

Strategy Research Project International Fellow

Algeria's Counter-Terrorism Strategy to Protect the State from New Threats

by

Lieutenant Colonel Abdallah Seddiki
Algerian Army



United States Army War College
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by

Lieutenant Colonel Abdallah Seddiki
Algerian Army

Dr. Jennifer S. Bryson
Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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Algeria's Counter-Terrorism Strategy to Protect the State from New Threats

The Sahel region is essentially a zone of crisis where the deterioration of the security situation will greatly and directly affect regional and global security. This region has become a safe haven for criminal activities alongside terrorism, such as drug and weapon trafficking, and it is also a region with ethnic minority conflicts. All these factors make the region an incubator for terrorism. Moreover, Libya's 2012 crisis led to a worsened security situation. Despite security measures taken by neighboring countries to protect their borders, a lot of armaments were smuggled to terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar-Eddine (AD), and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA).

Before the crisis in Libya there were threats to regional and global security, which pushed neighboring countries to quickly adopt different approaches to fighting terrorism and organized crimes in Sahel region. The neighboring countries worked together in order to face developing threats by combining local, regional, and global security to include the use of force.

Algeria adopted a regional security approach based on activating military and diplomatic cooperation between concerned countries. The approach had several objectives. First, prevent any international competition for influence in the Sahel region. Second, eliminate or prevent any hostile activities that may threaten Algeria's national security. Third, prevent any direct foreign interventions under the pretense of fighting terrorism.

Algeria refused to allow establishment of foreign military bases in the region, especially in southern Algeria, and stood up to neighboring countries that may have sought or accepted any kind of foreign intervention. Algeria and neighboring countries

succeeded for the most part, but not entirely in fighting terrorism and organized crime, and defeating terrorism politically, militarily, and even psychologically.

Definition of Terrorism

The definition of terrorism remains a matter of argument. What looks like terrorism to some countries can look like acts of resistance to others. Disagreement about the definition of terrorism remains a major problem that researchers and legislators face. Despite assorted challenges there are still many attempts to define the word terrorism. Efforts to define terrorism include: In 2004, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566 condemned terrorist acts as “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature.”¹ Title 18 of the United States Federal Criminal Code defines terrorism and lists the crimes associated with terrorism in section 2331 of Chapter 113(B), as: “activities that involve violent or life-threatening acts that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State and appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.”² Researcher T.Thorton describes terrorism as, “a symbolic act designed to influence political

behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence."³ Some researchers define terrorism as deliberate, politically-motivated violence, or the threat of such, directed against civilians.⁴ Terrorism may be politically or ideologically oriented without any legal or ethical restrictions.⁵ In each case, the components of a terrorist act include violence that causes bodily harm or material loss against innocent individuals, intimidation or humiliation of people in order to get certain gains without justification or excuse.⁶ After studying terrorism some authors and researchers tried to describe this phenomenon as an act and as a behavior. The polish lawyer Edward Kissoy⁷ maintains, "Terrorism is intimidation by actual or threatened use of violence as a means of governing or securing political or other ends."⁸ Most of these definitions focus on acts of violence of associated with terrorism. All definitions of terrorism agree on condemning such acts (whatever the reasons behind them) which cause instability and make people fearful that their lives and property are not safe. Fear spreads a lack of confidence which in turn leads to even wider spread of violence that can affect international stability and the relationships between states and societies.

In Algeria, according to Algeria's penal code, a subversive or terrorist act is defined as "any offence targeting state security, territorial integrity or the stability or normal functioning of institutions through any action seeking to spread panic among the public and create a climate of insecurity, disrupt traffic or freedom of movement, damage national or republican symbols and profane graves, harm the environment, means of communication or means of transport, impede the activities of public authorities and bodies serving the public, establishment of associations, bodies, groupings or organizations for the purpose of engaging in subversive or terrorist

activities, membership or participation in such subversive or terrorist associations in any form.”⁹

Brief History of Terrorism in Algeria

The origins of the Islamic extremist movement in Algeria can be traced to 1982 and a pioneering Islamic militant named Mustafa Bouyaali,¹⁰ who was one of the most famous Algerian jihadists and, in general, is the root of the militant Islamic groups in Algeria. In the early 1980s, Bouyaali formed a secret terror group known as the Algerian Islamic Movement (MIA).¹¹ In order to gather weapons to wage a guerilla war against the Algerian government, this organization attacked a police training center and stole weapons and ammunition.¹² Later, Bouyaali was arrested and executed in 1987.¹³

First Period 1992/1997: The Worst

During the nineties and after the Islamic political parties failed politically in 1992, the armed groups which broke off from those parties attempted to establish an Islamic state, taking advantage of the popular support and Algeria’s religious trend, in order to build a base of a foreign political, religious and financial support. Several other factors helped the emergence of these groups, including their readiness to support the radicals returning from Afghanistan. “[A]n estimated 1,000 to 1,500 hardcore foreign mujahedeen veterans abandoned their posts in Pakistan and Afghanistan and returned to settle in Algeria. Many of these men had dreams of bringing their Islamic revolution back with them.”¹⁴ Troubled economic conditions in Algeria, where the decrease of oil prices badly affected the economy, as well as the mountainous terrain provided these groups with safe haven. In addition, these groups leveraged misleading fatwa to exploit the sympathy of poor people. At the same time most of the military units were along the southern border, and there was an international military boycott, which pushed the

government to use its strategic reserve of resources. Also, most countries refused to provide assistance to Algeria due to its attitude on many regional and international issues. Only a few countries continued to support Algeria during this difficult period. Some countries even supported extremist groups by meeting their needs and turning a blind eye to their activities, which helped them increasing their strength and influence. Due to this situation and under demands from the people, the Algerian government decided to form self-defense "patriot" groups as volunteers to protect their villages from terrorist attacks in remote areas. Various factors helped those groups in their activities against the people and the nation. The bombings and assassinations by terrorist groups within urban areas and cities pushed the government to withdrawal border security forces to the cities in order to strengthen urban security. Also, the increasing availability of weapons and equipment helped terrorist groups take the initiative, at least temporarily.

Support weapons such as artillery and helicopters were ineffective for the security forces due to the forested terrain where terrorist groups hid. This new situation did not help the Algerian Army because it was a conventional army without significant experience in guerrilla warfare, and it lacked counter-terrorism special operation forces. Moreover, to make the matter more complicated, the terrorist groups claimed they were, in fact, not terrorists. The absence of any initiative from religious scholars and authorities outside of Algeria to expose the truth about these terrorist groups expanded and extended the tragedy for a long time.

Second Period 1997/2002: The Truth and Disclosure of the Big Lie

During the second period, Algerian security forces succeeded in eliminating and arresting a lot of terrorists, which prompted some of their leaders to surrender. Besides

that, the people started to reject them and also the religious scholars began clarifying the truth of their activities, explaining that they were criminal acts. But some of members of these terrorist groups formed their own groups and announced that those who would not support them are unbelievers. They declared war against people without distinction between man, woman or child, also using bombs in public places and mosques. Despite all that the security forces responded and succeeded in killing a lot of them.

Third Period 2002: Present Day and Recovery

During this period, Algeria began recovering from the crisis and regained strength and stability. The security forces succeeded in eliminating 85% of the terrorist groups, and pushed most of them to surrender. After the improvement of the national economy, the Army continued professional development efforts and took control of the situation. When the terrorist groups began to sense they might not attain victory, they devised new methods to carry out their attacks, such as kidnapping people as a way to claim ransoms and conduct bombings in public areas. Security forces kept pressure on and killed some of their more effective leaders which forced many followers to leave Algeria and flee to Mali, Niger and Chad. At the end of 2006, most terrorist groups joined the Al-Qaeda organization which provided financial support as well as access to additional members. Even then, Algerian security forces continued to apply pressure, promote stability and gain more control over the situation. The success of security forces combined with political and economic measures helped government efforts to eradicate this scourge to our religion and our society. In this most recent period Algeria started to rebuild society, far removed from the effects of terrorist violence which had been leading too many people in the wrong direction. The Algerian people lately have become more aware than before about the reality of terrorist ideology that caused

tremendous psychological damage among individual citizens and throughout societal structure as a whole. Popular rejection of terrorism was the main reason Algeria was able to defeat terrorism.

The Main Terrorist Groups in Algeria

During the difficult period that Algeria experienced from 1992 until the present time, many terrorist organizations emerged for several reasons, including the political instability in Algeria. Instability pushed many youths in the wrong direction to pursue their desires for political changes. Additionally, the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan encouraged many Algerians to attempt doing the same thing against the Algerian government. These influences led many Algerians astray, prompting serious consequences for the state and the Algerian people. This paper explores but three important organizations which have had a major impact on the Algerian state and people although numerous smaller organizations played contributory roles.

Armed Islamic Group (GIA)

The GIA was the most extreme and dangerous terrorist group in Algeria with about 20,000 members. It is an Islamist organization formed in late 1992 as a loose umbrella group of certain disparate Islamist movements fighting the Algerian military for control.¹⁵ Their goal was to overthrow the Algerian government and establish an Islamic state. This organization adopted violence as a way to achieve its goals and objectives.

The GIA conducted a wide violence campaign of massacres against the population.¹⁶ The GIA blamed the civilian population for not supporting the jihad and conducted massacres against them;¹⁷ this revealed the ugly face of terrorism. In addition, the GIA declared war against foreign presence in Algeria.¹⁸ The GIA killed more than 100 foreigners and used many brutal tactics such as assassination, bombing

(including car bombs), and kidnappings. From its foundation until its collapse, the GIA was led by about seven leaders, the most famous were: Abd Al-Haq Laayada (1992-1993), Cherif Gousami alias Abou Abdallah Ahmad (March 1994 to 26 September 1994), Djamel Zitouni alias Abou Abderahmane Amine (1994-1996), and Antar Zouabri alias Abou Talha Antar (1996-2002).¹⁹

Islamic Salvation Army (AIS)

The AIS was founded in 1993 as the military wing of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which was a result of political challenges that characterized Algeria during 1990's, the AIS encompasses most of the militants of the political party FIS.

Madani Mezreg was the national leader of AIS, with the assistance of three other regional leaders: Ahmed Benaïcha in the western region, Mustafa Kebir in the eastern region, and Mustafa Kartali in the central region. The AIS led many attacks against military targets throughout Algeria. Unlike other armed organizations, the AIS avoided targeting civilians and sought negotiation and a political solution for the conflict.

The AIS announced a ceasefire in 1997 to enable the government to find a solution for the conflict especially after the huge massacres led by GIA against civilians. This decision led AIS to a conditional surrender and they disbanded in January 2000.²⁰ Under the amnesty law announced by the President Bouteflika and by the January 2000 deadline some 5,000 AIS militants had surrendered their weapons.²¹ The government released many political prisoners marking the beginning of new period of reconciliation, and the birth of the concept of peace and non-violence among Algerians themselves.

Al- Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (GSPC)

The GSPC is a branch of Al- Qaeda in Algeria and the Sahel region, it is the largest and most active Islamist terrorist organization seeking to overthrow the Algerian

government and establish an Islamic state.²² GSPC has adopted the same military methods as GIA, but the GSPC stopped targeting civilians and focused attacks only on security forces. Civilians were, nonetheless, wounded or killed because of AQIM's criminal activities.²³ The GSPC emerged as a splinter faction of the GIA as a result of refusing violence against civilians when Hassan Hattab, the regional leader of GIA for several years, broke away from GIA and founded the GSPC.²⁴ After its foundation, the GSPC was led by three leaders; Hassan Hattab alias Abou Hamza (1998-2003), Nabil Sahraouian alias Abou Ibrahim Mustafa (2003-2004), and Abdelmalek Droudkel alias Abou Musaab Abd el Wadoud (2004-present time), in addition to the famous regional leader of “katibat of Sahara” (Sahara Brigades), Mokhtar Belmokhtar alias Khaled Abou al-Abbas who is most likely to play a significant role in Algeria and the emerging events in Mali.²⁵

The GSPC was founded with the intention avoid using violence against the civilian population. In order to regain the people’s support, the GSPC arose separately from the GIA. The GIA was responsible for crimes against civilians and refused the ceasefire that the AIS announced in 1997. The GSPC adopted a new strategy that relied on suicide attacks against state institutions, which led to a lot of casualties, but most of them were from the civilian population. Also, AQIM launched series of kidnappings and bombings targeting the Algerian government officials and Western interests. This group burst onto the international scene in early 2003 with the spectacular kidnapping of thirty-two European tourists in Algeria’s southern desert massifs.²⁶ This new strategy broadened the gap between the terrorist groups and civilian population and strengthened the cohesion and solidarity between the people

and government. In 2007, Droudkel the national leader of GSPC, announced the affiliation of his group to the global Al-Qaeda organization, and he changed the name of GSPC to AQIM.²⁷ Despite the name change, many in the media as well as governments continued to refer to this group as GSPC. By this step, Droudkel tried to expand his organization regionally and globally and strengthen ties with Al-Qaeda. The idea was to use global jihad as a vehicle for obtaining financial and human support not only from Algeria, but also from North African and other countries. In 2009, the GSPC was designated by the United States as a foreign Terrorist Organization.²⁸

The Crisis in Mali

For the past decade, the increasing instability in the Sahel-Saharan region has raised concern among Western governments. They have feared that the weakness of state control in the area would allow terrorist organizations to expand their influence and establish safe haven in an areas outside government control.²⁹

The recent crisis in Mali has exposed the difficulties that Mali has suffered. While the new situation becomes worse, international efforts to resolve the problem had no results.³⁰ The political situation in Mali became more fragile and in April 2012 the regime collapsed quickly and Mali's army was defeated by the armed groups and retreated quickly. The military coup on March 2012 created an opportunity for the armed movements of Touareg and jihadist groups to take control of northern Mali. AQIM and MOJWA announced an "Islamic state," which helped insurgents to achieve an important temporary victory. During these events, the Touareg did not pay attention to the Islamist insurgence forces because the Touareg were enraptured by their temporary victory.

During its history, Mali has suffered from internal problems regarding managing the diversity of its population and handling political instability.³¹ The Touareg have

always complained of negligence and discrimination by the Malian government, which has been dominated by southern ethnic groups since independence.³² Every time the Touareg launched their rebellions, the government dually turned to a military solution to end the violence and maintain the peace.³³ These problems led to an armed conflict between Mali's government and Touareg militias especially in the 1990's when Algeria hosted the negotiations and the signing of a ceasefire agreement by representatives of the Malian government and the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Azawad.³⁴

Algeria considered what happened as an internal problem for Mali, which should be solved among Malians themselves. Despite this, Algeria has continued efforts to help resolve this problem through three basic solutions. Each approach is preceded by a peaceful resolution that avoids any foreign presence near the borders. A foreign presence near the border could threaten the prospects for security and stability and have possibly have spillover effects in Algeria.³⁵

Algeria focused on political and negotiated solutions and dialogue with the main actors except terrorist groups. Algeria's strategy was designed to prevent any foreign intervention in the region and encouraged security cooperation between the countries of the region while avoiding to the extent possible any kind of military presence³⁶ which would only increase the likelihood of conflict by providing jihadist groups with a rationale increasing their activities and encouraging others to join them. Algeria knows from experience that any foreign intervention, whatever its causes or rationale, will only increase the crisis, not resolve it. An increase in tensions impacts not only the security per se, but significant humanitarian considerations as well. In June 2012 according to

UNHCR, the number of refugees was estimated at 64,864 in Burkina Faso.³⁷ Any acceptable solution should not ignore or deny other countries' security and sovereignty. The crisis in Mali is unique in that the Islamic movements succeeded in breaking away in the north with what appears to be remarkably minimal foreign support. They gained a rich region with a lot of natural resources and also assumed control of roughly 70% of the total area of Mali. The territory of northern Mali extends along many countries' borders, so any solution must take into consideration the interests of the border countries and any solution must include all of them.

The Main State Actors and Geostrategic Dynamics

The Sahel continues to face a common set of growing, complex, cross-border and inter-related security, development, human rights and humanitarian challenges. The activities of the AlQaeda affiliated terrorist groups in the region combined with transnational organized criminal networks involved in drug trafficking, human trafficking, and arms smuggling, as well as the presence of armed rebel groups and separatist movements are some of the most pressing challenges for "Sahelian States" as well as for the Maghreb and West Africa region. The crisis in Mali challenged neighboring countries to take action and highlights the role that every country should play in order to understand the potential solutions that will assist the whole region in triumphing over their new challenges.

Algeria

Algeria is considered the most important military actor in the region and the solution key in Mali due to its experience in combating terrorism.³⁸ Algeria prefers negotiations and political solutions rather than a military solution. Moreover, Algeria does not consider all movements as terrorist, which is why Algeria launched a dialogue

with Ansar-Eddine and hosted its delegation in order to help Touareg return to the political path rather than trying to isolate the group as a terrorist organization. On the other hand, Algeria welcomed the resolutions of the Security Council in 2012 (2056, 2071 and 2085).³⁹ In order to help solve the problem peacefully and isolate the terrorist groups as AQIM and MOJWA, the U.N. resolutions called and encouraged Azawad movements in Mali to negotiations and to cut ties with terrorist groups.⁴⁰ In addition, the Security Council decision permitted the use of military force to regain control of northern Mali. With respect to Algeria, three issues are central. First, Algeria does not consider Ansar-Eddine as a terrorist organization and has encouraged the Sahel countries to negotiate with them in order to focus on eliminating terrorist groups as AQIM and MOJWA. Second, Algeria is working on the three dimensions of humanitarian, political, and military support with an emphasis on promoting the unity of Mali territory and efforts to build dialogue among Malians. Algeria excluded any direct support for Algerian military operation in Mali because such an intervention in Mali would have far reaching consequences for Algeria. Algeria continues its efforts to create a viable regional mechanism for dealing with AQIM in neighboring countries. Algeria convened three separate meetings of regional foreign ministers, military chiefs of staff, and intelligence chiefs to discuss coordinating an appropriate response to the threat of terrorism in the trans-Sahara region. Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger established a combined military command center in Tamanrasset in southern Algeria in 2009 and 2010, and established an intelligence sharing center in Algiers designed to feed information to the command center in Tamanrasset.

Mauritania

The Government of Mauritania continues to address terrorism threats proactively. AQIM remained a threat, which was most visibly demonstrated by the group's attempt to mount a coordinated attack in the capital of Mauritania in February 2009. Mauritania applied effective measures to counter terrorist activity and launched enhanced initiatives in 2010. Mauritania continued to prosecute terrorists, supported efforts to reinforce regional cooperation, allocated additional resources to the national de-radicalization program, and continued training with its partners to enhance border security and law enforcement capacity. Recently, Mauritania was the only country in the region that sent its troops in pursuit of AQIM into Mali territory. That effort was largely a response to previous attacks against Mauritania in 2005, 2007, and 2008 in addition to the assassination and kidnapping of tourists in Mauritania in 2009. With these military operations Mauritania aimed to drive Al-Qaeda elements away from its borders with Mali. Also, Mauritania complained about the Malian regime's negligence in combating armed groups and possible state complicity with organized crime.⁴¹

Despite that, it is difficult to understand Mauritania's attitude toward the military operation that ECOWAS⁴² prepared in Mali in 2013. The opening of a military front in Mali could have a negative impact on the situation in Mauritania. The Mauritanian public strongly refused any kind of intervention by Mauritanian forces for many reasons. First, Mauritania's intervention in Mali failed in 2010 when it participated with French Special Forces effort to release French hostages kidnapped by Al-Qaeda,⁴³ and Mauritania lost many soldiers. Second, Mauritania is a poor country and cannot sustain the humanitarian crisis of war in Mali, which could result in thousands of refugees being displaced into Mauritania under the circumstances of war. The refugee population could

reach 74,104 in the near future, putting extreme pressure on available resources to cover all the needs.⁴⁴ Third, Mauritania fears that the conflict may impact its long border with Mali where terrorists may seek safe haven into Mauritanian territory. Finally, Mauritania always prefers to solve this problem peacefully.

Niger

Ironically, Niger is the fourth largest uranium producer in the world. It controls some 8.7% of global uranium production and provides 12% of the EU's consumption.⁴⁵ At the same time Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world. Niger's concern regarding the events in the Sahel region is more serious largely, but not exclusively due to demographic reasons. Niger has a population of 16,344,687 in which 9.3% are Touareg⁴⁶ and any crisis will affect them as will any resolution. As with the Touareg rebellion in Mali during nineties, Niger also has experience with rebellious elements. Decades ago a movement called the Niger Movement for Justice, targeted foreign uranium and oil industry companies such as the French company "Areva" in some sites in northern Niger. The foreign interests were secured by Niger's security forces.⁴⁷

In addition to the present activities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Niger is primarily concerned with the conflict in Mali. Niger fears the implications of the crisis, especially the possible transition of insurgency into its territory. Niger authorities are convinced that the use of military forces is the only way to end the control of the Touareg over the Northern Mali. Out of the entire population of Niger (fifteen million), one million Touareg live in south and west of Air Massif.⁴⁸ The new challenges in Mali, especially in the Azawad region, may affect Niger for many reasons. First, Niger has the largest Touareg population in the Sahel region. Second, Niger succeeded in integrating the Touareg in the national system,⁴⁹ but Niger still fears that the Touareg may establish

solidarity with Mali's Touareg were the Touareg in Niger were to face a military attack. It was this deep understanding of the complexities of the situation that pushed Niger authorities to support the entire military operation into Mali.

On the other hand, Niger continued working with Mali, Algeria, and Mauritania through the CEMOC⁵⁰ center in Tamanrasset, Algeria. In 2010, the four governments met in Bamako to discuss regional security and agreed to train up to 75,000 troops within the near future to counter AQIM and other militants.⁵¹

The Role of Non-State Actors

National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MLNA)

The MLNA is a political and military organization founded in 2010 to establish a state for Azawad people and to maintain the identity of the Touareg. This movement is considered the biggest organization that represents Touareg people in northern Mali. Moreover, the return of thousands of armed Touareg from Libya with significant military expertise, financial and materials resources⁵² strengthened this organization and helped the Touareg take control of the region, and declare the state of the national movement to Azawad in 2012.

Movement of Ansar-Eddine

Ansar-Eddine is a popular jihadist movement, founded in 2011 by Eyed-Ghali. This movement played a prominent role in taking over northern Mali. Ansar-Eddine applied brutal interpretations of Islamic law in the areas under its control. There are different arguments about the classification of Ansar-Eddine as to whether it is a terrorist organization or not. Algeria argued that Ansar-Eddine is not a terrorist group as it represents the Touareg in northern Mali. On the other hand, some other countries considered it a terrorist group due to its relations with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

Ansar-Eddine leader announced his readiness to cut ties with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. This decision could help to clarify their status in relation to other armed groups. In 2012 Ansar-Eddine participated in peace negotiations with Mali's representatives by sending a delegation to Algeria and another to Burkinafaso. This effort clearly indicates the will of Ansar-Eddine to resolve the problem and avoid military action.

Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA)

The MOJWA is an active terrorist organization that appeared in 2011 after it broke from AQIM. It seeks to spread violent jihad in West Africa while promoting a brutal interpretation of Sharia law in Mali. This group has relationships with Touareg rebels and Islamist fighters from Ansar-Eddine. The MOJWA enforced strict Islamic law and destroyed ancient world heritage sites in the city of Timbuktu.

The first appearance of MOJWA was on 22 October 2011, when this group kidnapped three western aid workers from the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf in southwest Algeria. It took control of the city of Gao after fighting against MLNA. MOJWA claimed credit for the kidnapping of seven Algerian diplomats from the consulate in the Malian city Gao. MOJWA also claimed responsibility for the suicide attacks against the state institutions in Tamanrasset and Ouargla in southern Algeria in 2012. MOJWA is considered the strongest armed movement in northern Mali because of the huge quantity of arms brought from Libya after the fall of Ghadafi and obtained from Mali's army camps.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is the previous Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which changed its name after joining the Al-Qaeda global

organization in 2007.⁵³ This is the same group discussed above, which used to be focused on Algeria. AQIM is not only spreading from its country of origin, Algeria, to the central Sahara and most notably to Mali and Niger, but also gaining a stronghold in other countries of the Maghreb.⁵⁴ The extension of AQIM's activities beyond Algeria into the broader Sahel region does not come coincidentally. For a long time, Algerian military and intelligence pressures in northern Algeria made the progress of AQIM's activities difficult, which was isolated in limited parts of northern Algeria.⁵⁵ Also, due to the military operations of Algerian security forces, AQIM suffered enormous casualties, as well as the elimination and surrender of many important leaders and dismantling of a lot of support networks. In recent years, AQIM has been operating across the trans-Saharan region of Northern and Western Africa,⁵⁶ in order to create new spaces for terror activities, and to organize away from security pressure of Algeria, and to take advantages of the weaknesses of some countries in the Sahara region. This situation led the organization to seek new financial resources by kidnapping foreign citizens for the purpose of securing ransom,⁵⁷ and by trafficking drugs and weapons.

AQIM has been considered the most important player in the Sahel region among terrorist groups for a long time, especially after the organization joined the global Al-Qaeda. They have a strong presence in the region and they are very active, whether on behalf of global Al-Qaeda or other terrorist organizations operating in the region. In addition, this group has had significant experience and has continuously adapted to new developments, especially security challenges. AQIM has strengthened its financial capabilities from weapons smuggling and ransom from kidnappings. The success of AQIM also derives positive relationships with various tribes in the region. Building

relationships is a key element of its strategy for rooting itself within in the Sahel.⁵⁸ This strategy provides security and protection for AQIM and even provides some degree of community access, if not support. These conditions have contributed greatly in the evolution of this organization and its efforts to take the lead with respect efforts to establish an Islamic Emirate in the Sahel.

The Regional Impacts and Threats from Libya's Conflict

The crisis in the Sahel represents a major threat to regional and global security, this region presents a favorable environment for criminal activities including terrorist organizations, organized crime networks, drug trafficking networks and illegal immigrations networks, as well as ethnic conflicts rooted in separation issues. Due to all these challenges, the region has become both more dangerous and unstable. North African countries were always facing the challenges represented in this region, but now the situation is worse. Also, the collapse of Mali's regime in 2012 increased the difficulty of countering the conditions which provide a safe haven to these organizations. The war in Libya, however, had a significant and direct impact. Perhaps most importantly, the influx of fighters and weapons from Libya negatively impacted the security situation in the Sahel region.⁵⁹ On the other hand, even though large-scale efforts have been implemented by neighboring countries to control their borders and prevent weapons smuggling, large quantities of weapons and ammunition have been smuggled,⁶⁰ nonetheless. Much of the smuggling was associated with the Libyan Army which was composed mostly of mercenaries from many African countries or by Touareg who participated during the conflict in Libya. The return of thousands of armed Touareg contributed extensively in the war in Mali and, consequently, the collapse of Mali's control of its own territory.⁶¹

Algeria's Roles in Supporting Stability and Effective Strategy Against Terrorist Groups in the Region

Only Algeria has the capability, expertise, and financial clout to make a real impact on the security issues in the region.⁶² Algeria's security and political approach in the Sahel region has a great value for the international community, which has in the past appreciated Algeria's approaches and its role to ensure the Sahel region's stability and development. Since the meeting of neighboring countries in Tamanrasset northern Algeria in 2009, Algeria has been a key force for combined, positive work in the Sahel region. Algeria has emphasized cooperation among neighboring countries against AQIM and other terrorist organizations. Algeria is wary of any potential foreign direct role in combating counter terrorism and actively seeks to prevent foreign, non-African intervention or presence in the region.⁶³ In mid-2009, the military chiefs of Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania developed the "Tamanrasset Plan" for regional cooperation to counter terrorism and related crime and agreed to increase the number of security forces deployed for Sahel counterterrorism to 75,000. Algeria has increased its forces to 25,000.⁶⁴ These countries agreed to execute mutual treaties and agreed upon the necessity for developing for the population of this region in addition to the security cooperation between neighboring countries. Also they agreed to criminalize giving ransom to terrorist groups.⁶⁵ The cooperation meetings focused on many objectives. First, the establishment of an information database about AQIM which will give the ability for quick intervention at the appropriate time and place. Second, enable neighboring countries to pursue terrorist groups across borders. Third, a military agreement for cooperation between neighboring countries and the population including all tribes against terrorist groups. A fourth objective concerns providing financial awards

for any information about terrorist groups. Fifth, drying-up the financial resources of terrorist groups and establishing humanitarian and development projects in Niger and northern Mali.

On the other hand, after Libya's crisis broke out and NATO's intervention, the situation became worse and prompted a situation which essentially threatened Algeria's national security. Algeria needs to create a new effective strategy focused on securing borders, strengthening the internal front against terrorist threats, while extending cooperation and coordination with regional and international partners.

During the 2011 meeting in Algeria with regional partners, there was unanimity about the impacts of Libya's crisis in worsening the situation in the Sahel region and threatening regional security of neighboring countries. The first result of this increased threat was the collapse of Mali's rule in the north. In order to face the new challenges, Algeria needs to establish an effective national and regional security strategy. This strategy needs to include helping Libya to build state institutions, and promoting Libyan security forces that could contribute in stabilizing both Libya and the entire region. Algeria emphasizes that regional cooperation may help to eliminate terrorism and organized crime, and ensure stability, security and development in the region. Algeria has a long history in combating terrorism and it should make more efforts to help other countries by sharing its experience and encouraging the international community to contribute in developing the Sahel region.⁶⁶

The conditions in the Sahel are a result of the absence of basic necessities of life, complicated by lack of education across the region's population. These dynamics contributed to the Touareg in Mali and Niger revolting not only against their

governments, but also against the ignorance and problematic policies practiced by the governments in power. At the same time the success of terrorist groups and crime networks is growing and making the situation worse. In order to face these challenges, the neighboring countries must establish democratic governance; enhance rule of law, respect human rights, while developing the natural resources which could help improve the economic situation. At the larger, global level, the international community should support Algeria's partners who lack basic capabilities to combat terrorism and organized crime. Due to their economic, technological, and military capabilities, the E.U. and U.S. should assist these countries by providing equipment, information, and training to help fight terrorist networks and organized crime. The Sahel countries need international support in order to enhance their ability to protect their borders and for the political, economic and social development in these countries.

Conclusion

To ensure the success of countering-terrorism we need to address the factors that contributed to the emergence of this phenomenon, whether those factors are economic, social, political, educational, or media related. A multi-faceted approach is essential because many different factors push individuals toward violence as a response to their frustrations and the failure of government to facilitate societal integration. Algeria has an important experience in countering terrorism that could help to defeat terrorism and prevent its evolution and development in this region. Through its experience, Algeria alerted the world about terrorism which has no geographic limits and targets victims indiscriminately. In the early 1990s Algeria called for more cooperation to confront these threats. Algeria has been fighting terrorism in the region virtually alone since 1990, while the world was busy arguing about "who kills whom" and

who would be blamed in Algeria. That was the situation until the events of 9/11/2001, when the world was alerted again and quite starkly that terrorism knows no limits and has no borders. Algeria knows that its stability will not be possible without the stability for its neighbors. That is why Algeria's diplomacy is committed to helping neighboring countries by providing the best environment for success.

Algeria's diplomacy operates in the African geopolitical framework. Algeria realizes that it lives in a region of crisis which is complicated by many security challenges that have the potential to negatively affect not only Algeria but the whole region. Those challenges include the failure to building political institutions, the absence or lack of a sense of national unity, as well as increasing ethnic conflicts which have fostered loyalty to the tribe rather than the state. Additionally, there are weak institutional and economic structures, in addition to the weak political performance and security instability in this region. Military coups have been as common as the spread of crime and violence. All this has contributed significantly to the increased instability which now characterizes the Sahel region. The net result has been the creation of a safe haven for armed groups, and armed conflicts.⁶⁷

Through its comprehensive understanding of the roots of conflict roots and the nature of the region's crisis and the needs and interests of the people, Algeria's diplomacy has explored several approaches to protecting Algerian national security.

According to the security approach, Algerian diplomacy always prefers action-oriented diplomacy, which enables it to deal with instability cases or conflicts with neighboring countries. This effective diplomacy approach has protected the country for a long time and strengthened its relationships with its neighbors. From Algeria's

perspective regarding the regional problems, initiative inside the African framework will be not only the most effective solution to solve Africa's problems, but, in fact, the only viable course to long term stability and regional success.

From Algeria's perspective, foreign military intervention under the pretense of combating terrorism, without careful consideration to the legal and political claims of the northern rebellions, would negatively impact the entire region. On the other hand, even if the international community succeeded in driving the terrorist groups from northern Mali, it would not be able to destroy them completely. Consequently, military adventures of that sort will constitute the opening phase of ongoing and long term conflict in the region. To solve this problem, all interested parties must support any efforts that empower Mali to help itself. By aiding Mali government efforts to negotiate with insurgent groups, destruction of their country can be averted. The international community must emphasize diplomatic and political solutions by encouraging dialogue in order to settle the crisis peacefully.

The international community and ECOWAS in particular must step up and contribute by supporting diplomatic efforts to find an acceptable solution. Further complications and destruction of Mali's society must be curtailed. Neighboring countries, including Algeria, should increase security collaboration with the international community in order to confront the complex challenges that permeate the region. Algeria needs to play an active role through its foreign policy to promote its position: prevent war while protecting its neighbors and assuring Algerian national security. Changes in Algeria's attitude about the military intervention in Mali will be driven by

future circumstances and consequences that are, perhaps, unforeseen at this time, but, regardless, Algeria will be involved.

Endnotes

¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566, Adopted by the Security Council at its 5053rd meeting, (October 2004), 2.

² U.S. Code Chapter 18, 113 B.
<http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/18C113B.txt>

³ T. P.Thorton, "Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation," in *Guerrilla and Terrorism in Internal Armed Conflicts*, ed. Frits Kalshoven (The University Law Review, 33:67 1983), 69.

⁴ Tomis Kapitan, Can Terrorism Be Justified (North Illinois University, April 28 2007), 4.

⁵ Christopher L. Blakesley, *Terrorism and Anti-terrorism: A Normative and Practical Assessment*. (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2007), 46.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Edward Kossoy (used the nom de guerre Marcinak; 4 June 1913-11October 2012) a Polish lawyer, publicist and an activist for victims of Nazism.

⁸ E. Kossoy, "Living with guerilla, guerilla as a legal problem and a political fact," *Guerrilla and Terrorism in Internal Armed Conflicts*, ed. Frits Kalshoven (The University Law Review, 33:67 1983), 70.

⁹ Report submitted by Algeria to the Security Council Committee, established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), the Algerian U.N mission home page <http://www.algeria-un.org/default.asp?doc=1427>,(accessed 27 December 2001)

¹⁰ Mustafa Bouyaali born in 1940 in Algiers, he was the leader of the Algerian Islamic Armed Movement (MIA), a guerrilla group based around Larbaa south of Algiers, from 1982 to 1987, arrested by security forces and executed in 1987.

¹¹ Evan F. Kohlmann, Two Decades of jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaeda, The Nefa Foundation, (May 2007), 2.

¹² Messaoudi Khalida and Elizabeth Schemla. *Unbowed*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 66.

¹³ Evan F. Kohlmann, Two Decades of jihad in Algeria, 2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Stephen Harmon, *From GSPC to AQIM: The Evolution of an Algerian Islamist Terrorist Group into an Al-Qaeda Affiliate and its Implications for the Sahara-Sahel Region*, (Concerned Africa Scholars, June 2010), 14.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ March 26, 1996, seven Brothers of Tibhirine in Media Province 100 km southern Algiers, were kidnapped and killed by the order of Djamel Zitouni national leader of GIA on May 1996.

¹⁹ These several figures are identified here, Abd Al-Haq Laayada, born in 1959 in Baraki near Algiers his father was an independence fighter against French colonialism, he founded the GIA in 1992 and was the first leader of this new organization, from 1992–1993 he was the national leader. In 1993 he was arrested in Morocco and extradited to Algeria security services. After many years in prison, he was released by a Presidential pardon.

Cherif Gousami, born in 1968 in Birkhadem near Algiers, he led the GIA as national leader from March 1994 to 26 September 1994. He was killed by security forces on September 26, 1994, with a number of his followers.

Djamel Zitouni born on January 5, 1964 near Algiers, he led the GIA as national leader (1994–1996) he was responsible for aggravation of attacks against France by carrying out of series of bombing he was killed by one of terrorist groups on July 16, 1996.

Antar Zouabri, born in 1970 in Boufarik 50 km southern Algiers, he led the GIA between 1996-2002 under his leadership the GIA was responsible for lot of massacres against population. In February 2002 he was killed by security forces in his home town.

²⁰ *The World Fact book*. Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA home page. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ng.html> (29 January, 2013).

²¹ Stephen Harmon, “From GSPC to AQIM: The Evolution of an Algerian Islamist Terrorist Group into an Al-Qaeda Affiliate and its Implications for the Sahara-Sahel Region,” (Concerned Africa Scholars, June 2010), 15.

²² Ibid.

²³ Office of the coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2010*, U.S Department of State, (August 18, 2011), 80.

²⁴ Stephen Harmon, 14.

²⁵ These several figures are identified here, Hassan Hattab, born in January 14, 1967 in Rouiba near Algiers; he is the first leader of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). Before joining terrorist groups he trained as a paratrooper in his military service.

Nabil Sahraoui, alias Mustapha Abou Ibrahim, born in 1966 in Banta eastern Algeria, was an Islamist militant. He led the (GSPC) in 2003. He was killed by security forces in 2004.

Abdelmalek Droudkel alias Abou Musaab Abd-el Wadoud, was born in 1970 in Blida southern Algiers. He is the current leader of GSPC.

Belmokhtar el Mokhtar alias Khaled Abou al abbes, was born in 1972 in Ghardaïa, central Algeria. At the age of 19 he joined Afghanistan to fight against soviet forces. After his return to Algeria in 1993, he directly joined the terrorist group GIA, expanded his activities to the Sahara by establishing katibat chouhadaa "the martyrs," scoped to the Sahara region and become integrated into the GIA as the group's ninth operations zone.

²⁶ Stephen Harmon, "From GSPC to AQIM: The Evolution of an Algerian Islamist Terrorist Group into an Al-Qaeda Affiliate and its Implications for the Sahara-Sahel Region," (Concerned Africa Scholars, June 2010), 17.

²⁷ Ibid.,16.

²⁸ Court Document. U.S. Attorney of Southern District of New York, Department of Justice. (18 December, 2009), 1.

²⁹ Wolfram Lacher, Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region, (The Carnegie papers-September 2012), 1.

³⁰ Mali: The Need for Determined and Coordinated International Action, (International Crisis Group policy briefing, Africa briefing N90) Dakar/Brussels, 24 September 2012,1.

³¹ For more details see, Disarmament, Development and Conflict Prevention in West Africa, (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research 1996).

³² Alexis Arieff and Kelly Johnson, *Crisis in Mali* (Congressional Research Service August 16, 2012), 4.

³³ LTC Kalifa Keita, *Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Sahel-the Touareg Insurgency in Mali*, Strategic Research Project (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, May 1989),15.

³⁴ Ibid.,16.

³⁵ Ahmed Ouyahia, Algeria's Prime Minister, interview with "Le Monde news paper" <http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2012/04/06/>

³⁶ Alexis Arieff, *Algeria: Current Issues*, (Congressional Research Service January 18, 2012), 10.

³⁷ Food Security and Humanitarian Implications in West Africa and the Sahel, fao home page, www.fao.org (June 2012), 2.

³⁸ Directorate General for External Policies, E.U. Policy Department, (E.U Parliament 2012),12.

³⁹ The United Nation home page <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10878.doc.htm>. (accessed 2012).

⁴⁰ United Nations, Security Council decision RES/2071, (12 October 2012), 3.

⁴¹ Wolfram Lacher, Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2012), 14.

⁴² The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of fifteen countries, founded in 1975. Its mission is to promote economic integration in "all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters. The Ecowas home page <http://www.ecowas.int/>

⁴³ Wolfram Lacher, 14.

⁴⁴ Food, Security and Humanitarian Implications in West Africa and the Sahel, fao home page, www.fao.org (June 2012), 2.

⁴⁵ Directorate General for External Policies, E.U. Policy Department, (E.U Parliament 2012), 8.

⁴⁶ *The world Fact Book*, the CIA home page <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ng.html> (February 2013)

⁴⁷ Update on the situation in Niger, questions-and-answers <http://www.areva.com/EN/news-8530/>

⁴⁸ Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Niger : Touareg, July 2008, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49749cd62.html> (accessed 25 February 2013)

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⁵⁰ Comité d'état-major operational conjoint/ a joint operational staff committee for Sahelian counter terrorist forces.

⁵¹ Bureau of Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2011, (United States Department of State Publication 2011), 24.

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⁵⁴ Annette Lohmann, “Who Owns the Sahara? Old Conflicts, New Menaces: Mali and the Central Sahara between the Touareg,” *Al Qaeda and Organized Crime*, ed Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (Regional Office Abuja, 12 Marrakesh Street, Wuse II, Abuja, Nigeria -June 2011), 10.

⁵⁵ Bureau of Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2010, (United States Department of State Publication 2010), 80.

⁵⁶ USAFRICOM, 2010 Posture Statement, Partnership Peace Stability, (2010), 7.

⁵⁷ Wolfram Lacher, *Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region*, (The Carnegie Papers-September 2012), 8.

⁵⁸ Directorate General for External Policies, E.U. Policy Department, (E.U Parliament 2012), 15.

⁵⁹ Ibid.,16.

⁶⁰ For more details, see report update: Unsecured Libyan Weapons Regional Impact and Possible Threats, (Civil Military Fusion Center. November 2012).

⁶¹ Directorate General for External Policies of the E.U., 17.

⁶² Ibid., 31.

⁶³ Alexis Arieff, *Algeria: Current Issues*, (Congressional Research Service, www.crs.gov, January 18, 2012), 10.

⁶⁴ Ibid.,11.

⁶⁵ Mali has also at times angered Algeria by reportedly helping to negotiate ransoms for European hostages see, Alexis Arieff, *Algeria: Current Issues*, 11.

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