of importance with regards to the Islamist-state relationship is the attempt by president Bouteflika to normalise the regime's relationship to Islamist supporters in civil society by offering a referendum on civil concord. This gesture of goodwill was designed to offer the public a choice as to whether Islamists who had not been guilty of blood crimes should be released from prison or exempted from prosecution. In a sense, such an initiative could be seen to denote an attempt to go down the road of a South African truth and reconciliation commission, offering pardons so as to wipe the 'slate clean' for Islamism in Algeria. The motives of such a move are however more complex, since wiping the slate clean for Islamism implies that the official version of Islamism being solely responsible for the civil war became further institutionalised. No attempt to assess state responsibilities accompanied this move, and reconciliation remained solely on the state's terms. The cynic may point out that it is the state's slate which benefited most from being cleansed by this type of pardon, and that it is the state which benefited most from normalising relations with Islamists in a context where the new constitution


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prevents the FIS from being re-created.

Another facet brought out by the referendum on civil concord is that of civil society at large, which at last had the opportunity to function outside the state-Islamist binary opposition. The debates arising from Bouteflika's proposal have been telling in this regard. Here, a passionate backlash against Islamism after several years of civil war has been noticeable in large segments of society, suggesting that the regime has by and large been successful in positing itself as a more reasonable alternative than the FIS, despite its poor political and economic record. It has also been successful in fashioning a reading of the recent history of Algerian politics where Islamism has been delegitimised as a viable political alternative, making the cancellation of the 1992 elections seem justified with hindsight. Still, the ensuing *Loi sur la Concorde Civile* in 1999 gave Islamists the opportunity to come forward and gain full amnesty. Under previous amnesty efforts, over 1,000 Islamists militants from the AIS and the *Ligue islamique pour la da'wa et le jihad* groups had been granted full presidential pardon (given the conditions of a previous cease-fire). With the new law, more radicalised groups could be included in addition. The 2001 Amnesty International Report cites a significant number of takers for this set of amnesties with 4,500 militants from the GIA, the *Groupe salafiste pour la predication et le combat*, and smaller groups. The report also points out, on a more pessimistic note, the difficulties and ambiguities in the application of the law, where the assessment of responsibilities for atrocities by individual claimants have not been processed in a uniform manner. In addition, the 2000 levels of violence, after two years of relative calm, rose again to 2,500 victims - with perpetrators including Islamist groups, militias and security forces\textsuperscript{120}.

4.4 Conclusion

The chronological structure of this discussion of political Islam in Algeria is, in some ways, unavoidable, since I have attempted to provide an analysis of the factors underpinning its growth and shape. I have also chosen this type of structure to emphasise the changes the movement has undergone in response to the evolution of the political scene in Algeria. In that sense, context, and its evolution help us meet the

methodological objectives set up in chapter two by providing an image of political Islam that is anything but monolithic. In addition, this strategy aims to provide the relevant background to the following analytical chapters in those terms.

Overall the historical account provided here remains cursory in many ways, as my main aim is not historical as such. Still, I hope to have gone beyond a historical expose of Algerian Islamism to introduce a number of key themes which further chapters will explore in more depth. These include:

- The importance of Islam in the context of postcolonial nation-building, where it proved an area of contention and competition with socialist/secularist ideas. This, along with the burden of the French legacy in cultural and political terms, is one of the markers of divisions within the FLN early on, but also the signifier of the hybridity of motif within nation-building:

  The basic ingredient of North African attitudes is the area’s Islamic background. It is only an apparent paradox that this must be understood in a dialectic context. North Africa - like any other culture area - can never be wholly ‘Frenchified’ or ‘Westernized’; it can only produce its own synthetic reactions to imported change, combining its past heritage with antithetical notions of secularization, materialism, revolution and nationalism. Nor can this synthesis be a single, linear evolution toward one inevitable outcome121.

- The importance of the legacy of armed struggle, not only in terms of patterns of nation-building, but also with regards to postcolonial institutions, with the preponderance of army control underpinning single party rule as a main factor. This dimension of 'war making', in turn, explains the solidification of a political lifeworld underpinned by the needs of the military elite. Indeed:

  ... we know relatively little about how states and societies in the Middle East have been shaped and reshaped by their intensive and prolonged exposure to and participation in war making and war preparation, often conducted by regimes that have embraced militarization as an everyday tool of governance as much as (if not more than) a means to

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ensure national security.

- The importance of political, cultural/linguistic and socio-economic factors in the development of political Islam since the mid-1970s.

- The importance of the interaction of the Islamist movement with the state over other political players/factors. Here, not only is the state/Islamist relationship one of significance to the aims and strategies of Islamism, but it is also one that displays characteristics of ideological exchange and hybridity. In the struggle for political power, Islamists have played upon issues of moral and political legitimacy and participated in the political game set up by the state when allowed to do so. The state is also of importance since it is the interruption of the democratic process that splintered the Islamist movement and polarised its militants.

Finally, our overview has emphasised the tactical and rhetorical complexity of the Islamist movement in Algeria, with deep roots in history, but also flexibility and change in the modern era. In addition, our analysis suggests that political Islam in Algeria can be seen as a political player with a specific take on the history of postcolonial Algeria, and a way of imagining the political that is in opposition to dominant motifs of the political lifeworld, an issue to which we now turn.

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Chapter Five
The Political Imagination of Algerian Islamism:
Rupture, Complexity, Diversity

Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Edward Said

5.1. Introduction

As chapter four demonstrated, political Islam in Algeria is a nuanced, evolving phenomenon that has deep roots, and an enduring grassroots appeal. The short overview of the historical evolution of contemporary Algerian Islamism has also given us a number of clues as to the ideological components of Islamist discourse in context. The aim of the following two chapters is to expand on the components and place of an Algerian Islamist political imagination. Bearing in mind the variety in emphasis among Islamist groups and changes over time, a number of common areas can be drawn and analysed. In chapter three, I pointed out that Islamist slogans suggested an ideological and political shallowness that should be challenged. Overall, this study moves away from the common assertion that Islamist discourse is hollow and purely opportunist. By contrast, I analyse the main discursive themes and strategies Islamism enacts, emphasising the main areas of rupture from dominant forms of political discourse. Overall, this chapter fits into the broader aim of redefining political Islam as a social movement by focusing on issues of rupture, complexity and diversity, while chapter six will focus on areas of complicity and continuity with existing patterns in the political lifeworld. Chapter six will also help locate Islamist political discourse within broader patterns of identity-building since independence.

Structurally, this discussion comprises of four parts. In the first instance, this chapter engages with the debate on whether Islamism in Algeria can be considered to be a social movement and/or an expression of nationalism. Secondly, the main discursive themes of Islamism are analysed with a focus on the political discourse of the FIS as the basis for our discussion. Thirdly, a consideration of political imagination is elaborated on in the context of Islamism in Algeria. Broader than discourse, political imagination encompasses symbolism (both in rhetoric and in action) as well as utopia. This is a wide topic, therefore only one theme of wider symbolism in this
political imagination is investigated in detail to illustrate the general points made on discourse in the previous section. Fourth, the evolution over time and according to circumstances of such themes among Islamist groups is charted as an opportunity to explore the rhetorical and tactical differences among Islamist tendencies in the 1990s in more depth. Here, the outcome of our inquiry leads me to the conclusion that political Islam in Algeria ought to be seen as one of the manifestations of a political Islam that can be broadly conceived of as a social movement. Their opposition is a central feature, but also where areas of diversity and complexity coexist within a looser overall framework.

5.2. Setting the Scene

Looking at the political imagination of Algerian Islamism implies both an analysis of the elements making up this imaginary and a framework for understanding the place of political Islam in the political realm in wider terms. As a starting point, I want to address the latter concern, so as to set up a number of research signposts to guide further analysis. There are many possibilities for this type of starting point, but here, I will concentrate on an overview and critique of one recent article, Marnia Larzeg's "Islamism and the Recolonization of Algeria", where such an assessment of the place of Algerian Islamism in the political lifeworld is made.

Her main argument rests on the idea that Algerian Islamism is functioning in rupture from dominant patterns in the political lifeworld in the postcolonial era. Its aim, for Larzeg, is to 'recolonize' the culture and political imagination of Algeria. She states:

I will argue that the Islamist movement means to redirect the socio-political evolution of Algeria through cultural recolonization. In so doing Islamism has in effect imposed on Algerians a new belief system and created a new counter-culture that thrives on nihilism, a blatant disregard for human life that cannot advance any political cause...²

To Larzeg, the importance of the colonial era to the drawing up of the Islamist political programme denotes a commitment to self-definition in blatantly anti-colonial terms, but she also implies that in so doing, political Islam reproduces similar patterns of cultural imposition³. Indeed, the violence linked to Algerian Islamist armed groups seems to suggest such an authoritarian streak.

Is this a fair assessment though? In some ways, it is, since Larzeg captures one of the dominant cultural motifs upon which political Islam builds its critique. As we will see, the issue of rupture, and the idea of a counter-culture (defined in anti-colonialist terms) are indeed central to the formulation of the Islamist agenda. But is such a simple picture an accurate reflection of the political imaginary put forward by Islamism, and more importantly, of its main influences? Larzeg’s argument relies on a comparison between the cultural, structural violence of colonialism and equivalent trends with contemporary political Islam. I wish to question - or rather to further problematise - this argument on two interrelated levels. Firstly, it is an oversimplification of the Islamist political imagination, privileging one aspect of it (in fact, privileging the tactical choices of some Islamist armed groups as opposed to wider discursive formations. Tactical choices are relevant to the production and effectiveness of discourse, but they are only one part of the overall picture). Secondly, it is an oversimplification of the evolution of the postcolonial lifeworld. This view seems to assume that postcolonial nation-building is unproblematic in its relationship to the colonial era and its strategies for governance, including surveillance and structural violence. By building a bridge linking Islamist discourse to colonial discourse, Larzeg may have a point. But the eclipse of the political imagination of the state at the centre of this equation ignores the links between political Islam and the state in the contemporary setting. We are thus looking here, I would argue, at a complex picture where aspects of discourse and political imagination are being passed on historically, from the colonial era, to the postcolonial themes of nation-building and state ideology, to the formulation of oppositional discourses to the state.

Larzeg’s conclusion is that political Islam in Algeria:

... is neither a reformist movement, nor a social movement bent upon socio-political and economic transformation. It is an oppositional movement to overthrow the existing order by using existing religious symbols familiar to Algerians but infusing them with different meanings in order to re-establish a mythic society, untainted by colonialism. The unrealistic character of this project qualifies it as political delirium\(^4\).

I must admit to being suspicious of any assessment of an ideology or movement as ‘delirium’ since it echoes too strongly of neo-Orientalist theses on ‘fundamentalism’ in the first instance, and because such a framework implies that the contradictions

and tensions within a political or social movement can work to disqualify it as a worthy member of ‘reasonable politics’. In my mind, such an overall argument relies primarily on an assessment of political Islam as a whole through the prism of recent Islamist violence. This is somewhat understandable since massacres perpetrated in the name of ‘Islam’ are unlikely to attract much intellectual sympathy. Yet, in my mind, this remains too simplistic a picture of political Islam and of violence. By contrast with this type of analysis, I wish to engage with the idea that Islamism’s political imagination has a complex relationship to both the colonial era and postcolonial patterns of governance. It indeed functions in rupture with dominant patterns of political imagination and wrestles with the legacy of colonialism in those terms. But it also displays elements of hybridity in its relationship to the political realm. This is in essence a dual argument where political Islam, on the one hand, can be seen to be oppositional in its formulation of political programmes and use of symbolic sources, and where areas of continuity with state discourse can be identified in the development of the Islamist discourse on politics on the other hand. This is of course not to discount the issue of violence in the dynamics of the civil war of the 1990s, or to underplay the socio-economic causes of the conflict. My aim here is to show how these issues are embedded into a wider set of discursive practices guiding political behaviour as well as rhetoric; in other words, that Algerian political Islam engages in a struggle over political legitimacy with the state where issues of political imagination are intrinsic to practical avenues for political competition (be these violent struggle or elections).

This, in turn, sheds a new light on whether one should - as Larzeg does - discount the possibility that political Islam could be seen to constitute an example of a social/political movement. As a starting point in this line of argument, it is perhaps wise to deal with definitions, and roots of what a social/political movement in the name of political Islam would look like. Starting again with Larzeg’s assessment, we see a binary opposition set up between what a social movement is supposed to be, and what she terms “an oppositional movement to overthrow the existing order”. Does this distinction hold under analytical scrutiny? On some level it does, since what Larzeg seems to be suggesting is that oppositional movements with radical, if not revolutionary aims (and overthrowing the existing order qualifies here) are qualitatively different from social movement attempting to work within the framework of existing power structures. Yet, this is once again only part of the picture in our case study: firstly, one could point to chapter four where political Islam was

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5 I hope to show here that the discursive contradictions of political Islam are embedded in a context too. They reflect the complexity and contradictions of that context.
shown to have participated in the legal, institutional game of politics. It is in fact the unwillingness of the army to accept the consequences of the democratic process that pushed the Islamist tendency towards greater polarisation. In other words, the more 'radical' aspect of political Islam for our case study can be located in a specific set of circumstances where its tactical choices and structure were influenced by more than ideological predisposition. Secondly, one could also argue that the boundaries between social, political and religious movements are often difficult to establish. Equally porous is the distinction between the idea of changing/challenging the existing order and attempting to overthrow it.

Therefore our first question should be 'what is a social movement?' and this assessment should refer to the possible ideological bases for the development of a 'social consciousness' in civil society, with reference to our case study. Cyrus Ziraksadeh defines the main features of contemporary social movements as involving three main characteristics: a deliberate attempt to create a new social order; the provision of an opportunity for marginalised voices to unite and be heard; and tactics involving confrontational tactics or alternative ways of approaching political practice. Straight away, we can see that a definition of social movements can accommodate the idea of the existing order being put into question. In fact, one could argue that, as representative of a civil society attempting to escape the power of the state, social movements are oppositional almost by definition, and that they should be expected to be reformist in their meekest forms, and revolutionary in their strongest:

Social movements are a subset of the numerous actors operating in the realm of civil society. They are groups of people with a common interest who band together to pursue a far reaching transformation of society... Social movements, by definition, are not members of the elites in their societies. They are anti-systemic... They rely on mass mobilisation because they do not directly control the levers of formal power such as the state.

The use of violence in this type of framework is, as a matter of course, not systematic: indeed peaceful social movements are often the best example of a transformative voice in society (especially, but not necessarily in democratic circumstances). But violence also belongs to the realm of the possible tactics at the disposal of social

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movements to achieve their aims, especially when other avenues for political change, or sometimes even for political protest, are absent. We can thus safely get away from a view of social movements limited to types of liberal, peaceful change exemplified by the Green movement for instance. Besides, even environmental groups can have violent wings or activists.

Current thinking on social movement stems from the continued importance of social movements in national, regional and global politics since the upheavals of 1968 in various states. In fact, the global dimension of protest has come to the forefront of current thinking on social movements. Here, "A global social movement is one which operates in a global, as well as local, national and international space". The term "refers to groups of people around the world working on the transworld plane pursuing far reaching social change". The relationship to civil society can thus be seen in a more complex ways when aims and bases for protest may be linked to other factors than those defined exclusively in the national realm. Overall, and despite such a wide scope though, social movements are characterised by two common elements: the types of aims they have (the transformation of society) and their position of subalternity in terms of access to decision-making. This is a question of power and power-sharing of course, but also one of competing ideas inscribed in different forms of discourse. Thus, as Alain Touraine argues, "Social movements are not a marginal rejection of order, they are the central forces fighting one against the other to control the production of society by itself and the action of classes for the shaping of historicity.".

In some ways, this focus on competing forms of discourse work as a rejoinder to nationalist constructs of identity. This should come as little surprise, since the central relationship entered into by social movements is with the state, which controls most of the discursive sites for legitimacy by virtue of its command over political culture. There is a thus a strong overlap between the literature on nationalism and nation-building and the analysis of social movements and civil society. In those terms, the construction of the nation is one that is fluid over space and time, and thus inherently a privileged site for contestation in terms of culture, ideology, religion, etc.:

... the apparatuses of discourse, technologies and institutions (print capitalism, education, mass media and so forth) which produced what is generally recognised as the 'national culture' (sic)... the nation is an effect of these cultural technologies, not their origin. A

nation does not express itself through its culture: it is cultural apparatuses that produce 'the nation'. What is produced is not an identity or a single consciousness... but (hierarchically organised) values, dispositions and differences. This cultural and social heterogeneity is given a certain fixity by the articulating principle of 'the nation'.

It is in fact in those terms that the so-called Islamist 'resurgence' has been theorised upon in the literature on post-Cold War trends: the re-emergence of nationalist (or neo-nationalist) movements in recent years has been noted by many academics in terms of ethnicity, religion and culture. For these authors, this revival may be a logical offshoot of lapses in ideological pressures from the superpowers, yet it remains fundamentally problematic due to its fragmentary potential on pre-existing conceptions of the nation. Indeed, as Stuart Hood warns us, "cultural nationalism assumes that nations are monolithic and denies the importance of subcultures based on sub-regionalism and class within the political unity of the nation". Yet what we have here is not a set of nationalist movements fighting the existence, integrity or role of the state, but a competition between state and oppositional understandings of the nation, both of which are equally 'imagined'. Therefore, the idea that political Islam could be seen through the framework of ethno-nationalism has its advantages, but also its limits. On the positive side, for instance,

Wallerstein's concept, 'reactive ethno-nationalism', is valuable for situating Muslims in a broader global context. By assuming that anti-imperialist social movements are a dialectical combination of new identities formed in reaction to world systemic forces, reactive ethno-nationalism explains how subject people simultaneously invent new identities, in order to contest the costs exacted by the accumulation processes of the capitalist world economy.

In the same vein, the strong tradition of protest in nationalist terms in Algeria during the colonial era was, as we saw in the previous chapter, underpinned by an explicit Islamic theme. However, when looking at the context of political Islam in more detail, the framework of nationalism seems only partially satisfactory: historically, as François Burgat points out, the 1970s saw the shift in political opposition for social

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12 see for instance, the work of Mark Juergensmeyer.
14 See chapter six on the imagination of the nation.
movements in the region from Marxism to Islamism\textsuperscript{16}. The question of nationalism does not account for the notion of social protest in explicit enough a set of terms here. There is also a global, or at least regional dimension to political Islam which goes beyond the remit of nationalist politics, at least in some ways. Once again, a strong tradition of regional links where pilgrimage networks worked as precursors to the development of this new form of "Islamic cosmopolitanism"\textsuperscript{17} is notable.

Consequently, we can see that nationalism alone is insufficient a term to cater for the complexity of the phenomenon at hand, and we need to adopt a more nuanced approach. The working hypothesis I will adopt here is that political Islam can be considered to function primarily as a social movement as defined above, bound in some ways to the national experience of opposition to the ruling elite in Algeria, but also with a regional and global ideological dimension. My ‘tour’ of the political imagination of Algeria Islam, in turn, attempts to assess and/or substantiate this claim.

5.3 Dominant Themes of the Algerian Islamist Political Discourse

5.3.1 Origins

Islamist political discourse in Algeria has evolved over a long period of time in response to far-reaching changes to the socio-economic and political context of the Algerian polity, with comprehensive input from ideologues from different generations. In the contemporary era, these changes have accelerated somewhat in the context of rapid democratisation (and its sudden reversal) arising from a deep legitimacy crisis for the state, as outlined in chapter four. We are thus looking at a complex phenomenon that is difficult to analyse systematically and in depth. Still, an initial general observation can be made concerning the contents and strategies of Islamist discourse since the mid-1970s: it has opted for a combination of traditional themes of Islamic scholarship (based on the works of Islamic orders, and a regional tradition of Reformist thought) with contemporary ways of approaching the connection between religion and politics. The 'traditional' elements of discourse are not limited to the Algerian context, however. Despite a long tradition of armed struggle in the name of Islam, Islamism remains a recent phenomenon in Algeria in comparison with other states in the region. The roots of political Islam have been present in Algeria since the onset of colonisation, but no movement akin in coherence


\textsuperscript{17} Paul Lubeck. 2000. "The Islamic Revival" p.163.
and strength to cases such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is noticeable until the post-colonial era. While Egypt saw the development of Islamist ideas and movements from the mid-1920s onwards, Algeria saw the development of nationalist movements, carrying a powerful nationalist, independentist, agenda at the forefront of political protest. Thus, like many states in the Middle East, Algeria experienced Islamism as a process of slow osmosis from elsewhere in the region (Egypt in the post-colonial era and Afghanistan after 1979 most notably). Islamism found fertile ground on Algerian soil in the socio-economic and political setting of the 1970s, but it is still worth pointing out that an external dimension of ideological influence played a great part in the shape and development of political Islam. Subsequently of course, Algerian Islamism found its own focus - fitting in loosely with the universalist aims of Islamist movements elsewhere in the region while developing tactics and a political programme adapted to its domestic environment.

Here, our overview mainly rests on the dominant discursive themes of the FIS, including tensions within the movement, but the other main groups are be dealt with to some extent, in comparative terms, in section 5.5. One could argue that this selective approach reduces the scope of analysis; that being said, the focus on the FIS is based on its prominence - and thus significance - on the Algerian political scene since 1988. In addition, the FIS makes a particularly good candidate for an overall analysis of political imagination since its structure as a front with the explicit aim to unify and represent the various strands of Islamism under one banner makes its common ground, as well as its compromises and tensions, a vivid and accurate picture of the ideological concepts, dilemmas and debates facing the Islamist movement.

Starting with the most general consideration of political imagination, two main ideological inspirations to the FIS (and arguably all Islamist groups in Algeria) are worth considering. Both these inspirations, predictably enough, come from Egyptian Islamism. The father of contemporary Islamism, Hasan al-Banna, is a first thinker of importance. Al-Banna founded the first organised Islamist movement in the region in 1928 with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (which now has branches in several others states), in an attempt to bring the teaching of Islamic reform to a modern context. His main inspirations, Ibn Badis, Rashid Rida and Muhammad

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'Abduh all advocated that Islam was not incompatible with the modern world. For them, as for al-Banna, greater integration of Islamic practice and institutions into modernity (as they saw it) would lead to a revival of the Islamic civilisation in political, religious and cultural ways. Unlike his predecessors however, al-Banna was prepared to use the tools of modern politics in a specific way: by creating a political party with structures, aims and a political programme to carry out this project. Al-Banna’s innovative contribution lies in his insistence on the dual focus on the state and of regional unity. On a state level, forming a political party would foster unity among Muslims and reverse perceived secularising tendencies of the political elite. Influencing this set-up through political participation would have the potential to bring the Islamist political agenda at the fore of political debate, to ultimately create a truly modern Islamic state. Regionally, al-Banna’s focus was once again on unity among Muslims. The revival of the institution of the Caliphate was a long-term project culminating from the progressive unification of the Arab World. Independence from colonial occupation or influence were necessary preconditions for understanding national and regional politics, and provided incentives for emancipation from foreign domination while incorporating the positive elements of modernity. Such a sophisticated approach to the place of Islamist parties in the political sphere on several levels testified to al-Banna’s willingness to take part in a meaningful debate on the role of Islam in the modern world. Ideologically, this will remain his most profound influence on subsequent Islamist projects. Just as important however was his input on the level of structural organisation of political parties, with the formulation of a basic political programme based on Islamic unity and the role of Islam in politics which remain the foundation of Islamism elsewhere in the region today. Organisational features based on the Muslim Brotherhood model remain the norm also: with a dual approach on integration/infiltration of state apparatuses and civil society institutions, and confrontation with the state when possible or appropriate. The choice of small groups size (for flexibility) and strategies of recruitment at the grass-roots level are final enduring influences. Even with the development of mass means of communication in the contemporary era, the formula for spreading the message remains fundamentally the same: through mosques, charitable organisations and educational facilities.

Besides this template, many other ideologues have been significant in the development of the modern ideas and organisational features of Islamist movements. But no ideologue can claim as influential a position in this spectrum as Egyptian

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Islamist Sayyid Qutb\textsuperscript{21}. Qutb represented a new slant on Islamism operating in the context of decolonisation and new independent states in the Middle East. In the Egyptian context, Sayyid Qutb belonged to a generation of Islamists who became disillusioned with the policies of Nasser after his accession to power, and tried to combat the secularisation of politics through various means including violence. Under the guidance of Qutb, the template of al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood remained intact, but on the level of ideas, Qutb distanced himself somewhat from the legacy of the Reform movement and Salafism to launch a radical critique of the religion/politics nexus and new avenues for overcoming perceived ills in society\textsuperscript{22}. Qutb's most important conceptual contribution comes with \textit{jahiliyya} (which can be translated as religious ignorance). \textit{Jahiliyya} is the cornerstone of Qutb's dual critique of modernity (understood in Western terms) and of the workings of politics nationally\textsuperscript{23}. Historically, he identifies the emergence of \textit{jahiliyya} as the result of the loss of civilisational leadership by the Muslim community, reflected by the Jewish and Christian lack of recognition of the superiority of Islam as a religion. This critique goes further than religious ignorance \textit{per se} though. For Qutb, the dominance of such false belief underpins the secularisation of political life, leading to forms of democratic representation which aim to supersede God's law. This viewpoint is clearly antidemocratic in character, but it retains a profound civilisational component also. Based on such a critique, Qutb saw 'the West' as a civilisation without legitimacy, and thus one belonging to the 'realm of war'. The obligation of \textit{jihad} in these circumstances provides the impetus for the invasion of non-Muslim states, a profoundly radical agenda reaching beyond the confines of the region. Qutb's indictment of society does not stop there however. For him, Muslim society have also sunk into \textit{jahiliyya}, despite their continued faith and devotion to God, by allowing the rule of secularised élites to determine their fate. Muslims, in that sense, have forgone their basic religious obligations. Qutb proposes to remedy this situation by restoring Islam to its dominant position through four main ways: the severance of relations to non-Muslim states (and the refusal to reside outside the 'House of Islam'); the renewal of Islam in Muslim states to be illustrated by wide-ranging political and social changes; the promotion of unity among all Muslims in a common

\textsuperscript{21} Ahmed Rouadja argues that both al-Banna and Qutb are said to have influenced Algerian Islamism in its more extreme forms, with more moderate influences at play with al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida. I would argue here that Qutb is a particularly radical version of Islamism influential in particular in the thought of Ali Belhaj. See Ahmed Rouadja. 1995 "Discourse and Strategy of the Algerian Islamist Movement (1986-1992)" in Laura Guazzzone (ed.) \textit{The Islamist Dilemma}. Ithaca Press. p.73.


\textsuperscript{23} On this concept, see Youssuf Choueiri. 1990. \textit{Islamic Fundamentalism}. pp.94ff.
and the development of the principle of shura (consultation) as the guiding principle of government under Islam.

Beyond these common ideological and organisational themes, lie various ways in which basic principles have been applied, especially in the lived context of political competition. Chapter four pointed to rise in the 1970s of a discourse of Islamism that would increasingly go beyond the remit of traditional Islamic grievances to become a political force for contestation. Tactically, the greatest aspiration for the generation of Islamists engaging in political protest in the late 1980s would be Mustafa Bouyali and his Movement Islamiste Algerien, a precursor to the FIS created in 1982. Despite a growing police crackdown on Islamists militants from 1982 onwards, Bouyali and his supporters would succeed in creating a forum for the Islamist ideals to become anchored in a nascent idea of civil society. Tactically, his defiance of the regime was the most important contribution to the movement, since his doctrinal contribution would remain limited to the dominant themes of Islamism outlined above, but applied to the Algerian context. As we have seen, the political setting the Islamist movement faced in the 1990s changed dramatically, with direct consequences on the shape and aims of the movement. Yet, despite such an environment characterised by rapid change (which will be accounted for in more depth later on), a number of key discursive themes evolved within the movement.

5.3.2. Discursive Themes

Political imagination is not just discourse, or rather, it englobes and qualifies discourse, with a wider picture of strategies of communication, symbolism and utopia. It is thus a rather vague concept by definition, but one that is difficult to escape if the complexity of the Algerian ‘Islamist solution’ is to be understood:

The idea of politics as ‘a struggle about people’s imagination’ is a corrective to some conventional thinking. The notion of politics centered on power relations and ‘interests’ does not take account of relations among individuals within a society or between societies that are based on what they think is right, just, or religiously ordained. More broadly, politics can be conceived as cooperation in and contest over symbolic production and control of the institutions - formal and informal - which serve as the symbolic arbiters of society. Politics as Leviathan is thus deceptively in favor of politics.

For a summary on Bouyali, see Francois Burgat. 1995. L’Islamisme au Maghreb. pp.164-170. For general context, see chapter four.
as symbol maker. Of course, this perspective involves understanding culture as contested, temporal and emergent.²⁵

Yet, it is perhaps through discourse that we have our most obvious and significant entry point into the Islamist political imagination, justifying the central place of discourse into our analysis. ‘Islam is the solution’ is the main slogan underpinning the political programme of the FIS. An oppositional standpoint with regards to the monopoly on power by the postcolonial ruling elite is the dominant discursive strategies developed by the FIS during the period of political liberalisation and beyond. Besides such general trends, and the ideological inspiration for Islamism common to all Islamist groups (as outlined above), there is a case to be made for an Algerian political Islam displaying a complex array of themes and strategies in discourse. This section investigates this dimension.

The FIS was created as a political front including many Islamist tendencies, some of which had substantially different political platforms from the others. The very existence of the FIS can be strongly linked to the context of political liberalisation in Algeria through the tactical expediency of unification under one banner. Generally speaking, the ideological stance of the FIS can be said to be the product of a lived tension between two broad poles in the party: the more conservative and pragmatic politics of Abassi Madani, a veteran Islamist, and the more radical (and less democratically-oriented) politics of the younger Ali Belhadj. A third, and more ideologically subtle influence would come from the more technocratic pole of the party creating a tripartite ideological structure. John Entelis provides us with an overall typology to reflect this complexity.²⁶


Table 5.1. Entelis’ typology of Algerian Islamism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Ideological Slant</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Ideological Influences</th>
<th>Main Proponents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preachers/ Reformers</td>
<td>Preaching as a means to moralising public life</td>
<td>Outside official Islam</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radicals/ Revolutionaries</td>
<td>Frontal Assault on 'impious state'</td>
<td>Arabophone, Petty bourgeoisie Radicalised in Prison</td>
<td>Sayyid Qutb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technocrats</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Upwardly mobile toward modern technocratic elite: educators, scientists, engineers...</td>
<td>Scientific and Western education, socialised into Islamism on campus, not in mosques</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This type of table should not detract from the degree of fluidity among the various branches outlined here in terms of constituency and the overall discursive coherence of the movement though27. The dual leadership structure of the party (Madani-Belhadj) would allow, during the years of democratic participation, for many divisions within the party to be successfully managed. With the promise of access to political power through the ballot box, the more radical elements of the movement took no issue with playing the democratic game. The political discourse of the FIS is thus one based on consensus-building during the 1989-1992 period:

The FIS established a dual strategy combining conciliation and aggressiveness. It used a double language that appealed both to a segment of the intelligentsia and a majority of the population. It attacked the state bureaucracy - its corruption and nepotism - and the spread of unislamic practices, and focused on social welfare through acts of national solidarity and large political demonstrations to force the regime to consider some Islamist perceptions on matters of national concern28.


As a result, the dominant discursive thematic of the FIS was on a principled opposition to the regime and the state apparatus from the perspective of an Islamist morality. This critique, in turn, was underpinned by a subtle strategy aimed at undermining the popularity of the regime further by providing a unifying, populist, alternative to it in ways grounded in authenticity culturally and effectiveness on the ground. Consensus within the party coupled with a strong oppositional stance to the ruling elite: such is the essence of the Islamist political bite and its success. But is what lies behind such a clear-cut picture as simplistic as this position suggests?

5.3.2.1. The Political Programme

The political platform of the FIS is one that is linked to the democratic process in a close way: many of the issues raised by Islamism previously are raised here, but the real possibility of accession to power (or at least widespread political change) gives the discursive articulation of the Islamist platform a confidence previously unseen. Key to this platform are issues of representation, freedom, justice and morality - the four underpinning elements to the Islamist understanding of political legitimacy. Rouadja summarises the 6 main aims/characteristics of the FIS as declared in their political platform of February-March 1989 in the following way:

1. The FIS is working for the ‘unity of the ranks of Islam’ and the coherence of the ummah
2. The FIS sets itself up as a global and general alternative for the solution of all ideological, political, economic and social problems within the framework of Islam
3. The FIS has adopted a moderate political approach
4. It emphasises policies based on social solidarity
5. It promotes the spirit of initiative in all aspects of political action
6. It takes on the role of safeguarding the Message.

The document “Plateforme des Revendications Politiques du FIS” is a telling illustration of these overall aims in terms of political practice. In some ways, this official pamphlet is not a remarkable document since it does not outline social policy in great detail, and does not establish the foundation for an Islamist state. But on another level, it is perhaps the most telling of all FIS-based discursive formations

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29 Despite this broad discursive base however, some Islamist groups would choose not to join the banner of the FIS during the democratic experiment. Here, the examples of En-Nahdha and Hamas are of note.


31 El-Mounquid 16. Translation from the French below by author.
both in what it says and what it does not say. It is a document which is in essence a hybrid between a set of political grievances against existing state structures and policy and suggestions as to the solutions to these issues according to the FIS. The 'encouragement' provided to the state to carry out the contents of this platform is ominous: it is half threat, half promise. In addition, the themes approached in this document range widely and they are thus worth listing, in summary form.

Table 5.2 The Political Platform of the FIS

| 1. the planning of reforms |
| 2. the dissolution of National Assembly and elections |
| 3. the separation of political parties from the state apparatus to guarantee free and fair elections |
| 4. state guarantee of civil freedoms as drawn up in Islam (mentioning in particular the release of Islamist political prisoners and the protection from arbitrary prosecution) |
| 5. the creation of an independent body to adjudicate multiparty rule |
| 6. to reform of the armed forces and the police to make them serve the nation and its citizens |
| 7. the independence of the judiciary branch of power |
| 8. to end of state monopoly on information and creation of the freedom of the press |
| 9. to end state violence as it relates to its neglect of social protest and general lack of justice |
| 10. to address social problems such as unemployment, crime, drugs-related issues and rates of emigration |
| 11. the implementation of the shari' a |
| 12. to protect the dignity of women through the preservation of Islam, their 'honour' and their rights at home and in the workplace |
| 13. to protect Algerian emigrant populations from racism and to maintain their Muslim rights through a foreign policy designed to this effect |
| 14. the reform of education to create equal social opportunities and to protect the nation from 'ideological invasion' and cultural alienation |
| 15. to conduct a wise foreign policy to encourage China, India, the USSR and Bulgaria to stop massacres of Muslims, to help the fight for the freedom of Palestine, and give assistance to the Afghans so as to end civil war. |

From: “Plateforme des Revendications Politiques du FIS” in El-Mounquid 16.

As a statement of political grievances, this FIS document bears a resemblance to the core elements to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for instance. The demands for political accountability, the separation of powers, judicial fairness, freedom of expression, and freedom from persecution are all key concepts to the formulation of various Bills of Rights and Constitutions in the democratic setting. This is thus a clearly liberal agenda in that particular sense. On the other hand, the moral issues linked to Islamist thought are also central to the formulation of this platform, without an account of how these two trends are to be combined in practice.
both in what it says and what it does not say. It is a document which is in essence a hybrid between a set of political grievances against existing state structures and policy and suggestions as to the solutions to these issues according to the FIS. The 'encouragement' provided to the state to carry out the contents of this platform is ominous: it is half threat, half promise. In addition, the themes approached in this document range widely and they are thus worth listing, in summary form.

Table 5.2 The Political Platform of the FIS

| 1. the planning of reforms                      |
| 2. the dissolution of National Assembly and elections |
| 3. the separation of political parties from the state apparatus to guarantee free and fair elections |
| 4. state guarantee of civil freedoms as drawn up in Islam (mentioning in particular the release of Islamist political prisoners and the protection from arbitrary prosecution) |
| 5. the creation of an independent body to adjudicate multiparty rule |
| 6. to reform of the armed forces and the police to make them serve the nation and its citizens |
| 7. the independence of the judiciary branch of power |
| 8. to end of state monopoly on information and creation of the freedom of the press |
| 9. to end state violence as it relates to its neglect of social protest and general lack of justice |
| 10. to address social problems such as unemployment, crime, drugs-related issues and rates of emigration |
| 11. the implementation of the shari'a |
| 12. to protect the dignity of women through the preservation of Islam, their 'honour' and their rights at home and in the workplace |
| 13. to protect Algerian emigrant populations from racism and to maintain their Muslim rights through a foreign policy designed to this effect |
| 14. the reform of education to create equal social opportunities and to protect the nation from 'ideological invasion' and cultural alienation |
| 15. to conduct a wise foreign policy to encourage China, India, the USSR and Bulgaria to stop massacres of Muslims, to help the fight for the freedom of Palestine, and give assistance to the Afghans so as to end civil war. |

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The implementation of the *shari’a* and ambiguity with regard to the treatment of women are of note. Finally, the international dimension of this document is striking, especially with reference to issues of education and foreign policy. That issues of foreign policy should be so central to such a document is surprising in itself, and it testifies to the regional - if not global - dimension of the Islamist aspirations. The welfare of Muslims abroad and in particular their rights as Muslims (to be free from persecution and to be respected as Muslims) work as counterpoints to the refusal to have the Algerian ‘culture’ be infiltrated by foreign elements (an educational argument reminiscent of the policies of Arabisation of the Ben Bella era). This is clear point of tension in the logic of the FIS discourse of identity where notions of the nation and of Islam coexist, and where cultural affirmation abroad is not seen as contradictory with cultural ‘purity’ at home. On the whole, many of the key aspects of the Islamist political discourse are alluded to here, but most of these ought to be expanded on further.

5.3.2.2. The Religion/Politics Nexus

Firstly, the Islamist interpretation of the connection between religion and politics is more complex than is generally understood. For the militants of the FIS, as elsewhere for Islamist groups, the importance of Islam in the political realm is based on a reading of Qur’an where the political aspect of the Prophet’s rule are part and parcel of his moral leadership. Here Islam is interpreted as model for the ‘political’ in terms that are both based on considerations of social welfare nationally, and part of a wider political project:

As a political party, the FIS sees the Qur’an as its founding principle. For us, Islam is not only a religion of purification, a religion where one only has to do one’s prayers and follow God’s commandments. Islam is much more than this, it is our way of life, as the Qur’an teaches us, it encompasses the whole human being, in his/her dealings with God, his/her peers, and society. Islam offers us a model which we promise ourselves to follow according to a global political project.

We can see the special place conferred to Islam as the moral guide for political behaviour in the Islamist political imagination: morality and political rule are thus strongly related in this type of analysis. But this standpoint is also strongly ingrained in a vision of postcolonial rule and of colonial times where the connection between

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the ruling elite and morality is assessed to have been insufficient. The idea that, under French rule, moral legitimacy would have been compromised by the domination of non-Muslims over Algerians is understandable - and it is the primary - and most symbolic - locus for the Islamist opposition to secular rule as perceived as foreign, arbitrary and inauthentic. This is more than emotional attachment to the liberational themes of the independentist movement though: the postcolonial regime falls under the same category as the colonial administration insofar it is perceived to have betrayed the Islamic and the liberational themes of the independence struggle.

[We ask the regime to account for] the existence of persons in the state apparatus who are hostile to our religion, and who are only agents for plans thought up by colonialism. This situation has led to the proliferation of immoral acts and the loss of sense of responsibility at all levels of the institutions and aspects of the state.

Who these 'agents' are remains implicit in this text, in part to avoid direct accusations that could lead to reprisals. In many instances, the link between colonialism/neo-imperialism on the part of the French and the moral bankruptcy of the Algerian regime is made obvious in this manner, as if such a connection was the delineating principle between legitimate and illegitimate rule. Secularisation is, in turn, the underpinning grievance of this aspect of oppositional discourse. The connection between religion and politics is thus principled in terms of Islamist thought, but also practically located within an understanding of Islamic culture and morality as the basis for legitimate rule in the postcolonial world and against foreign influence. In some ways, this is based on an interpretation of a return to a precolonial 'Golden Age' of Islam in Algeria, but on the whole, the greatest consideration in applying 'Islam' as the solution to the political problems inherent to the current political and economic crisis of the state is linked to cultural constructs of legitimacy.

5.3.2.3. Democracy

As an illustration of this, but also as a way to qualify this discursive framework, the question of democracy for Islamists in an interesting case in point. Generally, the Islamist attitude towards democratic rule has been seen as one of the most

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33 Ahmed Sahnoun, Abdellatif Soltani and Abassi Madani “L’Appel du 12 Novembre 1982”. *Soulal* (5). Reprinted in Mustafa Al-Ahnaf et al. 1991. *L’Algerie par ses Islamistes*. Paris: Karthala. p.45ff. Quote from p.46. This text was produced before the creation of the FIS as a political party, but one of its authors is none other than FIS leader Abassi Madani. The subsequent rhetoric of the FIS would tone down this aspect of the FIS discourse during the years of democratisation, for pragmatic purposes.
controversial elements of the Islamist platform on a regional level. Yet, as Kramer points out, analysts are often misguided in their assessment of political Islam as universally undemocratic:

... the moderate pragmatic Islamists whom I consider to be the mainstream of the 1980s and early 90s have come to accept crucial elements of political democracy: pluralism (within the framework of Islam), political participation, government accountability, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights\(^34\).

In the Algerian case, such trends of convergence between representation in democratic terms and the importance of legitimate representation is also present insofar as the very creation of the FIS is predicated on a *de facto*, if not *de jure* acknowledgement of the moral legitimacy of democratic procedures\(^35\). Yet, this aspect of the Islamist standpoint also reveals a number of clear tensions among the personalities and the ideas making up the movement\(^36\). Ali Belhadj, for instance, was widely quoted for his strong, and well-researched, antidemocratic views:

> Democracy puts impiety and faith on the same level. The democratic idea is one of the adverse intellectual innovations which haunt people’s consciousness. They worship it from morning till night, forgetting that it is a mortal poison with an impious foundation\(^37\).

The foreign nature of the democratic construct is significant in its rejection, but other issues can be seen to come into play as well. For Belhadj, there is an intrinsic problem with the notion of democracy understood in its original version, ‘the rule of the people’. Conceiving of a system of representation where human representatives, as opposed to God, would work as the arbiter of justice and social policy, works to him, as a violation of the role of religion in society. Additionally, he echoes many doubts expressed in the region as to the benefits of majority rule, as opposed to more populist, unifying frameworks of representation.

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\(^35\) See the political platform delineated in section 5.3.2.1.

\(^36\) For a discussion of such ambiguities, see Yahia Zoubir. 1996.‘ Algerian Islamists’ Conception of Democracy’. *Arab Studies Quarterly* 18 (3 -Summer) pp.73ff.

By contrast, the official stance of the FIS as a political party not only accepted the necessity of electoral competition, but it also used the language of representation to articulate its struggle for political power against the state. Additionally, it is in terms of democratic representation that the Islamist condemnation of the cancellation of elections was framed in the post-January 1992 timeframe. This of course could be seen as mainly tactical, since it is an election that was to bring Islamists to power in Algeria. Indeed, Islamists have often been accused only using the language of democracy insofar as it could bring them access to power without the concurrent commitment to the principles underpinning democracy. This should be qualified in two ways though. On a practical level, the Algerian case shows the strength of the democratic element of discourse, especially in terms of Islamist claims of representation against the illegitimate rule of the state. The cancellation of the electoral process reinforced the moral claims of the Islamist movement by proving a case in point of the Islamist case against the state. Secondly, there is a provision within Islamist course for dialogue and the importance of legitimate representation through the concept of *shura*. Algerian Islamists working within the framework of the FIS have used this concept to normalise their ambiguous attitudes towards democratic procedures. Generally, then, the Islamist attitudes towards representation testifies to its ambiguous position as a political party borne out of the necessity of playing the political game of democratic competition, while putting forward a political programme where foreign domination (economically, politically or culturally) and secular constructs guiding politics are seen as illegitimate. This is a contradiction which the end of the democratic experiment allowed many Islamists to eventually bypass, but the absence access to official channels of power for Islamists does not fully rectify this ambiguity.

5.3.2.4. Morality in Politics and Law

The question of the enforcement of religiously-inspired moral codes of conduct and dress, a highly sensitive and symbolic issue for both Islamists and their critics at home and abroad, remains the source of much conflict and debate in many societies in the Muslim World. Two separate but mutually-reinforcing issues are at play: where and how a distinction between private and public morals is made and which morality can be seen as acceptable in a given situation. Here, a degree of cultural sensitivity is *de rigueur*, since the mores, values and customs called into play are not limited to the Islamist viewpoint but are often relevant to the Muslim way of life in general. For

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38 See previous section for examples.
instance, issues such as the attitude towards the consumption of alcohol is one that is relevant to all Muslims. Even if it is not universally accepted, the Islamist insistence on the prohibition of the consumption of alcohol thus finds resonance culturally in the region, and it is echoed by legislation in this regard in Saudi Arabia, to name one example. In other words, it is a legitimate moral question in the Muslim world. In turn, what this means is that the moral alternatives under scrutiny are not a 'Western' morality pitted against an 'Islamist' morality, but a debate among the citizens of predominantly Muslim states as to the ways in which religious morality is mediated into the public realm. The question then is not so much whether Islamists do not want to, or cannot separate religion from politics but the place that Islamists attribute to private morals in the political sphere. Why is the politicisation of morals so important to Islamist politics?

In the Algerian case, the question of morality is tied to the politics/religion nexus outlined above insofar as it is the moral dimension of Islam, above all others, that brings its political bite to Islamist discourse. We have already seen that such questions are linked to conceptions of legitimacy of governance and representation. The connection with the moral dimension in Islam is more complex in character however. The main instrument of morality in politics for the FIS is the application of the shari'a to both the drafting of law and the formulation of social and economic policy, as all the founding texts and programmes of the FIS emphasise at length. For instance, one of the main issues the Islamist political programme puts forward is that of the relationship between Islamic morality and the workings of the trade and banking industries. The Islamist standpoint here is a delicate balancing act between the pragmatic considerations of economic growth in a global market (especially after the experience of the failure of state socialism in the 1970s onwards) and the moral economy of social exchange where relationships of exploitation are frowned upon, especially in terms of profiteering through usury. Islamist banking as a principle

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40 Indeed, private mores are a matter of public discourse for Islamists, but that is hardly unique: pro-life campaigners in Western societies would argue, among other things, that the state should outlaw abortions because they are, in their view, morally wrong. They, too, find that it is the responsibility of the state to incorporate the set of moral standards they believe in into public law. These moral standards, in turn, are often (even though not always) religiously motivated. Thus, in Western societies also, the separation between morality, religion and politics is not unproblematic.

41 This is a difficult theological issue to solve in itself - especially when most analysts assume that Muslims cannot make this distinction because of the nature of their faith or simply take at face value the Islamists' claims to create a 'truly Islamic society' without judging how truly Islamic their political programme actually is (or what such a programme should ideally look like).


reflects these tensions since it tries to reconcile the populist and moral underpinnings of the Islamic notion of community with the reality of the marketplace. The official economic programme of the FIS reflects this perspective: it deals with all three sectors of the economic spectrum (agriculture, industry and commerce) and emphasises:

1. the shari'a as regulating principle for material relations;
2. the role of the state as policy-maker respecting and advocating Islamic values and law, and as protector of the independence of Algeria from foreign influence;
3. the need to foster small businesses;
4. the protection of the business interests of Algerians vis-à-vis foreign interests;
5. private ownership and laissez-faire economics (with provisions for social welfare as advocated in the Qur'an)\textsuperscript{44}.

This is an ambitious programme which, by and large, focuses on past mismanagement as a focal point for opposition and does not draw specific policy statements. The moral component here is also of interest since it is designed to capture of the legitimacy of the platform proposed (with the implicit assumptions that corruption and mismanagement are at the root of Algeria's economic crisis).

Overall, the way in which the moral dimension of political discourse for the FIS is framed is linked to issues of political legitimacy in terms of how to best represent the Algerian people. Islam here is not only the guide to morality in politics, it is also what confers on the FIS its moral authority for taking part in the political process. This dimension is also the most eloquent and obvious point of contestation with the regime in power for the FIS. The state is seen through the prism of impiety as an explanatory factor for its social, economic, and political failures. By contrast, the role of the army in this setting is not fleshed out in a systematically negative way. In fact, the official programme of the FIS ensures that the liberational/heroic credentials of the defence forces are suitably praised. The issue of the control of the state apparatus by the army remains largely implicit throughout the democratisation period. In fact, only point 8 of the FIS platform in this regard alludes briefly to what is in fact one of the central questions of representation in the Algerian context:

The army should not be implicated in political questions so that it remains the army of Message, of the community and of the whole country. This way the clout of the army cannot but grow as it increasingly demonstrates its competence, its morality and its ability to defend the country\textsuperscript{45}.

\textsuperscript{45} "Programme Officiel du FIS" - Pamphlet.
5.3.2.5. The West/France

Another issue that illustrates tensions within the application of the question of morality within the Islamist framework is the oppositional stance of Islamist rhetoric not only in terms of the moral bankruptcy of the Algerian élites (through secularisation, corruption, etc.) but also in terms of the overall bankruptcy of Western morality as a model for the 'modern' in the political (and arguably cultural) realm. This is an aspect of the Islamist discourse on morality that is inherently relational: in other words, the relationship between Islamism and the West/France, as defined in Islamist terms, is set up in a dialectic relationship of opposition in moral terms. This is a complex framework where historical memory is intertwined with a consideration of postcolonial identity. The memory of colonial times works as a reminder of the illegitimacy of foreign domination and its lack of cultural authenticity in Islamic terms. Juxtaposed to this consideration is the idea that cultural neo-imperialism is at play in Algeria through the dual event of perceived deliberate cultural aggression by the French and the continued use of the French language by the elite and perceived economic and political links with France⁴⁶. In the first instance, the fear of neo-imperialism is clearly delineated in the discourse of the FIS:

He who thinks that our problems with French colonialism ended with Algerian independence in 1962 is gravely mistaken. On the contrary, this colonialism, with its strong and ancient roots, is more than ever prepared to reinforce its presence in our land, in several ways, the most important of which being cultural presence⁴⁷.

Additionally, connection with 'the French' for the regime can be framed as a way to delegitimise it in terms of its inability to overcome the colonial legacy and the reproduction of colonialist modes of exploitation. The term Hizb Franca (The party of France) is thus the strongest insult and most significant indictment of the regime in Islamist terms.

This is an issue of identity within the polity in this sense, as well as an identity marker with regards to France (and 'Western values' in general). The 'enemies' in this framework are not simply seen as 'French' or 'colonialists' though. The Islamist imaginary combines this type of motif with blatant condemnation of perceived

⁴⁶ In that sense, this duality between the authentic and the inauthentic follows issues of class in the Algerian polity in ways that, even if implicit, are difficult to ignore.
⁴⁷ Faycal Tilani "Permanence de la Lutte contre le Colonialisme: El-Mounquid 3. Author's translation.
Marxist or Jewish influences on policy-making in France as the source of a campaign against Islam (in ways that remain completely unsubstantiated). France is seen as the victim of an international campaign by Zionism to control political opinion and create an atmosphere of hatred for Islam⁴⁸. As a result, in Islamist terms, “This hateful campaign against the Muslim world as a whole has been orchestrated by an intellectual class educated abroad in Marxist-Leninist, or even Jewish milieus”⁴⁹.

There is a real sense of siege in the mentality expressed here, and a process which mirrors the type of ‘Islamic/Islamist threat’ literature that previous chapters discussed. Picking up on the very terms used in the European and American media to describe them, Islamists turn the logic of the Islamic threat argument on its head by framing the Algerian Islamists as the victims of an anti-Islamic campaign. One author goes as far deconstructing the Western discourse on Islam in ways that are reminiscent of Said’s critique of Orientalism⁵⁰. In particular, the portrayal of Islamic people as fundamentalist, ‘fanatical’ and intolerant in the media, and the ways in which the issue of the hijab in French schools has been handled are emphasised in the Islamist literature⁵¹. As a critique to this type of discourse, the FIS posits the idea that debates on Islam in the French media are “wilfully orchestrated” as a “racist” form of discourse that is not interested in dialogue with the Muslim ‘Other’⁵².

The battle lines expressed here are between an authentic, and moral, Islamic world and what is variously termed the ‘West’ or ‘modernity’. The interpretation of modernity here is also quite ambiguous: it is seen by one author as including manifestations ranging from “communism, socialism, capitalism, pragmatism, positivism, fascism, zionism, Arab nationalism, berberism, etc.”⁵³. One could argue that these various tendencies or ideologies are part of the modern world as we understand it, but the author’s grouping of all these possibilities under the banner of the “cancerous growth of modernity”⁵⁴ implies that all of them ought to disregarded altogether and replaced by an Islamic alternative. Yet the Islamist political framework does not aim to overcome capitalism for instance, and it plays upon themes of

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Arabism against Berber identity constructs. These contradictions are not addressed in much depth. Instead, the main illustration of the adverse consequences of modernity is seen here through the prism of women’s emancipation and the concurrent destruction of the family\(^\text{55}\). In addition, it can be noted that this concern goes beyond perceived cultural penetration by the French or fears of loss of Islamic values though: it also involves a very real fear of French invasion and neo-colonialism\(^\text{56}\).

In practice, there is an inherent ambiguity in how the FIS carried out its own relationship of the French ‘Other’ in those terms\(^\text{57}\). As Omar Carlier points out:

> Ali Belhadj strongly indicts the *Hizb Franca* (the Party of France), while Abassi Madani spend large amounts of time being recognised and consecrated by TF1 [a leading French TV channel]. The same Abassi Madani defines the struggle against the French language as a priority, but he is the first to put his children in Algiers’ *Lycee Descartes*. Is the FIS banned? Its clandestine leaders rush to Paris, when only months before they used the myth of renewed conquest by France in their political discourse\(^\text{58}\).

### 5.3.2.6. Delivering the ‘Social’

Beyond these principled commitments to a political imagination lies a practical critique of the inability of the regime to fulfil its social obligations. This is a stance of rupture of course - and one grounded in the increasing frustration of the Algerian population facing the regime monopoly on power. But this rupture is not one that questions the aims of the apparatus of the modern state, only the effectiveness of the state in delivering the ‘social’, so to speak. In this setting, political Islam provides a discourse for social justice and social rights, coupled with a commitment for addressing existing social problems\(^\text{59}\). The idea of discourse takes on an almost mundane dimension here, but one that is of critical importance to the ability of the Islamist leadership to connect with the political experience of its constituency. Framing the political in ways that are not only about morality in general, and social justice in particular is an effective oppositional stance to the regime. The added

\(^{55}\) Meryem Djamila. “Characteristiques et Consequences du Modernisme” *El-Mounquid* 12. Author’s translation. The fact that the author of this piece is a woman holding a PhD in philosophy is an interesting sideline also.


discursive strength of social dignity conferred by addressing issues such as unemployment, housing and sanitation ideally complements such a framework.

5.3.3 Discursive Strategies: Introducing Symbolism

To conclude on the analysis of Islamist discourse in Algeria, it is perhaps wise to summarise the main strategies that can be derived from the overview provided here. Arguably, a symbolic dimension of discourse is apparent in the use of the themes and discursive dynamics outlined above. In that sense, Islamist discourse intrinsically goes beyond the text *per se* to denote the political imaginary that underpins it. The question of political imagination comes to the fore at this point through our interpretation of discourse.

This is complex picture fraught with ambiguities. In fact, the dominant dynamic of the Islamist political imagination, if seen through the prism of political discourse, is of ambiguity above anything else. This ambiguity manifests itself principally through the careful combination of discursive elements which are not easy to reconcile, such as:

- Tradition vs. innovation: the Islamic tradition pitted against the moral excesses of Western modernity is contradicted by an attachment to the scientific aspects of the ‘modern’ world. In addition, the Islamist platform is innovative in character and articulates a critique of the regime in terms that goes beyond traditional concerns (corruption exemplifies). Furthermore, the participation of Islamism in the debates on democracy, legitimacy and representation are bound to the contemporary context, even with the caveat of Islamic morality acting as a dominant guiding principle.

- Populism vs. liberal economics: the economic platform of the FIS denotes an acceptance of the freedom associated with free-market capitalism and a vocal rejection of communism as an alternative to it. That being said, the importance of solidarity and social welfare for Islamists points to a continued faith in the idea of a welfare state acting to protect the weakest segments of the population and foster growth for small businesses.

- Practical politics vs. divine law: this is the crux of the Islamist argument, but also the greatest area of ambiguity in discourse for Islamists. The focus on the *shari‘a* as the basis for law denotes a commitment to divine rule as the basis for governance, but the acceptance of (if not demand for) the democratic process contradicts this somewhat. Here, we see that this tension was partially a result of ideological differences within the FIS. The fact remains however, that the practical
task of governance through representation, even through *shura*, is not equivalent to free and fair elections strictly speaking.

The Islamist strategy for gaining popularity in the political competition of the early 1990s gives this type of ambiguity a pragmatic context: indeed, the inclusive nature of the party made such compromises and differences inevitable. Furthermore, the nature of the democratic process did not encourage the FIS to clarify its position with regards these types of ambiguity so as to retain it wide, and populist appeal.

As second dominant strategy for Islamist discourse is the reliance on an affirmation of legitimacy based on *authenticity* and *morality*. On the one hand, morality is derived here from Islam as the regulating principle of the party (guaranteeing lack of corruption and commitment to social welfare, for instance). On the other hand, authenticity is based on a double articulation: Islam as a positive cultural basis and the rejection of colonialism/neo-imperialism, secularisation, non-Islamic mores. This is a political language rife with symbolic references to the identity themes that most Algerian can most strongly relate to (after all, most Algerians are Muslims). It is also a complex way of defining identity which highlights both what Islamism is and what it isn’t. This duality, in turn, is the linchpin to the political imaginary underpinning the Islamist bid for power: a commitment to Islamist politics is by definition a commitment against a number of alternatives embodied by the regime, and the ‘enemies’ of Islam abroad. The FIS is oppositional on the levels of political, social and economic issues, moral issues and cultural aspects of the political. Yet, beyond this practical dimension, the notion of rupture from the dominant discourses of the state deals with internal as well as external (if not global) issues of critique. It is a strategy aiming to engage with the principles and symbols received from the ‘West’, itself interpreted in a reified way. Here, Islamists condemn the Orientalist readings of Islam, but in many ways they reproduce the strategies of ‘Othering’ inherent to Orientalism. They aim for a complex understanding of the ‘Other’ where colonial/neo-imperialist as well as secularised frameworks for understanding politics overlap, but on the whole, the monolithic nature of such a conception of ‘Western modernity’ or ‘Western morality’ remains.

Strategically, authenticity in Islamist terms allows for a claim of monopoly over legitimacy - excluding both the regime in place for failing to live up to such expectations and potential political rivals for not meeting the Islamist standard by virtue of *not being* in the FIS. Therefore, the final ambiguity in this type of discourse lies in the populist slant of its claim to legitimacy. Despite support for the electoral
process, the aims of the FIS remain to create a common front for politics which encapsulates the various political issues and divergence into one framework. This strategy, in turn, is reminiscent of a single party rule based on a populist ideal, as illustrated by the leadership style of the FLN since independence. This, at the end of the day, is not a platform for pluralist politics.

Overall, we can see that the political discourse the FIS displays characteristics of complexity and ambiguity that encompass pragmatic needs for access to power (and therefore some degree of opportunism) and the principled commitment to the Islamist world-view, with the ambiguities this implies. Symbolically, the FIS plays the card of religion and morality, but also inherently the game of cultural authenticity as the basis for political legitimacy. What remains to be seen, in this setting, is how such a discourse manifests itself on the level of political action.

5.4. Violence as Political Imagination

So far, our analysis has focused on the themes and strategies underpinning the production of political discourse by the main Islamist party in contemporary Algeria. Thus, our understanding of political imagination has been thus far limited to its expressions through political programmes and other forms of discourse, as well as the symbolic issues and dynamics underpinning them. Two areas of exclusion are implied here however: an account of the post-democratic developments for Islamism on the one hand, and the variety among Islamist groups on the other (especially but not only after the ending of democratic experiment in 1992). This section addresses the first issue, and section 5.5. the second. Here, the specific focus of analysis is placed on the inscription of political imagination in practice, focusing on political action. Looking at the application of the Islamist imaginary to the realm of political action, in turn, could be achieved in several ways. One could for instance focus on the contradictions and tensions inherent in putting an Islamist programme into practice. In the Algerian case, this would be of course arduous since the FIS never had the opportunity to put its programme to the test of governance at the national level. But my reluctance to go down this path lies beyond the specific Algeria setting; here, the importance of political action lies in the ways in which it actualises discourse. In fact, what I investigate is the idea that political action can be seen to work as an element of political imagination. In other words, the way in which the political is imagined by Islamists can be seen to be reflected in its carrying out of policy.
This is a wide question, which would necessitate more in-depth analysis that this chapter can afford. Still, a significant example of this process is analysed as illustration and substantiation for this argument. The discursive, and communicative, aspects of violence in the post-democratic setting are seen to testify to a dimension of struggle between Islamism and the regime which has strong symbolic components. It is one of the main expressions of the political gains and losses on the ground that translates the Algeria Civil war into practice, but it is also significant in its uses of the body as a site of inscription of competing political imaginations. In “Violence, Voice and Identity in Algeria”, Michael Humphrey investigates the significance of violence, and in particular, what he terms ‘the production of corpses’ in the symbolic dynamics of the Algerian Civil War\(^60\). He highlights the main issue at stake in an analysis of political struggle and violence that takes the context of political imagination into account:

The tortured (wounded, mutilated or dead) body is the space in which power is being contested in Algeria today. Violence and pain are the basis for political contestation of the state, society and values\(^61\).

If we are to take the hypothesis that political struggle is framed through discourse seriously, then violence arguably becomes a privileged site of inscription for the struggle among political imaginations. It is the ultimate expression of competition for control over the legitimising tools of the lifeworld. This is an unsettling conclusion, but one worth unravelling further. Investigating Humphrey’s assertion implies investigating the instrumentality of violence in concrete terms, and juxtaposing these terms with the symbolic meaning violence takes on. In other words, instrumentality in violence in our setting is not simply about military gains: it is about the political gains it may also bring. In this sense who dies, when, and why is just important as how many people die. For instance, the assassination of a French engineer is meaningful because this target was chosen for political reasons. A woman being attacked for not wearing the hijab in an Islamist-controlled area implies more than violence against women per se. It implies that women are forced to wear the hijab in that area as a way to display the fact that it is under Islamist control. Violence has a function in performance: it can be a display of strength, or of territory — a way to communicate to an audience. It can also be used as a means to discredit one’s opponent’s claim to legitimacy. In dealing with political imagination, the question of the symbolism of violence is thus of importance, and worth examining in more detail.


On a concrete level, violence during the Civil War could be roughly divided into two broad types: violence perpetrated for the purposes of winning or strengthening one's position, referring to the killing of combatants as well as civilians (this could include political and symbolic gains as well as military gains on the ground) and violence related to lawlessness (such as rackets and delinquency). The second type seems on the surface to be more incidental, almost an inevitable by-product of the breakdown in law and order that accompanies a protracted civil war. Yet, it could also be argued that a degree of overlap between those two apparent types occurred in the Algerian case, since extra-legal activities — and the violence associated with them— worked as means to sustain the war effort economically for at least some of the protagonists involved. Even on this most general level, violence and its uses display elements of complexity.

In turn, the attitude towards the instrumentality of violence among Islamists varied during the war. The place of violence in the Islamist political imagination is one that reflects the notion of change in the dynamics of the movement in the post-democratic setting. The balancing act between ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ Islamism was offset by the ending of the democratic experiment in that the more ‘moderate’ option for the FIS became by and large discredited. That being said, the advent of Islamist of violence as a consequence of polarisation displays characteristics of complexity once again. The FIS, and its armed branch the AIS, continued to prioritise the idea of legitimate access to political power after the beginning of the hostilities. Violence, in that setting, is considered to be the only way to create the conditions for the return to democracy against the army-controlled state. According to one of the FIS leaders, this pragmatic attitude towards violence is what sets the FIS apart from other Islamist groups involved in violent struggle against the state:

The FIS has nothing in common with the GIA. First, because the FIS is a political party... the GIA, like the FIS resist existing power structures. But our aims as to the ends and means of this struggle are radically different. We see our current situation, involving armed struggle against the regime, as exceptional and situated in a specific context.

This is perhaps a partial point of view, but it still makes a strong statement as to the uses of violence for the FIS. In this framework, the choice of victims and levels of intensity, as well as the methods used, are crucial factors in understanding the nature of violence during the Civil War.

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62 See a statement to this effect by Ould Adda Abdelkrim, interviewed in Patrick Denaud. 1997. Le FIS: Sa Direction Parle... p. 107.
violence are directly linked to political expediency geared towards the competition for power with the state. Targets including police officers, state officials and members of the army represents a choice of violence that avoids the inclusion of 'civilians' as acceptable targets. This, in turn, is a qualified view on violence in Islam, as illustrated by Ali Belhadj's position:

Some say 'Islam is a religion which rejects violence and fanaticism, it is the religion of generosity, of tolerance and of peace'. I believe in these words, but with regards to whom? My attitude is now one of a fighter for God who sees that Islam is both the religion of generosity and tolerance, and the religion of force, of jihad and of the whip against he who is proud and stubborn. It is a religion that allies the just Book and the conquering sword.⁶⁴

For the GIA groups, on the other hand, the obligation of jihad under Islam has a broader meaning as an intrinsic tool for accession to power and the creation of an Islamist state. The catharsis of violence as the foundational element to the chiliastic utopia of Islamism in those terms has greater significance. For the GIA, there is an incumbent duty on all Muslims to fight non-Muslims and bring greater glory for Islam in the process. A GIA communiqué states: "It is through [God's] teachings that the GIA has killed the infidels of all religions and ordered all infidels to leave the country."⁶⁵ Practically, the post-democratic violence of the GIA groups is linked to the process of purification of Algeria from the presence of 'infidels' - targeting foreign nationals and cultural and media figures associated with the regime, or with perceived French cultural imperialism. The choice of victims is thus symbolically significant, but in different manner. We are thus looking at widely different types of Islamist violence, underpinned by different beliefs in the purpose of the use of violence.

State violence, by contrast, also has its purposes. While analysing it in depth is beyond the scope of this work, the dialectic of violence characterising the Islamist/state relationship is worth elaborating on since it is the node connecting the discursive notion of political competition with its manifestations in the political realm. Violence can be seen here as a relationship that carries symbolic meaning. At the most general level, the question of agency in violence has a symbolic dimension for Humphrey which testifies to wider patterns in the political/social setting:

⁶⁵ GIA communiqué 43. reprinted in Patrick Denaud. 1997. Le FIS: Sa Direction Parle... p. 17. Author's translation.
Agency is ambiguous. Who terrorizes, the state, its Islamic opponents, or both? The audience is multiple and diverse. It is local, national and international. Is this the body of a patriot, martyr or traitor? In other words, death by unknown hands in contemporary Algeria is rhetorical and assimilated into a wider social world of uncertainty, insecurity and rumor

The notion of uncertainty is of particular importance to agency in a violent setting since both the uncertainty in the allocation of blame and uncertainty as currency in itself have their political uses. Responsibility becomes a site for political contestation, where propaganda on both parts comes into its full application. This is an area of ambiguity since violence can be a source of pride in some instances: dealing with the 'Islamist problem' effectively for the regime and resisting the authoritarian rule of the regime for the Islamists. When civilians (and especially women, the aged and children) are massacred, on the other hand, responsibility needs to be shunned at all costs, for obvious reasons. Accusations of regime involvement in massacres to deligitimise Islamist groups are an example of this political war. Whether political players were actually prepared to commits acts of violence solely in order to blame the other remains controversial, but not beyond the realm of possibility.

As a result, fear and uncertainty shape political allegiances according to who is believed. In that sense also, the actual violence perpetrated on bodies becomes subsumed under the exigencies of political gains. Death matters in its expression of political meaning: "Because bodies no longer speak the origins of violence and the passions motivating murder can never be known with certainty, the efficacy of violence (terror) then is not just the ability to cause harm but also to shape its meaning - i.e., what it substantiates". The prize of such a contest is the status of innocence, if not victim status. When the perpetrators of violence cannot be clearly identified, the game of politics comes into full-swing to shape how terror can be interpreted. On the other hand, positioning oneself as the potential solution to uncertainty in itself has obvious advantages. This is in essence a game that remains about political legitimacy in fundamentally the same way that the moral discourse of democratic competition was about grasping the upper hand in the stakes of legitimacy. There is in fact no greater contest for legitimacy than one inscribed literally on the bodies of the nation: there is no greater legitimacy than the one conferred by the saviour of the nation from terror.

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Uncertainty is also a basis for the construction of a political setting where political alternatives are reified into extremes. This is a process that various Islamist groups and the state take part in equal measure to consolidate their claim to a position where each is the only alternative to terror. On the ground, the regime was more successful than its opposition in claiming a monopoly over the meaning of uncertainty, especially given its privileged position as the body of governance logically responsible for the maintenance of order. This should not detract from the fact that state violence was geared towards the political aim of discrediting Islamism throughout the Civil War; policies of ‘eradication’ vs. ‘conciliation’ should be viewed in conjunction with the strategic use of violence by the state as a form of political statement.

Finally, violence helps identify the location of contestation and measure political control over geographical areas by the protagonists in the Civil War. In this way, corpses function as the ‘instrument for social mapping’⁶⁸. For instance, Humphrey notes how violence against women works as the most potent example of bodies where discourse is inscribed:

> Algerian women’s bodies have been appropriated by a rival politics of violence which has made them the symbol of retrieving cultural integrity or modernity (e.g., hijab or no hijab) between rival movements. The cultural amplification of their innocence has simply polarized their positioning⁶⁹.

Women are seen here as the symbolic markers of morality, to reflect an imaginary where women are the silent bearers of societal propriety and men its gatekeepers⁷⁰. Traditionally, dressing in an Islamic way (the hijab, loose garments, etc.) could be seen as a marker of modesty and piety which reflects positively on the whole family (and protect women from unwanted attention in the social sphere). This model sets out women’s appearance as one serving a social function, and the fact that women in this setting are seen as largely passive is of course crucial. From the Islamist perspective, the pressure to return to this mode of dress is also about social signifiers as much as it is about modes of dress. The traditional model is seen here not only as a marker of Islamic faith (if not Islamist allegiance), but also as a choice to renounce the ‘Western’ mode of dress and its connotations for Islamists (vulgarity, unbridled sexuality). During the years of democratisation, changes in women’s dress quickly rose as one of the key symbols of the Islamist rise to popularity and relative power. In

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Islamist local constituencies, active steps to stop non-Islamic dress by women were taken at the earliest opportunity. This was designed to work as a marker of Islamist 'territory', and as a potent symbol that the Islamist agenda went beyond empty rhetoric. The international media attention concerning political Islam in Algeria, and arguably elsewhere, has also focused on this symbol.

When the Civil War began, women became rapidly caught in the political cross-fire because of their appearance: they were intimidated into wearing the hijab by Islamists, but also judged complicit to Islamist groups by the regime for doing so. That violence against women would become commonplace came as no surprise in this setting. Assaults, kidnappings and rape have been widely reported. Violence to force a woman the hijab was only one of motives involved though. Lawlessness allowed for women to be less protected from violent attack, and young women were kidnapped to work as sex slaves in maquis where fighters stay isolated for a long time. In some ways, violence against women occurred for practical reasons: because it could. Beyond this however, violence against women, much like the state of women's dress was the medium through which political gains and losses were measured and demarcated. For instance, women were killed along with their children as a means to eradicate 'the future' of entire families. Killing off the 'seed' means killing the offspring as well as the means to produce more. That women were massacred in some key geographical areas but not others is also of importance: their bodies suffered as retribution for the political allegiances of their husbands, brothers, or fathers. The sins of men were revisited on the innocence of their wives, daughters, and sisters. This is one of the main ways in which violence has found its symbolic significance in the Algerian setting. Women here are the ultimate symbolic carriers since they are seen as passive and innocent - not the makers of their fate.

On the whole, and through this example, we can see how political imagination finds symbolic expression in the practice of politics, even (especially?) in its extreme forms. Yet, one of the salient aspects of the analysis of violence provided here highlights the diverse attitudes of Islamist group vis-à-vis means for political action and thus an area of tension within the Islamist viewpoint. It is this dimension of dynamism within the movement that constitutes the final aspect of political imagination worth elaborating on.
5.5. Accounting for Diversity and Change: A Short Overview of Islamist Groups

Assuming that the FIS and the GIA groups are the most potent representatives of the Islamist movement in Algeria reflects their political prominence (through political participation and violence respectively) in the political spectrum of the 1990s. This is only one part of the range of Islamist groups, ideological orientations, forms of political participation/action, and constituencies in the Algerian Islamist framework however. Without delineating the political programme of each in any great detail, it is still possible to talk of the evolution of an Islamist political imagination over time and according to a varied political spectrum. Two main periods of time are worth listing here: the flourishing of the Islamist opposition during the democratisation period; and the fragmentation of the movement in the Civil War years. In the first instance, the opening up of the political sphere allowed for political groups and cells to create bona fide political parties. Only some of the many groups became mainstream political players, often through the grouping of several groups or tendencies under one banner, so as to maximise chances of victory, as illustrated by the structure of the FIS. R. Hrair Dekmejian list four main tendencies other than the FIS involved in politics at that time:

- Shanun’s *Rabitat al-Da’wa al-Islamiyyah*
- Jaballah’s *En-Nahda*
- Bin Kiddah’s *Harakat al-Ummah*
- Nahnah’s *Hamas.*

Chapter four showed that only *En-Nahda* and *Hamas* would register success in elections on a national level; in addition, Dekmejian posits the less confrontational ('activist') nature of these associations, most of which are interested in grassroots Islamisation of society. Still, both *Hamas* and *En-Nahda* represent the most significant Islamist alternative to the political programme of the FIS in the late 1980s and early 1990s - a fact compounded by their refusal to integrate with the Front in its early days. In both cases, but for different reasons, the Islamist message presented is less radical in its opposition to the regime and differs in its means for achieving the Islamisation of society.

*Hamas*, on the one hand, is a branch of Islamism based on Mahfoud Nahnah’s ‘Guidance and Reform’ movement founded in the 1960s as the main precursor to contemporary Islamism. Its defining characteristics are its close association both in tactical and doctrinal terms with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (and the work of

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73 Jama’a al-Irshad wa al-Islah.
Hasan al-Banna in particular⁷⁴). The differences with the FIS are however still notable despite these common origins and influences:

Hamas, however, is in some respects at a disadvantage when compared to the FIS: first of all by virtue of its conciliatory attitude towards the powers that be and also because of its dealings with the movements connected with the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood - these are more inclined towards compromise with the regime in the eyes of FIS militants, who are themselves disposed towards confrontation; and secondly because of the social origins of its adherents, who generally come from relatively more prosperous and well-educated backgrounds than their counterparts in the FIS⁷⁵.

Also of importance is M. Nahnah's emphasis on concept of *shura* as a means to bridge the gap between Islamic practice and democracy in a way that is less ambiguous than FIS pronouncements. This gradual, and moderate, approach, in turn, implies the use of non-violent means exclusively and is underpinned by a strong platform supportive of women's rights. For instance, Nahnah insists that: "Woman is the equal to man in every way, she shares with him the same nature, the same obligations and the same destiny. Why make a differentiation?"⁷⁶

Third in line in terms of prominence in the movement is A. Djaballah's *En-Nahda* which shares Hamas' circumspection with regards to the populist rhetoric of the FIS. Instead, it focuses on the social and cultural aspects of political Islam rather than short-term acquisition of power *per se*⁷⁷. This is a grassroots organisation used to its independent, if not clandestine status, and it focuses primarily on Islamisation in the Constantinois region. Al-Ahnaf et al. argue in this regard that the aims of *En-Nahda* in becoming a political party, and retaining its independence from the FIS, is strategic. Its political aim is to preserve the regional aspects of Islamism in the event of accession to power by the FIS (and thus the creation of an Islamist state)⁷⁸.

Overall, there have been doubts as to the degree of independence of these two movements from the regime, since their position is far more conciliatory than that of the FIS⁷⁹. The differences between the FIS and those groups is however more one of degree, rather than a substantively different political programme. Here, variations within the political imagination occur along the lines of means for achieving

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Islamisation of society: from above, or from below, through access to official channels of power, or gradually through the work of associations within civil society. Furthermore, it touches upon issues of symbolic significance such as the issue of women's status under Islam.

In the post-democratic era, the patterns of Islamist activity become increasingly difficult to chart with the fragmentation of the movement into several tendencies and many small groups changing names over time. The two main non-FIS tendencies stayed by and large in the non-violent side of Islamism and participated in the political process when possible. *Hamas* became the most powerful Islamist party in the institutional setting, since it remained a political party allowed to run for elections. The FIS was banned and thus split up into many groups, including violent precursors to the infamous GIAs. Small groups which had not joined the FIS out of suspicion regarding the democratic process had a new opportunity to gain a voice in Algerian politics, through violence. All groups at that time were predicated in oppositional terms to the state, although in different ways, and through the use of different means. In the area of violent uprising, early attacks on security forces by the 'Afghan-led' *Takfir wa Hijra* in 1991 and more widely from 1992 onwards are notable. This movement became marginalised later on in the Civil War, but was one the precursors and strongest advocates of armed struggle in the name of Islam. Subsequently, four main Islamist tendencies became involved in violent struggle against the regime:

- **The AIS** - (*Armee Islamique du Salut*), the armed branch of the FIS working towards the accession to power by the FIS (given its electoral near-victory in 1992) and as a means to protect the dominance of the FIS in the Islamist political spectrum. Its relationship to the GIAs was particularly tense and characterised by violent conflict.

- **The MIA** (*Mouvement Islamique Arme*), lead by Abdelkader Chebouti, who was associated with Bouyali in the 1980s, focuses on a rejection of the participatory tactics of the FIS and the necessity for armed struggle. Severine Labat points to Chebouti's fear that participation in elections would expose the Islamist movement as a whole to state repression and only provide opportunities for co-optation. In the run-up to the elections of Dec 1991, Chebouti however left much institutional freedom for the FIS to operate. Martinez points to its extreme

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suspicion of infiltration by security services and secrecy as the bases for its progressive sidelining during the Civil War⁸³.

- The MEI (Mouvement pour l'Etat Islamique) - along with the GIA groups, it functions as a revolutionary guerrilla that aims to go further than the MIA and the AIS. Ideologically, its innovation lies in its leader, Said Makloufi's “Traite sur la Desobeissance Civile”⁸⁴ which forms the basis for terror destined to educate the population as to the Islamist agenda and create a forum for rebellion against the regime. It too would be sidelined because of its focus on violence against 'civilians' as opposed to the security apparatus of the state⁸⁵.

- GIAs (Groupes/Groupement Islamique Arme): uncompromising with the regime in the extreme, the GIA groups captured the imagination of the media at home and abroad through flamboyant acts of violence. It is characterised by its complete condemnation of the democratic process as illegitimate in Islamic terms, and its commitment to fight against all perceived enemies of Islam using all means necessary. It was created by a former Bouyalist, Mansour Meliani, whose GIA folded with his arrest in the first few weeks of its operation. The organisational set-up involved in the GIAs would however take on a dynamic of its own with a structure of cells emerging quickly and informally⁸⁶.

Efforts at unification among Islamist groups in early 1993 were undermined by operations by the security forces and the gradual emergence of the GIA groups as the leading force in the conflict, even if only insofar as it captured the publicity necessary for its status to grow⁸⁷. Various other groups concerned with violent or non-violent struggle would come and go as well - and use various names - including the GSPC (Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat) and the Islamic League (Ligue Islamique pour la Da'wa et le Jihad), for instance. Overall, the fragmentary nature of the end of democratic process created opportunities for differences among Islamist groups to flourish. Once again though, the Islamist tendency retained its common political imaginary despite such a fragmentation⁸⁸ in terms of its general aims and vision for society. Differences as to the appropriate means for achieving those aims are the point of contention between the various branches of Islamism in that setting.

⁸⁴ Reprinted in Patrick Denaud. 1997. Le Fis: Sa Direction Parle... pp.287ff.
Consequently, the range of themes and discursive strategies developed in our treatment of the FIS is by and large valid for the vast majority of the Islamist tendency in Algeria. That being said, the overview provided here should suggest also that diversity, under the wide umbrella of the Islamist political imagination, is a characteristic feature of the movement.

5.6. Conclusion: Algerian political Islam as a Social Movement

The main aim this chapter was to demonstrate how looking at the political imagination of Islamism in Algeria as the application of Islam to politics is simplistic. The importance of the postcolonial dimension in discourse showed the location of discourse, for instance. In trying to account for political Islam in a more complex way, as a result, several strands of argument were developed on. Firstly, the framing of political Islam as a social movement was seen as the overall framework under which the analysis of political Islam was to operate. The question of political imagination only provides a partial answer as to whether Islamist groups can be considered as such, but it is a useful starting point nonetheless. Secondly, our aim was to look at various strands of political imagination to unearth the complexity of political Islam in the Algerian setting (a combination of pragmatic/opportunist and principled elements cohabiting through ambiguity were of note). Thirdly, and as a way of adding to our analysis, both the issues of the symbolic referents of political action in political imagination and issues of variety were explored to some degree.

In conclusion, therefore, we can go back to our general hypothesis as to the nature of political Islam, given the terms of imagination and operation defined here. On the whole, it can be argued that the FIS functioned as a political party when allowed, but that the bases of its contestation where laid long before the democratic experiment, and continued in various forms, after its end. Also, compared with Tunisia and Morocco, Algerian Islamism held a large degree of monopoly over the discourse on political opposition in the early 1990s, which, for Burgat helps explain why its rhetoric could always afford to be more radical. Our study of political imagination showed that the range and diversity within the movement is underpinned by a common political imaginary; as a result we can talk of an overall Islamist movement in Algeria. The ‘social’ and ‘political’ aspects of political Islam, on the other hand, are undeniable. Starting from the assumption that "The role of Islam in modern North Africa (and for that matter, in the Middle East as well) is as elusive as quicksilver".

we can concur with one author who states that the Islamist movement in Algeria can be seen as “not theological”, but “essentially sociological” in character. The oppositional stance of the movement, and its choice of tactics both in the institutional game of elections and the informal settings of Civil War denote that Islamism here is fundamentally about protest. Thus, as Eikelman and Piscatori argue,

Protest is a useful, if ... general, term to refer to the spectrum of activities of Muslims, especially the politically active Muslims we refer to as Islamists. By definition, Islamist groups are involved in protest. They have resolved that the wrongs of society must be righted, but the corrective means are not restricted to one kind of activity.

Yet, as we are about to investigate, the story does not stop at rupture with dominant patterns of political imagination and structures of power embodied by the state. Areas of connection, including mimicry, in terms of tactics and discursive themes between Islamism and the state introduce the idea that Islamist political imagination may be a hybrid political formation.

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93 Jan Nederveen Pieterse argues that "Relations of power and hegemony are inscribed and reproduced within hybridity". Here, power relations and hegemony are "not merely reproduced but refigured in the process of hybridization". Jan Nederveen Pieterse. 1995. "Globalisation as Hybridization" in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.) Global Modernities. London: Sage. p.173.
Chapter Six
Political Identity and Political Contest in Algeria: Continuities in Discourse

Perhaps the most important contribution of the subaltern school to contemporary debates around modernity and the postcolonial nation-state lies in its insistence that we learn to read the history of the latter in terms of continuities and collusions rather than ruptures. These continuities and collusions concern the silent contract between colonial and postcolonial regimes (of knowledge, governmentality, intellectual and political positions) mediated through a shared commitment to the tenets of modernity.

Sanjay Srivastava

6.1. Introduction

So far, our analytical focus has privileged the study of Algerian political Islam in terms of the areas of rupture from dominant patterns of political imagination it effects. As a contender for political power and legitimacy, Islamism proclaims not only its opposition to the ruling elite, but also disjunctures in terms of how it envisages the 'political'. The in-depth analysis of the political imagination of Algerian Islamists in chapter five thus attempted to draw a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the place of Islamists on the chessboard of the Algerian political lifeworld. In the present chapter, my aim is to problematise this picture even further and go back to the historical 'drawing-board' to investigate areas of continuity in discourse between Algerian Islamists and their political opponents in terms of one of the most central components of the political lifeworld, that of political identity. The idea that the political imagination of Islamists is in opposition to dominant forms of political imagination should not obscure those areas of coherence, if not complicity, which bind both trends to the overall Algerian political lifeworld. My endeavour here remains analytical, but my focus is more historical, since an adequate treatment of areas of continuity in the lifeworld necessitate an analysis of the evolution of the dominant themes of this lifeworld.

Consequently, this chapter will attempt to disentangle and historically trace the principal identity motifs which are at the forefront of both discourse and behaviour. Thus, the main themes I will try to explore are linked to the Algerian experience of political identity formation historically, and its place and role in the contemporary political setting. This is used to provide further insight into the underpinning dynamics which characterise the contest for political power and legitimacy between
the state and its Islamist opposition\(^1\). Three main lines of argumentation are investigated here to reflect these concerns. Firstly, it is argued that, in the case of Algeria, identity themes were central to the formulation of an anti-colonial discourse which framed the independence struggle and formed the building blocks in the construction of the post-independence Algerian political identity (or rather more accurately, identities). Identity issues, which are themselves central to the Algerian experience of colonialism, have framed the creation of the 'founding myths' of the Algerian nation (insofar as Algerian nationhood can be considered to be, to some extent at least, an 'imagined community'). This has been accompanied by the re-interpretation of such motifs over time - in social, cultural and political terms and terrains. These themes cover a range of historical and ideological symbols including the importance of independence and anti-colonialism, unity and consensus, Islam, Arabism, development, strong leadership, and an ambivalent relationship to French culture and language. Identity motifs are thus central to the articulation of the Algerian experience of the political (and vice-versa), be it through conflict or harmony.

Secondly, this chapter elaborates on the main themes which have dominated the rhetoric anti-colonial movements as well as post-colonial identity discourse by the state. Three areas of historical continuity come to the fore as we unearth the development of identity discourse throughout the pre-colonial and colonial history of Algeria, and its symbolically charged decolonisation struggle: the prominence of foundational referents of political discourse, a referent of moral agency lying at the core of political legitimacy, and the relational character of identity formation. In turn, political contest for legitimacy and power can be seen to occur in terms of identity-based ideological constructs, which are debated and appropriated by different political forces in different ways.

Thirdly, this symbolic core is transposed to the contemporary context of Algerian politics with particular reference to the ideological opposition between the Algerian state and its Islamist opposition in the 1988-1992 time frame. It is argued here that political identity motifs constitute the political tools modulating access to political power by framing the contest over the ownership of the moral dimension of legitimacy of governance\(^2\). This process implies the existence of a common political

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\(^1\) There are of course other opposition groups which have challenged the regime's monopoly on power, but these have proven less successful in challenging the state's monopoly on power, at least so far - their lack of success can be attributed to a number of factors, one of which is their reluctance to play the 'identity' card.

\(^2\) This process is not specific to the Algerian historical experience; it can also be seen to be relevant, in more general terms, to identity formation elsewhere.
imagination from which identity motifs can be derived, encoded and mediated into political discourse to suit specific political needs by all actors involved. In addition, the symbolic dimension of this struggle does not limit itself to discursive formation, but is also encoded the patterns of political action which characterise the state-Islamist relationship. Here, discursive strategies carry symbolic meaning and contribute to the definition of belonging and exclusion on which the conflict rests. In this sense, Islamism as a political movement takes on the mantle of the defender of the legacy of a war of liberation gone wrong. Its aims relate to promoting what early forms of nationalism failed to achieve in concrete terms, and what the postcolonial state 'perverted'. In the Islamist political imagination, identity can be linked by a visible, and not so subtle, thread to existing themes in the political lifeworld dating back to early nationalist movements, through the political strategies of the nascent Algerian state, and the regimes that have ensued.

The use of identity motifs in political discourse will be thus seen here as perhaps unavoidable, but inherently problematic, a theme developed in conclusion. But first, and as way of introducing our discussion of Algeria, the concepts of identity and political identity in particular, need to be conceptualised more clearly.

6.2. Defining Political Identity

When you remain within the established field of identity and difference, you become the bearer of strategies to protect identity through devaluation of the other; but if you transcend the field of identity through which the other is constituted, you lose the standing and identity needed to communicate with those you sought to inform. Identity and difference are bound together. It is impossible to reconstitute the relation to the second without confounding the experience of the first.

The Oxford English dictionary provides two definitions of identity which prove a helpful starting point to our purposes. Identity is defined there as 'the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing' and 'individuality, personality'. This condition thus implies both the affirmation of a specific set of qualities and functions and the concomitant differentiation from 'other' identities this specificity implies. The philosopher Charles Taylor investigates this process further to try to draw out how

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personal identity is formed. Taylor’s definition of identity is pointing to the moral and spiritual aspects of identity formation and the complex relationship between the instinctual and cultural factors that underpin it:

We are dealing here with moral intuitions which are uncommonly deep, powerful and universal. They are so deep that we are tempted to think of them as rooted in instinct, in contrast to other moral reactions which seem very much the consequence of upbringing and education... But like so much else in human life, this 'instinct' receives a variable shape in culture... So our moral reactions in this domain have two facets, as it were. On one side, they are almost like instincts...; on the other, they seem to involve claims, implicit or explicit, about the nature or status of human beings. From this second side, a moral reaction is an ascent to, an affirmation of, a given ontology of the human.

As a result, he defines identity in a way that approximates the idea of an individual moral choice reflecting self-definition, or 'personhood':

We speak of (identity) in these terms because the question is often spontaneously phrased by people in the form: Who am I? But this can't be necessarily answered by giving name and genealogy. What does answer this question for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame of horizon within which I am capable of making a stand.

This frame of horizon is where the individual stands in relation to others within and outside the group; it is a position and a choice.

On this individual level, our definition seems clear and rather unproblematic, but two central questions remain: how does this idea of personhood relate to collective identity-building, and how does the passage from the individual to the collective operate (and vice-versa)? Shifting our focus to collective identity - be it cultural or political - creates a new set of issues and questions that are more arduous to tackle. How can we define political identity and what are its boundaries? What part does it play in politics? How is collective identity constructed, by whom and for what purpose? What is the place of the analysis of political identity in political science?

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These issues have been debated widely by political analysts and philosophers, with renewed interest in the post-Cold War era and have led to a vast literature and protracted debates. Suffice it to say here that the issue of political identity goes to the heart of how both nationhood and ideology are constructed, thus mediating the place of the individual into the collective and defining both belonging and its boundaries. Thus, the processes of political affiliation, group dynamics, the role of ideology, and nation-building all spring to mind as examples of underpinning processes to the *imagining* of a collective identity. Perhaps more important still is the question of how these collective processes shape the identity of the individual in a political setting.

In this context, it is worth acknowledging from the outset that concepts such as political culture, political identity and ideology are inherently hard to define, partly because their existence and influence on the political process is notoriously difficult to quantify through statistical and other quantitative methods, and partly because they all imply individual self-definition - a *qualitatively* subjective process *par excellence*. Yet, few contemporary analysts of politics would risk bypassing the issue of identity altogether: its consequences in the political sphere are all too obvious, be it through the study of ideology or that of political culture. Still, dealing with identity proves problematic on another level. Exclusive reliance on identity questions as explanatory tools for political behaviour often runs the risk of oversimplifying complex decision-making processes and community dynamics, thus producing a primordialist account of political behaviour unable to account for individual differences and socio-economic influences. One should also beware of the binary oppositions analyses of identity often reinforce instead of overcoming. In short, while most analysts have a diffuse (or not so diffuse) feeling that using cultural traits to characterise the political is an important part of the equation of political identity, and thus ultimately political behaviour, such an endeavour is fraught with difficulties. Contemporary authors on the subject of identity have therefore tended to focus on specific case studies of identity in politics to avoid the pitfalls of generalisation7, but general theories on political identity are still critical to the debate on identity, as much for their limitations as for their insights8.

One such attempt, and a good starting point for our analysis, is Benedict Anderson's classic *Imagined Communities*. Anderson's account attempts to link political identity to the concept of nationhood by emphasising the creative nature of the process of political identity-building in the frame of the 'nation'9. Anderson starts from a series

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7 This volume exemplifies this trend.
8 See, in particular, the work of Ernest Gellner on nationalism.
of perplexing questions, the most salient of which being why nationalism holds such significant power over individuals despite what he judges to be their ideological (and philosophical) poverty\(^\text{10}\). His answer to this question is 'anthropological':

I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign\(^\text{11}\).

Communities are imagined not only through Gellner's conception of invention - implying ideological manipulation and the use of historical motifs to serve political purposes\(^\text{12}\) - but also in a more positive sense - as a creation. Thus, "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined"\(^\text{13}\). In turn, this implies an understanding of political identity that is inherently relational:

... the nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind\(^\text{14}\).

In this sense, political identity only holds by locating itself in opposition to its neighbours, or its alternatives: without its boundaries and its 'Others', political identity is impossible to define. What Anderson's approach underplays however is the dynamic re-interpretation of political identity over time within political communities (whether these are nations or smaller societal sub-groups)\(^\text{15}\). A political community, if understood in Anderson's terms, must be viewed as a lived phenomenon in which the production of a collective identity is an ongoing process through which history is re-interpreted, symbols re-appropriated, and legitimacy is contested and reaffirmed.Political identity is part of discourse and thus an active participant in the way in which power relations are codified, and sometimes challenged. Thus, the dialectical relationship between construction of Otherness in identity and the interactions of political actors for supremacy in the political sphere can help explain "the apparent incapacity to constitute oneself as oneself without excluding the other - and the


\(^{13}\) Benedict Anderson. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. p.15.


\(^{15}\) Furthermore, his account doesn't take into consideration the very real possibility of pluralism in political identity, and the lived contradictions in political identification lived by individuals at the margins of nationhood.
apparent inability to exclude the other without devaluing and, ultimately, hating him\footnote{16 Cornelius Castoriadis. 1990. Le Monde Morcelé. Paris: Seuil; p.29.}

The question of power is thus one that lies at the heart of political identity, and our initial question of who controls the production of identity and for what purpose is one that needs to be addressed. The relationship between the production of ideology and power relations has been tackled with varying success in philosophical, political and sociological texts - with a special interest placed on identity contest, self-other relations and marginality. Three main strands of analysis have attempted to critically deconstruct the production of ideology in general and that of political identity in particular: post-structuralism, post-modernism and post-colonialism. While these analytical standpoints differ in many ways, they all share a concern for the process of identity-making, especially in relation to those people or categories of people such an 'imagining' excludes. The work of Stuart Hall on identity is exemplary in this regard:

\begin{quote}
Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself\footnote{17 Stuart Hall. 1991. "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity", in A. King (ed.) Culture, Globalization and the World System. London: Macmillan. p.21.}.
\end{quote}

Such a focus on the dynamics of the 'self-other' relationship can be seen to be derived from the work of continental thinkers such as Jacques Derrida (with his interest in relational identity linked to \textit{differ\'ence}), but it ultimately finds its strongest inspiration in the work of the French sociologist Michel Foucault on health, the prison and sexuality. Foucault's careful deconstruction of the genealogy of such dichotomies as innocent/criminal and insane/sane point to a moral economy of structural differentiation in societies. Foucault's main contribution to the question of collective identity-making in the polity lies in his analysis of the nexus between knowledge (and more specifically to the intellectual production of categories) and power relations. Inspired by Nietzsche's Will to Power, this consideration displaces the process of imagining identity from the free, consenting individual described by Anderson, to structures of power and those who control them. Political discourse, which appropriates historical and sociological 'facts', is an apparatus for the construction of a regime of truth supportive a specific regime of power. Consequently,
the task of the analyst of political identity, and its place in discourse is inherently linked to the problematic of power 18.

As far as social and political identity is concerned, two processes have been identified by scholars inspired by Foucault's work in sociology as well as many gender and race analyses in cultural studies. On the one hand, the codification of power relations through mental categories of belonging defined by discourse can be seen, in Foucauldian terms, to strike at the heart of the imagining of political identity. As Stuart Hall shows:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discourse formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies 19.

On the other hand, this view implies that identity contest within the polity can be seen as the negotiation - through discourse - of these boundaries, thus affecting power relations. The application of this insight, in turn, is best exemplified by Edward Said's Orientalism20. Said's project echoes heavily of Foucault's own work on power/knowledge. Through a textual analysis of Western scholarship on the Orient, Said draws a parallel between the uneven power relationship between the centres of European power and the mostly colonised 'Orient' (interpreted widely), and concomitant distortions in the academic and journalistic accounts of the Orient destined at a readership in the metropolis. Said's discussion has the advantage of marrying a strong sense of how identity markers are crucial to the articulation of power, a theme of particular relevance to the issue of colonial power. But we do not need to focus exclusively on how colonial power was reinforced through external academic production for political purposes. Our primary interest here is to unearth the ways in which the colonial legacy has been interpreted by the post-colonial state to achieve its own political aims. Collective political identity, as a result, can be seen here as more than a mode of identification in the contemporary era. Following Foucault, I will look at identity issues and symbols as political tools which political actors use to gain power and build legitimacy. One area worth bearing in mind in conceiving of nation-building in the postcolonial setting also is Partha Chatterjee's

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conception of the nationalist imagination (in response to Anderson's work). As a way to put together the various theoretical strands on identity alluded to here, one quote from Chatterjee suffices:

... the most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West21.

Finally, it is perhaps necessary to problematise the concept of political identity a little further. Beyond the post-colonial state, there have been and remain other ways in which collective identity is constructed in the polity. For instance, tribal links in Africa relate to political organisation and articulate identity in a radically different way to the state. We could also mention the question of cultural métissage and dislocation (within the polity) and look at the margins of identity, and, externally, at the question of identity in exile, especially for diaspora communities. In essence, we thus need to be careful in dealing with the 'other' - as neither the self nor the other are as clearly demarcated a set of categories as the political ideologues of identity would have us believe. But the very use of such categories in political discourse makes them politically relevant.

6.3. Identity and the Experience of Colonialism in Algeria

Once the 'jewel in the crown' of French colonialism, Algeria sought and won its independence through a brutal - and bitter - independence struggle immortalised in the public eye through Franz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth, and Pontecorvo's classic film The Battle of Algiers. Such a high profile (especially in the French-speaking world) has often coloured the public consciousness to create an image of an Algerian political history dominated by ruthlessness and violence. In effect, Algeria's descent into civil war since the aborted elections of December 1991-January 1992 only seems to confirm such expectations and to reinforce, perhaps too stereotypically, images of a post-colonial world rife with political instability coupled with economic dysfunction and the absence of political pluralism. To some extent, such images perform the necessary task of communicating the physical, political and emotional violence linked to colonialism and its aftermath. Still, it is worth bearing in mind that such recurring patterns are not mere by-products of history, unavoidable, tragic, and somehow linked to an unchangeable political culture of violence. Here I will try to bypass the

stereotype of a violent political culture and thus a monolithic understanding of the question of political identity in Algeria and point to some of the principal areas useful to our understanding of the interaction between identity motifs and political outcomes.

Historically, the process of political identity formation in Algeria cannot be divorced from the experiences of colonisation, colonial rule and decolonisation specific to the Algerian case. The symbolic significance of conquest, oppression, and ultimately liberation, provides the foundation upon which a strong, independent idea of 'nationhood' was built. Most nations' political lifeworld display such historically significant moments which come to crystallise individual and collective fantasies concerning the value of political citizenship, comradeship, justice and freedom (the French, American and Russian Revolutions are powerful examples). In the case of Algeria, such motifs derive their primary significance from the experience of colonialism - which comes to symbolise lack of equality, justice and freedom, the division and thus defeat of the Algerians in the face of colonisation, and the political disenfranchisement this process implies for the individual and collective entity. It is perhaps most interesting to note the juxtaposition of basic French education in Algeria emphasising the founding myths of the French nation (liberté, égalité, fraternité) and the practice of the opposite of such principles, despite Algeria's special status as département, for 130 years. This is only one of the contradictions of colonialism though. If we are to look at the political and cultural métissage such forceful penetration implies, the ambiguous legacy of the French era becomes apparent. The French colonial regime systematically sought to destroy pre-colonial identity motifs (which were acquired and transmitted through kinship, tribal and other local ties and expressed through indigenous cultural and religious manifestations), while excluding Algerians from having access to full French citizenship which criteria they, by definition, could only fail to meet. It is in this double eclipse that contemporary Algerian political identity was born, and it is in identity terms that independence was ultimately fought for.

During the colonial period, the native Algerian attitude towards independence is one that evolved slowly, and as a result of the failure of the French colonial project to

22 Obviously, it would be reductionist, and somewhat unfair, to argue that only the colonial experience matters to the formation of political identity. What I would argue here is that the colonial moment has helped frame the identity dimension of politics in a crucial way which I will concentrate on. Others factors have contributed to the formation of that identity, but they have often tended to be explained or articulated in terms of motifs which arose as a result of decolonisation.

assimilate its subject population in an acceptable way. Revolts against colonisation were initially common, especially during the 1830-1847 time frame, but the growing acknowledgement that French presence would not be easily overcome (as colonial policies of massive European immigration, vast land acquisition and bureaucratic and legal means for making Algeria French reached their peak in the late 19th Century) led to a variety of native attitudes towards assimilation. At the turn of the Century, few were those that advocated full independence from France; in fact the most prominent social movement dealing with the issue of political identity from a native standpoint at the time, the Young Algerians movement, advocated equal human and political rights for Algerians so as to make assimilation possible. It was the growth of nationalism in the early 20th Century that started to reverse this trend and to articulate the idea of an independent political identity for Algerians. In particular, the creation of the Etoile Nord Africaine Movement (ENA) in the 1920s marked a rupture from earlier articulations of political identity. Interestingly enough, the ideological slant of the ENA grew from the Algerian workforce's experience of life in metropolitan France and through the exposure of immigrant workers to civil protest by trade unions, and in particular the French Communist Party. It is difficult to say whether independentist ideas developed at that time because of changes in the ideological terrain brought in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, or primarily through the experience of the reality of French life outside the colonial model. But one thing is for certain, this turning point in the self-conceptualisation of some native informants living in the métropole opened the gate for the growth of new political movements (culminating in the creation of the FLN), and led to the birth of the idea of an independent Algerian nation-state underpinned by its own, untainted, political identity. The political discourse of the ENA's main spokesman, Messsali Hadj, made the implications of such identity claims quite clear:

We are also the children of the Algerian people and we will never accept our country being attached to another against its will; we do not wish, under any pretext, to jeopardize the future, the hope for national freedom of the Algerian people.

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24 This attitude can be at least partially explained by the distorting effect of French education and cultural values during the colonial period, as growing numbers of Algerian became inspired by the French ideals of freedom inspired by the 1789 Revolution, in stark contrast to the reality of colon rule underpinned by legal discrimination through the Code de L'Indigénat and unequal political representation. Many native critics of the time saw assimilation as a means to gain access to this ideal of France, and the integration of Algerian identity into the French framework was seen to require more equal rights.

Self-definition against the definition imposed by France here forms the linchpin and ultimate justification for independence. The ENA was banned in France several times for its emancipatory message, but kept reappearing under different names, such as la Glorieuse Etoile Nord Africaine, and the well-known Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA) well into the 1930s. In fact, it was only with the outset of World War II that the momentum of such movements was momentarily abated.

In Algeria itself, native public opinion became severely divided on the subject of independence by the 1930s. One well-documented debate, which divided Algerian public opinion on the subject of the 'Algerian nation', illustrates this phenomenon clearly. In a famous article in Entente in 1936, Ferhat Abbas, then one the leading figures of assimilation through equal rights, announced: "there is no Algerian fatherland". Such a comment would have been typical of a number of young intellectual Algerians who still hoped for full inclusion into the French Republican ideal, and who clearly differentiated between two Frances - colonial France and its oppressive government on the one hand, and Republican France, itself partially imagined through the lens of a French education emphasising the human rights ideals brought forward by the French Revolution26. As a response to Ferhat Abbas' rejection of the national ideal, his main political opponent, Abdelhamid Ben Badis, himself inspired by the religious Reform movement, replied in al-Shihab that the Algerian nation "is not France, cannot be France and does not wish to be France"27. The Ulemas Reform movement had been critical in articulating the idea of an Algerian identity that married the scientific gains of French modernity with traditional Islamic values and social practices. As such, it functioned as a bridge between religious ideas of belonging and the development of nationalist ideas in Algeria. While the immigré ENA and its successor the PPA had provided the nationalist rhetoric and impetus for the birth of an independence movement, the Reform movement at home provided the identity basis on which this movement could be built. In this vein, it also is worth noting that the future slogan of the FLN was derived almost word for word from Ahmad Tawfiq al-Madani's classic quote, "Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, Algeria is my fatherland". It can thus be seen that, from early on, the idea of an Islamic culture was used as an alternative base for political identity and thus the platform upon which independence could be secured, a theme that will be explored in more detail later on.

27 For original quotes, see Claude Collot and Jean Robert Henry. Le Mouvement National Algérien, p.67.
The individual role of each movement to the development of the idea of an Algerian nation is thus notable, but so are such early divisions among militants. The ENA activists heavily borrowed from the French Communist party in terms of its organisational structure and it developed a language for emancipation akin to other nascent forms of nationalism of the time. The Reformists were almost exclusively based on Algerian soil, they operated from various orders primarily located in the countryside and functioned as the repositories of cultural and moral opposition to French colonialism. The évolutés, who were advocating assimilation, on the other hand, were mostly based in large cities and predominantly in Kabilya, and represented a small lumpen-bourgeoisie which had only been partially assimilated and who longed for equal rights under French law. Such widely divergent aims, backgrounds and viewpoints meant that these early efforts failed to lead to any large-scale or co-ordinated Algerian response to the question of colonialism. That being said, such nascent forms of political protest should not be dismissed as pointless on such grounds: on the contrary, it is through this variety in views and societal projects that the idea of an Algerian nation progressively took shape, and it is through the different fates these three movements faced that the future of Algeria was decided.

The évolutés placed their faith in the liberal and reformist ideas of the 1936 Front Populaire government in France and the reforms which they had been invited to contribute to by Prime Minister Léon Blum and his Minister of State Maurice Violette. Such faith proved misplaced when under tremendous pressure from conservative and colon political figures in the métropole, the severely toned down and timid Blum-Violette laws failed to pass the parliamentary test in France (these had been designed to widen French citizenship to a token number of Algerians without prior renunciation of their Muslim status, normally a requirement for the accession to citizenship). This event had a tremendous effect on Algerian public opinion in Algeria and in metropolitan France; it ended the illusion that assimilation into Republican France on equal terms would ever occur and therefore pushed an ever greater number of activists into the camp of the independentists. Ferhat Abbas moved from assimilation to emancipation but retained his belief that the most effective way of achieving such a result would be through the framework of French citizenship. He created another movement, the Union Populaire Algérienne in July 1938, with only limited success. Understandably, the ranks of nationalists grew rapidly at this time, with new division lines being drawn with activists based in France and those based on Algerian soil. But evidence of such divisions and ultimately of the strength of the nationalist movement despite them would only surface partially in 1945 and fully in 1954. World War II helped putting such pressing
questions aside, as many Algerians joined the war effort, out of solidarity, and out of necessity²⁸.

From this short overview, we can see that the idea of independence has strong roots in the Algerian political psyche - and deservedly so. Far from being an overnight phenomenon, the idea of what an independent political identity would resemble occupied hearts and minds throughout the colonial period, and especially in the 20th Century. Notwithstanding this great vibrancy in debate however, the portrayal of the independentist struggle and its meaning was to be systematically distorted and re-appropriated by the war's main victor, the FLN²⁹. The most vibrant political movement of the post-war era was not in fact the independentist PPA (the FLN's precursor), but Ferhat Abbas' various political movements: first, *Les Amis du Manifeste de la Libérté* (AML) enjoyed great success with the general Algerian population and many members of the PPA defected to join it, but it was dissolved in the aftermath of the May 1945 uprising in Sétif and the Northern Constantinois and the massacres of Algerian natives which occurred in response. In the context of renewed antagonism between the two populations, Abbas pressed on with a new party, *L'Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien* (UDMA) which went on to win a majority of seats in the native section of the segregated Constituent Assembly. Alas, the use of official channels for promoting independence was also unsuccessful as Abbas' plans to turn Algeria into a republic failed. Instead, a fairer but still uneven system of representation through the National Assembly was put into place. It is at this point of unique opportunity, and with the UDMA in a position of weakness, that the PPA decided to re-enter the political arena as a contestant after various boycotts. Its new party, *Le Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* (MTLD) went to win a majority of Muslim seats in the Assembly, despite its staunch independentist rhetoric. The MTLD became the most prominent independentist force from that point onwards, but it should be pointed out that internal divisions, especially with regards to the status of Kabylia deepened over the next few years. In addition, the MTLD political wing fostered the creation of a parallel military organisation the *Organisation Secrète* (OS) to carry out direct political action, often of a violent type, ending with intense police crackdown in March 1950. In this context, three factions appeared: the centralists (named after their allegiance to the Central Committee), the Messalists (named after their leader Messali Hadj) and a

²⁸ It is often forgotten that North Africa was one of the terrains on which WWII was fought with disastrous human and financial consequences. The French defeat in 1940 lead to isolation and financial hardship; but more importantly the Vichy government and its pro-Hitler stance galvanised the colon population to undermine Jewish rights on Algerian soil and reinforced their powerful position with regard to métropolitan France.

²⁹ See the discussion on the importance of unity as a symbol for more detail.
third group, Le Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action (CRUA) dedicated to reconciling the other two. Ironically, it is this third faction which would take action on November 1st, 1954 and spark the beginning of the independence war. Six internal members of the organisation and three former OS operatives in exile took leadership of the armed struggle, and on October 31st, the CRUA officially announced the creation of a new revolutionary movement, Le Front de La Libération Nationale, or FLN.

The liberational rhetoric of the FLN, which became the dominant independentist force of the war, came to reflect the concerns of previous nationalist movements in several ways. The greatest strength of the FLN during and after the independence war was its uncompromising commitment to expel the French using whatever political and military means necessary. While this represented a pragmatically sensible platform to adopt for a nascent political force, it was also the reflection of the need to expel the French in more ways than physical removal suggests - it meant cultural, social and emotional cleansing as well. The political discourse of the FLN was thus culturally and politically emancipatory in character. Its chief symbolic motif was the return to pre-colonial political and cultural values through independence, a return to Islamic mores and cultural practices (identified as an ideological alternative to French culture and political values), and cultural and linguistic Arabisation. This return to a partially imagined past was meant to reflect a more authentic mode of being - in opposition to the super-imposed values of the coloniser. Thus, as far as political identity is concerned, the independence movement defined itself by comparison - and in opposition - to the dominant political discourse. It drew from a cultural and symbolic set of motifs which was indigenous to re-create an identity judged lost, to foster the unity needed for success against the French, and to provide the foundations for a viable, coherent Algerian nation-state. To achieve this, the FLN reiterated its predecessors' identity claims and added a revolutionary twist to their poignancy in the context of growing tensions with the French after the Second World War and the beginning of hostilities in October 1954. The 1956 Soummam declaration made the political platform of the FLN very clear: "The historic mission of the Algerian Revolution is to destroy the odious and decadent colonial regime which

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30 It is worth noting that the FLN was not the first emancipatory political force to use such motifs: the Fédération des Elus Indigènes, the Islamic Reform Movement, L'Etoile Nord Africaine, and the Algerian Communist Movement were all ideologically powerful movements of the pre-World War Two period which the FLN was ideologically and symbolically indebted to. For a summary of the activities of such movements in English, see John Ruedy. 1992. Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of A Nation. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Chapter Five.
stands to prevent progress and peace". As two of its main conditions for a cease-fire, the FLN leadership stated the following:

1. the recognition of an indivisible Algerian nation. This clause aims to overcome the 'French Algeria' colonial fiction.
2. the recognition of the independence of Algeria and its sovereignty over all aspects of its affairs, including national defence and diplomacy.

Needless to say, the French authorities were not willing to accede to such demands and only gave up on the idea of French Algeria after almost eight years of conflict.

Despite this coherent and ultimately successful response to the problem of nationhood, the FLN always played down the important role which political forces other than itself had played in bringing about the independence of Algeria, and the divisions which continued to plague the independentist movement during the war and in the months that followed it. Even before the insurrection had begun, the Messalist faction of the MTLD has created an alternative to the FLN, Le Mouvement National Algérien (MNA) which, despite the growing popularity of the FLN, continued to resist assimilation. Internal changes and resulting tensions also came to fore at the Soummam conference: the wave of continuing violence pushed moderate UDMA members towards a pro-FLN stance and they joined the movement, so did former centralists, thus creating a coalition of forces around the CRUA-FLN. By contrast, the external (exiled) leadership of the CRUA became increasingly isolated from the centre and was excluded from the formation of the first executive of the FLN central committee, Le Conseil National de La Revolution Algérienne (CNRA), thus creating a schism among the original membership of the FLN. Another example of such tension was the assassination of Ramdane Abane, one of the leaders of the Battle of Algiers, by FLN leadership in obscure circumstances in December 1957. As the power balance between the original CRUA members and a new class of army officers of the ALN (the army wing the FLN known as l'Armée de Libération Nationale) shifted, a progressive purge of the original membership of the movement occurred. With the original external members (Ahmed Ben Bella, Mohamed Khider and Hocine Ait Ahmed) intercepted and jailed, and many of the original internal

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31 Soumman Declaration, El-Moudjahid, special edition no 4. 1956. El-Moudjahid remained the official journal of the FLN after the independence war and one of the most comprehensive sources of political discourse.
leadership killed in combat, the prominence of officers based externally in Tunisia and Morocco, such as Houari Boumediene, increased. Yet, despite these divisions, the FLN succeeded in creating broad enough a consensus to set up a second, more comprehensive executive in the fall the 1958. This new organisation, named le Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne (GPRA) was designed to act as a political interlocutor to the French executive headed at that time by General De Gaulle. Designed to be inclusive of previously marginalised FLN leaders, it succeeded in portraying the FLN as a united front, and as the only independentist force worth negotiating with. The FLN was successful in achieving such a recognition in the end, but divisions among internal and external leaders, among liberals, Marxists and Islamists, and between the leadership of different regions (or wilayats) only became more entrenched. At the heart of such division were class divisions, ethnic divisions (with the Kabyle question), and issues of personal differences. But most important perhaps was the fact that power-sharing became an increasingly significant issue when the outcome of the war started to tilt in the favour of the independence movement. As John Ruedy argues:

By the early 1960s, thousands of Algerians who had played leadership roles of many different kinds in the revolution could lay claim to a share of political power, but no mechanism had been created to adjudicate and apportion such claims. If the years 1954-56 witnessed a progressive coming together of nationalist leadership, the years 1957-62 witnessed an ever greater segmentation of the élites. This was in contrast to the society as a whole, which through the shared experiences of the war and repression, had developed the clear sense of identity referred to earlier...

From this overview, we can see that the formation of political identity in Algeria cannot be divorced from the history of the development of the Algerian nationalist movements and the war of independence, and that their relevance to our discussion is crucial but far from straightforward.

6.4. From Colonial Legacy to Political Identity in the Postcolonial Era

The postcolonial history of Algeria35 can be best characterised through the large degree of political stability it enjoyed until the late 1980s. Upon independence in 1962, the consolidation of the state under the FLN leadership meant internal power

struggle within the movement and with other nascent political groups, but within a few months the post-colonial state became solidified under the leadership of Ahmed Ben Bella under single party rule. In time, economic pressures, coupled with Ben Bella's mismanagement of the relationship between the political establishment and the powerful military, lead to a (relatively) bloodless coup d'état in 1965 and the accession of colonel Houari Boumediene to power, a rule which lasted until his death in 1978. Boumediene's rule was, due to its length and success in the early years, critical to the patterns of institutionalisation of the Algerian state, including the solidification of existing economic patterns through the development of a socialist economic policy, the involvement of the military at the heart of the decision-making process, and the establishment of laws and constitutional arrangements supporting single party rule. In turn, the power transition after Boumediene's death was smooth, but in the context of growing economic problems typical of the Third World in the 1980s, the legitimacy of the state became increasingly challenged by wide segments of the population. These culminated in the 1988 food riots which prompted rapid democratisation and emergency economic changes, and allowed, for the first time since independence, political parties outside the FLN to be formed and for the press to operate outside state control. This evolution of the political scene, which is not untypical of the postcolonial world, can be seen to explain much of the setting and factors underpinning the continuing crisis of the Algerian state. But before we launch into our analysis of the role of identity in explaining the crisis, it is perhaps necessary to look at the issue of political discourse, and its historical evolution in the Algerian setting, more closely.

Here, the colonial era in general, and the decolonisation period in particular are critical in identifying the 'founding myths' which helped create and solidify the idea of a postcolonial nation-state. The thread linking nationalist and postcolonial identity themes is already apparent: unity in struggle, Islam as the basis for a common identity, left-wing politics would all find their place in the postcolonial lifeworld. Such 'founding myths', which the independence war helped creating, constitute the framework for understanding politics in Algeria, and provide a set of criteria for judging which political behaviour is acceptable, and which one is not, according to how closely it matches the standards set up by this mythology. In that sense, assessing political behaviour is intrinsically an identity issue since it is based on a notion of belonging to a specific political pedigree. In turn, while an exhaustive list of such 'myths' is difficult to draw, a number of key themes are worth developing on. For a discussion of the postcolonial tenets of political culture - with special reference to the underpinning influence of the army in political affairs, see I. William Zartman. 1973. "The
Independence is an obvious and main theme: it reflected the willingness to overcome the legacy of French colonialism in political, cultural and socio-economic ways. It positioned itself in systematic opposition to what was identified as French values, and aimed at reversing the effects of colonialism by returning to a pre-colonial 'Golden Age'. Upon independence, such themes were ingrained in the constitution and were explicitly used by the regime to couch its legitimacy: independence was here underpinned by a triple alliance of socialism, Arabisation and a focus on Islam, all seen as sites of fracture with the colonial ideal. Such a focus is reflected by the 1963 Constitution which asserts that the Algerian state is socialist with Arabic as its official language and Islam as its official religion. Socialism was partially inspired by the (largely unacknowledged) influence of early nationalist movements, and especially the *Etoile Nord Africaine*. But it was also seen to play a key role in creating an alternative to a continued form of economic dependence on the former coloniser (a theme which is consistent with various Third World nationalist themes of the time). Islam, which will be dealt with in more detail later, provided a comprehensive, intelligible, viable, and most importantly authentic cultural, social and political alternative to the French model. Arabisation, on the other hand, helped solidify the myth of an ethnically and culturally homogeneous Algerian nation and to overcome, in very practical ways, the legacies of French culture. More subtle is the Constitution's articulation of the role of the nascent Algerian state in those terms. Here, the Constitution highlights both the importance of socialism as a way to create and guarantee economic self-sufficiency for Algeria, and an official pledge by the state to fight imperialism at home and abroad. In practice, such an ideal of independence was translated into a tripartite policy of differentiation from previous cultural and political practices judged tainted by their association with French culture. The linchpin of this policy was the progressive and comprehensive Arabisation of the education system which was ultimately to be reflected in hiring practices, particularly in the public sector. This was to be accompanied by an official attempt to set up a 'distance' between the Algerian nation and the French nation, ideologically, in diplomatic terms, and in terms of economic links. The application of such policies was however not as clear-cut as the official state rhetoric of the Ben Bella and Boumediene administrations seem to suggest. The

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37 For an overview of the main themes raised by the 1963 Constitution, and its context, see John Ruedy. 1992. *Modern Algeria*, p.200-201. It is no coincidence that socialism and the central powers of the state under the aegis of the FLN are articulated in terms of independence. The theme of socialism is developed on in more depth later on.
policy of Arabisation was progressive and selective and it tended to focus on rural and working class pupils while the elite and some middle class children attended French-speaking or bilingual schools, thus creating a dual education track with widely different outcomes. Within one generation, it became clear that French-educated children were at a comparative advantage when accessing tertiary education and, ultimately, the job market. Such differences only worked to reinforce (and came to symbolise) class divisions within the Algerian polity. To be part of a political and economic elite was associated with being unduly influenced by the French. In short, being associated with the French culturally became a vehicle for criticism, a way of inscribing class divisions within a discourse of authenticity. Such associations found resonance in the ambiguous position of the state towards France in diplomatic terms. Official policy meant that the full normalisation of diplomatic relations took two decades to achieve, but unofficial and informal relations between the Algerian political elite and the French state remained strong due to common economic interests. Such informal relationships among politicians and powerful industrialists blossomed during the first few years of the post-independence era, chiefly through the exploitation of Algerian natural resources and import of French manufactured products onto the Algerian market. In that sense, the importance of independence symbolically was offset by the need for economic development, especially for the economic elite which had vested interests in a continued relationship to the former colonial power. Yet this relationship became increasingly unstable as the balance of power between the trading partners changed. The Evian accords marking independence had guaranteed French economic interests in a variety of sectors for a minimum of six years, but following this period, and after the coup which deposed President Ben Bella (himself a proponent of such a continued economic link), the Boumediene administration began to alienate its French partners through a wave of nationalisation of existing industry and the setting up of a set of economic 5 year plans (based on the Soviet model). Thus, the development of socialism as the linchpin of political ideology and economic policy in the post-colonial era is

38 The Evian accords of 18 March 1962 marked the official end of the war of independence. In addition to formal political independence, the French made key economic concessions to the nascent state: most importantly, it gave up its claim on Southern parts of Algeria where oil reserves had recently come under exploitation. But the French managed to secure a series of contracts offering them monopoly over some markets and industries, including oil, for a period of at least six years.

39 The French resorted to punitive measures by scraping Algeria's preferential import treatment regarding the wine industry and the vegetables trade leading to the progressive disappearance of viticulture in its former colony. Yet, despite this measure, the Boumediene government continued with its programme, maintained trading relationships with France and continued to provide labour for France, while diversifying its trading base with other European states and the United States. In fact, the Boumediene administration's own negligence of the agricultural sector in its economic plans, led to a stagnation and eventually to the slowing down of the whole primary sector with serious consequences.
intrinsically intertwined with the importance of being independent, as opposed to just gaining formal independence. In this sense, the political development of ideology and economic policy can be linked back to this identity requirement in a fundamental way.

Officially though, the theme of national independence was inscribed within the larger framework of developmental political discourse prevalent at the time and thus put Algeria on the map of the Third World. Symbolically, independence was coupled with the acknowledgement that the International Order would have some bearing on the future development of Algeria: hence belonging to the non-aligned movement in the early years reflected Algeria's reluctance to be influenced by outside players due to its traumatic colonial past. Additionally, non-alignment allowed Algeria to deal with both superpowers in a position of strength during the Cold War. In effect, Algeria's non-aligned status was somewhat compromised by its informal links with the Soviet Union, who provided Algeria with most of its weapon capabilities, but Algeria refused to let the Soviet Union develop military bases in its territory and retained its political and economic independence from the Soviet bloc. In fact, Algeria sought allegiances of a different kind, which once again, reflects both its colonial past and the aspirations delineated by the political and cultural project of the nascent nation state. Algerian leaders felt a natural association with the developing world (as the post-colonial world and the Third World often overlapped), and it rapidly became a powerful Third World player known for its commitment to the New International Economic Order designed to redefine the Third World's relationship to more powerful nations and negotiate a better deal as a result. While diplomatically Algeria became quickly known as a neutral power useful in mediating disputes among states, its commitment to the issues faced by the Arab World grew quickly. For instance, Algeria was one of the most vocal supporters of the Palestinian cause. There is a number of factors underpinning Algeria's growing association with the Arab World: cultural commonalities, especially given the pro-Arab stance of the regime at the expense of the Berber minority, is an obvious instance. In the context of the growth of Arab nationalism region-wide, which echoed Algeria's own independence project, the desire to belong to a regional entity while retaining one's independence found natural locus in the Arab World. With many shared cultural and religious values, and with common economic interests and dilemmas (especially in relation to the exploitation of oil), the largest Maghribi nation state found a reliable set of allies in the Fertile Crescent. It is worth pointing out that such a framework of belonging came as a viable and culturally consistent alternative to the French framework of assimilation which had been seen as structurally violent and unequal. A freely chosen, equal relationship
to the Arab World can thus be seen to symbolise Algeria's accession to a normal status in the international community. Such a stance also proved helpful in masking the regional divisions and tensions Algeria faced in the Maghrib. Initial territorial disputes with Tunisia and Morocco were eventually solved, but Algeria's involvement in the Western Sahara dispute in opposition to Morocco created a gulf in interests which still affects Maghribi relations today.

As a whole, we can see that the task of building an independent and strong Algeria in the postcolonial era was indubitably an arduous and multi-faceted task, involving the development of a discourse of political independence based on a *new articulation* of identity, accompanied by the development of policies at home and abroad which could underpin such a project. Despite tensions and disputes among the political elite (and eventually Ben Bella's dismissal), the Algerian regime was successful in understanding that such a move required a vast and carefully planned array of changes touching upon the political, social, cultural and economic spheres of life. In addition, it understood clearly that it was through the articulation of a sense of identity and belonging that political allegiances could be created and maintained and political legitimacy ultimately justified. However, there were inherent tensions in how this was achieved in practice: indeed, symbolic expectations and political realities are not always easy to reconcile.

The return to Islam is another central theme in Algerian identity discourse that can be traced back to the foundation of the state. Religiously and culturally, Islam was the strongest factor fostering national and communal unity. It provided an already-existing, and historically validated, alternative to what was perceived as the French way of life - including language, culture, education, and societal structure. In other words, it constituted the foundation for an alternative, post-colonial identity. Islam was also a fundamental rallying call under which the FLN gathered public support for the revolution - and thus is linked to the legitimate overthrow of illegitimate rule.\(^4\) This historical claim helped frame Islam as a factor in the success of the independence struggle, and thus a necessary constituent to political legitimacy and success of post-colonial regimes. There is little new in this appropriation of religious motifs and their application to the political realm in the Algerian setting however. For instance, the mythical figure of Abd Al-Qadir dominated the political imagination of the resistance to French invasion until 1847 and continues to exercise a strong symbolic influence on Algerian politics. The idea of the holy warrior fighting for a *jihad* precedes the era of Al-Qadir of course, but the example of resistance to French

invasion in the name of Islam was a symbolic referent of great political value for the FLN, partially because it stood as testimony to the fact that there had been a strong resistance to the French upon invasion, and partially because it represented a vital link between religion and its political role as a (anti-colonial) tool of emancipation. As mentioned above, Islam was officially enshrined as religion of the state through the 1963 Constitution, a move which subsequent legislative amendments were not to question. Islam was also constructed as a political tool which, to successfully underpin the regime in place, was to be carefully controlled and nurtured to work as a currency for legitimacy. As a result, the activities and settings of mosques came under the control of the state and its ministry of religious affairs. With the creation this 'official' Islam, and with the gradual incorporation of various associations and labour organisations into the FLN party machine, the state hoped to gain control over all avenues for political expression and thus of potential challenge to its power in ideological terms. The added benefit of such a policy in terms of discursive coherence, was that such a centralisation of cultural expression, in the name of the party and that of Islam, helped perpetuate the illusion of societal homogeneity under one body of command.

Unity was thus a crucial component to the post-colonial understanding of the nation - with all that this implies for consideration of individual and community identity. One of the great themes underpinning the birth of the Algerian nation, unity was understood as unity of the people, under Islam and against the French. In the early independence years, this emphasis helped link Islam with the political and economic espousal of socialism - a populist, communitarian ideology par excellence. During the war, the structural organisation of the FLN articulated identity within the struggle in a collective, as opposed to individual, manner, a theme which is indicative of the subsequent FLN position towards identity:

... the Algerian revolution was, from the beginning, a movement of collectivity: of collective leadership, of collective suffering, and collective anonymity.

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41 The 1976 Charter, set up by the Boumediene government with an unprecedented degree of popular consultation, somewhat deviated from the staunch socialism of the Ben Bella era. But the commitment to Islam (interpreted both as a religion and as a cultural system designed to tie Algerian identity to a more general Arab identity) remained constant throughout.

42 For a study of the importance of mosques as a political space since independence, and especially in the context of the of rise of political Islam, see Ahmed Rouadja. 1990. Les Frères et la Mosquée.


Unity in political and societal terms had underpinned the victory against the French in direct ways: colonial oppression was interpreted as the failure of Algerians to unite against the oppressor. The divisions within the FLN during and directly after the independence war were in turn severely underplayed in the political discourse and historical testimony produced at the time to promote this ideal. Unity in struggle was glorified not only as a factor in the success of the independence war, but it was also subsequently used as a means to justify single party rule under the banner of the dominant FLN. The cultural need for unity justified lack of democratisation after independence under the banner of a populist social contract (where pluralism was sacrificed to more pressing developmental needs), eliminating alternative political forces and projects existing at the time, and perhaps even more importantly, underplaying existing social, cultural and ethnic differences. The 'need' for Algerian unity successfully masked the emergence of post-colonial political and economic élites and eclipsed the question of the place of Berber identity within the framework of the postcolonial state, to name but two examples. Additionally, such an emphasis was used to camouflage the distinctive Marxist underpinnings of the FLN revolutionary rhetoric and tactics - and to help frame the subsequent socialist doctrinal slant of the FLN in power within the framework of an Algerian identity. Unity, equality, strong and collective leadership not only figured prominently into the discourse of the Boumediene era, but also continue to hold a privileged place in political discourse, functioning as a veritable rallying call in support of the government in times of legitimacy crisis. As Benjamin Stora points out, such reliance on a monolithic understanding of Algerian identity allowed the regime a large degree of ideological flexibility, as well as a privileged position as the sole mediator of societal conflicts and differences. That being said, this official position in no way reflected the reality of the power relations that actually developed in the post-colonial period. Ruedy talks of the creation of a political myth where:

47 The French historian Benjamin Stora summarises this process well when he highlights how the post-colonial obsession of the regime with the commemoration of the war helped mask the cleavages that had characterised the development of the nationalist movement before the war, and the often violent clashes among FLN forces and between the FLN and its main rival nationalist force, the MNA. See Stora. 1993. *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie*. Paris: La Découverte. p.4. For an overview of such nationalist clashes, see chapter 4.
... the party, separate and distinct from government, was the guarantor of the nation’s ideological purity and the articulator of its major policies. According to the myth, it was an avant-garde revolutionary elite expressing the will of the working masses, and as such, it bore responsibility for policing the bourgeois infected state bureaucracy, one of the more unfortunate legacies of colonialism. Yet, by 1964, the FLN had itself become a vehicle for upward mobility for Algerians anxious to improve their material and community standing.49

Thus, far from being a factor in harmonising community interests, the party quickly grew as a way to canalise and thus control class and other societal divisions.

In terms of discursive coherence, unity as a theme had another key purpose: that of issue linkage between the traditional aspect of political identity (Islam), its key political feature (independence) and the political programme which was set to underpin it in practice: the development of a populist form of socialism adapted to recently de-colonised societies. The unity of the ummah could be equated to the idea of unity against the colonial oppressor, and unity against the colonial oppressor lead, after victory, to the idea of a united people in socialist terms. Socialism was an official feature of the political discourse of the FLN after independence and remained the linchpin to political, social and economic policy until Boumediene’s death in 1978. Both Ben Bella and his successor made socialism one the key components of their respective Charters: in fact, Ben Bella went as far as stating, in a tour de force of ideological reshuffling: "Islam is a socialist religion, it is a religion of equity". The political shrewdness of this ideological statement is worth pausing on, for it goes to the heart of how what was seemingly a foreign ideological construct could be adopted in a state so reluctant to accept outside influence. Socialism was equated with Islam to make it more politically acceptable: socialism was posited as a culturally valid and thus legitimate construct. Additionally, making Islam 'like' socialism erased the foreign origins of this ideological construct, thus reinforcing its legitimacy in terms of authenticity. This was a sensitive issue for a nascent political identity as any connection to ideological themes reminiscent of colonial era were by definition excluded.50 As a result, it is easy to understand why "Throughout the first thirteen

50 The references to the Soviet Union in this regard could have been seen to undermine the independent status of Algeria, as the status of the states of the Soviet bloc illustrated. More subtle was the possible connection to the development of early nationalist movement and the ENA's connection to the French communist party in particular. The connection with a nationalist era that had been conveniently glossed over upon independence was one not to be cultivated.
years of independence, the leadership worked assiduously to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam and socialism, even going as far as to claim on occasion that Muhammad himself was the founder of socialism. Later on, Bounmediene's National Charter of 1976 posited socialism as an irreversible position designed to further the process of nation-building independence had started. Here, issue-linkage was articulated not so much in relation to Islam as it was to the legitimising function of history in its most symbolically powerful expression: that of the war of independence. In both cases, the process remained one of assimilation of socialism as a social, political and economic project into the political imagination of the nation.

In practical terms, this political stance led to the rapid heavy industrialisation of the economic sector and the formation of politicised civil society groups controlled by the party. Despite this apparent stability however, socialism was far from a monolithic doctrinal stance of the regime; in fact, its evolution as an ideological guide to political and socio-economic affairs is indicative of its varying degrees of appeal for the public, and more importantly, for the elite over time. Initially, socialism bore the promise of a real distanciation from the colonial model by promising to create the conditions for self-sustaining development. The initial success of the Algerian government in generating capital (through the development the hydrocarbon industry in particular) boosted its standing in the international community (where it became a model for development along decentralised socialist lines) and with the Algerian population. The growing economic crisis linked to the failure the five-year plans instigated by the regime came to a head in the mid-1970s when the first large-scale forms of political dissent became noticeable. The year 1972 is one of two key breaking points in our understanding of the regime's commitment to socialism. With the creation of socialist brigades (dominated by left-wing university student groups) dispatched by the regime to encourage an 'agrarian revolution' in the countryside, the regime hoped to mobilise the political energies of a new generation. But it is the same regime that would allow the growing number of Islamist students in universities to become politically active in competition with the left-wing groups from the same epoch. By 1976, our second key date, the regime had frozen its support for the brigades and effectively allowed the Islamist opposition to eradicate the political potential of left-wing groups in university settings. Whether this move came as a result of the

53 The socialist political ideology which underpinned the Bounmediene era came to involve the development of large scale industrialisation projects which were designed to guarantee the economic development and future economic independence of Algeria.
unpopularity of the 'agrarian revolution', or more as a result of the fear of the regime to see its grip on the civil society lessen, is difficult to ascertain fully. One fact remains clear though; the regime clearly benefited from manipulating the various emerging voices from civil society to promote its political agenda, but in order to preserve its legitimacy, it could not disavow its commitment to the socialist ideal without embarrassment. Indeed, the regime was still holding on to socialism as its guiding principle after it has become obvious that both the 'agrarian revolution' and the industrialising plans were in crisis. The example of the brigades therefore helps put the ideological commitment of the regime to socialism into perspective.

The final theme worth alluding to in our overview of the dominant discursive motifs of the postcolonial political imagination complements the triptych of Algerianism through independence, Islam, and unity through socialism that we have now drawn. Arabism is cultural theme which finds resonance both with Algeria's attempt to find a new place in the region and its concern with cultural and political homogeneity. Once again, despite the existence of a culturally distinct Berber minority, Arab themes were glorified as the foundation (along with Islam) of an Algerian nationalism that would fit into regional patterns of pan-Arabism. The need to see the Algerian nation as one is a theme we have identified as constitutive to the development of post-colonial political identity. Arabism, in turn, solidifies that claim in relation both to the external notion of the Other (inclusion in the Arab world as a factor of exclusion of the former coloniser's culture) and its internal manifestations (in relation to Berber culture and language in particular). The denial of the existence of a particular Berber ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity would be complete in the post-colonial era. In practical terms, this was concurrent with policies of Arabisation. In terms of political discourse, the message was spelled out clearly by various representatives of the regime. Most famously, the Minister of Culture and Information, Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahim, wrote in 1973 that:

> When reading all that has been written on the Arabs and the Berbers in Algeria, one realises that much has been done to divide the Algerian people. For instance, to argue that the Algerian

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55 see footnote 49. It is only after Boumediene's death that the regime gradually disengaged itself from its socialist commitments. The Chadli Benjedid regime gradually pushed Algeria toward economic liberalisation, privatisation and a more energetic search for solutions to the growing problem of international debt.

population is composed of both Arabs and Berbers is historically false\textsuperscript{57}.

Such a standpoint was put into question most prominently in 1980 with what has now been termed the 'Berber Spring'. Upon the interdiction of a conference on Berber language in the university of Tizi-Ouzou, a wave of political protest erupted on university grounds, leading to a general strike in Kabylia. The response of the regime in this regard was as swift as it was repressive, but the 'Berber question' was never overcome in the post-colonial years. It thus came as little surprise to most observers when upon the democratisation of the political system in 1989, the Berber community would have its own party, the RCD (Rassemblement pour la Culture et La Démocratie).

Overall, we have seen that a number of key themes were developed by the Algerian regime since the end of the colonial era as the foundation of the idea of a nation, and of national identity, which would overcome the legacy of colonialism and create (or re-create) identity links to cultural and religious forms seen as more authentic. But we have also seen the contradictions ingrained in the constructions of such themes and their inclusion in the political language of the state in practice and in relation to the real divisions characterising Algerian society. Despite such ambiguities however, political identity was one of the driving factors underpinning the strength and versatility of the postcolonial state: in looking for a postcolonial national identity, the FLN leadership emphasised those themes which were both culturally relevant and politically useful. This process was creative in nature and involved the encoding of identity motifs in political discourse, a dimension of identity discourse we now turn to.

6.5. Encoding Identity into Political Discourse

Collective identity formation is a delicate process and requires continual investments\textsuperscript{58}.

As Jean-Claude Vatin and Jean Leca have pointed out, the legitimacy of the Algerian regime in the post-independence era was never linked to a democratic conception of political representation. Its legitimacy was based on its historical link to the

\textsuperscript{57} Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi. 1973. De la Décolonisation à la Révolution Naturelle. Algiers: SNED. Own Translation. Taleb-Ibrahimi instead argues that Arab-Berber mix was issued from a common love of the land see p.225

independence war. I would add that the distinctly populist position of the regime (through the use of the themes of socialism and unity) created the practical underpinnings for such a lack in popular participation. The above discussion has shown which themes and symbols were used by the successive Algerian regimes to create and sustain political legitimacy and to underpin domestic and foreign policymaking. The selection process which mediates these identity themes' access into official political discourse is not as direct or as unproblematic as the above list of themes suggests however. A distinct process of encoding of general identity themes into discourse has always been matched by an effort by the state to shape the political culture of the population, a lesson in population control from the French era that was duly learnt. This process is highly selective, and it varies in its emphasis according to the political context in which it occurs. For instance, the complete eclipse of the role of nationalist movements other than the FLN (and in particular the influence of Messali Hadj) from the official historical record was a highly political process in nature. Bypassing real dissension among nationalists, and the struggle during and shortly after the independence war between nationalist factions, the regime effectively monopolised the discourse on history to create its political legitimacy and exclude others from any claim to it by the same gesture. Our understanding of political encoding should thus posit history as a privileged discursive site where:

Collective identity involves the achievement, by individual actors or by social groups, of a certain coherence, cohesion and continuity... The cohesion of collective identity must be sustained through time, through a collective memory, through lived and shared traditions, through the sense of a common past and heritage. It must also be maintained across space, through a complex mapping of territories and frontiers, principles of inclusion and exclusion that define 'us' against 'them'.

De Certeau shows that history functions as a mechanism underpinning how communities imagine themselves - and thus that the representation of history has a political value which varies over time, making the production of historical knowledge an unstable endeavour. Such an analysis send us back to Hobsbawm and Ranger's conception of the 'invention of tradition' where different societal groups manage their access to the control of the institutions which produce identity so as to monopolise

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60 See Benjamin Stora. 1991. La Gangrène et L'Oubli. Chapter 8 deals with the diversity of nationalist movements, chapter 11 with the creation of a discourse of historical selection.
identity claims\textsuperscript{63}. In this sense, tradition is not a fixed set of beliefs but as Wright argues, a dynamic set values which are used for political purposes: mobilisation of selected aspects of tradition to create political outcomes\textsuperscript{64}. From this perspective, three main patterns can be seen to be at play: appropriation, re-interpretation and silencing\textsuperscript{65}.

Firstly, the use of identity motifs in political discourse involves the appropriation of key events of history, and especially the historical period surrounding the independence war of 1954-1962. As the epicentre of the national consciousness, the symbolically-charged history of Algeria provides a reliable and plentiful source of legitimising tools for accessing or retaining political power. Having participated in the armed resistance to the French was originally a key element to political legitimacy: this can explain, in part, the key role played by members of the military after independence, and their popularity with a constituency heavily composed of former FLN combatants. Yet, one would expect that, with the coming of age of a constituency in the 1970s which could not remember the war of independence, the balance would shift toward a wider range of legitimising motifs, such as economic success, ideological sophistication, etc. In reality, the regime showed remarkable consistency in retaining its strategies for underpinning its political power. Its monopoly on the political, cultural and religious spheres of expression through the control of the party and official Islam helped prevent, or at least distort, the creation of an autonomous civil society, and the creation of vast clientelist networks further disabled the potential for political opposition. Overall though, the official discourse on political legitimacy remained by and large anchored in the legacy of the war of independence\textsuperscript{66}. One explanatory hypothesis in this regard could be that the use of historical validation is more of about identity than it is about political expediency, strictly speaking. Pocock is one author who has explored this theme fully by arguing that there is a nexus between state power and the production of an historiography to underpin it: "a community writes its own history when it has the autonomous political structure needed if it is to command its own present, and typically, the

\textsuperscript{65} For a good overall account of the processes underpinning the manipulation of history for political purposes by the postcolonial state, see Gilles Manceron and Hassan Remaoun. 1993. D'Une Rive a l'Autre: La Guerre d'Algerie et la Memoire de l'Histoire. Paris: Syros. Chapter Two "En Algerie, l'Histoire sous Surveillance".
\textsuperscript{66} The legitimising claim of being Islamic, while crucial, lost some of its poignancy once the non-Muslim occupier was expelled after the war. To be legitimate, the regime would have to be Muslim, but how and, how much, it could be expected to fulfil the political and social expectations that came with the affiliation with Islam only became an issue with the growth of political Islam in the 1970s.
history it makes will be the history of that structure."67 This analysis shows a double
link: no historiography can be produced without sovereignty, but no identity can be
constructed without historiography either, making the construction of history an
element of nation-building. Here, in essence, laying a claim to the war of
independence represents a claim to belong to a certain group, the winning camp, and
thus by contrast, not being a harki, a term used during the war to denote those who
Algerians who collaborated with the French army or enlisted in it. Post-
independence, being harki became associated with the general idea of being a
collaborator, a traitor, influenced by the French, in a word, foreign. The regime was
always shrewd in using strategies of exclusion involving the rumour that a particular
political figure was a harki, or influenced by the French, as the means to discredit
them politically and personally, with a great degree of success. More widely, the
appropriation of the key historical moment of the 'revolution' sends back to the
instant of birth of the nation, painful and cathartic, and thus to all the other themes
which have been sown together as the founding myths of the nation. In the case of
Algeria, historical claims are thus both identity claims and cultural claims in terms of
the motifs outlined above: independence, Arabism, unity and Islam. Not only could
political legitimacy be derived from the association with Islam the war of
independence conferred, but being a good Muslim could also be proven/measured by
one's involvement in the war.

The regime's discursive strategy does not stop at staking a claim in the historical
process though. In addition, this process involves the simplification and re-
interpretation of such selected historical facts to make them more politically useful.
This involves the simplification of political events to facilitate the transition form
'fact' to political symbol. Here, historical metaphor is of particular importance as it
provides more elasticity in interpretation than 'mere historical fact': it is the symbolic
meaning of historical events rather than the events themselves that are debated and
appropriated to validate political structures and behaviour. A classic example of such
simplifying measures concerns the post-colonial depiction of France by the regime
both in its political discourse and with its tight control over the production of
historical record. This was achieved in two chief ways in the Boumediene era: first,
through the plethora of independence celebrations controlled by the regime and used
as clear opportunities to reinforce existing power structures68; secondly, through the
tight political control of the work of Algerian historians by the regime (and the
concomitant rejection of non-conforming versions of history produced outside

68 As mentioned by Stora in his introduction to his short volume on the independence war. see
Algeria). Eriksen develops on this idea of historical commemoration and delineates a particular role for it in the functioning of society. For Eriksen, commemoration functions as memory expressed through performance to underline "the cohesion of society, its moral values and the legitimacy of authority." This focus on the control of history resulted in the polarisation of history into almost caricatural sides, and a sense of historical progress which framed the victory of the FLN as complete, inevitable and not be shared with anyone. For instance, the condemnation of those associated with French culture assumes that all French people are the same, when in fact, the Algerian experience of 'the French' is very particular in nature. No attempt in this depiction of history is made to elaborate on the idea of a pieds-noirs (colon) culture or politics (nor to discuss the differences among pieds-noirs); and no attempt at comparing this culture to that of the French metropolis was attempted by the regime. A clear dualism between the Algerian and the French is designed to clear demarcate between the legitimate and the illegitimate, the brother and the harki. This system of validation of political identity allows for key debates in Algerian history to be bypassed altogether. These can be seen to include, for instance, the history of the harkis in Algeria and massacres after the war, the sheer diversity of the attitudes toward the Algerian relationship to French culture, identity and citizenship in the early 20th Century and the heterogeneity of Algerian identity itself in ethnic, cultural, linguistic and class terms. Relationships of clientelism within Algeria and with France continued, if informally at times, and despite the exclusionary discourse of French influence in all aspects of political and economic life. The selection of what is relevant to the discussion of history is intrinsically linked to what can be identified as politically valuable to highlight or to hide.

Thirdly, and as a reflection of the issue of selection, this process involves exclusion - or silencing - not only of differences inside the group, but also of outside claims to either similar identity motifs or to a voicing of difference. In these terms, identity plays a distinct political function since it is an active participant in defining truth, meaning, and relevance. Exclusion is of course a powerful political tool for retaining a monopoly on power: it has the double advantage of maintaining the myth of perfect representation (if the nation is unanimous, one voice to represent it suffices) and practically allowing for civil society to be controlled, distorted or plainly forbidden. A number of areas of heterogeneity have been highlighted in our discussion already,

69 See Benjamin Stora. 1991. *La Gangrène et L'Oubli*. pp.229ff. Stora shows how as early as 1966, the regime endeavoured to gain control over the historical process. This is best exemplified through the 1974 decision to ban all historical research not cleared by the regime-controlled Centre National des Etudes Historiques (CNEH).

with the prominent example of the Berber community. This is not the sole area of occultation this system of political representation implies though. It is apparent here that the silencing of diverging voices by the regime since independence operated on three inter-related levels: on the most basic level, silencing of difference is designed to preclude the existence or possibility of difference. The identity need for unity reflects the political need for unanimity: thus not acknowledging the potential/actual difference of the Berber community, or of women as a social group, allows those in power not to have to deal with the consequences such an acknowledgement would bring in terms of its legitimacy and its social policy. A second layer of silencing comes from the need to hide those 'differences' which serve the regime by keeping it in place. The masking of political and economic interests of the regime, the role of political élites and relations of clientelism can all be masked through a prism of identity where the issue of class is not problematised at all. Finally, the monolithic image of political discourse helped mask the emergence of alternative ideological constructs and the repression of potential contenders for power since independence. By setting up a political game whereby the identity motifs monopolised by the state are the only forms of political imagination which can be legitimately appealed to, the state effectively silences those opposition groups which want to function outside this model.

In sum, we can see that the production of an identity discourse has had its continued uses in the political sphere in the post-colonial era. In addition, identity themes have permeated the political consciousness to the extent that they have become the prism through which politics is constructed. The question remains as to which dominant legitimating motifs have dominated the inclusion of identity into political discourse.

As a result of this process of encoding, a number of areas of consistency have evolved historically in the case of Algeria. These constitute a set of identity referents, or categories, to which political claims of legitimacy have systematically referred to since independence and can thus be seen as forming the platform upon which political competition is played out. The first one of these is the foundational component of political discourse, an issue of particular relevance to a post-colonial state. Here, political discourse refers back to the symbolic origins of the state, in others words, the conditions of its birth and the utopia which it set out to realise. In the case of Algeria, such a foundational element is rooted clearly in the transition from colonial rule through armed struggle and is thus symbolised by the 'founding myths' of the struggle for independence, the importance of the FLN, of specific historical leaders, and of sacrifice for the cause of liberation. Adequate association with a foundational
theme or symbol confers legitimacy in the present and in the future. Political success rests on showing fidelity towards the ideals of the independence movement - but how these ideals are interpreted and appropriated by the state and its opposition varies according to political needs once again. Obviously, the role of interpretation of history is particularly relevant to this dimension of identity discourse: the search for legitimation through foundations is a way of laying a claim on history, of justifying one's actions by claiming *lineage* with an idealised past to which no political player can justifiably object to. By being the follower of a distinguished tradition, one hopes to escape criticism. Correspondingly, one could also argue that beyond the manipulation of identity discourse, the postcolonial regimes since Ben Bella never fully overcame the "historical conditions under which they came into being", the experience of a violent overthrow of the colonial order highlighting and creating a tradition of "military primacy, absence of democratic legitimacy, and the violent exercise of authority". The historical referent of political identity is thus more than strictly discursive, it is also lived.

Secondly, the 'moral' referent of political discourse is the adjudicator through which political legitimacy is achieved. Moral legitimacy - understood through the prism of Islam by almost all political actors in the Algerian political sphere, albeit in different ways - is in turn the second main foundation for political legitimacy. This moral referent associates itself not only to the moral conduct of individual leaders themselves, but also and more importantly to the 'moral' behaviour of the state apparatus. Economic efficiency, the provision of welfare, issues of corruption are all legitimate topics of moral assessment. The question of whether the state's institutions and its leadership are legitimate 'rulers' can thus be framed in terms of whether they are fulfilling their Islamic obligations. In this context, the aim the state is therefore to monopolise the religious symbols of legitimacy to proffer upon itself political legitimacy, while the opposition must try to disrupt this monopoly by either questioning the state's success in living up to its promises, and/or by trying to reclaim the moral high-ground for itself by providing an alternative to the current leadership.

Thirdly, the identity referent of Algerian political discourse can be seen to be relational in nature: beyond the silencing of the voices of difference within the state (non-Arabs, non-men, non-Muslims, non-FLN), the political identity promoted through state rhetoric constructs its 'Others'. Here, we have seen that the symbolic colonial legacy is one that has proven useful to the regime in creating its enemies and justifying it authenticity in relational terms. The primary Other of the post-colonial

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regime has remained 'the French' throughout the postcolonial period. Ironically, opposition groups have also framed their criticism of the state in relation to its real/imagined connection to the French state economically, politically, culturally or linguistically. The Islamist labelling of the FLN/regime supporters as *Hizb Franca* (The Party of France) from the mid-1980s onwards is noticeable in this regard. It would also be naive to think that such identity motifs are posited in relational terms for matters of simplicity only. As our definitional section pointed out, such binary oppositions are tools for enacting relationships of political power which are far from benign. It is clear here that political acceptance (legitimacy) or rejection (illegitimacy) are direct functions of an association with identity motifs (or lack thereof). Identity motifs glorifying national attributes against real and imagined others are of course not unique to Algerian setting (and nor is the primacy of identity motifs to the creation of the nation), but there is a final use for the 'Orientalisation' of France which is often underplayed in the analysis of identity worth mentioning; the issue of political responsibility. The success of the regime in gaining independence and building a nation-state was always interpreted in identity terms. Similarly, the allocation of blame for political, economic and social failures is often framed in terms of identity motifs (the Islamist movement certainly used this technique to condemn the regime in terms of 'Western/French' influence). What is silenced here is the possibility that political events could have developed in a different way for the regime, and that political and economic successes (or failures) are often a function of other factors than identity.

In sum, through such methods, identity works as the underpinning discursive function of power, it becomes the way in which power is expressed and political relationships are articulated. In that sense, it is possible to articulate the conditions under which political opposition against the Algerian regime has emerged (one could almost argue, *had* to emerge). In the contemporary setting, we can thus look at the identity dimension of political imagination in Algeria as a double-edged sword, which can legitimise the regime, but also opens up the possibility that political power can be disputed, albeit in identity terms. My final contention here is that the emergence of Islamist politics in Algeria is a function of the progressive loss by the regime of its monopoly on the production of discourse of identity, and its loss of control of the space in which this discourse was created.

The above discussion suggests that identity motifs not only figure prominently in the political discourse of the Algerian polity since independence, but also that identity has acquired, through the process of decolonisation, an emancipatory and legitimising quality which no political player wanting to gain access to official channels of power can afford to ignore. In consequence, we can re-examine the ways in which the current crisis in the Algerian political sphere is to be articulated. It is my contention here that it is around identity motifs that ideological contest between political forces in Algeria occurs in the contemporary setting. While political, socio-economic and military issues have been critical in explaining the rise of the Islamist movements in Algeria since the mid-1970s, the identity dimension of the conflict has thus far been limited to analyses of Islamist discourse. My aim here is to contextualise this discourse within the wider political discursive practices outlined above. The hypothesis that needs investigating is whether themes and process outlined so far find resonance in the Islamist political imagination. The study of various instance of written and oral discourse should be indicative.

The evidence supporting the thesis that political contest in Algeria is modulated by a specific identity discourse is curtailed by the lack of powerful, well-organised or high profile political opposition to the Algerian state prior to 1988, largely as a result of the effective monopolisation of the political process and the media by the state apparatus up to that point. The 1988-1989 period is more telling in this regard: the sudden and largely unmediated opening of the political process to democratisation in the wake of the October 1988 riots provided full opportunities for alternative political ideologies to develop with little state control over legitimising identity claims. Until the reversal of this democratisation process, the 'founding myths' outlined above became open to re-interpretation, not only as founding principles, but also as guiding principles.

The main contender for political power in the 1988-Jan 1992 period, the FIS, questioned the political legitimacy of the state, its economic efficiency, and its moral and religious credentials. As part of its critique of the state, and in the context of electoral competition at the local and national levels, the FIS articulated its credentials, its position and its political programme using not only identity motifs

72 The 'Berber Spring' and the progressive rise of political Islam since the 1970s are notable exceptions. But the Berber Spring was short-lived through intensive political repression, and the Islamist card became most relevant by 1988 than ever before.
with which electors could identify with, but the identity motifs which had been so far monopolised effectively by the state as the legitimising tools for power. A number of such themes are worth developing on in this regard.

Once again, Islam figured prominently in political discourse; it constituted the basis for moral legitimacy and modulated other identity themes such as unity, welfare, and strong leadership. Islamists succeeded in questioning the state in moral terms through the prism of Islam (i.e. by seeing the corruption of the state in terms of its failure to live up to its Islamic rhetoric). In addition, they used their privileged position at the grass-root level, and in popular areas, to perform key welfare functions that the state had been unwilling or unable to perform. This approach to direct political action led to a belief that Islamists were 'closer to the people', were more caring about the plight of the dispossessed, and ultimately were more responsive, more responsible and, in any case, incorruptible. This process was accompanied by the state's progressive loss of control over religious discourse. Since the mid-1970s, the number of mosques outside state control had proliferated, especially in Algeria's major cities and suburbs. These openings in civil society (for these can be interpreted as such73) in turn facilitated the rise of an alternative and critical political discourse on social issues and morality in a free space. Algeria has a strong tradition of political protest articulated in religious terms and religious orders have always had a special role to play as the vehicles for this process. In the case of political Islam, the connection between the regime and its Islamist opposition was closer than the current civil strife suggests. The regime had played a central role in the birth of the Islamist movement through its post-independence policies of Arabisation which brought a large number of Egyptian Muslim Brothers into Algeria as primary and secondary school teachers, thus implanting the seeds to Islamism within the education system. The fact that Islamists were encouraged in their political activism to undermine the strength of left-wing groups, especially in universities in Algiers and Constantine is worth reiterating also. In fact, the struggle for the identity motifs of Islam began in the 1970s when Islamism began to reprise the religious themes of the regime to overtake it in the legitimacy stakes. As early as 1970, it was the regime which began re-borrowing the identity discourse of Islamists, prompting change in state policy in terms of religion. This implied a greater attention placed on religious education, a step up in the moral discourse of the state in religious terms, and key

73 For an in-depth discussion the relationship between the growth of Mosques outside the control of the state and the rise in Islamist discourse, see Ahmed Rouadja. 1990. Les Frères et la Mosquée.
concessions to the Islamist political agenda to try to overrun its new ideological rival, or at least to neutralise it.\footnote{See Ahmed Rouadja. 1990. Les Frères et la Mosquée. pp. 21-23. Rouadja quotes the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs, Mouloud Kassim Nait Belkacem 'instigating a campaign against moral degradation' by condemning the adoption of Western mores leading to the break-up of marriages, alcoholism, cosmopolitanism, snobbish attitudes and topless bathing. See the main organ of the FLN, El Moudjahid, 29 Sept 1970.}

In terms of symbols of unity, the use of Islam was once again critical symbolically and practically. Because of its grass-roots programme, the Islamist movement managed to capture the symbolic 'upper-hand' by using a unifying framework of politics "Islam is the solution\footnote{a common slogan for Islamists in the whole region. For a discussion of this concept in relation to the Algerian example, see Mustafa Al-Ahnaf, Bernard Botiveau and Franck Frégosi. 1991. L'Algérie par ses Islamicistes. Paris: Karthala. pp.79ff.}", which through its vagueness could be seen to overcome the gender, class, ethnic and other social divisions which a more specific political programme could have spawned. Such a tactic is reminiscent of the populist, unifying discourse of the FLN following independence. The analogy does not stop there, though. The link between the FLN and its 'offspring'\footnote{based on a pun in French, where FIS and fils, which means 'son', are homonyms. See, for instance, Rachid Boudjedra. 1992. FIS de la Haine. Paris: Denoël.} is multi-dimensional: first, the FIS, despite some internal dissent, acknowledged the necessity to play the political game in terms dictated by the state. This commitment was reflected by the FIS' acceptance (despite its early rhetoric\footnote{See Ali Belhadj: "In Islam, divine law rules; with democracy, the people, thieves and charlatans rule. What is forbidden is forbidden, even if laws came from all the parliaments on the earth. The people only have the right to choose the Muslim sovereign who governs according to the sharia". El-Mounquid no.23. Own translation.}) of democratic elections - and thus its tacit acknowledgement of the necessity of accountability to the people, a theme which it used against the authoritarian state as a means to undermine its legitimacy. Whether this choice was pragmatic or principled, the fact remains that the FIS did not attempt to radically break from established patterns of political action. Instead, it concentrated on challenging the regime in ideological terms. Here, the strategy of Islamists was to capture the liberational themes which had underpinned the independence war\footnote{A good example of an pamphlet discussing civil disobedience against the state is Saïd Mekhloufi. 1991. "Pondements et Buts de la Désobéissance Civile", quoted in Patrick Denaud. 1997. Le FIS: Sa Direction Parle.... Paris: L'Harmattan. pp.287ff.}. By using essentially the same political discourse as the FLN during and directly after the independence struggle, the FIS aimed at making the state look like a moral impostor that had perverted the values of the 'revolution' such a freedom from oppression, equality and development\footnote{The FIS had to be careful in how it was condemning the regime, so as not to alienate the military and frustrate the development of the fragile democratic process. This attack was thus framed in terms of a condemnation of moral laxity in society and of communism, both of which to could be considered the responsibility of the regime. See, for instance, Ahsan Saïdan. "Société Musulmanne ... et Société Communiste". El-Mounquid no.5. Saïdan states: "For a}. The FIS then claimed these values for itself.

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\footnote{See Ahmed Rouadja. 1990. Les Frères et la Mosquée. pp. 21-23. Rouadja quotes the Minister for Education and Religious Affairs, Mouloud Kassim Nait Belkacem 'instigating a campaign against moral degradation' by condemning the adoption of Western mores leading to the break-up of marriages, alcoholism, cosmopolitanism, snobbish attitudes and topless bathing. See the main organ of the FLN, El Moudjahid, 29 Sept 1970.}

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Pragmatically, this position made sense for a political movement intent on challenging the authority of a regime identified as corrupt and inefficient. But the ideological tour de force of this type of critique is that it effectively corners the state into a defensive position where it has everything to prove, and where Islamists can position themselves and as both doctor and cure without having to provide much support for their own credentials. The lack of experience of power by Islamists, on the other hand, exempts them from such scrutiny, thus making the rejection of their political platform, or of their worth as a political force, a moot point.

Third, the FIS reprised the anti-French discourse promulgated by the nationalist movements of the inter-war period and the FLN during and after the war of independence. With the added dimension of anti-Westernism thrown in the balance, the Islamist discourse on its 'Others' incorporated both rejection and blame:

France knows that the secular West cannot work as a civilisational model for Muslims. The West has certainly managed to send a man on the moon, but is it capable of healing a sick society? Criminality, alcoholism, drugs, prostitution, suicide, individualism and despair are the price of secularism, and the loss of faith in absolute values.

Fourth, in the same way that the successive post-colonial regimes (and in particular the Boumediene government), developed a new kind of economics through their development of Algerian populist socialism to redress the social injustices of the colonial era, the Islamists of the FIS promised a new, moral way of administering economic and social affairs through the prism of 'Islamic economics':

In Islamic countries, we have learnt from the developmentalist and materialist economic policies which do not take into account the spiritual and cultural elements of Muslims, and which, through their centralised administration of capital, do not differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims. They go against the Islamic shari'a, in its elements and in its aims. Why should man obey the law of the market, or the notion of merchandise capitalism advocates?

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long time, communists have played up with with this pernicious ambiguity: they began by fighting Islam and exterminating its followers, but when they realised this only lead Muslims to being even more attached to their religion and unity, they attempted to posit that communism does not contradict Islam! Own Translation.

Abou-Zeineb. El-Mounquid. no.26. Own translation. Another good example can be found with Fouad Ben Abdelhalim. "Les Véritables Enemis de l'Algérie", El-Mounquid, no.9, which virulently condemns the involvement of France in assessing the Islamist alternative.

This is clearly a different economic project to socialism, but the idea that morality can be linked to economic policy is not: this focus on social justice was the underpinning connection between socialism and Islam for the FLN.

Fifth, the FIS took on many of the tactical choices of the independence fighters of the FLN (through terrorism, guerrilla warfare in the countryside and urban guerrillas) as its tactics after the breakdown of the democratic process. The analogy does not stop at methods: in both cases the violence was part a larger dynamic of conflict, and in both cases, violence took on sociological aspects of a similar nature. The idea that a political culture of violence could have been established in Algeria is an attractive one for its conceptual simplicity. It implies endless cycles of violence, where conflict is seen as an appropriate, legitimate way of gaining power because of its proven record of effectiveness. Most authors on the subject are careful enough not to fully tread such a line though, fearing that such an encompassing model leaves little to be explained by other factors, and in any case fails to account for the possibility of social change. One of such authors is Omar Carlier, who, in his well-regarded *Entre Nation et Jihad*, talks of a 'culture of violence' derived from the foundational act of war accompanying the birth of the Algerian state. The quasi-sacralisation of the war of independence has underpinned the continued relevance of this culture to the idea of national identity, but he is quick to point also, that such an evolution works as part of the socio-economic dynamic which has framed the rise of political Islam. Luis Martinez qualifies this further and shuns the expression 'culture of violence' as such. He talks of violence as an established means for political expression and proven avenue for gaining upward social mobility, personal prestige, and wealth. In this setting, the FIS thus does not merely re-create the actions and rhetoric of the FLN; it clearly makes its own mark according to political circumstances. Yet, it does not emancipate itself from the post-colonial legacy of the FLN (which itself had not overcome the legacy of colonialism and the war of independence).

Sixth, it should be noted that on a symbolic level, the FIS made a number of contentions destined at enacting visible societal change to make Algerian society more moral - by making it seemingly more Muslim. The issue of the veil for women, and women's behaviour, is of particular importance here as Algerian Islamists confer

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symbolic importance to women’s appearance as a canvas for depicting societal mores. The question of the veil, itself a complex issue for all Muslim women to have to negotiate in their respective societies, becomes somewhat reified as the terrain on which political gains and losses in terms of political support at the grass-root level can be measured. But the issue of women's status is not a new political score card in Algeria. The importance of the role of women during the independence war has been codified by the post-independence rhetoric of the state as one of glory and sacrifice, but the real gender issues highlighted by the special place of women as freedom fighters, often at the frontlines of the conflict, and their subsequent sidelining in the postcolonial political chessboard, have set up the scene for women being the actual and symbolic bodies on which political struggle is played out, as opposed to one of its actors. More recently, the 1984 family code, itself seen as a major early concession to the growth of Islamism through its repeal of many key women's rights, showed that playing a shrewd political game against the Islamist opposition was, even back then, a priority for the regime. It is indeed my contention that the state's decision to implement the 1984 family code was linked to the need to retain its moral legitimacy in Islamic terms rather than a change of heart over women's rights under Islam. There is thus a discrepancy between the actual roles of women in Algerian society (which vary considerably - some Islamists are women, and some of the fiercest critics of Islamism in Algeria have been women as well) and their symbolic role.

Finally, one should note that, for the FIS in the 1989–1992 period, identity discourse was more than a tool for gathering power (or keeping it). It was considered by its leaders as a way to monopolise the power of the state against both the FLN and the other possible contenders for power. Also, despite its populist discourse, the FIS did not specifically attempt to provide a platform for empowering all previously marginalised sections of the population equally. Its anti-state rhetoric was matched by a discourse on non-Muslims, women, and ethnic minorities (such as the Berbers) which was, at best, ambiguous.

85 for a discussion of the role of women in society, according to the FIS, see Mohamed El Arbi. “Femme Eman-Chipie?” El-Mounquid no. 11.
86 Aiwha Ong and Micheal Peletz state, in relation to the symbolic role of women's bodies, that "discursive constructions of bodies are frequently plotted against divisions that maintain social order, and that those bodies in particular are commonly used to symbolise and threaten transgressions of social boundaries". In their introduction to Ong and Peletz (eds.). 1995. Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and the Body Politic in Southeast Asia. Berkeley: University of California Press. p.6. This analysis can be argued to be similar for our example. See also, in more theoretical terms, Anne McClintock. 1995. Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context. London: Routledge.
87 See, for instance, "La Vérité sur L'Egalité entre l'Homme et la Femme" El-Mounquid no.3.
6.7. Conclusion

Overall, the choice of framing politics in terms of identity motifs linked to morality by Islamists was shrewd as it forced the FIS' political opponents to discuss political issues according to that identity framework, a line of debate the state was unprepared for. In particular, the FLN-dominated political elite was put in the position to have to reaffirm its religious, moral and populist credentials in terms which were imposed by its opposition. That being said, it could also be argued that it was the state that set itself up for such criticism through its own continued use of the identity card in the post-independence era. That it would be called into account for its failure to live up to the identity themes it had set up was only a matter of time. This type of societal rupture has echoes of the independentist fracture with the French also. It emphasises an identity nexus binding the nation and religious identity to promote a 'new' kind of nationalism which cannot but reflect old dichotomies between the pious and the impious, the authentic and the colonial, the legitimate and the illegitimate. The locus of political contest thus remains firmly anchored in the symbolic nature of identity as opposed to a radical departure in the ways politics has been understood since independence. Our starting point for understanding the historical development of the FIS, its relationship to the state, and the ensuing descent into civil war in Algeria, should thus account for the ways in which the game of politics is played in Algeria.

The slogan "Islam is the solution" may sound a little simplistic, but what it does not reflect is a simple game of opposition between pragmatic politics and identity politics. The identity dimension of politics is firmly anchored in the tradition of Algerian political discourse, dating back to the colonial era (and probably beyond). One should thus take great care in using the term 'identity politics' to describe movements such as political Islam in Algeria and elsewhere. I hope to have shown here that the identity dimension of politics is one no actor in Algerian politics has managed - or even attempted to - escape. Perhaps it is instructive to note here that despite being labelled post-Cold War revivalist forces, Islamist movements in the Middle East and North Africa are the product of a long tradition of political dissent in the name of Islam anchored, in the case of Algeria, in the colonial encounter:

The history of modern Algeria does not begin in 1962. The FIS does not spring from nowhere, but originates from a complex past, which

is still relevant to the present. To understand this history allows us to overcome such simplistic images\textsuperscript{89}.

There is little new about this 'new' nationalism, and conceptions of political Islam as a distinctively post-Cold War force in politics, or as a unified global threat need to be reconsidered somewhat. As for Islamism in Algeria, it remains a force in politics, not only because political violence is still commonplace despite the return to some degree of democratisation, but also because the state has felt the need to include some Islamists in that process.

Finally, it is also worth considering that political Islam does not propose a radically different political identity to the Algerian people, but offers to fulfil the promise of that identity. Whether such a project is one capable of providing a solid basis for the growth of a unified yet pluralist Algerian nation in the post-colonial era is another matter\textsuperscript{90}.

\textsuperscript{89} Benjamin Stora. 1991. La Gangrène et L'Oubli. p.311.
\textsuperscript{90} Jean-François Bayard warns that manifestation of political imagination which claims a monopoly on authenticity could easily lead to totalitarianism, as all claims to differences can be interpreted as a threat to identity. For any political ideology wanting to compete on the Algerian political scene, this is also worth bearing in mind. See Jean-François Bayart. 1996. L'Illusion Identitaire. Paris: Fayard. p.43.
Chapter Seven
Conclusions

If Islamic movements are essentially and invariably authoritarian and anti-democratic, what explains their sustained popular support and why have they won elections in Turkey and Algeria, only to be kicked out of office by the military to the applause of Western democrats? Continuing our query, why is the Islamic presence so visible in the infrastructures of the new global system, that is, in the commercial networks, electronic communication systems and migrant communities within the global cities of Europe and North America? Haven't these Muslims read Fukuyama's *The End of History*? Paul Lubeck "The Islamic Revival"

7.1. Introduction: The Failure of Political Islam?

In his celebrated book *The Failure of Political Islam*, Olivier Roy highlights what he sees as the central problems facing contemporary Islamist politics. Challenging the claim that the growing influence of political Islam poses a serious threat to existing power structures, he argues that, despite the effect political Islam has had on public mores and local conflicts, the state and society advocated by Islamists is no more than an illusion. For Roy, the failure of political Islam is both ideological and political. It is an ideological failure because Islamists have been unable to develop an intellectual framework and policies which can shape the political environment, and it is a political failure insofar as Islamism has failed to transcend existing power allegiances and structures. Roy is careful in pointing out that his analysis does not inscribe itself within the Orientalist position early on, and uses both intellectual arguments and case studies to substantiate his position. On an abstract level, he untangles some of the contradictions of the Islamist political position and asserts:

In my view [political Islam] has failed because Islamist thought, at the end of an intellectual trajectory that tries to integrate modernity, ultimately meets up with the 'Islamic political imagination' of the tradition and its essential premise: politics can only be founded on individual virtue.

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3 Olivier Roy. 1994. *The Failure of Political Islam*. p. 21. Roy argues that Islamist political thought rests on the premise that Islamic virtue is the guiding principle of political structures and action, thus destroying the innovative elements of political Islam. See Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, pp.61-64.
Additionally, Roy’s argument implies that the religious rhetoric of Islamists movements is a facade for existing power interests and thus that “Today’s Islamist movements, like the Algerian FIS, do not offer a new model for society”\(^4\). They fail, for Roy, to produce a genuine ‘Third Way’ for politics. Following the logic of this argument, and discussing the recent history of the Middle East, he thus concludes that:

Neofundamentalism is seeking its devil in a different god, but does not see the desert within\(^5\).

How has this argument held to the test of time, given that Roy’s account was first published in France in 1992, before Algeria’s descent into Civil War, the accession to power in Afghanistan by the Taliban and Erbakan’s Refah party’s election to power in Turkey? Can political Islam be said to be the mere reflection or articulation of socio-cultural trends, or has it developed as a political force (or set of political forces) capable of challenging existing political orders? It should be pointed out that while Islamists have not succeeded in achieving widespread and undisputed power throughout the region, political Islam has left its mark on political structures and events, on public morals and emerging conflicts as a key political player. The case of Algeria where the confrontation between Islamist groups and the state has led to a multifaceted civil war exemplifies the potential for the Islamists ‘wild card’ to become politically, if not militarily relevant for many states in the region. In fact, political Islam cannot be seen as the mere political expression of an abstract ideology (whose credentials in terms of coherence and applicability are indeed worth debating); it is also a broad-based social phenomenon deeply ingrained in a broad-based constituency, and, to some extent, the reflection of the values and opinions of some segments of civil society.

Still, the way Roy articulates his argument is more sophisticated than my short summary gives it credit for. The question of whether the contradictions of the Islamist political imagination are ultimately too salient to make Islamism a realistic ‘Third Way’ is crucial of course. Yet, insofar as Islamists believe that there are no such contradictions, and given the few opportunities Islamists have had to gain access to political office unhindered (and thus to be potentially discredited), this question remains one that can neither be proved nor disproved. As such, the point is not so

much whether political Islam is a political failure waiting-to-happen, but how crucial is it proving to be in shaping politics in the Middle East and North Africa.

More recently, Ibrahim Karawan has redeveloped a similar argument which attempts to take on board new historical developments as benchmarks for assessment. He acknowledges that:

Since the mid-1970s, Islamists have posed a considerable challenge, both to regimes and to other opposition forces. The political impact of Islamism has been felt on national and regional levels, and its diverse manifestations in Arab societies cannot be ignored. Effort to eradicate Islamism as a political force - including repression - will not succeed, and it will not vanish or wither away in the foreseeable future. Although some astute observers differ over whether the phenomenon is declining or expanding, a sound analysis of Arab and Middle Eastern politics must take Islamists seriously.

Still, Karawan's conclusions emphasise that "Islamists do not represent the force of the future in Arab politics" and that "their increased social presence has not translated into political power". For him, even though Islamists have succeeded in influencing the policies of most regimes, the Islamist challenge has been successfully contained, leaving Islamism in an impasse:

Islamist movements face obstacles along three main paths to political power. Assassination removes a leader, but does not undermine the regime - which subsequently becomes more repressive. Working within a system undergoing controlled political liberalisation is compromised since the process is influenced more by the managers than the managed. Finally, military take-overs are difficult to achieve since most armies in the Middle East are no longer the small institutions which made coups a frequent feature of Arab politics during the 1950s and 1960s.

This assessment is intrinsically more contextualised and up to date than Roy's; an impasse is not a failure. Indeed, the main strength of this argument is that it recognises that the dynamic relationship between regimes and their Islamist opposition is a dominant explanatory factor in explaining the relative success/failure of Islamist movements in a variety of settings.

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That being said, Karawan’s analysis still measures possible success in terms of access to official channels of political power. This denotes the central blind spot of this type of explanation, where Islamists are not going to be the force of the future in the Arab world because they have not/will not acquire widespread political power by controlling the state. This is perhaps a justified standpoint since most analysts in Western Europe and North America are most concerned by the consequences of an Islamist-controlled state or set of states on the region, and ultimately globally. Still, Islamists in Egypt for instance have shown that there are other ways to gain access to political power than elections (through various associations from civil society influencing policy in indirect ways), and one could also point out that there are different forms of power, some of which Islamists are more interested in than others. Not all Islamists groups in fact seek control of the state per se, and even those who do want it for a set of purposes which vary from case to case but which invariably imply widespread change in the dominant political, cultural and religious values of the polity. This implies changing the way the political realm functions and how it is imagined. Only the most cynical of analysts would see the Islamists’ focus on moral values purely in terms of political opportunism. This exclusive focus on power excludes the most formidable strength of Islamists: that of change at the level of ideas. On that level, as acknowledged by Karawan, Islamists have been successful and are likely to remain so.

Perhaps neither Roy nor Karawan are wrong in presenting political Islam’s primary importance in cultural/religious terms, but they are wrong in assuming that the category of ideas is less important or relevant than holding control over the polity. Arguably, ideas are the most powerful long-term tools for changing society. And in this context, do Islamists still succeed if they don’t get power but reshape society according to their model nonetheless? Indeed, the record of Islamists in accessing political control of the polity directly is patchy, but their steady rise in setting the political agenda and often imposing Islamist solutions to various issues is unmistakable.

Ultimately, this dissertation has attempted to explore this dimension of political Islam in more depth, and in the context of a specific case study to investigate the significance of political Islam beyond mere considerations of political power. And it is argued here that ideas is where we need to start to see what the meaning(s) of the confrontation between Islamists and the state is/are.
7.2. Summary of Findings

7.2.1. Conceptualising Political Islam

This dissertation attempts to both fit into current debates on the Islamist question (or should I say questions?) in the Middle East and to present an original set of research findings and conclusions. To fulfil these purposes, our first aim was to investigate the theoretical underpinnings which could support a balanced analysis of Islamist political discourse and its place in the political life-world relevant to the society in which it develops. Concurrent to this aim was the analysis of the way in which political Islam has been framed in the literature and the media. From this discussion, an assessment of how political Islam can be defined academically (and how it shouldn't be defined), as well as ways in which the analysis of this phenomenon could be conducted, were developed. Such a precise focus on concepts, theory and methodology is an intrinsic part of PhD research, but it is also particularly important to the analysis of a phenomenon which is as complex and controversial as political Islam. In recent years, the literature on Islamism has been prolific - in general, and with reference to Islamist politics in Algeria. The media has also reported extensively on Islamism, especially when relating to the violent tactics of some Islamist groups, and in particular terrorism. Despite such a large set of discussion pieces, the field of Islamist politics remains open to further discussion and alternative interpretations and foci to those thus far adopted. This in turn can be explained through a number of factors. As our analysis in chapter three pointed out, the end of the Cold War has left a vacuum in the academic consciousness and for policy-makers as to where the next threat to Western interests and security might spring from. The Islamic threat has figured prominently on the agenda of such discussions (along with the renewal of 'the politics of identity' as a destructive force in politics in general). Needless to say, such a limited framework of understanding of the structure and dynamics of the international system leaves out other factors at play in the making of international relations. Worse still, the risk of self-fulfilling prophecies looms large when an actor or state is defined and treated as the enemy. Such a factor has proven to be of importance in the making of antagonistic relations between the superpowers during the Cold War, fuelling mistrust and entrenching misperceptions. In our current context, the labelling of Islamist politics as the 'green menace' has only worked to reinforce a sense of siege and victimisation on the part of Islamist leaders and militants. It is thus worth bearing in mind that analyses of political Islam in Western Europe and North America do not function in abstraction from the real world; instead, they participate in shaping it. Islamists read Western newspapers, watch
satellite television programmes, and consult academic publications about themselves and will react to these stimuli both in terms of their views on 'the West' and in terms of self-definition in a global context. Simplistic labelling of Islam, Islamic people (not to mention Islamists) as underdeveloped, obscurantist and violent will only result in greater numbers joining the banner of 'Islam is the solution' against the West.

One of the main aims of this dissertation was to step away from a description of Islamist politics as a threat that should be managed, and to embrace an approach defining Islamism as a political actor of contemporary relevance, with an important role to play in the game of regional, global, and national politics. This choice is not unique to this work: a significant body of literature has developed since the 1980s to explain, in context, the rise of political Islam in the Middle East. In the 1990s, such types of analysis developed further to correspond to the continued (if not increasing) relevance of Islamism to politics in the region, and in response to the 'Islamic Threat' literature of the post-Cold War era. This dissertation acknowledges the poignancy of the struggle many academics have to face in trying to escape such simplistic frameworks of analysis and to overcome the legacy of Orientalism. The analysis developed here attempts to inscribe itself within the terms of this struggle. In the case of Algeria, such battle lines are as entrenched as elsewhere in the field, but an additional political dimension complicates matters further. The main body of literature on Algeria (be it in history, sociology, economics or politics) remains based in France (and tends to be produced by Algerian, French, or more generally North African scholars). The work produced on political Islam in Algeria and the civil war is no exception to this trend. In principle, there is no reason to be suspicious of this phenomenon. After all, Algeria was a colony of France for 132 years and so until fairly recently. It is to be expected the French scholars (or North African extraction or not) or French-speaking Algerian analysts would take such a strong interest in a former French dominion with strong remaining economic and politics links with its former coloniser, as well as an extensive number of Algerian nationals living on French territory. A useful parallel would be the interest taken by British analysts and journalists in the politics and culture of the Indian subcontinent.

Still, it can be noted that, while a large body of excellent work on Algeria is produced in French (and in France), an equally large amount of highly polemical, politically-motivated work is also published, often even if it is academically flawed. Complete neutrality in this regard is probably impossible to achieve, but an attempt to

transcend and reject inflammatory political discourse on Algeria is part of the endeavour academics ought to pursue. One way to achieve this is perhaps to identify the source of such differences in academic quality. In part, this dichotomy stems from academic/media developments in France during the Algerian war of independence. High level of state censorship at the time made the publication of testimonies of war by French and Algerian individuals the only possible articulation of alternative 'truths' about the conflict in a highly volatile environment. The question of torture by French forces became the focal point of the fight for free speech at that time, and the only way to speak of a war, where the French government spoke of an intervention to re-establish order. Hence the importance of personal testimony and the proliferation of first hand, first person accounts by Algerian nationalists, French conscripts, French colons and eventually officers of the French army willing to 'set the record straight'. The production of historical accounts of war were considerably enriched by this trend, and it remains a dynamic field today. The cost of this development, however, is the enormous variation in quality and integrity in the literature, and the integration of political debates within pieces posing as academic work on history. This continues today in the production and publication of material on Islamist politics, with similarly uneven results. The use of an academic forum to air disapproval of the Islamist alternative cannot be discouraged on free-speech grounds, but the overall blurring of the line between opinion and academic analysis remains a dangerous slippery slope.

Another avenue for understanding this heterogeneity in the production of work in the French-speaking academe lies in the articulation of the role of intellectuals in France since the May 1968 cultural and political wave of protest spearheaded by intellectuals and academics. Nowhere is the enduring but problematic influence of intellectuals and the cultural elite over the political sphere more evident than in France. As self-appointed defenders of truth and integrity, intellectuals have tended to outgrow the limits of their specific academic or cultural competence to claim the status of social and political commentators with the special duty of acting as the social conscience of the nation. This is perhaps noble in most cases, but one needs to bear in mind that academic qualifications in one field do not guarantee competence in another. The example of the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy's intervention in the media to affect political outcomes with regards to the responsibility of the


Algerian regime in the massacres of civilians during the 1990s is telling in this regard. As a distinguished member of the French intellectual elite, Lévy used his high media profile to strongly deny increasing evidence of regime involvement in patterns of violence in the troubled state. In a political environment where increasing pressure from civil society on the French government to lift its unconditional support for the Algerian regime in the wake of several damaging reports by Amnesty International and other human rights' organisations, intellectual debates on the Algerian situation, and the role of France in it, opened up. Lévy's contribution in this regard manifested itself by a visit to Algeria, with the blessing of the regime in place, to 'investigate' the truth of the matter. Whatever his political motives were, the result was one of support of the Algerian ruling elite and the French government's position, thereby crushing mounting criticism and cancelling out the need for a debate on the matter. Lévy's short visit to Algeria (and the control of his access to information by the regime) could not have afforded him the knowledge, and therefore the authority, to make definitive pronouncements on the situation. Yet, his position as an intellectual allowed him to make claims which played in the hands of the political interests and the financial commitments of the French and Algerian elites. Here, his philosophical credentials did not necessarily imply that his knowledge of the situation at hand would lead to a balanced and careful analysis of the dynamics of violence. His dislike of what he saw as violent, obscurantist and intolerant blinded him to the possibility that violence in Algeria might be multifaceted. Most importantly, his 'crusade for the truth' worked to undermine discussions on the issue of human rights and political participation in Algeria - and of the place of Islamist politics-, instead of fostering further analysis or debate on the subject. In sharp contrast, those French analysts concerned with political Islam in Algeria held a much lower media profile and their academic publications emphasised the difficulty in allocating blame in a clear-cut way, as well as the complexity of the dynamics underpinning political developments. Overall, being an influential intellectual in this setting created the possibility of being manipulated by the very power interests free-thinking intellectuals are supposed to keep in check.

Lévy's naïveté has been noted elsewhere. What is of importance here is the complex relationship between politics and academia in France when it comes to the emotionally-charged issue of Algeria. Many prominent members of the recent or current political elite were linked to the process of decolonisation in Algeria, including the late François Mitterand. Jean-Marie Le Pen's controversial role during the war (and accusations of torture in particular) have often been argued to colour his

14 He has also reported on trouble-spots such as Bosnia and Afghanistan in the last few years.
National Front's tough stance on North African immigration. Both left and right-wing parties have had to deal with the aftermath of the decolonisation struggle, and with their responsibilities as former colonisers. A vast number of intellectuals and artists, ranging from Albert Camus to the rising stars of Raï have strong links with Algeria and have often articulated through art, music or literature their sense of dislocation and of loss. Algeria thus permeates the national consciousness of political as well as intellectual elites, with the recent notable rise in Algerian immigré influences. Politically, the attitude of the French government with regards to the current Algerian crisis and its immigré population remain highly controversial. The French interior ministry went as far as refusing refugee status to Algerians fleeing the violence on the grounds that there was no civil war in Algeria, only residual terrorism, echoing almost word for word the position of the Algerian regime. The mass trial of Algerian immigrés accused of collaborating with or being Islamists (and bringing violence to France) was also marred in controversy due to legal irregularities. The very need felt by Islamists to 'internationalise' the conflict by carrying out acts of political violence on French territory testifies to the perception of a close relationship between the two regimes. The possibility that such a sensitive position, and the debates which are bound to arise from it, would trickle down to academia is of little surprise.

It is in this tumultuous environment that this dissertation finds its place. Along with other analyses produced in the French-speaking world, the English-speaking world, as well as Italy and Germany for instance, this piece emphasises the importance of focused analysis of trends, events, and material which goes beyond political partisanship and interests, and personal preference.

That being said, chapter two has shown that rigorous analysis does not lead to unproblematic accounts of history or political situations. The issue of interpretation is a central question facing the methodology of the social sciences, and one that cannot be bypassed easily. Our overview of the philosophy of the social sciences showed how problematic the questions of authorship and objectivity can be, and the example of Orientalism illustrated this difficulty. Still, the methodology used this in this piece tried to acknowledge the strengths of positivist projects and their place in a pluralist methodological framework. Conversely, interpretive studies were identified as the providers of key analytical tools for the analysis of political discourse, identity, and legitimacy. The works of Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricoeur in particular were seen as important bridges between interpretation as a mode of encounter with the subject and critical analysis as a mode of systematising our understanding. Despite
this relative level of abstraction, chapter two tried to stay close to the question of methodological tools for analysing political Islam. The case of Algeria here was seen as one where postcolonial studies should be coupled with concepts developed through the study of political Islam in the Middle East to provide a comprehensive set of analytical concepts. It is thus why Islamism in Algeria was analysed through the prism of competing political imaginations articulated through political discourse and institutions, and competing within a broad conception of politics (known as the lifeworld) for political power and symbolic legitimacy. Bearing in mind the research results developed in later analytical chapters, it is perhaps wise to go back to our original concepts and discuss how empirical analysis illustrates them and how such themes can be brought together to form a general set of conclusions with regard to Algerian political Islam.

7.2.2. Research Findings

On the whole, our analysis showed that the political imagination of Algerian Islamists reflects the complexity of the political and social setting in which it is ingrained, it reflects the aims and contradiction of the nation-building themes developed by the postcolonial state, and it displays elements of rupture, as well as elements of continuity and hybridity in how it formulates political discourse. Here, it can thus be established that political discourse by Islamists and their place in the political spectrum of Algeria are not as straightforward as originally anticipated. In-depth analysis of the Islamist political imagination highlights the legacy of the colonial era and the imprint of attempts by the postcolonial state to shape the Algerian political lifeworld according to a specific set of identity themes underpinning the notion of the nation, the requirements of legitimacy and, to a certain extent, the conditions for governance. As such, Islamism does not constitute a radical alternative to the way the political is imagined in Algeria, but works as an ambiguous heir to the articulations of the political developed since independence.

More generally, our analysis hoped to forgo the assumption that political discourse, because of its propaganda uses, is not a helpful tool in understanding political motivations. The public agenda contained in official forms of discourse is laden with strategic considerations of power acquisition and often reflects political ambitions as opposed to a strict ideological stance. That being said, such an occurrence remains analytically fruitful in conveying the struggle for ideological dominance in the Algerian political life-world. In turn, mapping this 'war of words' helps better understand the ways in which the political competition for power in Algeria has been
played out during the short period of democratisation of 1989-1992 and its direct aftermath. It is a central contention of this dissertation that the identity dimension of the competition for power between the state and Islamists at that time is central in understanding the dynamics underpinning the conflict that has ensued, in association with economic and socio-political factors. The discursive dimensions of this political exchange are far from monolithic in nature and both Islamist and state discourses have shown remarkable adaptability and resilience in the face of a multifaceted conflict. Political imagination modulates the articulation of political aims and frames the modalities of access to official channels of power. Thus, political imagination in this setting, as elsewhere, is malleable to manipulation on the part of the participants in political contest, but only to a certain extent. The boundaries imposed by this framework are flexible, but they exist nonetheless. Many of the current 'rules of the game' were originally played on and institutionalised by the postcolonial regimes of the 1960s and 1970s. Now seen as veritable 'founding myths of the nation', these rules are taken on, and their underpinning identity themes are used, by all political players attempting to gain political power on a national level.

Despite these areas of continuity however, strong elements of rupture from established modes and types of political discourse can be recorded for Algerian Islamism in the early 1990s. Of course, this rupture is constructed for political purposes so as to draw out a political alternative to the status quo offered by the state, but it also presents elements of originality both in how it responds to the political imagination of the state and in how it formulates its own political credentials. Chapter four was the first of three analytical chapters which dealt specifically with the case study of Algerian Islamism. It served as an introduction to our analysis of the Islamist political imagination by plotting the development of Islamist (and to a certain extent Islamic) ideas in the political sphere since colonisation. The outcome of our analysis at that point was that, far from being a historical aberration, or a unique occurrence, Islamism in Algeria is historically contingent and has strong roots in a tradition of political protest in the name of Islam dating back to early colonial revolts\footnote{This era of continuity within the political sphere can also be linked to discursive strategies and themes developed in the post-colonial era, an issue which was developed on in more depth in chapter six.}. Additionally, chapter four showed the changes the contemporary Islamist movement has undergone over the past thirty years, in terms of constituency, strength and types of groups involved.

Chapter five developed on this idea of diversity in turn to explore the complex array of discursive patterns in the Islamist political imagination. Starting with an overview
of the key themes underpinning the Islamist political discourse, our analysis moved on the other components of political imagination to challenge the assumption of that Islamism is ideologically abstract and hollow. The second part of our chapter looked closely at the evolution of the ways in which Islamism in Algeria has drawn its discourse as a form of rupture from dominant patterns of political imagination, both over time, and among groups. A vast degree of adaptability in the drawing up and acting out of discursive strategies was highlighted here and the main reason for such changes, was, predictably enough, changes in the fortunes of the Islamist movements and of course state policy with regards to Islamism. This flexibility could however be argued to have boundaries for mainstream political groups such as the FIS (and its armed branch), as well as small independent cells such as the GIAs, even though information on the relationship between GIA groups’ policies as opposed to their discourse is difficult to gather with great accuracy. Despite these differences though, the oppositional nature of the Islamist political imagination (in discourse, symbolism, utopia and deed) was unmistakable, if ambiguous at certain key periods. Chapter five concluded with the argument the political imagination of Islamism in the Algerian case re-framed our understanding of Islamism to go beyond the definitional framework delineated in chapter three. Not only is political Islam embedded in the societal fabric in which it evolves, but its participation in the realm of political ideas give it a unique place as a social movement. 

Chapter six turns this logic on its head to a certain extent, and works a historical backdrop to the ways in which nation-building in postcolonial Algeria has been constructed in terms of political identity. Identity is here seen "in ways that do not reinstate it as a finite, smoothed out and always already coherent narrative... I understand identity formation as a process that produces both sameness and difference". Our main area of investigation was the sites of collusion between Islamist discursive strategies on identity and previous/current dominant patterns and themes in identity-building. Identity is only one way in which commonalities in terms of political imagination could be systematised, but it is a telling example as it forms the basis for the symbols and themes developed in political discourse, as well as the 'rules of the game' of politics in the postcolonial setting. While, at face value, treating areas of dissonance and developing a historical treatment of the roots of
complicity between Islamism and official forms of political discourse may sound like a contradiction in terms, the connection between these two trends should be conceptualised in a more complex way than simple contradiction. In order to gain political relevance and 'bite', Islamism must distance itself enough from regime rhetoric to be seen as a genuine alternative to its policies. On the other hand, with regime monopoly on the motifs of political identity since independence, the use of widely different motifs to imagine politics, let alone identity, would prove too dissonant to appeal to the majority of the population. Besides, such motifs have become ingrained into the political culture of all Algerians to a great extent, to include Islamists themselves. This is through this delicate balancing act that the Islamist political imagination is formulated and draws its strength.

Overall, this discussion allows us to substantiate the central hypotheses set up in the introductory chapter. Our main contention was that Islamism, as a social movement, is embedded in the contemporary Algerian political lifeworld. In various ways, our analysis showed how political Islam is responsive to economic and socio-political changes, but we have also seen that beyond this tactical consideration, it has been shaped in response to the discursive practices of the state. Islamism draws its strength from its oppositional stance to state monopoly on power, but uses the symbolic and ideological resources of the state to proclaim itself as an authentic and legitimate alternative to the regime. Political imagination is thus central to our understanding of the mechanism of the state-Islamism relationship because it represents a set of tools and images which can be used to frame what constitute legitimacy in the political realm. Islamism is the logical heir to the authoritarian regimes of the postcolonial era in Algeria. Its revolutionary rhetoric is inspirational to supporters and voters desperate for political change, and its suggests a commitment to a radically divergent political imagination to that of the state. The reality of the connection between dominant and Islamist political imagination is more nuanced though, suggesting subtle but pervasive forms of hybridity in discourse and flexibility on both parts to reflect the changes in the power relationship between the competitors for power over time. Beyond struggle for political power lie power plays and exchanges; making the notion of opposition between the political imagination of the state and that of the Islamist opposition less clearly defined as anticipated.

7.3. Policy prescriptions

It is perhaps imprudent to assume that a definite set of policy predictions can be derived from the analysis of political Islam in the context we have drawn here. After
all, one of the main motivations underpinning this dissertation is an attempt to contextualise political Islam to unearth its complexity and flexibility, suggesting that such predictions might be self-deluding. Our account also steps away from recent historical analyses focusing on the causes and dynamics of the Algerian crisis and is probably ill-equipped to draw conclusions as to the prospects of conflict resolution in a rapidly evolving environment. This should not mean that the conclusions outlined above have no practical applications to the scholarly treatment of political Islam in the Middle East, and in Algeria in particular though. Our preoccupation with political imagination denotes a wider interest in patterns of state-building in the postcolonial context, and it thus defines the political contest for power in Algeria in terms of the modalities of governance which underpin it. Furthermore, shifts in the assessment of the role of political Islam in the definition of what constitutes the political in the Middle East has practical implications in terms of policy-making from a Western European perspective.

7.3.1. Conflict Resolution

This section examines possible avenues for long-term conflict resolution in Algeria. I hope to show here that, despite the cessation of large-scale violence, conflict resolution is still a valid form of policy for Algeria in the context of 2001. Conflict resolution measures involve both internal and external measures, thus highlighting the policy implications for Western European powers the issue of Islamism brings. As such, this analysis hopes to highlight the range of conflict resolution techniques available to reduce residual conflict and promote long-term solutions for governance in Algeria, as well as the pragmatic difficulties and obstacles involved in this process.

Firstly, and without tackling the problem of violence in Algeria in any great depth, several general points can be made to integrate concepts of conflict resolution into the Algerian context. As a starting point, it can be said that, like most post-Cold War 'complex emergencies' and internal conflicts, the Algerian crisis has been a complex and dynamic phenomenon and in which many actors are not clearly defined. Therefore, claiming to know who exactly is responsible for which act of violence is a problematic endeavour. What is possible is to convey a range of possible practical avenues to stop violence altogether, build confidence into state institutions and tackle the problems underlying the crisis to build lasting peace. While is process is understandably fraught with ambiguities and difficulties, it does not exclude the use of language of conflict resolution altogether. On the contrary, it is in crises such as the Algerian civil war and its aftermath that conflict resolution and nation-building need
to be brought into the debate. As far as conflict resolution is concerned, it must be stressed from the outset that any long-term involvement by external powers, one way or another, ought to be based on Algerian needs and priorities. Conflict resolution cannot be artificially imposed by a Western force or to promote foreign interests. Also, international initiatives must be matched by local and state-sponsored programmes in order to reach their full potential and form the foundation for long-lasting stability and eventually peace. This applies to Algeria as it does to any other state.

The common wisdom on the Algerian civil war states that the spiral of violence was set into motion by the halting of the democratisation process in January 1992. Is this statement accurate strictly speaking though? The army take-over on power, state repression of Islamism and armed rebellion of Islamist militants were certainly the catalysts of the civil war, but as our analysis of the history of Islamism shows, the roots of the conflict were more complex in character and the scene of the conflict was set slowly through the patterns of nation-building and policies of the state in the postcolonial era. Additionally, many questions remain unanswered as to who really dominated the regime at which point and how fragmentary the Islamist opposition really was at the height of the conflict in the mid-1990s. The factionalisation of all sets of actors, including the army, as well as the growth of semi-independent local armed militias blurred the distinction between the 'oppressors' and the 'victims'. The progressive return to partial democratisation, and the inclusion of some Islamists in the political process, have been accompanied by the relative decrease in hostilities suggesting that the conflict has run its course. Still, the controversial plans of President Bouteflika to pardon imprisoned Islamist not guilty of 'blood crimes' and the passionate debates in civil society this unleashed in turn suggests that tensions in various political camps and throughout society are still running high, with many of the issues of governance and human rights still unresolved.

In this fluid environment, what would conflict resolution imply? Most conflicts classically tend to 'resolve themselves' by running their course; one side 'wins', or all parties have reached a point where peaceful settlement becomes a more viable option than continued fighting. This framework is particularly relevant to interstate conflict, but in a post-Cold War environment where low-intensity and internal conflict are the

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dominant patterns, combatants are not always easy to identify and patterns of violence at the local level can re-emerge sporadically over many years and spark a renewed crisis. Intervention generally involves UN peacekeeping forces using their clout and neutrality to keep factions apart and promote negotiations. Ideally, this would also involve a long-term plan for peace-building based on a thorough examination of the roots of conflicts and the means and political will to address them. Thus, the basic notion underpinning conflict resolution is that states or populations engulfed in violence suffer from more than violence itself. Often linked to conflicts are underlying problems of state legitimacy, structures of governance, socio-economic problems, social divisions, etc.19. Post-conflict reconstruction, as a result, can only occur through a combination of measures emphasising the halting of violence per se, political and social reconstruction, economic restructuring and development and individual healing and the rebuilding of trust in the community20. Typically, these dimensions imply a combination of external factors and a local willingness to achieve long-lasting peace. Three levels of initiative can be identified to achieve peace: grass-root involvement, state-sponsored work, and external efforts underpinning the other two. Such an international dimension must be combined with indigenous solutions, and if the use of an international peacekeeping or peacemaking force is involved, clear rules of engagement are mandatory to success. In the post-Cold War world, four types of external strategies for intervention to bring peace have come to the fore: military/peacekeeping intervention (including mediation), diplomatic action involving pressure, sanctions and inducements, humanitarian relief and/or monitoring and finally informal international campaigns by pressure groups and/or through the media. These initiatives, in turn, can be combined or substituted for one another if circumstances on the ground change. Internal efforts are more difficult to classify given the diversity of initiatives observed, but they generally involve support from foreign powers/institutions in the following areas: investment, the creation of new institutions for governance, law and the distribution of goods, the setting up of peace and reconciliation committees, and psychosocial healing for communities touched by violence, and individuals involved in the violence as well as their victims21. Overall, third party involvement can be categorised in two ways, with concomitant techniques.

21 Chaiwat Satha-Anand notes that, on a cultural and religious level, Islam contains many of the basic tools needed to underpin the practical avenues for peacemaking. Such a perspective is helpful is overcoming the idea that a culture of violence in Islam fuels conflict in the region -
Table 7.1. Techniques for Third Party Involvement in Conflict Resolution

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coercive</th>
<th>Non-Coercive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Enforcement</td>
<td>Pure Mediation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Forcible coercion, such as sanctions</td>
<td>Conciliation/Problem-Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation with Muscle, using incentives and threats of sanctions</td>
<td>Good Offices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From: Table adapted from fig 1.4. in Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsotham and Tom Woodhouse. 1999. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p.11.

From this broad overview of the avenues for third party conflict, we can derive a number of key issues which can be seen to be use in the Algerian case. Here, the conflict resolution 'needs' that we can identify are multifaceted to reflect the complexity and ingrained roots of the conflict. A summary of the changing patterns of violence in the state-opposition nexus since the early 1990s provides major clues as to where, beyond the basic economic and political causes of the rise of political Islam, the mechanisms of the conflict lie. Our analysis isolates six main sets of factors:

- the social and economic conditions allowing for Islamism to flourish
- the structure of and strategies for nation-building of the postcolonial state
- the mishandling of the Islamist opposition in the 1970s in the first instance, and in the post-1988 period;
- the fragmentation of Islamist forces after the ending of the democratisation process in the first instance, and the changing fortunes of specific groups during the conflict;
- the fragmentation of the regime (including military) and elite forces in the later years of the conflict;
- the external dimension: including the role of international organisations (namely the limits of international law on human rights in the context of sovereignty), economic questions in the global economy (and their divorce from issues of ethics in the international system - to be contrasted with the use and aims of economic sanctions in Iraq), and the question of aid as factor in the reinforcing of the war economy.

Any successful plan for long-lasting stability in Algeria ought to derive lessons from this recent history and tackle the diversity of participants and their specific motivations. These dynamics nearly brought Algeria to the brink of state collapse and there have been noticeable consequences of this crisis for changes in patterns of

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political behaviour in Algeria, namely changes the way political liberalisation has been handled to prevent another anti-regime landslide. That being said, the basis for governance in the postcolonial setting has not fundamentally changed insofar as the basic relationship between the regime and its constituency remains strongly controlled by the army, even though its presence has been felt in a less obvious way in the last three years. Violence has subsided for the most part, making one the most prominent aspects of conflict resolution obsolete (intervention in 1993 for instance would have dramatically changed the dynamics of the state-Islamist opposition, even though the consequences of such a policy are difficult to predict). Still, successful conflict resolution implies all parties involved in the hostilities being part of the peace process, as well as the drawing of new 'rules of the game' for post-conflict politics. In the absence of such initiatives at key times of the civil war, at least one major participant has been excluded for the most part from the new 'deal'. In the short-term, an anti-Islamist backlash in civil society resulting from many years of violence mostly attributed to Islamist groups, may keep political opposition to the regime in check, but the 'Islamist question' has not been resolved to any extent, and the reasons for the success of FIS in previous elections have not been addressed in any significant manner. The lesson of unbridled democratisation has been learnt by the army in particular, but the issue of legitimacy in representation does not stop at careful control of partially free elections (even assuming that those are fair). Political Islam should remain a question of genuine political relevance among all citizens and their current representatives. With the gap left by the FIS, new forms of political opposition will emerge in ways which may not be as timid as those currently observed. The current status quo in Algeria is more than a cease-fire though, and not only because of the relative weakness of the Islamist movement. The state has regained control of the means of adjudicating legitimacy in political life through political discourse backed up by the means of keep control of the state through all means necessary.

For conflict resolution scholars however, this would not constitute a solid basis for long-lasting peace. The differentiation between positive and negative peace is helpful in illustrating this concern. Negative peace is simply achieved through the cessation of large-scale acts of violence, typically through a cease-fire followed by successful negotiations for a peace settlement. Positive peace, on the other hand, runs deeper than this short-term process to address the conditions that have led to the conflict so as to lay the economic, social and political foundations for long-term conflict
For our case study, while it is arguable that, by and large, negative peace has been de facto achieved (with the regime regaining control of the polity and the disbanding of most of the Islamist movement), the conditions for positive peace are far from present. In fact, it is the very circumstances leading to the current cessation of hostilities that may bring recurrent civil unrest. Conflict resolution techniques have a role to play in overcoming such issues in two main ways. Firstly, the language of conflict resolution brings with it the acknowledgement by all parties involved (including external players) that the civil war should be called by its own name. In other words, post-conflict reconstruction\(^\text{23}\) implies a conflict, with sides, and deeds. The vocabulary of demonisation must be forgone for more constructive discussions on the place of power-sharing and genuine political change. Secondly, the far ranging practical avenues for overcoming the legacy of conflict match the root causes of the Algerian conflict in a close way. Positive peace means that the socio-economic and political sources of conflict are addressed in a meaningful and practical way. These initiatives can imply economic restructuring, institutional changes, local initiatives to rebuild communities, confidence-building measures with regards to political elite, education, social policy in terms of training, employment, distribution of wealth, town planning and housing as well as changes in the structure of political representation. From this far-reaching agenda, we can deduce that Algeria would benefit from most of these areas of conflict resolution in the short and long-term. Endemic unemployment and underemployment problems, economic decline coupled with soaring population growth, housing shortages, and socio-economic relations between the elite and the population are all contributing factors in the rise of the form of political Islam observed most prominently in the 1980s onwards. Dealing with these issues means more than preventing the growth of political Islam again though (conflict resolution does not require that political Islam should necessarily be considered to be an illegitimate form of political expression); it deals with the nature of political protest from the grassroots up, and thus challenges the kind of populist social contract which, in the eyes of many Algerian voters, has failed. The alternatives to this contract should arise in an indigenous context, with the acknowledgement by the elite in power that changes are necessary given previous forms of political protest. In turn, this leads to potentially far-reaching changes in the way the demands of civil society are accommodated by the state, and the very structure of political

\(^{22}\) This is based on Johan Galtung's definition of peace and violence. For him, peace is the absence of violence but his definition of violence is encompassing of what he terms structural violence - including forms of social and economic exclusion as much as interpersonal violence per se. See Johan Galtung. 1969. "Violence, Peace and Peace Research" Journal of Peace Research. pp. 167-191.

\(^{23}\) For an overview of this aspect of conflict resolution, see chapter 7, "Post-Settlement Peacebuilding" in Hugh Miall et al. 1999. Contemporary Conflict Resolution. pp.185ff.
representation in Algeria. In that sense, and as this dissertation illustrates, the political dimension of the conflict in Algeria not only takes on discursive forms, but also these discursive forms take on identity issues which articulate and thus mediate the conditions for conflict. Meaningful settlement of the political situation in Algeria thus implies a reinterpretation of the 'rules of game' in the political lifeworld of the postcolonial state in terms of identity, power relations, and legitimacy of governance.

This is an ideal model of course, and one which ignores the realities of power both in Algeria, and among the international political players which could set up avenues for positive peace in Algeria. In fact, it could be argued that it is precisely because the conflict resolution 'needs' of Algeria are based on an understanding of positive peace that such initiatives are bound to be unwelcome by the regime. The obstacles to the possibilities outlined above are many, and not all of them are bound to the power interests of élites. The case of Algeria in the 1990s distinguishes itself from many post-Cold War crises/civil wars by the lack of conflict resolution initiatives and pressures from international organisations, and foreign powers. Only independent organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch raised the issue of intervention during the conflict, pointing in particular to the wide range of extralegal violence by the state. Unilateral initiatives by European states such as France and Italy have had little impact. On the contrary, the perception that the French state has remained firmly supportive of the regime despite human rights issues finds strong substantiation. Condemnation and questions by international bodies such as the OSCE, the UN and the EU have been episodic and focused on matters of 'concern' rather than intervention. Proposals for international commissions of inquiry were also all rejected by the regime. Two fact-finding missions (one of which was headed by European Parliament representatives) were allowed into Algeria at the height of the civil war, but only to be closely monitored by the regime and directed at blame for violence as opposed to a wider assessment of the political situation in Algeria. Besides questions of political will and economic interests, the structure of the international system had a part to play in the failure to implement a peace plan during the civil war years. The Algerian regime called upon its right as a sovereign power to define and deal with any internal 'disturbance' in the manner it saw fit without having to be held accountable to international bodies of governance. The preponderance of the concept of state sovereignty in the

24 This perspective implies that violence performs particular social and political functions within the parameters of conflict which need to be overcome for long-lasting peace to be put into place. For this type of analysis, see Raimo Vayrynen. 1991 "To Settle or To Transform? Perspective on the Resolution of National and International Conflicts" in Raimo Vayrynen (ed.) New Directions in Conflict Theory. London: Sage. pp. 1-25.
international system allowed for human rights concerns to be seen as secondary to the rights of the Algerian state under international law. Any UN resolution in this regard would also have been unlikely to be backed up by force under the aegis of the Security Council where France is a permanent member.

This failure to intervene at the height of the conflict is useful to our analysis insofar as it illustrates the main obstacles to implementation of peace plans, and by extension, positive peace measures. These include having the means and the political will to intervene; to have the international structures and law backing up decision-making; the ability to make decisions on the basis of neutrality and for the purpose of human rights preservation. These obstacles are great, as the growing literature on the problems of intervention has illustrated. One concern is worth elaborating on slightly here: the question of whether intervention is a long-term solution to the problems underpinning a civil war. To a certain extent, this will remain a moot point in the Algerian case given the present state of affairs. Yet, positive peace, because of its wide-ranging set of initiatives and its focus on the causes underpinning conflict, only becomes more important in this setting. The obstacles to military intervention remains just as relevant in the case of post-conflict reconstruction though, and even perhaps more so. The Algerian regime is unlikely to agree to foreign involvement and scrutiny into its affairs, especially if it is likely to result into its loss of control over the political process in any significant way. Questions of political will are thus crucial here since intervention in these matters against the will of the regime would require a commitment to an 'ethical' foreign policy few powerful nations would embrace, especially for a state such as Algeria. Economic incentives have been offered and accepted and are likely to contribute to a relative easing of the economic strains underpinning the crisis. But the complete control by the regime over patterns of aid and investment has been shown to be contributory factors to the institutionalisation of the civil war from 1994 onwards. Further investment in this regard is unlikely to be tied to issues of accountability. Issues of psychosocial healing are also unlikely to be developed internally in a meaningful way, even though the regime has made efforts to normalise its relationship to political Islam and offer pardons to imprisoned Islamists, suggesting efforts at reconciliation in the vein of a 'truth commission'. Despite these efforts however, it remains clear that the state has regained full control over the production of historical truth and is therefore unlikely to approach the process of healing from the standpoint of acknowledging and dealing with the legal and moral responsibilities linked to the civil war.

Overall, the practical dimension of policy prescriptions described here under the banner of conflict resolution highlight a number of problems linked with the specifics of the Algerian case. Additionally, it underpins most of the current discussions on the obstacles to intervention by third parties and conflict resolution techniques in cases of civil war given the current set-up in the International System. The prognosis is therefore very limited in its possibilities and extensive in its assessment of obstacles. The question of violence itself has been partially resolved in Algeria, and a process of greater democratic participation has been put into practice. However, as pointed out here, many factors underpinning long-term positive peace are absent in the Algerian context, suggesting that a resurgence of political Islam or other (also potentially violent) forms of protest is likely to occur in the next few years. For its part, Islamism has found its new martyrs, and it also has not had the chance to be discredited through the practice of political power, and it remains, by and large, an attractive oppositional option for many. That being said, the regime will be a lot more careful in its handling of political opposition in the future. In this setting, Islamists are likely to go for a more Egyptian style of contestation (with varying and careful strategies for undermining the state). From the perspective of a Western power trying to negotiate policy with regards to Algeria in an 'ethical' way, the options remain limited and very much tied to the ability of the Algerian regime to retain control of the political process while appearing to make compromises to pluralism. Economic interests in the area of oil and natural gas resources are likely to continue playing the role of moderator of international public opinion, regardless of media attention and human rights organisations' work. As observed with the case the US-China relationship, issues of human rights have not gained the clout to dictate foreign policy over strategic economic interests. And the continued emphasis on the free market on a global scale is unlikely to alter such priorities. The question of political Islam goes beyond potential intervention to curb regime excesses though. One area that remains open to positive changes in policy with regards to Algeria, as well as elsewhere in the region, is the approach of European and North American powers to the importance and role of political Islam in the region (and within 'Fortress West' in diaspora communities). Creating a system where pariah status in the New World Order is reserved for Islamist groups/states in the future is likely to create conflict as opposed to prevent it. Helping regimes fight Islamist groups will only intensify to ideological gap between Islamists and what they theorise as the West also. Thus, one crucial area where changes in policy-making are likely to alter the antagonistic stance of many Islamist groups is change in the definition of the Islamist factor to undermine binary oppositions on both sides, and eventually to acknowledge the part political Islam
plays in the political spectrum of Middle Eastern politics and its contribution to the
global conversation on politics and modernity, an issue we now turn to.

7.3.2. Political Islam and the Global Conversation on Politics and Modernity

Chapter three, our overview of political Islam as a region-wide phenomenon, began
with an analysis of the global dimension of political Islam in the recent literature on
the New World Order. Reassessing this set of issues here, in light of our analysis of
the political imagination of Algerian Islamists, is the second area of policy-related
issues this conclusion addresses. The consequences and meaning of globalisation
have been discussed in depth elsewhere, but the specific connection between global
institutions, an idea of the 'global' and movements such as political Islam is worth
pausing on26. The New World Order has meant a re-negotiation of our understanding
of territorial borders, through challenges to existing state boundaries. More deeply
though, the importance of the issue of borders in the post-Cold War world illustrates
the re-negotiation of the boundaries of identity that the processes associated with
globalisation imply. In this context, one could raise the question of whether the
perception of a post-Cold War wave of ethnic and religious revivalism has denoted a
process of fragmentation which undermines both the idea of territorial integrity of
states and emergent ideas of the 'Global Village'. Suffice it to say here that, at first
sight, the issues of political Islam and globalisation make uneasy bedfellows. As
Lubeck argues,

Even more challenging to Enlightenment theory is the fact that the
triumphal expansion of global forces appears to be correlated with
the intensification of Islamic practice as well as the simultaneous
migration of Muslim communities into new states and regions via
the new global infrastructure. In turn, this gives rise to Islamic
social movements of great diversity, complexity and
contradictoriness... By becoming the voice and assuming the
leadership of anti-imperialist nationalist movements... Islamic
movements have now largely displaced secular nationalist and
leftist movements as the primary mobilizing force of resistance
against real and imagined Western political, economic and cultural
domination27.

26 For an introduction to surrounding debates, see Akbar Ahmed and Hastings Donnan (eds.).
Globalization". in Robin Cohen and Shirin Rai (eds.) Global Social Movements. London: The
Athlone Press. pp.148-149.
We have suggested that, in the Algerian context, political Islam is the offspring of the process of post-colonial nation-building. Political Islam nonetheless remains a region-wide phenomenon and despite its complexity and varied incarnations, it retains a large degree of overall coherence in those terms. Thus, our first, and most central, question ought to be: is political Islam as it can be currently observed a precursor to an alternative to current patterns of cultural/political globalisation? And if this is the case, in what way does it participate in the global discussion on the political and the concepts of modernity which surround it? We are looking here at a double problem: how the political imagination of political Islam is influenced by and influences globalisation in the field of political ideas, and whether the issue of political Islam can help us identify some tensions in the way globalisation is defined and theorised upon, especially in the context of the Middle East.

The discussion of political Islam's place as the potential global challenger to the New World Order occurs in a context where a number of new ethnic and religious movement appear to take on a threatening role with regards to the Westphalian state system in fundamental ways. But the place of Islamism within this premise is doubly confusing - while other sub-national groups are seen as destructive to the unity of particular states, Islamism has been seen to bring in the added bonus of being a global challenger to the International System itself. This view is based on the region-wide currency of Islamism as well as the transnational links observed between groups, as illustrated by the influence of the infamous Islamist supporter Osama Bin Laden. So, from the perspective of the academic literature and the media in Western Europe and North America, current constructs of the globalisation in cultural terms seems to be on a collision course with the political agenda of Islamists. This is an ambiguous opposition, because it assumes, in its purest form, that globalisation ought to be understood in terms of the free propagation of ideas (be these cultural, religious or political in nature) as part of a 'global village' freed from the cultural constraints and limitations of nationhood. Political Islam would, in this setting, be entitled to participate in this global conversation freely and on its own terms. Of course, one could question the neutrality of such lofty ideals on the other hand, when the freedom of expression characterising the global village is seen in terms favourable to the cultural constructs of the 'West' (and especially the USA), and especially when such exchanges often underpin the less idealistic and more unequal workings of the global trade system. That political Islam should be seen as a threat to the New World Order may not be so absurd after all in these circumstances. If political Islam is interpreted as an emergent voice of the developing Muslim World challenging the
constructs of globalisation and proposing a radical - and globally-oriented - alternative to this model, it is indeed, in that sense, a 'green peril'.

The connection and interaction between dominant constructs of the global and the Islamist political imagination is thus worthy of a closer examination. Determining the place of Islamist politics in Algeria can be tied back to understanding how Islamism can be defined, and the role it can play, in the region and globally, as a challenger to existing constructs of political modernity, an issue of radical importance in the post-colonial setting. Political Islam does not function independently from the pressures of the global order either: it influences its forms and is shaped by it to some extent. The reaction of Islamist groups to the portrayal of the Muslim World in terms of a 'Clash of Civilisations' and the assessment of political Islam as a threat to regional and global stability has brought greater focus and a sense of place within the international order to the movement in these terms. A sense of siege on the part of Islamists has led to a greater sense of unity and purpose among groups and individuals. It has also sharpened the Islamist position as an 'anti-Western' force, culturally and politically, and sometimes in terms of armed struggle. But the Islamist way of engaging with the global does not stop at this oppositional stance between a monolithic 'World of Islam' (spearheaded by Islamists) and the equally monolithic 'West'. Be it through their understanding of an Islamist form of cultural, political and religious globalisation, or their ways of dealing with current patterns of globalisation, Islamists are far from isolated from the debates revolving around their place in the New World Order.

In fact, Islamists in Algeria and elsewhere have quite strong ideas as to what the global order should look like in Islamist terms. Islamist discourse is universalist in that it often focuses on the return to a united and powerful Islamic ummah. The theme of global community is very strong in the pamphlets and speeches of the vast majority of groups in the region. The House of Islam is defined as the centre stage upon which cultural and political renaissance is to occur. Based on the revolutionary thought of Sayyid Qutb in particular, this view has been interpreted by most (but not all) groups as creating the obligation of Jihad (through varied means) to change society internally, but also to 'export the revolution', so to speak, to other parts of the region, and beyond. Regional issues such as the question of Palestine have created further impetus for unity among Islamist groups as well - in other words, they can see themselves as fighting for a common cause of which Palestine is the most poignant example. On this level, it is possible to see political Islam as a force in politics that goes beyond borders in its scope and influence (as cross-border financial, tactical and ideological exchanges are common, if only informally). While it currently does not
have a global reach, it is within its premises to attempt to acquire one. Imagining a world where Islamist ideas have global currency may sound far fetched, but the current revival of the Islamic faith in the United States for instance, reminds us of the potency of Islam as a religion, and thus the potential for political Islam to reach new constituencies in the future if the right conditions arise.

Nevertheless, these suggestions should not obscure the ambiguities and problems associated with viewing political Islam purely in this light. Firstly, the discourse of Islamists has remained wilfully ambiguous, as our case study illustrated. The creation of a stateless ummah is a prominent theme, but the main concerns of most Islamist groups remain tied to the political setting of existing states. Each group has a particular agenda which is predicated upon local circumstances. Hamas in Palestine is just as concerned with the issue of Palestinian independence as Hezbollah is concerned with the withdrawal of Israeli troops from South Lebanon. Egyptian and Jordanian groups have questioned the inefficiency and legitimacy of their respective state apparatuses. The Algerian FIS has had to tackle political liberalisation more closely. Also, while there seems to be an agreement among Islamists as to the creation of an 'Islamic state' nationally before regional expansion can occur, not all groups agree as to what this state should look like. For instance, moves towards relative political liberalisation in Iran have prompted quick condemnation by Islamist groups keen on developing their own model for an 'Islamic state'. On the whole, one could say that there is an inherent tension between advocating the creation of an Islamic state and the questioning of the existence of states which the Islamist rhetoric seems to imply. Islamist groups have not clarified their position in this regard and/or have modified it over time, and it is arguable that this ambiguity has always worked to their advantage.

Informal links between groups do exist, there is co-operation in terms of intelligence and training, funding goes across borders (with groups, individuals and sometimes states acting as patrons), and diaspora communities often offer vital links, but the international dimension of political Islam should not be overestimated. So far, there has been no actual evidence to support the thesis that political Islam is an integrated supranational force in politics - let alone a global power. By contrast, Islamist groups have so far concentrated most of their efforts on gaining political power within the boundaries of existing states. Whether they will expand their focus onto the global stage when, or if, they do consolidate power internally remains to be seen.
On the other hand, it is also worth mentioning that the attitude of Islamist groups towards globalisation has been equally ambiguous. Islamism has dealt with globalisation in the way that it has dealt with the issue of modernity: through a two-pronged approach. The cultural dimension of globalisation has been rejected as Western neo-imperialism and the cultural values carried by such a process have been described as morally bankrupt. By contrast, Islamists have been more than willing to take on board the technological gains of globalisation. In particular, they have learnt to use the global tools of communication to harness regional and diaspora support and to propagate their message nationally and across borders. Perhaps surprisingly, international patterns of trade have not been questioned thoroughly by Islamists however, especially for groups operating in oil-producing states. That being said, their support for international capitalism is not unqualified, since clientelist networks leading to uneven distribution of wealth by the state often find their origins in the international trading system. The exploitation of oil and trading outside the region have never been rejected, and foreign aid and investment has not been rejected outright as a future option for an 'Islamic state'. Finally, Islamist criticism of capitalism has tended to focus on un-Islamic banking practices nationally and internationally, focusing on the question of usury. Islamic banking is one area that Islamists have supported as a workable alternative to current patterns, preventing isolation from international patterns of trade while respecting Islamic principles. Islamists can thus be seen to have adopted a qualified and pragmatic attitude towards most observable manifestations of globalisation. Culturally, the moral high ground in Islamist terms remains a viable option, but economically, Islamists remains all too aware of the dilemmas typical of the Third World many Middle Eastern states have to face.

What I have illustrated through this rough overview is that movements such as Islamism can help us illustrate areas of tension in the ways globalisation can be thought of, helping us challenge simplistic understandings of what globalisation means, and to acknowledge the variety of ways in which it is perceived and how it can affect people. In this context, we can go back to more general questions concerning the value of globalisation in its various forms. It is important to remind the reader here that globalisation as a process is far less structured and more controversial a phenomenon than catch-phrases such as 'our global village' and 'the era of globalisation' seem to suggest. There are different aspects to globalisation (such as culture, politics, technology and economics) and as an ongoing process, it affects different regions of the world in different ways. The basic definitions of globalisation seem to suggest the idea of a world that is getting progressively smaller, a world that
is easier to reach and comprehend, and where borders and cultural barriers are increasingly under stress. In that sense, globalisation trends seem to have been in place for some time: the invention of the telegraph, the telephone, and the aeroplane can all be seen as significant precursors in this regard. But what 'we mean' by globalisation today often seems to imply more than improved means of travel and communication (even though these remain central to it). Acknowledging the difficulties in defining globalisation with precision, and in the context of debates concerning its relevance and shape, David Held et al. build a overall framework of understanding stressing that: "Globalization can be taken to refer to those spatio-temporal processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents."28 A number of features characterise this process to give globalization its current direction(s):

... globalization can be thought of as a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions - assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact - generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power.29

Here, there are four main aspects of the discourse on globalisation worth considering (and these are not necessarily mutually exclusive)30. The first way of interpreting this trend is the metaphor of the 'global village' - this implies a smaller world, but also one where heterogeneity of experience works in harmony with disappearing boundaries31. The second way of looking at globalisation focuses on the expansion of the capitalist global economy where trading and production patterns lead to the erosion of economic barriers. Thirdly, the erosion of the state system is another way of engaging with the idea of the global. Globalisation here functions in terms of supranational institutions slowly gaining control over the state and ultimately making it redundant32. Examples here include super-states in the making such as the EU, powerful trading conglomerates, or financial institutions such as the IMF and the

29 David Held et al. 1999. Global Transformations. p.16.
31 This is referring back to Ohmae's influential introduction to the context of the "borderless world". See Kenichi Ohmae. 1990. The Borderless World. New York: Collins.
32 This idea has been criticised by, among others, Stephen Krasner, who views globalisation as too complex and amorphous phenomenon for sovereignty to be undermined. Stephen Krasner. 1999. "Globalisation and Sovereignty" in David A. Smith et al (eds.) States and Sovereignty in the Global Economy. London: Routledge. chapter 2.
World Bank. Finally, globalisation could be seen as a vehicle for 'Western' cultural hegemony underpinned by the economic profits associated with increased consumerism in new markets. The acceleration of the process is a central feature of the contemporary era where the results of global changes are increasingly noticeable, if asymmetrical:

That we are on the cusp of entering the second millennium under a ruthless, unregulated, polarizing regime, one that simultaneously integrates the more advanced and marginalizes the weaker regions of the world, is surely now indisputable. Like it or not, globalization is the determinant material and social force of our time... globalization is never linear, for its impact is always mediated by specific, historically situated local institutions... Nor is globalization continuous: rather it is characterized by rapid spurts of growth, followed by tension, resistance and stagnation33.

The attitude of academics and policy-makers vis-à-vis globalisation have been varied to reflect variations on these basic possibilities. In our case, assessing briefly the relevance and impact of such models on the Middle East can help us better conceptualise the place of Islamism in this context. Here, it is obvious from the outset that the uneven results of globalisation have been felt keenly in the region. Little support for the idea of a global village is to be expected in the first instance, since the processes of state-consolidation and regional balancing are still undergoing major changes34. Questions of political identity, as well as political realities in the region (linked to rivalry and economic priorities) make the idea of a global village a luxury most Middle Eastern states cannot afford35. Our second theme finds more resonance on the region however, as the consequences of the globalised world economy have reached in Middle East in unambiguous ways. That being said, uneven trade relations linked to issues of development persist and take precedence over long-term financial projects of global significance arising from the region. In other words, a free global economy has not lead to an even global economy. The state system has not been eroded by globalisation at this stage, to refer back to our third theme. In fact, the state has proven remarkably resilient to efforts to create a more integrated EU-type regional forum. If anything, it is internal instability that states have had to

34 This issue is also linked to critiques from the Middle East as to the issue of representation of the Middle East/Arab World/Muslim World in dominant frameworks of globalisation. See for instance, Hassan Hanafi. 1998. "The Middle East, in Whose World?" paper from The Middle East in a Globalizing World Conference in Oslo 13-16 August 1998. paper published online by the Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies.
deal with - as the case of political Islam illustrates. Fourthly, cultural hegemony is an
issue of importance in Middle Eastern societies, and globalisation is often associated
with this problem. Islamists have highlighted the social and cultural dilemmas
brought on by high levels of cultural exposure to 'Western culture', but they are by no
means the only critics of this phenomenon.

Here, the cultural and economic aspects of globalisation seem to have had the
greatest impact on the region, but the legacy of this impact is not wholly positive.
Global trade patterns and access to satellite television can often work as reminders of
the inequalities in the international system that globalisation has not overcome36.
Political Islam, in that context, can be seen as one of the elements of protest against
this process. Of course, our analysis has shown that the roots of political Islam are by
and large anchored in the national realm, but such national circumstances are, in
turn, tied to the international dimension brought on by the transition from
colonialism, patterns of trade and debt, as well as cultural penetration. Additionally,
political Islam's position on the 'West' has evolved over time to reflect the evolution
of globalisation. It is now more than the reflection of anti-colonialism, or resentment
over the loss of traditional values for a seemingly more modern/'Western' lifestyle in
Middle Eastern societies. These processes go hand in hand, and anti-Western
attitudes evolve in conjunction with whatever images and influences are received
from the outside. Political Islam is a player in the global matrix of cultural exchange
in a dual way: it adapts to globalisation to sharpen its critique of a certain way of life
and set of values, but at the same time, it is a reflection of the hybridity and sense of
ambiguity it carries with it (even if those remain largely unacknowledged). As Ngaire
Woods reminds us, we can identify three core elements to current patterns of
globalisation: "The expansion of markets; challenges to the state and institutions; and
the rise of new social and political movements"37. Islamism belongs to this third
category. Current forms of political Islam are thus, in part, an expression of
globalisation and one of the consequences from it one ought to expect. Most
significantly though, political Islam illustrates the identity dimension - and locality -
of new social movements on the global stage38. The politics of location operate in a
lived tension with the extensity of globalisation to produce an overall framework,

pp. 447-470.
38 For more details on such movements and their relationship to the global, see P. Waterman.
Smith et al. (eds.) 1997. Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity
beyond the State. Syracuse: Syracuse University press.

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which Roland Robertson argues would be more accurate to term "glocalization"\textsuperscript{39}. Stuart Hall also dwells on this new type of articulation between locality and globality to warn that political and cultural identities are not about to disappear under the banner of one construct. For him, globalisation can just as easily "lead to a strengthening of local identities, or to the production of new identities"\textsuperscript{40}.

While it is premature to say whether political Islam will have a detrimental affect on current patterns of globalisation, one thing is for certain: groups such as Islamist movements help us question the particulars of globalisation as a process. Their 'pick and mix' approach highlight the fact that globalisation cannot be assumed to be a universal, unquestionable good. If seen as a vehicle for perceived Western hegemony, cultural globalisation is met with contempt, and thus part of the dynamic that gives political Islam its political relevance. That being said, Islamists would probably not take issue with cultural globalisation if it were used to propagate Islamist ideas globally. Global means of communication have made the success of political Islam possible and will continue to function as one of its main assets. Far from being an anti-modernist aberration, political Islam works as an illustration of the forms of contestation which are bound to the experience of the global, with the distinctive aim of Islamising modernity. This implies engaging with what the current forms of modernity have to offer in political, economic and cultural terms, as opposed to escaping modernity altogether\textsuperscript{41}. And, in that sense, Islamism functions as a contestatory global social movement grappling with the contradictions of North-South relations in the global era to formulate its version of the postcolonial condition. It is a global social movement insofar as its theorises upon its own sense of locality within the polity (in each case), while partaking in the regional setting of politics and defining its place in the global setting.

Understanding this context, in turn, has the potential to change policy in order to better deal with such movements, as well as to anticipate the negative aspects of globalisation trends so as to have greater control over the process, especially with the prospect of the emergence of a coherent idea of global ethics\textsuperscript{42}.

\textsuperscript{42} For a consideration of such prospects, see Vincent Cable. Globalization and Global Governance. London: Chatham House papers (RIIA). conclusion.
7.4. Conclusion: Islamism in the Postcolonial Context

By now, it is probably obvious that the previous section on policy prescriptions plays a trick on the reader by dealing with policy per se only in a peripheral way. To some extent, this is unavoidable due to the resilience of the Algerian regime and its ability to use the tools of sovereignty provided by the International System. My suspicion of policy prescriptions in general and of predictions in particular runs deeper than the brief assessment of the obstacles to long-term conflict resolution in Algeria however. What the Algerian case shows us in rather unambiguous terms is the pitfalls of foreign involvement in domestic problems, however grave these may be. Hence an ethical quagmire remains unavoidable: while the arguments presented by organisations such as Amnesty International in terms of human rights are both sound and thought-provoking, the reality of foreign involvement and 'responsibility' remains often tied to policy debates where a balance between economic considerations and human rights concerns is difficult to reach.

Our second section, in keeping with our overall analysis of political Islam in the Algerian context, also points to the challenging nature of the political imagination of Islamism beyond specific borders. The issue of a cultural clash between policy makers in Western Europe/North America and Islamists in the region only works to add a dimension of antagonism to the policy-making process. The general assessment that political Islam remains a potentially explosive political option for Middle Eastern states, with destabilising consequences for the patterns of global trade touching the region, has prompted democratic states in the 'West' to continue providing de facto, if not de jure, support to non-democratic regimes. Despite vocal assurances concerning commitments to global democracy, ethical foreign-policy making and human rights protection, Western foreign policies in this regard remain underpinned by a narrow understanding of what constitutes the national interest. In this setting, discussing policy options from a UK perspective, for instance, remains futile if it is based on the domestic 'needs' of Algeria (assuming that determining such needs from our perspective is even possible). For such an endeavour not to be futile, our analysis would have to focus on the possible policy gains from the perspective of the UK.

Still, it is perhaps too cynical to discount the potential role of academics, the media and policy-makers altogether. Our focus on the question of ideas that underscore political Islam as opposed to a focus on political violence suggests that greater understanding of the societal mechanisms underpinning political Islam can lead to
positive changes of attitudes in our societies as well as societies in the Middle East. Tackling the question of the place of political Islam as part of the process of globalisation is seen here as a starting point in this regard and it hopes to inform further discussion and debates. Beyond this, the task of this dissertation has been practical insofar as an in-depth discussion of the political imagination of Islamism in Algeria (and thus an analysis of its place in the political lifeworld and the identity ramifications of its relevance) is a missing link in the academic literature on the subject. Tying in political Islam to its context, and linking its patterns of political imaginary to questions of nation-building in the postcolonial setting, helps give its voice a substance that is often missing from the literature.

Additionally, looking at political Islam in this way opens up new questions (and/or reopens old wounds) concerning the political process in the postcolonial world. With the Cold War power games largely overcome, and several decades of independence for most post-colonial states, the urgency of state consolidation has given way to new aspirations for emerging civil societies. These can be the fruit of the dashed hopes of revolutions gone sour, or simply reflect new frustrations with developmental hurdles and perceptions of neo-imperialism on the part of former colonial powers. In any case, the populist case for governance has lost much of its appeal in states like Algeria, because of the demise of communism on the one hand, and the failure of the elite to secure prosperity for and legitimacy with regards to the population on the other. The appeal of alternatives claiming to recapture the themes ingrained in the founding of the postcolonial nation lies in the dual-track policy of keeping the gains of independence intact (even sometimes in populist terms), while partaking in the national and global political arena in more legitimate ways. It is in this mixture of the old and the new that political Islam finds its place. While it is a reflection of the failures of postcolonial states in some ways, it can also be inscribed within the broader framework of the continued argument as to what modernity means in political and cultural terms in a global environment, and from a postcolonial perspective.

Central to our contentions, as a result, is the idea that political identity, as a expression of political imagination, is the locus upon which political contestation is played out. Political violence has human ramifications worthy of our attention and compassion, but this should not obscure the complexity of the mechanisms which bring political violence into the fore as a form of political expression. The Algerian civil war involves political Islam, but it is not defined by it. The civil war, like political
Islam, is part of the map of the political imagination of contemporary Algeria, for better and for worse.

Political Islam, it has been argued, has been an attempt to emancipate the Algerian political lifeworld from the monopoly on political thought, imagery, and expression effected by the dominant party since independence. By reclaiming the tools for defining authenticity, political Islam has done more than effectively challenge the power of the state, it has attempted to redefine the very bases of legitimacy that underpin political power. But as our analysis showed, political Islam never really emancipated itself from the legacy of the postcolonial state - in fact, the success of its methods has rested on its manipulation of existing political motifs to undermine the regime and claim legitimacy for itself, without fully drawing a radical - if not revolutionary - political agenda.

It is through this act of borrowing 'the master's tools to dismantle the master's house' that political Islam has managed to capture the imagination of the Algerian public during the short democratic experiment of the early 1990s. But it is also because of this compromise that political Islam has fallen victim to the ruthlessness of an army unwilling to give up its power and privileges, and to the implacable logic of authoritarian rule. It is perhaps comforting to think of political Islam as a dangerous, potentially totalitarian, promise of theocracy, as it conveniently hides the reality of an Algerian postcolonial condition where none of the dreams of freedom and emancipation have come to fruition. It is comforting for us to feel that, in any case, an authoritarian, army-controlled state is the lesser of two evils. It is comforting for the Algerian population, after almost a decade of insecurity, if not terror, to feel that authoritarian rule is better than Islamist terror also. But this experiment in Orwellian doublethink is only one more stone in the construction of a political imagination where historical facts, and political realities, are distorted and re-appropriated to serve the needs the state. It is doublethink to unerringly believe that the founding myths of the nation reflect the reality of postcolonial politics. Freedom from colonial oppression means little if sovereign power is not accompanied by freedom from the abuses of the state, freedom of expression, and political participation. It was after all in those terms that the struggle for independence was fought, and for this precise reason that colonial rule had become untenable. It is doublethink to rework the history of the past ten years to see political Islam as an aberration carrying with it the slippery slope of intolerance and violence, because it sets up the political chessboard of Algeria in a way where the ordinary citizen is given the illusion that she/he has made a choice between freedom and oppression. No such choice was ever given.
Thirteen years ago, Algerians forced the authoritarian regime to democratise. When given a choice in a vote, they chose Islamism. And that choice may have been more oppositional than Islamist in character, but perhaps that is what matters the most. Algerians voted against single party control, against corruption and clientelism. They voted against arbitrary arrests, state control of the press and lack of opportunity. It was the army that cancelled the 1992 election, and it did not do so to save Algeria from itself, but because it could not allow an election that it might not win. The army arrested and interned the members of its opposition in desert camps reminiscent of the Gulag. It committed extralegal arrests and killings, as well as other human rights abuses. Regardless of the responsibilities of Islamist activists in the civil war (which are indeed significant), the responsibilities of the regime remain unchanged.

The political reality of post-civil war Algeria is one where the regime has claimed moral legitimacy over the Islamist alternative by virtue of winning the war. The regime used all the tools of war at its disposal to destroy and deligitimise political Islam, including the (successful) use of propaganda at home and abroad. It is the victor's privilege to speak of civil concord, and of pardon. But, by placing responsibility for the civil war squarely on the shoulders of Islamism, the state has already indicted it. By returning to a democratisation process where the legal and political safeguards are in place for the regime not to lose, the state has compounded its victory. And finally, by co-opting the remaining Islamist groups into positions of relative power and placing civil society in a situation where the illusion of representation through democratic means is in place, the regime has anchored its power more securely than ever before.

The civil war may be over, but the relative calm of the past three years belies something perhaps even more monstrous that civil strife: it carries with it the slow process of institutionalisation of a lie, and the acceptance of it. In that sense, the Algerian situation bears the hallmarks of an Orwellian nightmare.

Lost in this nightmare is the importance of re-claiming history by civil society, a sense of belonging within that history, and a place in the modern world as it is. The freedom to undermine the fiction of the French mission civilisatrice is the same freedom to recognise that a social contract ultimately underpinned by terror is no social contract at all. It is also the freedom to recognise international double standards of morality. It is only in those circumstances that one could talk of a postcolonial condition living up to the ideal of overcoming the legacy of colonialism,
as opposed to merely chronologically following it. Or as Winston Smith, a somewhat disgruntled employee of the Ministry of Truth, would put it:

Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows\(^4\).

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