

Example of algerian civil war literature review

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



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Introduction

The bloody Algerian Civil War was triggered off when the army staged a coup d'état to halt an impending second round election victory by the Islamic Salvation Front. However, the causes of the conflict are both complex and interrelated. The deposition of President Chadli Benjedid in January of 1992 and cancellation of the election results, brought to a head the more than three years of continuous riots and demonstrations in the lead up to the first ever multiparty. The basic problem stems from the country's indecision on whether to introduce democracy or not, especially when it became apparent that the democracy would result in an umbrella party of Islamist groups (FIS) ascending to power. This paper argues that the Algerian conflict stemmed from the dire need of the establishment to prevent the ascendancy of Islamic groups to power, which involved wanton and senseless killings to repress or instil terror in the masses. With as many as 150, 000 deaths due to the conflict, this conflict is critical to understand because it was mainly fomented and perpetrated by the government.

Multiple Causal Factors

The FIS had gained a reputation as being against the establishment and had made threats against the establishment as pro-French, traitorous and corrupt. Further, the state of emergency and consequent suppression of political expression before and after the coup stirred up further resentment among parties that were sympathetic to the FIS. For instance, in 1980, demonstrations by Barbers in Kabylia to reclaim their cultural rights were violently crushed by the government, in the same way that 1988

demonstrations in Algiers saw violent repression by the government. The 1988 riots brought on changes in the country including a new constitution in 1989 as well as the emergence of close to 50 insurgency groups (most of which were armed). As the insurgency progressed, more insurgency groups driven by different needs came into being, including those that sought the return to the political process that would see the FIS assume power, while other groups called for outright jihad to overthrow the government. There were also local insurgency groups that simply sought to capitalize on the economic opportunities created by the power vacuums during the violence. Militia groups formed or functioned as parallel governments (collecting taxes and carrying out administrative functions).

It is impossible to ignore the economic factors (specifically Algeria's oil wealth) in the ensuing conflict. With upwards of 12. 2 billion barrels of oil reserves and upwards of 4. 5 trillion cubic meters of gas reserves by the close of 1988. However, in 1986, global Saharan Blend oil prices plummeted affecting the country's oil income. The fact that the government was heavily dependent on the resources, the distribution of the oil revenues became an issue. Agriculture and industry collapsed (or weakened), with the country becoming even more dependent on imports. The local currency appreciated and increased speculation in the economy worsened the situation.

Unemployment, unavailability of consumer goods and other economic difficulties stirred resentment among the public, which in turn served to fuel support for the insurgency groups. This is not least because the country's industrialization was mainly geared towards serving the needs of the state with agriculture being mainly ignored.

The role of religion as an organizing ideology behind the FIS and other insurgency groups also highlights its position in the conflict. Religion was used a ready way to condemn corrupt western values and capitalism. It is important to recognize the role of French and other foreign companies (whether directly or in partnership with Sonatrach), which were in turn perceived as profiteering from the country's resources. In addition, Martinez (2000) points to the role of the respective governments before and after the coup is fomenting the violence both by creating conditions for the conflict and creating/funding some armed groups to carry out atrocities that would later be blamed on the key insurgency groups. The government is also said to have infiltrated major insurgency groups and encouraged killings/massacres of public figures in an attempt to turn public opinion away from the rebel groups. The government's strategy during the conflict (which resulted in civilian deaths) and reliance on surrogate militias as a weapon to combat the insurgents, contributed to the death toll and scale of the violence.

Mundy (2013) points to the rebel discourse/ideology as well as the wanton and senseless models in an attempt to explain the Algerian conflict. The government's use of militia fights to fight its wars, coupled by its efforts to blame the militia's atrocities on the insurgency groups perfectly illustrates this model. In the perspective of the wanton and senseless model, the tendency of government and rebel militias to indiscriminately killing civilians and public figures in collusion with or under the protection of the army. This is betrayed by the failure of the state to prevent or stop death squads, compounded by the reticence of the international community to act to

protect civilians. Government forces went beyond non-intervention to brutal attacks by government tanks/helicopters attacked civilians or prevented them from escaping attacks by government-backed militia.

Conclusion

It is clear that the Algerian conflict could never have occurred or escalated to the levels to which it reached if the Algerian government had intended to prevent it, or act as a responsible government. The coup stirred up the already bitter resentment against the establishment, which was worsened by subsequent repression. In addition, ineffective government led to power vacuums that were filled with militias (some with the government's backing), leading to killings. The government did also not fail to protect civilians or prevent the violence, but actively participated in direct attacks against civilians. This conflict points to the necessity of strong national institutions and governments, which must be coupled by equally strong international institutions. International institutions are necessary to prevent governments turning on its people, and this is important because the Algerian situation mirrors the conflict in Syria.

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