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ISLAMIST MOBILIZATION UNDER MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM IN ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

During the 1980s, as regime capacity to distribute service became constricted. Dissatisfaction with the government performance began to grow in various sectors of the society. The inadequacy of the government's economic measures to keep up with the need for a fast-rising population, compounded by the mid-to-late 1980s austerity policies, provides ideal ground for Islamist movements. In October 1988, disgruntled youth were among the first to react to the tension, their actions creating a gap in the state's defences through which Islamists rushed. Following riots in October 1988, Algeria's government opened the political system overnight in February 1989, after more than two decades of one-party control under the National Liberation Front (FLN).
This article follows the new constitution adopted after 1988 riots and consequent end of the one-party system and mentions the acceptance of multi-party system in Algeria. It is also mentioning the political changes that came after the constitutional change, especially the Islamist political upsurge. Subsequently, this article focuses on the various ideological differences within Political Islam, namely, rejectionist, moderate and liberal. Finally, it mentions the rise of Islamist Parties and the electoral and political dilemma of Algerian political elite.

Keywords: Algeria, Political Islam, Islamist Mobilization, Multi-Party System, Constitution, Rejectionist, Moderate, Liberal

1. INTRODUCTION

After the Iranian revolution, Islamist activities in Algeria gradually increased and become more political in tone. “Jacobin types of movement” emerged and demanding the end of the existing type of secular state and its replacement by an Islamic state. “The Islamists regathering momentum began again in the early 1980s, when socio-economic conditions started deteriorating due to the President Bendjedid’s controlled economic liberalization policies which contributed to the emerging crisis. During this period, Algeria’s heterogenous Islamist movement comprised in several factions or school of thought” (Zoubir, 2007). Despite of Islamist movements amorphous nature and internal differences, all of its factions agreed on one general strategic agenda that build the foundation for Islamic State through preaching and proselytizing in mosque and universities. With a strong presence on college campuses across the country, the Islamist movement resurfaced and grew in popularity among the country's first post-independence generation, who were dissatisfied with the educational system and discouraged by a lack of professional options (Zoubir, 2007).

“The Islamist discourse convinced many members of this first post-independence generation that the Western model of modernization and governance, adopted by the Algerian state was a failure. Islamist offered an alternative

governance system that extolled the country's Arab and Islamic values, offered citizens a heightened consciousness of this identity and claimed to furnish solutions that would lead to a better way of life, social justice, and a redistribution of political power and economic wealth. Although the various parts of the movement disagreed on many issues, their leaders and partisans came together in 1989 when Algeria adopted multiparty system and to form the FIS, which provided Algerian political Islam with a more official organizational framework" (Mortimer, 1991).

Introduction of Multi-Party System:

The inadequacy of the government's economic measures to keep up with the need for a fast-rising population, compounded by the mid-to-late 1980s austerity policies, provides ideal ground for Islamist movements. In October 1988, disgruntled youth were among the first to react to the tension, their actions creating a gap in the state's defences through which Islamists rushed. Following riots in October 1988, Algeria's government opened the political system overnight in February 1989, after more than two decades of one-party control under the National Liberation Front (FLN).

The rioters, who were born in the post-colonial era, believed that the promises of freedom had been broken. A strong but nascent desire for political change, mostly among those aged 18 to 25, prompted them to call for the resignation of all officials. Unlike Egyptians, Saudis, and Moroccans, Algerians were raised on an egalitarian and social justice worldview, and every Algerian felt entitled to full citizenship and full enjoyment of state benefits (Roberts, 1990). "The government response to the riots was brutal. For the first time, the army, once a symbol of the great battle for independence and firmly associated with the state after it was won, turned its weapons on Algerians" (Esposito, 1991).

The Chadli Bendjedid administration made it plain that any challenge to the political structure and patronage system on which it was founded would be met with vehement opposition. As a result, the 1988 riots seriously harmed the legitimacy of the Algerian state, which had been formed through the revolution, and opened up "Pandora's Box." "Despite its willingness to use force, the administration quickly realized that repression alone would not be enough to stabilize the country and that political change was required. After extensive internal debate, the authorities produced a new constitution in February 1989 that terminated the FLN's political monopoly, with article 40 allowing the formation of political associations" (Zoubir, 1998).

The right could not be utilized to violate fundamental liberties, fundamental values, or components of national identity, national unity, or the security and integrity of the national territory, according to the article. Political parties cannot be formed on the basis of religion, linguistics, race, gender, or region basis. Despite these protections, the government granted licenses to all parties that applied, including an Islamist group that linked democracy with heresy. In the hurriedly arranged municipal and national elections, more than thirty new political groups emerged. "The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) quickly established itself as the most well-organized and effective opposition party, bringing together a diverse group of extreme Islamists, veterans of the Afghan war against the Soviets, students, urban businesspeople, and unemployed youth" (Quandt, 2004). More than 30 political parties have been accredited under the new law, three of which are already well-known in Algerian politics. One was the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), which was clearly identified as the successor to the Brother Cultural Movement (MCB), which arose in Kabylie during the 1980 Berber Spring. The MCB was a semi-secret organization dedicated to the preservation of Berber culture.

Alternative Political Vision in Islamist Response: The earliest Islamist sentiment in post-independence Algeria emerged among members of the Association of Algerian Ulema`s and a few other religious individuals. It was largely reformist and moralist in nature during the 1960s and 1970s. "They merely constituted a moral voice against negative effects of rapid modernization. They were unable to criticize the governing regime for its socio-economic policies because the vast majority of Algerians were benefiting from generous welfare policies financed by hydrocarbon revenue" (Ghanem, 2019). Al-Qiyam (1963) emerged at the very start of independence as opposition to state socialist model especially state policies related to religion. Hachemi Tidjani one of Al-Qiyam leader, who had protest against Bin-Bella's and later Boumediene's policies. The movement was suppressed by the government in 1967. But this action did not deter the Islamists and in the 1970s a second opposition movement, al-Dawa, emerged. This attracted people who were later to play a key role in the transformation of this socio-cultural movement in to a political movement. It was very critical of the Algerian states policies that it viewed as not confirming to Islamic principles. It was more aggressive in recruiting members and propagating its ideas than the Al-Qiyam group had been. It was however, tolerated by the state as a counterbalance to the radical leftist student groups on universities campuses throughout the country (Layachi, 2019).

Since independence, to till 1989 Algeria was under control of single party system that was FLN. Through 1980s Algerians were protesting they believed that the socio-economic crisis of 1980s was result of arbitrary and improvident decision of Benjadid regime. This situation has given an opportunity to Islamists to reorganize themselves and use

peoples anger to incorporate their political ideas. Islamist propagated that the present pathetic situation of Algeria is due to rapid westernization of state and society. "They gave a slogan ''Islam is solution'' and offered a governance alternative that according to him, was culturally more authentic than imported western ideology such as socialism, which had failed. The Islamists were able to pose as pro reforms, calling for the resolution of all the problems that Algeria faced by creation of a religious government which will be guided by precepts of Islamic religious law. During these socio-economic difficulties, the population swiftly turned towards Islamic model for help"(Chhibber, 1996).

Political Islam is not monolithic in Algeria, it has many shades. Between Islamists, the disagreement on almost everything except the need to be implementing Sharia and establish an Islamic State. Islamists can be categorized in three types of groups, based on their method of achieving their desired polity. These differences not just over the how to establish a desired Islamic State, but rather a function of how competing interpretations of the Quran, Sunnah, ijma (consensus), qiyas (analogical reasoning), the historic debate over usul-al-fiqh (the principles of Islamic jurisprudence) and fiqh (deep and comprehensive understanding). This spectrum can be categorized in the three broader categories:

Rejectionist View: Rejectionist view sees a sharp and irreconcilable clash between the Shariah and Western model of democracy which is based on rationality, secularism and sovereignty of the people. "Islamists argue that the only sovereign on earth is the almighty Allah. Human exercises his rule on earth through a majlish-al-shura (consultative council) whose members are accountable to him only on the Day of Judgment. They reject a man-made constitution and wish to build and manage governing institution on the basis of Quran, the hadith and the Sunna. For them, government should be based on ijma (consensus), and tawhid (unity), not voting, and plurality. The rejectionist principle of tawhid sees diversity and plurality as bad for the umma (the whole community of Muslim) and barrier in the way of their wellbeing" (Lapidus, 1992).

The intellectual origin of this view is associated with Sayyad Qutab and Abu-al-Moududis views, who condemns imitation of foreign ideas. They drew a distinction between western and Islamic doctrine of Shurah (consultation between ruler and ruled). They argue that hakimiyyah (sovereignty) rests with God alone and thus is antithetical to democracy. Sayyad Qutab calls to action to recreate the Islamic world on strictly Quranic grounds by casting off jahiliyya (the state of ignorance of God) that in his words, is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty. In his view democracy transfers to man of the greatest attributes of God, namely hakimiyya and makes some men lords over others.

Sayyad Qutub further says that, "Islam can provide complete solution to all problems, whether political, economic or social in nature. On the other hand, Western influences are dangerous and harmful. For Sayyad Qutab, neither East (the socialist block) nor West (the capitalist world) could be called civilization" (Vatin, 1983). They were instead for him, two different faces of what he called jahiliyya. "Rejectionist Islamists argue that as long as states in Muslim world continue to copy and emulate non-Muslim models they are about to fail, because those models are man-made and transient (Tibi, 1999). Only the Islamic model of state can last and be successful because it is based on the law of God that are moral and immutable.

The rejectionist view began to surface effectively in Algeria after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Many Algerian Ulema's attributed their defeat and lagging development to the lack of oneness with God. So, they sought a return to traditional fundamental Islam. Rejectionist believes in the infallibility of the Quran and Hadith, and they demand to make all kinds of decision through the prism of Islam. They believe that the basis of moral and ethical order is divine, so man should not impose his own system. That's why divine system sharia is necessary for human wellbeing and to avoid misery. Rejectionist political discourse center on the doctrines of revolution, legislation and consensus. Rejectionist wants to obliterate all institutions that claim secular authority and infringe upon the divinity of God.

They were completely in favor of demolishing existing secular authoritarian regime. For Belhadj, democracy and secularism are kufr (un-Islamic) that's why it is haram (forbidden). They call for return to original teaching of the divine texts. The GIA, GSPC and Takfir-wa-hijra are some other organizations who have similar view. Most of the armed group still fighting are likely to share the incompatibility viewpoint, which does not allow for a negotiated solution or a compromise that allows for dissent. They are likely to construct a totalitarian social and political regime.

Moderate View: The moderate view emphasizes on the concept of Maslaha (public interest), and Adl (justice). In this view Shurah provides the basis for representative government institution that is similar to Western democracy, but it reflects Islamic values rather than western liberal values. This view has been proposed by Islamist who do not agree with several key elements of democracy such as secularism and human laws that clash with the sharia. But they are willing to use political liberalization and democratization for the purpose of freely articulating their view, mobilizing

support and attaining power. Moderate view sees political liberalization and democracy as an opportunity through which to gain control over state and then the necessary changes can be implemented for the establishment of an Islamic order (Driessen, 2012).

In Algeria's heavily populated cities in the 1970s, two groups influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood took root. One was formed in the country's east, and it was known as the Eastern Group. It was led by Abdallah Djaballah who was inspired by the Muslim Brotherhoods teachings. The other group was led by Mahfoudh Nahnah who was acting as branch of Muslim Brotherhood. He was imprisoned (1976-1980) because of their activities protesting against President Boumediene National Charter. In the 1980s, polarization and antagonism between those factions grew, particularly over who should represent the Muslim Brotherhood. Nahnah's group became known as the international Muslim Brotherhood and the Eastern Group as the local Muslim Brotherhood after the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood accepted Nahnah as its official representative.

The meaning of democracy and rule of law within the moderate Islamic spectrum does not differ much from secular Arab views. Universal citizenship, peaceful transition of power, checks and balances, citizen participation, public authorities' neutrality in dealing with multiple religious and ethnic identities, and tolerance of diversity are principles shared by moderate Islamists and liberals alike. When moderate Islamists proclaim the "civility" of the public realm, they never employ the adjective secular to define the neutrality of public institutions, but they transmit the same implications. Moderate Islamists oppose violence and support pluralistic politics as a means of promoting competition. They consider gradual democratic openings as the only realistic means to challenge repressive authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, and they rule out extreme strategies as choices for political revolution.

Liberal View: Those Islamists fall in this category, who have embraced to rejectionist and moderate view and aspire to construct their desired Islamic State through democratic methods (Entelis, 1995). Liberals want that their approach to western political system, should not be viewed as a compromise rather it should be seen on the basis that democracy is not intrinsically un-Islamic. Rachid Ghannouchi the leader of Ennahda Party said that, if democracy is meant the liberal model of government, a system in which the people freely choose their representative and leaders, in which there is an alteration of power, as well as all freedoms and human rights for the public, then in such a situation, Muslim should not feel threatened by this (Senzai, 2013). This liberal view has emerged as strong advocates of democracy and political participation. Liberal Islamist parties have been active in numerous Muslim nations in recent years, and they have begun to priorities political engagement.

Liberal view advocates liberal solutions to the problems of politics, religion and society. It presents a liberal Islamic interpretation of democracy, freedom of thoughts, and other contemporary issues. Liberals recommend that ummah should interact with the developed West and take from it whatever is good and applicable. Thus, Islam is compatible with modern Wester thought and value. Liberals attempted to interpret Islam in term of modernity and developed several doctrines such as public interest in terms of utility and consultation in the context of parliamentary democracy. They called for a reworking of Islamic thought to include western science, democracy and constitutional government.

The liberals argued that the modern western viewpoint should be adopted in its entirety. According to Ahmed Moussalli, the liberals' primary purpose has always been to bring the West and the East together. Rashid Ghannouchi established a doctrine of democracy and Islam compatibility, claiming that borrowing and learning from the West is acceptable. In fact, he presented three well-established rules to support his claim. Wisdom is a long-cherished goal for believers, religion was revealed for the benefit of humanity, and the Shariah is perfectly compatible with humanity's vital needs (Ali, 2009).

The liberal view which finds Islam and democracy genuinely compatible with each other and it can be existed together in Algeria and elsewhere is based on Egyptian Islamic scholar Muhammad Abduh. According to Abduh, maslaha (the common social good or welfare) in Islamic thought is similar to public interest and utility in Western thought. Similarly, he equated shura with democracy and ijma with consensus. Abduh was a proponent of the parliamentary system and defended pluralism, and also refuting those claims that western notion of democracy would be undermine the unity of the ummah. Abduh emphasis on the role of reason in understanding religion. He was in favor of pluralism and freedom of thought. This view holds that it is possible to have democracy in an Islamic environment, where basic principles of good governance and respect for civil and human rights can infect be inspired by both the Quran and reason (man-made laws). It is possible to have rulers who are accountable both to the people now and to God in the hereafter (Khan, 2003).

Trajectory of Islamist Participation: Islamists organizations have emerged as a political force in Algeria since the 1980s. The Islamist movement has constituted a wide and heterogenous phenomenon with three main fronts, a cultural front aiming at the re-Islamization of society, a non-violent political front acting inside or outside of the system for gradual, peaceful and comprehensive change, and a violent political front aiming at bringing down the regime by force and at instituting a rigid Islamic order. The Islamists, who were at the forefront of the struggle for change, welcomed the political opening that came in 1989 when a constitutional amendment and new laws allowed the birth of a multi-party system, independent association and free press.

By October 1988 riots, the single party hegemony in Algeria ended. This step surprised all, including Islamists who quickly formed their own political party. They decided to participate in active politics and contestant elections, although some Islamists leader such as Shaykh Shahnoun and Mahfoud Nahnah initially were determined to abide direct political involvement. They formed the Rabita-al-Islah-wa-Irshad (The Movement for Reform and Guidance), as a national association designed to influenced the political process with direct part in it (Hill, 2011). The other group of Islamists who looked this political transition as an opportunity to incorporate their idea of Islamic state, decided to be actively involved in political process and through contest in election. This group was led by Islamist leader Abbassi Madani and Ali Belhadj. Ultimately result came in to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in early 1989.

The FIS was the first Algeria's Islamist party, most of its members were preachers. It was initially able to mobilize large numbers, covering some 9000 mosques across the country. The rise of FIS was aided by high unemployment and widespread poverty, as well as a general sense of disenfranchisement from political authority and resentment of government corruption, as a result of the events of October 1988. FIS was an amalgamation of many Islamist groups ranging from moderates to extremists, and there were significant differences between them on various matters. Due to the representation of various parties, the organization quickly became a powerful political player in Algeria. Madani and Ali Bel Hadj were at the helm.

They were adamant about sizing up the new political chances presented by the constitutional reforms, which included the opportunity to participate directly in formal political life. FIS provides hope, explanations for life's meaning, material support, and anti-corruption protection. FIS' political and cultural agendas were rooted on the Quran and Islamic tradition, with the ultimate objective of establishing an Islamic state based on Sharia law (Ibrahim, 1991).

The first multi-party elections in Algeria were set to take place in June 1990. The FIS was able to quickly organize and gain mass support, resulting in a landslide victory in the municipal elections. This was the first time an Islamist party took part in government through nonviolent and democratic means (Hamzawy, 2008). The FIS won 32 of the 48 Wilaya (provincial) councils and 850 of the 1548 municipal councils, receiving 54 percent of the vote. President Bendjedid was obliged to announce a national parliamentary election after the FIS won local elections. The election date has been established for June 1991 (Mortimer, 1996).

The announcement of election divided the FIS in three ways; Hamas was advocating co-existence of all Islamists with other secular parties in a democratic political structure. Second was, extreme fundamentalist, who called for the immediate creation of an Islamic state and denounced the idea of elections altogether. Third division was the FIS, that had been holding a middle path, although it decided to participate in elections but did not go as far as Hamas in committing to a democratic political structure.

Later before the election, Mahfoud Nahnah, who formed a party of his own, Hamas which was another formal Islamist party. It accepted the democratic alternative as well, although it did not have widespread support. Similarly, Abdallah Djaballah formed his own political party, An-Nahda, but none of them were able to compete with FIS, which was remarkably popular. Abdallah Djaballah announced the foundation of a new Islamist party not long after the municipal elections of 1990, which saw the FIS win a landslide victory over the FLN. Djaballah was a political activist and religious scholar who had previously led the Jama-al-Islamiya, an Islamist movement prominent among Algerian students in the 1980s, and was also a key figure in the establishment of the Rabitat-ad-Dawa in 1988. The Harakat an-Nahda al-Islamiya, or Mouvement de la Renaissance Islamique (MRI) in French, is a new Islamist political party (Willis, 1998).

The MRI's main goal was to weaken the FIS, which Djaballah had grown to regard as uncompromising and overbearing after the FIS's refusal to create an Islamic coalition as recommended by Mahfoud Nahnah of the Mouvement Democratique et Socialiste (MDS). The MRI, on the other hand, never had much of a chance to compete with the FIS. The

MRI's support was limited, owing to the party's personalistic nature, and it only managed to garner 2% of the valid votes cast in the first round of the aborted parliamentary elections of 1991.

Algerian society, as well as the country's political arena and Islamist movement, were all altered in the aftermath of the civil war. From the beginning, the FIS' violent existence demonstrated the country's hardline political Islam's boundaries. By the end of 1990s, the FIS had been banned, its leadership had been over thrown, it was unable to control the violence its affiliates had unleashed, and it was kept away from the negotiating table by its own military wing, the AIS. After all, it was Mezrag, not the FIS's Abbasi Madani and Ali Belhadj, who persuaded jihadists to lay down their arms. Madani fled Algeria for Qatar, where he died in April 2019, while Belhadj, once a charismatic leader, has faded into obscurity (Ghanem, 2019).

Algeria's post-conflict Islamist groups failed to present a clear vision for the country or a practical set of policies to challenge the status quo and address the socioeconomic challenges that plague ordinary Algerians. After the fighting, moderate Islamist parties like the Nahnaha-led MSP (formerly known as Hamas) and the Ennhada party distance themselves from FIS and the jihadists' extremist interpretation of political Islam. A participation-driven strategy was adopted by the Liberal and Moderate parties. These parties are now unable to mobilise people and do not pose a serious threat to the regime's military support.

2. CONCLUSION

In the period 1962-1988, Algeria lived under a semi-totalitarian military regime, with the ruling party National Liberation Front (FLN), only providing a legitimizing facade. The political opposition, restored to secrete and exile-based activity, with consequently minimal influence on political life, but it nevertheless succeeded in developing secret opposition network divided along two main lines, leftist and Islamist. Bloody protest in October 1988 led President Chadli Bendjedid to adopt a new constitution in February 1989, which for the first time since independence, allowed the formation of political associations other than the FLN. Article 40, of the new constitution provided freedom of expression, association and right to form association of a political nature further strengthened the democratic nature of the constitution. Before this constitutional change, official permission was required for the establishment of any kind of public association, including mosque. The new constitution was also abolished the identification of the state with the FLN and the FLN leadership was fundamentally redefined. The military also excluded from all types of political functions such as building of socialism and running the state administration. From 1989 to 1991, Algeria was seen as model for democracy in the WANA region. That model could transition an authoritarian regime into a liberal government. Through closely monitored, much more freedom was allowed in terms of political speech and pluralism in the public sphere. This was a historic transition to a multiparty system. By 1991, thirty-three parties were able to obtain official recognition from the state.

In this new political landscape, two influential independent preachers, Benhadj and Madani, decided to establish the FIS comprising different Islamist groups with varying ideological position, but some Islamist refuse to join. The FIS won the majority of the votes in the 1990 municipal elections and mange to repeat their success in the first round of the legislative elections in December 1991. Before the second round in January 1992, the military intervened, forcing President Bendjedid to resign and assigning the High Council of State to run the state. A month later, a state of emergency was declared and the FIS was outlawed, with all its local and regional administrations disbanded.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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