“One and Done” or “Long Run” Democracy?

The Rhetoric and Behavior of Algeria’s Front Islamique du Salut, 1989-1992

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Introduction

*Thinking Outside the Western Box*

On 12 June 1990, the *Front Islamique du Salut* won a 55% majority in Algerian municipal and provincial elections. This success shocked both Algerians and the world, and it has contributed to discussions of the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Since declaring independence from France, Algeria’s colonial ruler, in 1962 after eight years of war, the *Front de Libération Nationale* [National Liberation Front, or FLN] had ruled Algeria as a one-party state with support from nationalists, Westernized Algerians and some religious leaders. In October 1988, demonstrations and riots protesting the one-party rule of Algeria and the existing economic crisis put pressure on the FLN government to open the political system. In early 1989, the government responded by approving several reforms, including a new constitution that allowed other political parties to form. The *Front Islamique du Salut* [Islamic Salvation Front, or FIS] was founded in March 1989, representing those who were disenchanted with the FLN government and/or wished to reform society using Islam as a model. Throughout 1989, the FIS organized and mobilized its supporters. Following its electoral success in June 1990, the FIS took power in various municipalities, including the large, important urban communities in the north of Algeria. In December 1991, another electoral victory in the first round of national parliamentary elections seconded the local success of the FIS in 1990. Yet, what appeared to be a process of democratization in Algeria was shut down in January 1992. On 11 January, the army cancelled the second round of parliamentary elections and, on 14 January, staged a coup d’état, imposing a military junta, the *Haut Comité d’Etat*. Pushed out of the electoral process, the more moderate members of the FIS were overcome by FIS radicals and other Islamist militants, who
struggled violently against the military regime in a bloody civil war that lasted into the early 21st century.¹

The legacy of the above events continues to affect Algerian politics and worldwide scholarly discussions to this day. Despite the ultimate radicalization of the FIS after its ascent to power was denied, the years 1989 through 1992 provide valuable insight into Islamist movements and especially Algerian Islamism because of FIS participation in the democratic process. The Algerian Islamists, like other Islamist movements pursuing political power, have been accused on multiple fronts of adhering to “one and done” democracy, meaning that they seek political power through democratic elections, at which point they will close the democratic process and impose a one-party Islamic state based upon the shari’ah, or Islamic law. In short, they supposedly believe in “one” election, and then they are “done” with democracy, as opposed to being committed to democracy in the “long run.”²

Between 1989 and 1992, several Islamist groups, or groups that argue for a return to the principles of Islam and the shari’ah in politics, the economy, morality and society,³ existed in Algeria. However, the Front Islamique du Salut was unquestionably the leader of the Islamist movement, for it was the only party that was able to organize and mobilize Algerians on a massive scale in the name of Islam, and it encompassed a variety of modes of Algerian Islamism. Throughout the past twenty years, both scholars and firsthand observers have articulated this concern of one and done democracy in the case of the FIS. Interestingly, their justifications for the one and done democracy accusation have varied, yet they often reach the same conclusion: the FIS planned to (and probably would have) installed a one-party Islamic state had it come to

¹ More detailed historical information on the FIS and Algeria will be provided in Chapter I.
² In the wider context of Islamic politics, the same accusation has been made of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Islamist parties in Morocco. John Voll, Email conversation, 25 March 2010.
power in 1992. Often this accusation is based upon a reading of the discourse of the FIS that emphasizes its radicalness. Indeed, the radical FIS rhetoric served to mobilize a broad base of support, yet since the moderate wing of the Front remained predominant from 1989 until 1992, its discourse deserves more attention in the literature.

In addition, the one and done democracy charge is substantiated by reports of FIS local policies and actions between June 1990 and December 1991, but these reports concern actions that are usually related to social issues, and the connection is not always made to their political significance in the Algerian process of democratization. Some sources practically ignore the fact that the FIS even came to power and do not address the possibility that these eighteen months during 1990 and 1991 could serve as a source to evaluate the democratic or anti-democratic plans of the FIS for national government. In short, the following discussion is born out of a challenge to the secondary literature on the FIS concerning the Front’s rhetoric and the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the political significance of FIS policies when in local power. Accordingly, the secondary literature as it relates to the one and done democracy charge and the usage of certain terminology will be reviewed in Chapter II.

While admittedly historians and the world will never know what would have happened had the FIS come into national power in 1992, this study analyzes both the rhetoric and the local behavior of the FIS in order to address this one and done democracy charge in a more comprehensive way. It is not the goal of this discussion to speculate on what might have happened, for speculation and hypotheticals do not serve the study of history. Instead, this study addresses the justifications used by observers and scholars in arguing that the Front Islamique du Salut was planning to take advantage of the process of democratization occurring in Algeria in the late 1980s and early 1990s in order to come to power and impose a one-party Islamic state.
As the justifications relate most generally to FIS rhetoric and local behavior, the ensuing discussion analyzes each area separately before bringing these analyses together in order to add nuances to the one and done democracy charge and its justifications.

First, an examination of the discourse of the FIS will be carried out in Chapters III and IV. Previous analyses have chosen to use monolithic concepts, such as democracy, with little or no consideration of the existing conceptions and definitions. Since the concept of democracy can be defined in ways that are tied intrinsically to its Western origins and idealizations, such definitions are often difficult to apply to the Middle East and North Africa in positive ways. Moreover, the discourse of the FIS is judged against this concept – which is not even defined in the same way by scholars – with scarce attention to the definitions that the FIS itself was using. Overall, this new discourse analysis pays attention to the sources of FIS statements, meaning whether they came from the Front as a whole, its moderate wing or its radical wing, and it draws out the meanings of the term “democracy” used by the FIS and its leaders. In addition, the existence of both moderate and radical discourses put forth by the FIS has often been seen as contradictory. Yet, the leader of the moderate wing, Abassi Madani, and the head of the radical wing, Ali Benhadj, saw unity, not discord, in the coexistence of these modes of Algerian Islamism in the FIS, hence this discourse analysis views the two forms of discourse as complementary, not contradictory.

Second, in Chapter V the discussion looks to the policies and actions of the FIS while in local government in contrast to the tendency to use only FIS rhetoric as the main measure of the Front’s plans for the continuation of the democratic process in Algeria. While an understanding of the FIS in local power cannot be entirely indicative for how the FIS would have conducted itself in national government, it began to implement its vision for Algerian society along the lines
of the perceived Islamic social model after taking power in certain areas in June 1990. Moreover, its local policies occurred in rather localized ways and were not entirely hampered by national politics and bureaucracy. In this way, the local policies and actions of the FIS can be considered part of the plans that the FIS had for Algeria because it sought to build an Islamic state starting at the municipal level. Observers and scholars have seen the behavior of the FIS as a threat to civil liberties – and thus a menace to democracy – but this connection is rarely articulated in a clear or explicit way. In addition, a survey of FIS rhetoric about the Islamic social model will enhance the discussion of the FIS in local government by explaining the Front’s framework and justifications for certain behavior. Chapter V will pay particular attention to FIS treatment of women and the Front’s conceptions of women as society’s measure of piety and morality, for FIS attitudes and behavior towards women have often been cited as support for the one and done democracy accusation.

Finally, the rhetoric of the FIS and the behavior of the Front in local government will be analyzed together in order to formulate an assessment of the one and done democracy accusation that is as comprehensive in its sources and arguments as possible. A new working definition of democracy will be developed as the common ground between scholars’ conceptions of democracy surveyed in Chapter II and the FIS leaders’ own definitions of democracy in Chapter IV. The implications of Front’s local behavior seen in Chapter V for this working definition will also be discussed. Overall, this study concludes that the charge of one and done democracy can neither be entirely discredited nor entirely justified. The discussion culminates in the conclusion that the situation was even more complex than previously thought or admitted in scholarly writing. Due to these added complexities, the accusation of one and done democracy with which
the FIS has been charged is partially unjustified because of an inability or unwillingness to take into account the entire situation, including all of its nuanced realities.

The conclusions of this paper bring scholars and readers back to the significance of the experience of Algerian Islamism, as represented by the *Front Islamique du Salut* from 1989 until 1992, in wider discussions of Islam and democracy. Above all, this discussion shows that questions of Islam and democracy are deeply tied to the individual contexts in which they arise, and that Western experiences and conceptions of democracy, which are never themselves “ideal” in reality, can be problematic when narrowly applied to other areas of the world. The West cannot expect a simple transference of its liberal democratic political, social and economic institutions to other contexts, nor should democracy be considered synonymous with “The West.” The best way in which to understand Islamist movements like the FIS that participate in democratic processes is to “think outside the Western box”: to let go of Western experience, traditions and ideals of democracy and to pay attention to the conceptions of democracy that the groups themselves use. In this way, we can better understand the reasoning and motives of these groups in their claims to support democracy. More importantly, we can begin to find a common ground between our own ideas of democracy and those of other groups with which we may not be as familiar. Thus, just as this study seeks to assess, clarify and qualify the justifications given to support the one and done democracy accusation against the *Front Islamique du Salut*, the ultimate goal is that the same considerations will be given to other situations in which Islam and democracy have met either amicably or violently throughout the world so that scholars and the public can begin to understand these two broad concepts and their relationships in more specific and qualified ways.

*NB: All translations from French sources are my own unless otherwise noted.*
Chapter I

Major Events in Algerian History and the Development of the FIS

Algerian History, 1830-1980

In 1830, the French captured Algiers, thus beginning the long period of French colonial rule in Algeria. The French rule in Algeria was pervasive in many ways. The French began a program of ‘civilizing’ Algeria when it entered the country in 1830.\(^1\) Large numbers of French citizens moved to Algeria, and some Algerians were given French citizenship. Moreover, a significant class of "Frenchified" Algerians emerged who felt cultural and political affinity to France. In response, certain groups called for the renewal of Algerians’ Arab and Muslim identity, seen for example in the 1920s and 1930s with the figure of Abd al-Hamid Ibn Badis and his reformist Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama.\(^2,3\) In 1954, the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) and other armed groups began a guerilla war campaign to resist French rule while co-opting assertions of Algerians’ Arab and Muslim identity. The war for independence lasted until early 1962, when the Evian Accords were signed between the FLN and the French, and a ceasefire went into effect on 19 March 1962. On 5 July, Algeria declared independence from the French. Between 1962 and 1990, the FLN ruled Algeria as a socialist one-party state. Islam was declared the official religion of the state in 1962 and in all subsequent Algerian constitutions.\(^4\) However, the FLN ruled Algeria as a secular country, meaning Islam was part of

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the Algerian government only in its constitution and not in practice.\(^5\) On 9 February 1979, the government chose Colonel Chadli Benjedid to serve as the next president of Algeria following the unexpected death of the previous leader, Houari Boumediene.\(^6\) Also notable at the end of the 1970s was the beginning of the mobilization of Islamists in their calls for the implementation of *shari‘ah* law.\(^7\)

**The 1980s: Economic Turmoil and Political Liberalization**

By 1982, Islamists had become increasingly active, and following several disturbances by the Islamists, the FLN government reacted by arresting many Islamist leaders, including Abassi Madani, who was then a professor at Algiers University.\(^8\) Yet, in June 1984, the Algerian government approved a piece of legislation, the “Family Code,” that was widely viewed as a concession to the Islamists on the part of the government and a serious diminishment to the status of women by reducing their rights and power in marriages and restricting their freedom to travel alone without male supervision.\(^9\) By the mid-1980s, the economy began to deteriorate, especially when oil prices started to collapse in mid-1986. A significant part of Algeria’s economy depended on its oil resources, thus the collapse in prices was disastrous for the Algerian economy. The economic crisis led to poverty, unemployment and a housing shortage and bred civil unrest, of which October 1988 proved to be a “definitive and historic turning

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\(^6\) Unless otherwise noted, the above and following dates for the history of Algeria are derived primarily from Le Sueur, pp. viii-xv. Substantive material also derived from François Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa* (Austin: The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, 1997) pp. 269-305.

\(^7\) Le Sueur, p. 29.

\(^8\) Willis notes that despite these arrests, in the early 1980s Chadli Benjedid’s regime was mostly tolerant of the Islamist movement and even saw it as a way to stifle opposition within his own government. Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 72.

\(^9\) Le Sueur, p. 29.
On 4 October 1988, protests and riots began in Algiers in which Algerians denounced the “post-colonial status quo” and demanded a change from the government, both economically and politically. Three days later, on 7 October 1988, Islamists staged a peaceful demonstration in Algiers, but the military reacted violently. On 10 October 1988, President Chadli Benjedid responded with promises to liberalize Algerian politics. His promises came to fruition on 23 February 1989, when a new constitution was promulgated allowing for the formation of other political parties with the approval of the state, thereby ending the single-party system that had existed since 1962. Quickly, at least fifty-six political parties formed, including the *Front Islamique du Salut* [Islamic Salvation Front, or FIS].

The social and political situation of Algeria in the late 1980s had important ramifications for events between 1989 and 1992. In early 1990, the population was measured at approximately 23.5 million people. Religiously, Algeria was 99% Sunni Muslim, with a small number of Christians and no Jewish population. Despite its almost completely Sunni makeup, Algerian society embraced a wide variety of interpretations of Sunni Islam, thus there was still a considerable amount of religious diversity. Islam, as a major force in the nationalist revolution and the official religion of the state, was an integral part of Algerian identity in sentiment, although not in expression. In fact, mosque attendance in Algeria was at some of the lowest levels compared to the rest of the Muslim world. Ethnically, Algerians are mostly Arab, but

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10 Le Sueur, p. 31.
11 Le Sueur, p. 31.
there is a significant Berber minority – approximately 20-25% of the population. Berbers live in concentrated areas and speak their own dialects of a language group different from that of Arabic. Berbers are also Sunni Muslim, but their resistance to Arabization has left them fairly independent from the rest of the Algerian population. As for Algerian women, they played a role in the nationalist struggle, but they were mostly left out of the rewards of independence, though the FLN regime did encourage them to go to school and work in factories. In June 1990, the urban population was larger than the rural population, so urban areas carried more weight in elections. Additionally, in early 1991, the unemployment rate was recorded at 25%, and in June 1990, 50% of Algeria’s poor was unemployed. In early 1991, 50% of the population was under the age of 19, and 57% of the population was under the age of 25. The majority of Algerians had thus been born since the nationalist revolution, meaning at least some of the youth did not have the same ties to the FLN-led national revolution as their parents’ generation. Moreover, the young and unemployed sections of society overlapped, so one must keep in mind the potential force of a young, poor and unemployed subset of Algerian society.

Politically, three factors are worth highlighting. First, Algeria, as seen above, was ruled a single-party state for 28 years. During this time, there was a considerable amount of evidence of corruption in the government, which partly led to Algerians’ disenchantment with the FLN regime. In fact, a former prime minister revealed in April 1990 that $26 billion had been paid in

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16 Le Sueur, p. 16.
20 Brumberg, p. 65.
21 Brumberg, p. 65.
22 Kim Murphy, “Algerians Confront Freedom: Perestroika has replaced one-party rule. Fundamentalists have mobilized. The nation is in turmoil on the eve of a free-for-all elections, Los Angeles Times (5 June 1990), p. 1.
bribes and commissions on foreign contracts in the previous two decades. Algeria’s foreign debt at the time was just slightly lower than $26 billion and consumed 75% of the $10 billion earned in foreign exchanges at the time. Second, the Algerian Army had a significant amount of power and was closely tied to the FLN state, and it was wary of threats to its power. Finally, during the process of liberalization, dozens of other political parties were formed; 49 parties besides the FIS ran candidates in the 1991 elections. Among these parties were other Islamist or Islam-oriented parties, each of which had their own rhetoric and aims. Hence, the Front Islamique du Salut was not the only Islamist party at the time, although it embodied a range of modes of Algerian Islamism and had a “quasi-monopoly” on the opposition.

1990-1992: Elections Won and Cancelled

On 12 June 1990, the first multiparty elections in Algeria were held to elect municipal and provincial leaders. The FIS captured 54.25% of municipal votes and 57.44% of provincial votes, exceeding expectations of the FLN government and observers, who generally predicted the FIS would win about 25% of the vote. The FIS won control of 853 out of 1,551 communes (urban communities) and 32 out of 48 wilayas [provinces]. The FIS won 64.18% of the votes in Algiers, 72% in Constantine and 70.57% in Oran, three of the largest cities in Algeria. The FLN fared far worse, winning approximately about 28% of municipal votes and 27% of votes.

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25 Burgat and Dowell, p. 293.
31 Burgat and Dowell, p. 279.
Perhaps even more significant was the electoral success of the FIS predominantly in urban areas and in the north, whereas the FLN’s support was mostly confined to the interior where it enjoyed significant support, especially in areas from which FLN military leaders came.33 There has been some debate about the meaning of the Front’s victory, especially concerning whether it won mostly out of “rejection” votes, votes out of frustration with the FLN government, or whether the FIS enjoyed mostly “sanction” votes, votes of support for its program. In addition, it has been suggested that the boycott of the election by several other parties “amplified the success of the FIS.”34 For current purposes, it will suffice to say that “rejection” votes played a role in the Front’s electoral success, but the FIS did have some real support for its Islamist vision for Algeria, especially in its popular urban base. Scholars have also debated the implications of the 65.15% turnout rate for the June 1990 elections,35 but such a turnout is typical and considered legitimate for other free elections in democracies.36,37

In April 1991, the FLN government approved of a new electoral law to redistribute voting districts.38 This example of “gerrymandering” was an attempt by the government to strengthen the areas in which it had more support so that southern Algeria would receive significantly more electoral votes than before. If the FIS were to accept these changes, it would have led to its “own public execution.” The FIS demanded the reform of the new law, and on 23 April 1991, a general strike was called to begin on 25 April. The strike and protests escalated

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33 Kapil, p. 31.
34 Patrick Girard, “Que vont faire les islamistes de leur victoire?” *Jeune Afrique* n° 1538 (20-26 June 1990), p. 9.
36 Entelis, p. 223.
37 Willis, pp. 133-34.
38 The following information on the period April-June 1991 is primarily derived from Burgat and Dowell, pp. 291-297.
throughout May, until the police intervened on 29 May. On 5 June 1991, President Chadli
Benjedid declared a four-month state of siege. The parliamentary elections, which had been
scheduled for 18 and 27 June, were postponed until December. On 7 June, the FIS announced
that it would suspend the strike. Between 9 June and 30 June, the military began its repression of
the FIS and arrested both major and peripheral members of the Front. On 30 June 1991, the
government arrested Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj. Tried and convicted of crimes against the
state in a military tribunal, Madani and Benhadj were sentenced to twelve years in prison.

On 26 December 1991, the first round of parliamentary elections were held, in which the
FIS won approximately 188 out of 232 seats available in the first round. A total of 430 seats
were up for election between the two rounds. This meant that in the second round of elections the
FIS needed only 28 more seats to gain a parliamentary majority. In response, on 2 January,
300,000 FIS opponents attended a demonstration to ‘save democracy.’ On 11 January, the army
cancelled the second round of elections, scheduled for 12 January 1992. Also on 11 January, the
army forced the dissolution of the National Assembly and the resignation of the President. On 14
January, the army, fearful of losing its power to the FIS or a FIS-FLN coalition government,
staged a coup d’état and established the Haut Comité d’Etat (HCE), a military junta of five men.
On 9 February 1992, the HCE declared a state of emergency and, on 4 March 1992, banned the
FIS. Soon thereafter, violence erupted, especially after the Front decided to turn to armed

39 Burgat and Dowell, pp. 293-94.
41 Le Sueur, p. xiv.
42 For more information about the results of the June 1990 and December 1991 elections, see Salah-Eddine
(Montpellier: Laboratoire de géographie rurale de l'Université Paul-Valéry et de l'U.R.A. 906 du C.N.R.S.
"Dynamique de l'espace rural," 1992). This pamphlet describes the breakdown of support for the different parties in
the various communes, provinces and legislative districts.
44 Burgat and Dowell, p. 301.
struggle at the end of the summer of 1992, ultimately deteriorating into a violent civil war that ended in the early 21st century.

The Development and Strategy of the Front Islamique du Salut

In March 1989, two leaders representing two different modes of Algerian Islamism came together with other, but not all, Algerian Islamist leaders to form the political party of the Front Islamique du Salut. Abassi Madani (1931- ) had fought for the FLN during the nationalist revolution and was imprisoned in 1954, but he became disenchanted with the FLN because of its “betrayal” of the values of the revolution. After the revolution ended, he went to Britain, where he completed his PhD in education. Upon returning to Algeria, he became a professor at the University of Algiers, where he was also active in the Islamist movement and was arrested for Islamist activity in 1982. In the FIS, he served as the official president and spokesman of the Front, and he has been considered the representative of the more moderate mode of Algerian Islamism. Ali Benhadj (1956- ), on the other hand, did not have the same ties to the war for independence. Born in Tunisia, he started out as a teacher, but he was more well-known for his role as the imam at the Al-Sunna Mosque in Algiers and his popular Friday prayer services, which served a major role in the popular movement of the FIS. Although he had no official title in the FIS, he was viewed as the second-in-command and acted as such, and he has been considered the leader of the more radical wing of Algerian Islamism. Together, the Front’s

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45 Burgat and Dowell, p. 318.
46 There is no decisive end date to the Algerian civil war, for violence has continued. The beginning of the 21st century, however, marks a transition from violence used for the causes of civil war to violence used for wider movements such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb. John Voll, conversation, 26 April 2010.
47 Le Sueur, p. xxiv. Le Sueur also notes that Madani was released in 2003 after being put under house arrest in 1997. As of 2009, he was in exile.
48 Le Sueur, p. xxi. Le Sueur also notes that Benhadj was released from 2003, only to be re-arrested in 2005 for making statements supporting Iraqi insurgents. He was released soon thereafter, but Le Sueur does not provide Benhadj’s current activity or whereabouts.
leaders formulated a political program for the FIS, *Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh*, or the *The Islamic Salvation Front*, which they published in March 1989 in Algiers. Several months later, in September 1989, the FIS was legalized as an official party by the FLN government.\(^49\)

On 20 April 1990, the Front held a peaceful demonstration in Algiers during which Madani delivered the *Plateforme des Revendications Politiques du FIS* [*Platform of the Political Demands of the FIS*] to the Algerian presidency, the contents of which will be discussed in Chapter III. The party won electoral success in June 1990 and took power in local and *wilaya*, or provincial, governments thereafter, the nature of which will be discussed in Chapter V. The protests of April and May 1991 are described above, though after the strike was called, the *Majlis al-Shura*, the national Consultative Council of the FIS, responded with a communiqué denouncing Madani and his increasingly radicalized tactics. Ali Benhadj and Abassi Madani, who was replaced provisionally by Abdelakar Hachani in July 1991, were arrested on 30 June 1991. Between 5 June and 4 July, it has been estimated that two thousand FIS activists were arrested.\(^50\) The FIS wavered on its plans to participate in the December 1991 elections throughout the summer and fall. However, Hachani announced on 14 December that the FIS would participate,\(^51\) and the Front took 188 seats out of 232 available seats in the first round of the vote.\(^52\) The Front was ultimately banned in March 1992 after the military coup in January 1992.

In the period from 1989 until early 1992, three significant aspects of the strategy of the FIS merit attention in light of the Front’s ability to mobilize large numbers of Algerians in June

\(^49\) Unless otherwise noted, the following dates and some substantive parts of the history of the Front Islamique du Salut are derived primarily from Le Sueur, pp. xxi-xxii.


\(^52\) Burgat and Dowell, pp. 299-300.
1990 and December 1991. First, there was the dual leadership of Madani and Benhadj. As will
be seen in a discussion of their rhetoric in Chapter IV – Madani and Benhadj represented two
different modes of Algerian Islamism: the moderate and radical wings, respectively. At least
between 1989 and 1991, the differences between these leaders served to strengthen the
movement, for the two leaders generally worked together. The dual leadership has even been
described as a “‘good cop bad cop’ act.” As the representatives of two existing, although not
necessarily competing, lines of Islamist thought, these two leaders were able to mobilize a wide
range of Algerians. They also had somewhat different spheres of mobilization: Madani, as the
spokesman of the FIS, led prayers in the mosques but also spoke to the Algerian and foreign
press, whereas Benhadj was known more for his prayer services. Benhadj also had the mass
following, particularly because his radical rhetoric appealed to the poor and unemployed urban
youth. Although the FIS had the Majlis al-Shura, its Consultative Council that constituted its
national leadership, Madani and Benhadj were both supreme over this body, thus the leadership
of the FIS was focused in both image and reality in these two figures.

The second important strategy of mobilization was the use of mosques for political
purposes. The FIS employed this strategy widely between 1989 and 1992, and the government
tried to put a stop to it as early as April 1989. FIS supporters congregated in the mosques on
Fridays to listen to Benhadj and Madani. The FIS saw no issue with spreading political
messages in mosques, and it saw the mosques as the way to ‘reach the real people.’ Closely

53 Brumberg, p. 64.
54 Brumberg, pp. 64-65.
56 “Ministry Communiqué Bars Politics from Mosques,” Algiers Domestic Service in French (1 April
1989).
57 William Quandt, Between Ballots & Bullets: Algeria’s Transition from Authoritarianism (Washington,
58 “Islamic Front Chairman Holds News Conference,” Algiers Television Service in Arabic (8 January
1990).
related to the network of mosques used were the social services provided by the FIS, which proved to be a valuable resource for mobilization. A third strategy of the FIS, both before and after the June 1990 elections, was general cooperation with the government and its timetable for elections. However, in May 1991, Madani turned to more radical tactics – although not more radical goals – because the government had turned on the FIS in the promulgation of the new electoral law in April 1991 and in its use of violence against protestors in May 1991. In this way, Madani was arguably trying to remain loyal to the 1989 constitution and its framework for coming to power.⁶⁰

As for the constituents of the FIS, one magazine described FIS supporters as a “large-scale coalition of discontented people [mêcontents].”⁶¹ The Front’s largest source of support came from the urban poor. Many were men who were young and unemployed, meaning that they came from two of the largest sectors of Algerian society, living in the slums of urban areas.⁶² The mobilization of these men did cause somewhat of a loss of the Front’s more traditional support, but it also constituted a major source of popular support.⁶³ Merchants were also part of the Front’s broad base of support, and there was a fringe of intellectuals. In total, the FIS mobilized approximately three million supporters.⁶⁴ Ali Benhadj was particularly successful in mobilizing the massive base of support. On the other hand, the more moderate and traditional social groups in Algerian society were reached through Madani, who served somewhat to reassure these groups and the public of the moderate goals and tactics of the FIS, as part of the

⁶¹ Girard, Jeune Afrique n° 1538 (20-26 June 1990), p. 6.
⁶² Quandt, p. 50.
‘good cop bad cop’ dual leadership. The most significant groups who were not drawn to the cause of the FIS were the Westernized classes, who sympathized with the FLN and the French, and the Berbers, who were alienated by mentions of Arabization by the FIS.

Overall, a brief overview of Algerian history has given some background information necessary to understanding the context of the events between 1989 and 1992. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Algeria was undergoing rapid changes and an unprecedented mobilization of civil society in the postcolonial period, of which the FIS took advantage. The FIS, using its mosques, social services and dual leadership, was able to mobilize a large portion of Algerian society both in rejection of the Front de Libération Nationale government and in support for specific changes in Algerian society following the Islamic model. The message of the FIS and its leaders will be discussed in more detail in Chapters III and IV, and Chapter V will treat the behavior of the FIS in local government between June 1990 and December 1991. Before these aspects of the FIS can be discussed, it will first be necessary to provide greater depth to the one and done democracy accusation in the following chapter.

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66 Le Sueur, p. 33.
Chapter II

Review of the Literature: The “One and Done” Democracy Accusation and Terminological Debates

The literature available on the *Front Islamique du Salut* concerns two major areas of interest for this paper. First, instances of the one and done democracy accusation are available both in the primary sources and in the secondary literature. These accusations contain different viewpoints and reasons for believing the *Front Islamique du Salut* may have been using democracy to get to power but did not plan on maintaining the democratic process. Accordingly, a survey of some examples of these accusations, as well as some discussions of these accusations, will help to contextualize discussions of democracy and the FIS. Second, a discussion of various terms used in the literature will serve to understand terms applied as “labels” to the FIS, such as “fundamentalist” and “Islamist.” More importantly, a brief overview of the term “democracy” in the literature will make clearer the standards of democracy used in the one and done accusation. This chapter will also establish a working definition of democracy as a more inclusive standard for the judging the rhetoric and activities of the FIS.

The One and Done Democracy Accusation: Primary Sources

The discussion begins with examples of the one and done democracy charge in the primary sources because the observers and writers concerned in these sources were closer to the events; their reasons for believing the FIS planned to do away with democracy were therefore articulated somewhat differently than reasons in scholarly literature. In April 1990, it was reported that “an increasing number of people who have condemned the ruling party’s record of political autocracy and economic mismanagement now openly express fear of the
fundamentalists.”¹ In June 1990, many Algerians felt that the FIS “could present a more insidious threat than 27 years of one-party rule.”² More specifically, “The fundamentalists want strict application of Islamic law, which opposing Algerians fear would mean a system as autocratic and economically inept as the one-party, state socialism many Algerians are trying to shed.”³ Jeune Afrique described the “potential menace to democracy that the Islamists constitute[d]” in after its electoral success 12 June 1990. In addition, Le Monde argued that democracy was not seriously there for the “FIS whose logic of a society closed by archaism excludes women, uses xenophobia and gives rights to intolerance and to the surveillance of all for all.”⁴ Omar Belhouchet, the publisher of El Watan, one of Algeria’s leading newspapers, was quoted about the state of siege imposed by Chadli Benjedid in June 1991: “Everyone applauded the state of siege. Everyone. Why? The first reason is that among intellectuals, among women, among democrats, among most of the political parties, people were very much afraid of the (Islamic Front); they felt that (the party) was an imminent danger to our country.”⁵ Overall, the comments of observers who used the language of “fear,” “threat,” and “danger” suggest that some observers present during the electoral campaigns of the FIS in 1990 and 1991 were concerned that the FIS would implement a one-party state if it came to power.

The One and Done Democracy Accusation: Scholarly Literature

Discussions of the one and done democracy charge in the secondary literature do not use

the same language of fear articulated in the primary sources, as scholars have been generally

² Kim Murphy, “Algerians Confront Freedom: Perestroika has replaced one-party rule. Fundamentalists have mobilized. The nation is in turmoil on the eve of a free-for-all elections, Los Angeles Times (5 June 1990), p. 1.
removed from the immediate context of the electoral campaigns of the FIS. Scholarly discussions are also rather varied in terms of arguing that the Front was in fact planning to install a single-party Islamic state once in power. The one and done democracy charge generally rests on two aspects of the FIS: its rhetoric and its behavior, hence the other chapters of this paper will address these two facets. The following section begins with straightforward accusations of one and done democracy against the FIS, before turning to more qualified accusations, including those scholars who have been hesitant to accuse the FIS entirely of one and done democracy.

Few scholars have actually argued without qualifications that the *Front Islamique du Salut* was planning to do away with democracy once it came to power through the electoral process. Perhaps the best example comes from Martin Kramer, who writes:

> Democracy, diversity, accommodation – the fundamentalists have repudiated them all. In appealing to the masses who fill their mosques, they promise, instead, to institute a regime of Islamic law, make common cause with like-minded ‘brethren’ everywhere, and struggle against the hegemony of the West and the existence of Israel. Fundamentalists have held onto these principles through long periods of oppression, and will not abandon them now, at the moment of their greatest popular resonance.

> These principles bear no resemblance to the ideals of Europe’s democracy movements; if anything, they evoke more readily the atavism of Europe’s burgeoning nationalist Right…

Here, Kramer is not referring specifically to the Algerian case of the FIS, though he discusses the Front at other points in the article as a case of fundamentalism. Nevertheless, he does not see democracy as part of the plans of the “fundamentalists” for the “regime of Islamic law,” even if democracy is the means through which they attain power. Beverly Milton-Edwards, without making the accusation herself, articulates the one and done democracy charges in the field in this way: “This case study [of Algeria] presents one of the worst scenarios for the… way it has been manipulated to serve political ends. Indeed, events since the late 1980s have typically been

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presented as the ‘wrong kind of democracy,’ where political liberalization and electoral freedoms only encouraged Islamic fanatics bent on manipulating the system to their own undemocratic ends.”\textsuperscript{7} Another one and done democracy accusation aimed at the FIS comes from Yahia Zoubir, who argues in reference to the FIS, “[The] objective was not the establishment of a democratic order, but the monopoly of political power.”\textsuperscript{8} Thus, to Kramer and Zoubir, democracy was clearly not a goal for the FIS; it was a means to gain power to install an Islamic order that carried no guarantees of democracy.

Most one and done democracy accusations against the FIS are made with greater qualification. Claire Heristchi does not see the FIS as necessarily violating democracy entirely, but her “best case scenario” is one in which democracy is limited:

Equally problematic [in FIS discourse] is the provision for pluralism within the framework of Islam which Islamists probably would have favored once in power…The most optimistic prevision for an Islamic government, had it come to pass, is thus one where democracy was likely to be curtailed. More pessimistically, one could anticipate a system whereby elections in the future would only be superficial exercises designed to reinforce the power of Islamists, much like democracy operates in other parts of the Middle East since the 1990s (for instance, in Jordan).\textsuperscript{9}

Heristchi thus sees the framework of Islam, in which calls for political pluralism were made, to be problematic and restrictive to any democratic government that might have existed. At the same time, this conception of the one and done democracy accusation at least allows for the possibility of some democratic principles to be protected by the FIS.


\textsuperscript{8} Yahia H. Zoubir, “Algerian Islamists’ Conception of Democracy,” \textit{Arab Studies Quarterly} 18.3 (Summer 1996), p. 66.

Some of the more qualified discussions of one and done democracy accusations – which cannot themselves be called accusations, but which are useful nevertheless – point to the fact that the FIS did little to counter Algerians’ concerns. For example, Hamou Amirouche writes:

In a culture flagrantly lacking any democratic tendencies, democracy was perceived not as rules and procedures to guide a simple political change of government, but as an opportunity for the winners to displace the privileged and exact revenge. The FIS, if had accessed power through universal suffrage, would have been unlikely to revert to such extreme deeds, but it did little to alleviate widespread fears among its adversaries about is intentions.\(^\text{10}\)

One sees here that Amirouche is actually fairly certain that in practice the FIS would not have done away with democracy, yet he points to the fact that FIS rhetoric did little to assuage fears of its plans to discard democracy if it came to power. Somewhat similarly, John Voll and John Esposito point to the inability of FIS leaders to convince their opponents that they were not planning to “hijack” and then discard democracy:

…[The Front’s] opponents charged that the FIS had ‘hijacked democracy.’ While the FIS denied this charge and claimed to recognize the importance of the electoral process, critics charged that the FIS was simply using the democratic process to come to power and then in turn to impose an Islamic system of government with little tolerance of political pluralism and the rights of women. The statements of FIS leaders did not effectively counter these charges… The range of statements made by FIS leaders, their seeming equivocation about democracy and equal rights for women, left them vulnerable to criticism and skepticism regarding the true nature of their ultimate agenda.\(^\text{11}\)

Again, they note: “Many charged that the FIS was out to hijack democracy; that it was not prepared to work within the system, to recognize individual and group rights and to leave the ultimate control of the political system to the people.” In short, “Some feared that the FIS only believed in ‘one man, one vote, one time.’”\(^\text{12}\) Esposito and Voll’s discussion of the one and done democracy accusation (‘one man, one vote, one time’) brings to light two important facets of the

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\(^{12}\) Esposito and Voll, p. 171.
charge. First, the rhetoric of FIS leaders, especially in its variations, did not convince FIS opponents that that the FIS would not use democracy only to gain power. Second, the perceived lack of willingness to work within the political system, to recognize rights and to let the people rule adds some depth to the one and done democracy charge by expanding the kinds of evidence used against the FIS, evidence found presumably in the statements of FIS leaders and possibly in the behavior of the FIS. Thus, these more qualified one and done democracy accusations and discussions of such accusations are more prevalent in the literature and, ultimately, contribute to the scholarly literature by highlighting the sources of the accusations.

**Terminological Debates: Democracy**

The use of the concept of democracy in the scholarly literature concerns two main problematic areas. First, as expected, scholars do not agree on the principles of democracy. One sees a variety of definitions and emphases in the work of those writing on the FIS. John Entelis finds some of the “key democratic ideals” to be “political participation and public contestation.”  

13 Milton-Edwards expresses the “vocabulary and sentiments of democracy”: “pluralism, freedom and representation.”  

14 An interesting take on democracy comes from John Keane: “Democracy is not another ideology... but a condition free from ideology. It is, in other words, the means by which a plurality of groups with different and often conflicting beliefs can live their differences and get along with murdering or dominating each other.”  

15 Gudrun Krämer also suggests ‘crucial elements of political democracy’: ‘pluralism... political participation,

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government accountability, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights. William Quandt writes, “Democracy is the solution to one major problem in politics – the problem of tyranny. Democracy, if it means anything, means that people can rid themselves of a truly bad government without going to the barricades, without revolution, and without the gun.” While scholars seem to recognize the variation among their definitions, they do not always consider the differences in experiences and definitions of democracy when looking at the FIS, Algeria and the Middle East and North Africa. Overall, scholars tend to judge Islamist groups such as the FIS according to a pre-conceived concept of “Democracy” without recognizing that the differences between the Front’s notion of democracy and their own varying definitions do not necessarily mean that the FIS was anti-democratic.

Second, and somewhat related, scholars do not always acknowledge that there is a difference between general, theoretical notions of democracy and the Western ideals and experiences of democracy. As seen above, Martin Kramer argues that the goals of Muslim ‘fundamentalists’ including the FIS, do not measure up to the “ideals of Europe’s democracy movements.” However, there is a difference between the ideals of Western democracy and its realities, as noted by Burgat and Dowell: “The Western liberal experiences have always posed limits to the freedom of expression of followers perceived as antagonistic to it.” Dale Eickleman explains that accusations of the incompatibility of Islam and democracy sometimes take place “because the measure of ‘democracy’ is narrowly defined in a manner which

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16 Gudrun Krämer, quoted in Heristchi, p. 122.
18 François Burgat and William Dowell, The Islamic Movement in North Africa (Austin: The Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, 1997), p. 131.
privileges parts of the West.”¹⁹ Such inability to conceive of democracy outside of the Western context in discussions of non-Western parts of the world also concerns the place of secularism in democracy. For example, Robert Mortimer writes, “Democracy is basically a secular concept with which all religions must come to terms.”²⁰ Yet, Western countries have varied in the level of secularism in their politics; the French, for example, have been practically anti-religion, whereas some countries, such as the United States, at least allow for more religiously inspired political vocabulary.²¹ Even in Western democracies, religion need not be removed entirely from the political arena. Accordingly, the Western tradition – and varied experience – of democracy should be not idealized or held as the only measure of democracy in the world. Thus, the two problematic areas of scholars’ use of the concept of democracy when discussing the FIS involve a lack of recognition that democracy is defined differently by scholars and that democracy can be conceived of and exist in forms not identical to the Western tradition.

**Terminological Debates: Islamism and Fundamentalism**

“Islamist” and “fundamentalist” are two labels commonly applied to the *Front Islamique du Salut*, but, like conceptions of democracy, the understandings of these terms vary in the literature. Moreover, one needs only to take a look at various Western media sources, such as *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, to see that these two terms are often used interchangeably. Fortunately, scholars have paid more attention to their differences. A search in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* yields the following definitions:

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²¹ Burgat and Dowell, p. 231. They note, for example, the credo of “In God We Trust” in the U.S.
The term “Islamism/Islamist” has come into increasing use in recent years to denote the views of those Muslims who claim that Islam, or more specifically, the Islamic shari’ah, provides guidance for all areas of human life, individual and social, and who therefore call for an “Islamic State” or an “Islamic Order.” Islamists focus primarily on political matters, but they are also concerned with economic, social, and moral issues.22

Fundamentalism is defined as the activist assertion of a particular faith tradition based on an affirmation of self-defined foundational principles or ‘fundamentals’ of the faith. Fundamentalist movements are movements of renewal, aiming to transform society and religious life.23

For Robert Malley, the overlap between fundamentalism and Islamism is in their calls for “renewed respect of sacred texts.”24 The difference lies in where this respect must be: Islamism calls for a renewed deference to the principles of Islam in all areas of life – moral, political, economic and social – whereas fundamentalism is concerned with the respect of Islam mostly in the moral sphere.25, 26 Thus, Islamism and fundamentalism concern two different types of Islamic movements, though their meanings are at times conflated.

Hugh Roberts makes an excellent point about the use of labels in the context of the term “fundamentalism”: “It may be suggested that the entire Algerian case should be classified as an instance of ‘pseudo-fundamentalism,’ but I would argue that this is the academic theorists’ easy way out and does not do justice to the complexity of Algerian reality.”27 This point is suggested by other scholars, though perhaps not articulated so bluntly. Nevertheless, I agree with Roberts’s suggestion about the use of labels and the loss of understanding of complexity, especially with the term “fundamentalist.” If one accepts the conception of Islamist movements calling for the

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26 Malley, p. 231.
guidance of Islam in the political, social and economic spheres, it will shortly be seen that the FIS did just that, hence I am not necessarily opposed to the application of this definition of “Islamist” to the *Front Islamique du Salut*. I will at no point call the FIS “fundamentalist,” for this term is highly politicized and debatable. Ultimately, this study understands the *Front Islamique du Salut* in terms of the one and done democracy accusation through what the Front was saying and doing, not through the kinds of labels that “fit” the FIS and the connections perceived between these labels and democracy.

The varied conception of democracy cannot be avoided for obvious reasons, but scholars’ definitions will be put aside for the following three chapters. Instead, I offer a working alternative definition of democracy that is meant to be inclusive of both scholars’ and the Front’s conceptions of democracy: democracy is the rule of the people that involves the freedom to choose one’s leaders in accountable and regular elections. Accordingly, the freedom to choose implies that citizens have the freedom of choice itself, meaning that political pluralism and a diversity of opinions must be allowed. Although this definition of democracy as freedom of choice and freedom to choose is indeed broad, it at least provides some more open and even ground on which to compare scholars and the Front’s conceptions of democracy. Thus, the one and done democracy accusation and use of certain terminology has differed and been narrow throughout the literature. Scholars’ inability or unwillingness to remember these variations in their own literature and the Western tradition of democracy when discussing the FIS has resulted in an almost wholesale disregard for the Front’s definitions of democracy, thereby enabling scholars to call the FIS anti-democratic without fully analyzing the Front’s views on democracy.
Chapter III

*Making Sense of FIS Discourse*

As a political party, the *Front Islamique du Salut* had much to say about the existing government in Algeria and the need for an Islamic regime. In this chapter and the following chapter, FIS discourse will be taken as comprising publications, articles, public statements and interviews of the Front and its two main leaders that indicate how the FIS framed its movement, political party and goals to its followers, the Algerian population and the rest of the world. Understanding the sources of FIS rhetoric in a systematic way allows the ongoing discussion of the one and done democracy accusation to take on clearer nuances. If observers and scholars have so seriously feared the FIS coming to power, one needs to understand what kinds of ideas the FIS was advocating, especially when different or even seemingly contradictory ideas were advanced by the moderate and radical wings of the party.

The discourse analysis in this chapter addresses the two forms of discourse that came from the Front without a specific figure or wing as the source: its choice of name for its political party and its political programs. Through these subjects, the discussion aims to highlight the major themes of the overall discourse of the FIS, which are not necessarily related to the concept of democracy, in order to provide the general framework of the ideas and attitudes of the FIS. Making sense of the rhetoric of the FIS necessitates understanding its complexities and apparent contradictions. Most importantly, the FIS presented itself as encompassing coexisting modes of Algerian Islamism, but that it leaders did not see these different modes as contradictory.
What’s in a Name? The “Rhetoric” of the Name the “Front Islamique du Salut”

The discussion of the rhetoric of the Front Islamique du Salut begins with its name itself for several reasons. First and most obvious, the name of the party and especially its acronym, FIS, appeared widely in the party’s rhetoric and in newspapers. Second, the English translation of Front Islamique du Salut, “Islamic Salvation Front,” suggests to the reader that the three notions of Islam, salvation and the formation of a front separately and conjointly carried meaning for the FIS and Algerians. Finally, the acronym FIS, through a manipulation of language and pronunciation, presents the Front as the “son,” or in French the “fils,” of the existing Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) government and the Algerian independence movement that ended in 1962. In this way, the choice to name the party the “Front Islamique du Salut” provides an insightful point at which to begin examining the overall rhetoric of the Front.

The name “Front Islamique du Salut” comprises three major concepts: Islam, salvation and the formation of a front. In fact, Ali Benhadj wanted to name the party “Front islamique unifié,” or “United Islamic Front” to emphasize the idea of tawhid, roughly translated as “unity,” particularly in terms of the monotheistic unity of God.1 However, Abassi Madani proposed substituting “salut” for “unifié” because the idea of unity “[did] not have a grand political sense” and because “[they] want[ed] to save this community [umma] and this people.”2 For Madani at least, the salvation of the Algerian people figured so importantly into the mission of the FIS that he found it necessary to include it in the party’s title. In March 1990, Madani described the meaning of the choice of name in an interview:

It is a “front,” because it confronts; and because it has a wide range of actions and of domains; it is the front of the Algerian people with all its sectors, and over its vast territory. It is open to the variety of tendencies and of ideas that

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achieve a coherent unity across the wealth of diversity…; the unity of interests, of positions and of agreement… It is the unity of a common destiny.

It is “Islamic” in name, because it has an Islamic content, method, historical function. Islam is a goal to which we bring a model of change and of reform, and where we draw our reason of being and the reasons of the continuity of our being, the being of the best of nations….

As for “salvation,” it is represented by the apostolic function, as being the salvation of the faith, that which leads to the right way and prevents error; and by the historical, economic, social, cultural and civilizational function. It is the salvation of all in order to be all (everything) [C’est le salut de tous pour être tout].

Although the description above comes from just one leader of the FIS, Madani’s explanation at least shows that the FIS consciously chose its name because of the meaning it conveyed.

One especially important aspect of this name involves the decision to form a front and to name it as such. The FIS was an overarching organization that brought many currents of Algerian Islamism together under one name. Yet, the fact that it was one broad organization did not mean that it had to have a uniform discourse. Both Madani and Benhadj saw the organization as encompassing multiple versions of Algerian Islamism. Madani described the party as a “Front which groups together several tendencies” of which “each orator has his own personality and his own particular leanings.”

He also responded to a question about radicals and moderates in the Front: “There are no divisions inside the FIS. God created men with different moods.”

Similarly, Benhadj acknowledged that there were “differences in point of view,” but these did not mean “a difference at the level of objectives.” Integrating the notion of the “front” into the title of their political party was arguably an attempt by the different groups within the FIS to

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3 Madani, interview in Al-Masar al-maghribi (Parcours maghrébin), quoted in Al-Ahnaf et al., p. 31.
6 Madani, quoted in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans,” Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic (22 June 1990), p. 22.
show that they were open to a range of Islamist views, but as a result, the discourse coming from the party would not be monolithic and would instead encompass the beliefs of the variety of groups represented. Thus, the intentionality and consideration involved in the choice of “Front Islamique du Salut” is considered an overarching part of the rhetoric of the FIS because the Front presented itself even in its name as a united front comprising a wide range of Islamist beliefs that aimed for the salvation of Algerian society through the model and goal of Islam.

The other rhetorical aspect of the name “Front Islamique du Salut” concerns its acronym, FIS. The acronym FIS, if it is treated as one word, is pronounced in the same way as the word “fils,” French for “son.” As a result, the FIS presented itself as the son and heir to the FLN. In this way, the FIS tied its legitimacy as a political party to the established legitimacy of the Front de Libération Nationale. This connection to the FLN regime is especially important because the FIS appropriated much of the nationalist rhetoric that the FLN regime had used during and maintained since the struggle for independence from France. Yet, the relationship between these two political forces was more complicated than that of “father” and “son.” If anything, the FIS was a rebellious child; just because it was “born out” of the FLN does not mean it had the same character or goals. The FIS tied its legitimacy to the moral authority and legitimacy of Islam, which it saw lacking in the existing FLN regime since the revolution. The resistance of the FIS to the FLN regime was therefore articulated through the lens of impiety and morality.

Moreover, the FIS intended to depict the FLN regime as morally deceptive, especially by

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9 The intentionality of this play on words is not made clear by either the primary sources or the secondary literature. However, Mohammed Harbi seemed to have caught on in the title of his article in Le Monde, “Un FIS enfanté par le FLN” (“A FIS birthed by the FLN”). With FIS pronounced as “fils,” the title then becomes “A son birthed by the FLN.” Le Monde (21 June 1990).
11 Heristchi, p. 122.
alleging that the FLN had betrayed the sacrifices and struggle of the nationalist revolution.\textsuperscript{12} In fact, the FIS did not actually condemn legitimacy the Algerian state born out of the nationalist revolution; rather, those who were in power were seen as traitors to the cause of the revolution, which was also perceived as Islamic.\textsuperscript{13} Hence, the FIS presented itself as the heir to the FLN that fought in the national revolution, not the FLN that had ruled since the revolution.\textsuperscript{14}

In this way, the FIS did not offer a wholly different political identity from that of the FLN. Rather, it offered to make that identity a reality, a promise that had been betrayed by the FLN.\textsuperscript{15} By proposing itself as both the solution to Algeria’s problems and the one capable and knowledgeable enough to enact that solution,\textsuperscript{16} FIS was given the means to delegitimize the FLN through the regime’s immorality and impiety while characterizing itself as the solution to the incompetence of the existing regime. Thus, through its name alone, the FIS set itself up as an Islamic alternative in the form of a political front while advocating a complicated kind of legitimacy and pseudo-continuity in its relationship with the postcolonial regime.

\textit{The Political Programs of the FIS}

The second aspect of the doctrine put forth by the FIS as a whole involves two documents that represent its political programs. The first document is a tract prepared and published by the \textit{Majlis al-shura}, the Consultative Committee of the FIS, on 7 March 1989 in Algiers.\textsuperscript{17} This tract,

\begin{flushright}
12 Heristchi, p. 127.
17 Heristchi, p. 129.
16 Heristchi, p. 127.
\end{flushright}
a forty-nine-page document\textsuperscript{18} titled \textit{Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh},\textsuperscript{19} Arabic for \textit{The Islamic Salvation Front},\textsuperscript{20} represented more of a validation of Islam and a nationalist approach than a social and political guide to government and the solution of Algeria’s social, political and economic issues.\textsuperscript{21} The justification of Islam used quotations from the Qu’ran and the \textit{hadith}, the accounts of the statements and actions of Muhammad and other early Muslims,\textsuperscript{22} as well as nationalist rhetoric appropriated from that of the \textit{Front de Libération Nationale}. In a section titled “Characteristics of the Front Islamique du Salut,” the pamphlet presented six points that can be interpreted as the party’s goals.\textsuperscript{23} These points have been summarized in this way:

1. The FIS is working for the ‘unity of the ranks of Islam’ and the coherence of the \textit{ummah} [community].
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 emphasizes 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 [of the Prophet].\textsuperscript{24}

In this self-description, the FIS inserted itself into the realms of religion, society, economics and politics. In fact, there appears to be no area of society in which the FIS saw itself as uninvolved.

While some concepts generally considered typical of a democratic and pluralistic society were present in demands such as those for separation of power, freedom of expression, political accountability and judicial fairness, the tension created by the concurrent importance given to

\textsuperscript{18} This author was unable to find a full English or French translation of the text and thus relies on quotations from and analyses of the text in secondary sources.
\textsuperscript{19} The physical document has been described as such: “On the cover of this pamphlet is a circle (representing the globe?) drawn in green, the colour of Islam. In the centre is the open Quran. Above the circle is the Quranic verse relative to the prime importance of the \textit{umma}, which is taken up and commented upon in the text itself. At the base of the circle are the initials of the FIS in large letters.” Rouadjia, 102n.
\textsuperscript{21} Rouadjia, pp. 80-81.
\textsuperscript{22} “Hadith,” \textit{Oxford Dictionary of Islam}.
\textsuperscript{23} Rouadjia, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{24} Heristchi, p. 120.
Islamic morality and how the two were to be united in reality was not resolved in the political project of the FIS.\textsuperscript{25} Despite these tensions – which the Front itself did not appear to feel – the FIS saw itself as an all-encompassing solution to the problems of Algerian society and government.

This crisis-solution framework figured prominently into the FIS discourse as a whole in its general message of “‘Islam is the solution.’”\textsuperscript{26} The “crisis” seen was multidimensional: it involved a social and economic crisis and a “crisis of confidence” between the leaders of Algeria and the Algerian people.\textsuperscript{27} The FIS was above all concerned with the internal problems of Algerian society and aimed to offer a comprehensive solution to the crisis of Algerian society: Islam and its principles. A mere sixteen lines of the forty-nine-page tract treat the plans of the FIS for foreign policy.\textsuperscript{28} The FIS thus offered its plans for Algeria almost completely in terms of domestic policy.\textsuperscript{29} First and foremost was the implementation of the shari’ah, the Islamic law established in the Qur’an and hadith. The FIS saw no need for a constitution, as it had the Qur’an to delineate the principles of governance.\textsuperscript{30} Implementing the shari’ah according to the principles of the Qur’an was therefore the main source of domestic policy:

The policy of the Shari’a, consisting of control of administration and qualitative co-ordination of planning… will attempt to further dialogue (with social partners) with the aim of reaching truth… and justice. It will opt for a median position in the political domain, that is to say a moderate position, thanks to its frankness and good faith, as the Front is founded upon persuasion rather than oppression.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{25} Hersitchi, p. 120.
\textsuperscript{26} Hersitchi, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{27} Hamdi, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{28} Rouadja, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{29} This fact especially distinguishes the FIS from global Islamist/“fundamentalist” movements such as al-Qaeda. The FIS was a specifically national movement and party.
\textsuperscript{30} Rouadja, p. 80.
Using the shari’ah as the foundation of domestic policy was to provide political guidance and enable moderation, dialogue and justice. Also noteworthy is the distinction between persuasion and oppression, for while democracy and elections are not mentioned, the notion of persuasion fits into the idea of campaigning and elections. At this point, remembering that these Islamists chose to form a front encompassing many currents of Algerian Islamism is useful for making some sense of the vagueness of the program. One the one hand, while this is only a brief excerpt above, any kind of specific policy is indeed lacking. Yet, this program arguably represents the choice of the different parts of the party to find a ‘least common denominator.’ The vagueness of the program can thus be interpreted in different ways.

The concept of shura, or “consultation” between political leaders and citizens, was also connected to plans for domestic policy. In its program, the FIS saw shura as the way to eliminate “political economic and social oppression and monopoly, and [it] will consequently make the principle of equality one of its main lines of action.” Accordingly, shura “will multiply the opportunities and the fields of action in which the will and the creative genius of the umma can operate.” The FIS also saw shura as the foundation for the economic organization of Algerian society, particularly because it was framed as a remedy to the ills of the FLN’s socialist economy. The abstract notions of justice, dialogue and moderation that were to follow from the policy of the shari’ah were translated into somewhat more specific policies of consultation and economic justice and recovery. Shura was thus a political and economic plan for Algeria, but the Front did not seem to mention or contrast shura with democracy. Therefore, the program of the FIS put forth in Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh, while it was indeed vague, argued for certain

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33 Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh, pp. 18-19. Translated and quoted in Rouadjia, p. 82.
34 Rouadjia, p. 83.
values which the FIS saw as lacking. Moreover, the renewal of these values, attained through the reconciliation of the shari’ah with politics and governance, was presented as the cure to the political, social and economic ills that infected the Algerian government and society.

The second document that functions as a kind of political platform and important source of the party’s rhetoric comes from the Plateforme des Revendications Politiques du FIS [Platform of the Political Demands of the FIS] that was published in the sixteenth issue of the bimonthly FIS newspaper, El Mounquid, or The Savior. Interestingly, one scholar translates the title of this platform as “The Political Platform of the FIS,” but in this translation, an important part of the history of this platform is lost. This platform was not published solely as a political platform; rather, it was a list of political demands that a delegation of the FIS, led by Abassi Madani, presented after the rally on 20 April 1990 to the president of Algeria. Therefore, it was not necessarily a plan for Algeria, but it instead delineated what the Front wanted from the government, at least in April 1990. That same scholar nonetheless provides a useful summary of the list of demands:

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. The 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. The end of state monopoly on information and creation of the freedom of the press.

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35 Heristchi, p. 121. For the full version in French, see Al-Ahmad et al., pp. 49-51. Both versions are taken from El-Mounquid n° 16. The full document is printed in French in El Moudjahid n° 7.732 (20-21 April 1990), p. 4.
36 Heristchi, p. 121.
37 El Moudjahid n° 7.732 (20-21 April 1990), p. 4. Also discussed in Rouadja, p. 91.
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, drug-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 designated 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.\(^{38}\)

The above platform was formulated approximately one year after the pamphlet *Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh* was drawn up by the FIS leadership. At first glance, the reader notices that there is no mention of *shura*, though it will be seen in due time that the concept of *shura* has not left the FIS leaders’ discourse. Unsurprisingly, the political and economic guidance of Islam through the *shar’iah* remains a prominent theme, particularly in terms of social justice.

This more recent platform appears more specific in its aims and demands than the pamphlet of 1989, perhaps because it was directed at the Algerian government. The appearance of a more clearly articulated set of grievances and goals after a year of political organization and mobilization certainly is not shocking. Compared to the platform detailed in 1989, the solutions offered in the 1990 platform, while still involving Islam and *shari‘ah*, appear to target more directly the practices of the FLN regime. Many of these demands – especially those in points 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8 – involve dismantling or at least decentralizing the one-party regime that had ruled Algeria since independence in 1962. In addition, point 4 makes reference to “civil freedoms,” albeit those “drawn up in Islam.” These points in particular, along with aforementioned excerpts of *Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh*, do suggest that the Front as a whole had at least some

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\(^{38}\) Heristchi, p. 121.
respect for pluralism and multiparty politics. However, this denunciation of the single-party regime of the FLN does not seem to tell the whole story. The question that those looking at the FIS have been left asking involves the “next step” of this platform: in April 1990 the FIS at least claimed to support freedom and pluralism, but was a multiparty system seen merely as the means to delegitimize the FLN regime and achieve power, or did the FIS support the maintenance and protection of multiparty politics in the long run? The mention of pluralism, civil liberties and *shura* in the platforms of the FIS do suggest that it adhered to some political principles, but the Front’s platforms did not explicitly mention the concept of democracy, which would have provided more insight into the FIS party’s plans for ruling Algeria after coming to power through democratic elections.
Chapter IV

Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj: Two Leaders, Two Wings, Two Discourses

After looking only at the Front’s rhetoric coming from no particular source or person in the form of the choice of its name and its programs, little information has emerged that suggests what kinds of plans the *Front Islamique du Salut* had for maintaining or scrapping democracy. The situation is further complicated when Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj are brought into the picture. If any kind of unified or uniform discourse seemed to exist when the rhetoric was coming from the whole of the FIS, this appearance of uniformity, which was arguably just the “least common denominator,” crumbles with an analysis of the statements of Madani and Benhadj. When these two leaders are introduced, two discourse analyses become necessary. Their statements and the views they represented were especially divergent when it came to the topic of democracy. The differences between the rhetoric of Madani and Benhadj are of interest to an investigation of the one and done democracy charge because they are too often confused or forgotten to be representing two distinct wings of the FIS. Moreover, as seen in Chapter III, the leaders of these two wings did not see the need to reconcile their different and seemingly contradictory views exactly because they were two leaders in a united front encompassing different modes of Islamism.

If the FIS was not trying to put forth a uniform rhetoric, then neither of the views of these two man should be understood as representative of the discourse FIS as a whole. Both the moderate and radical forms of rhetoric coexisted between 1989 and 1992 and served to mobilize different types of supporters. Nevertheless, observers and scholars have tended to look mostly at the radical rhetoric and its views on democracy, and they have assumed that the existence of the
radical rhetoric automatically meant that the FIS planned to do away with democracy once in
power. This assumption fails to adequately treat the duality and complexity of the discourses of
the Front coming from its two main leaders. This chapter considers the rhetoric of the two main
threads of the party separately before then understanding what their mutual existence meant for
FIS plans for maintaining or closing the democratic process if it were to come into national
power. From these two different leaders and their perceptions of democracy, it is clear that there
was by no means one singular discourse articulated concerning the plans the FIS had for the
democratic process after its desired electoral success.

Abassi Madani and the Moderates

As has been suggested, observers and scholars have tended to overlook, ignore or “cancel
out” the more moderate discourse of Abassi Madani and the moderate wing, a discourse which
was more amenable to notions and principles of democracy, when looking at the radicals’
rhetoric. As a relatively moderate Islamist and the president and spokesman of the FIS, Abassi
Madani provides a wealth of rhetoric, mostly in the form of statements and interviews.
Accordingly, the ensuing discussion analyzes Madani’s rhetoric on a thematic level, beginning
with his more abstract conceptions and discussions of democracy before turning to more specific
plans or visions he had for democracy in Algeria. These themes will also serve as points of
comparison and, more often, contrast with the radical rhetoric of Benhadj.

The first area of Madani’s rhetoric is his conception and definition of democracy. Madani
broadly saw democracy as popular sovereignty:

Democracy, if one sticks to the most widespread definition, is the power
of the people… Despite the deficiencies of the concept in the connection to the
Islamic concept that is the power of God and that the holder of power is only the
performer of the law of God conforming to the shari‘ah. The difference between
one [democracy] and the other [the Islamic concept of power] is that the people are a will entirely free in their choice…¹

To Madani, democracy meant the power of the people, and “there is no other wisdom than that which restores to the people their sovereignty.”² It is interesting that Madani contrasts democracy and the “Islamic concept of power” in the sense that in democracy the “people are a will entirely free in their choice.” This certainly suggests that Islamic power somewhat restricts the freedom of the people’s choice, but Madani does not suggest how so. Madani also saw democracy as having three major components: pluralism, liberty and choice.³,⁴ The consistency of these concepts in Madani’s rhetoric makes them crucial for understanding his views on democracy, and thus his further comments on these three facets of democracy are discussed below.

Before detailing Madani’s conceptions of pluralism, liberty and choice, however, it is also worth noting that Madani did not see democracy as laying down specific rules of behavior; rather, “It is a concept, an idea, a philosophy. It gives nothing. It is up to us to give it content and an impact if we apply it and work with it.”⁵ Madani understood democracy as an abstract notion that had to be given it its own specific meaning. In the case of the moderate FIS, the meaning of democracy comes from adherence to pluralism, liberty and choice. Madani and the moderates also had less of a “problem” with democracy because they conceived of its nature differently than did the radicals. As will be seen shortly, the radicals believed that democracy and Islam were two mutually exclusive alternatives. However, Madani did not think of democracy as an

¹ Abassi Madani, quoted in Kamel Hamdi, *Ali Benhadj, Abassi Madani, Mahfoud Nahnah, Abdellah Djaballah: différents ou différends?* (Algers: Editions chihab, 1991), p. 82. NB: Hamdi generally does not cite the origins of the statements by these four leaders, yet for present purposes, the fact that his book was published in 1991 is significant because it means all of these statements were made during the FIS’s participation in the electoral process.


⁴ Madani, quoted in an interview from *Le Point* n° 926 (25 June 1990), cited in Hamdi, p. 80.

⁵ Madani, quoted in an interview from *Horizons* (20 October 1990), cited in Hamdi, p. 81.
alternative to Islam, but as a way to allow the people to choose what they consider to be the best means of governing and the best leader. In this way, democracy and Islam were not presented as mutually exclusive; instead, democracy was presented as the way for people to voice their political desires and choose the Islamic solution. Therefore, this major difference between the conceptions of the radicals and of the moderates allows one to understand the different stances of two groups towards democracy, for if democracy was not a competing alternative to Islam, then adhering to democracy was far less problematic for Muslims.

The first major aspect of democracy is that of political pluralism. Pluralism, meaning the existence of opposition particularly in the form of other political parties, was connected by Madani to the ability of the people to identify and correct mistakes made by their rulers. Certainly, the FIS saw itself as a form of opposition in this sense, for it identified the “crisis” of the FLN regime and presented itself as having the solution to the mistakes made by the existing government. Perhaps this positioning of the FIS legitimized pluralism in Madani’s rhetoric. Nevertheless, Madani’s statements concerning pluralism are crucial for addressing the one and done democracy accusation, for this accusation centers heavily on the belief that the FIS would come to power in order to install a one-party Islamic state. Fortunately for present purposes, Madani had much to say about the necessity of pluralism, although his often nuanced assurances of the need for pluralism have not assuaged concerns about the FIS coming to power. In 1990, Madani saw multiparty politics as necessary to democracy: “Multipartism is a sine qua non condition to deepen the democratic process in our country.” Madani explained the necessity of pluralism in this way:

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It is necessary to have pluralism. Why? Because one must have what is needed to fulfill one’s duty, and we believe that it is necessary to have opposition… How can there be no opposition if there is no pluralism? We believe that pluralism is necessary for political development, because we are not angels. We are right sometimes and make mistakes at other times. We are human and make mistakes, and we are not prepared to impose ourselves on people even when we are wrong. Never… Therefore, pluralism must be allowed, because there is opposition… We are prepared to benefit from any lesson, even the lessons of our enemies, so why should we ignore the lessons of our sons who share the same destiny with us? Pluralism is a guarantee of cultural wealth, and diversity is needed for any development. We are Muslims, but we are not Islam itself… We are an Islamic party, and the others are Muslims. Our affiliation to Islam means we are committed to its law and values. People, all people, have the right to judge us on the basis of these values.\(^8\)

Opposition and pluralism were clearly closely interconnected in Madani’s mind, for one cannot exist without the other. Allowing for pluralism and opposition gave the ruling regime legitimacy and made it stronger by correcting its mistakes. Madani also admits that the FIS is not immune to making mistakes because it does not consider itself to be Islam itself: “How could we discover our errors if there is not an opposition to signal them to us?”\(^9\) Therefore, the existence of opposition makes the regime accountable to the people, for they have the right to judge their rulers on the basis of their purported values, which, in the case of the FIS, were Islamic in nature.

The nature of the opposition of which Madani approved is more complex and nuanced. On the one hand, Madani was recorded as saying that other parties, whatever their stance, would be allowed to exist if the FIS came to power. For example, he said, “Our power allocates to all the parties their rights so that they can say their opinions even if it is blasphemy in a Muslim country… In our political conditions, we hope that the other political parties help us. We do not want to ignore the presence of other parties even if they ignore us.”\(^10\) He did not see the other political parties as enemies, therefore he accepted coexistence: “We accepted to coexist with the

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\(^8\) Madani, quoted in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans,” *Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic* (22 June 1990), p. 22.

\(^9\) Madani, quoted in an interview from *Jeune Afrique* n° 1543 (25 July – 1 August 1990), p. 20

\(^10\) Madani, quoted in an interview from *Le Point* n° 926 (25 June 1990), cited in Hamdi, p. 81.
other parties within the municipalities. Why not within the government? We are not tyrants…
The other parties are not our enemies, but our brothers. And fraternity imposes dialogue.” From
statements such as these, Madani appeared to be approving of all kinds of opposition, even if
they expressed “blasphemy” in a Muslim nation.

On the other hand, he qualified what constitutes acceptable opposition in several ways.
First, he was quoted as saying, “We do not reject those who are good Muslims.” From such a
statement, it appears that the FIS would communicate only with those groups who are pious
Muslims. Responding to a question concerning the possibility of cooperating with other parties
in the national legislative elections, Madani said, “…God orders us to help each other in
devotion, integrity and piety… On these bases, we are ready to cooperate with those who wish
it.” Again, it appears that piety and religion were a kind of requirement for cooperation with
opposing parties. He also claimed that “the Islamic Salvation Front does not consider itself as
being the trustee [of Islam] or its source, and it does not consider opponents or those who fight it
to be non-Muslims.” Again, because the FIS did not consider itself to be Islam, it would not
consider opponents to be outside Islam. The status of the opposition, although it was
theoretically allowed to exist, was thus complex in terms of the way that Madani viewed those
opposing the FIS vis-à-vis Islam.

The final consideration in terms of Madani’s vision of pluralism concerns his underlying
assumption that the Front Islamique du Salut, despite the allowed existence of opposition to
correct its errors, was indeed the “right,” “true” or “correct” party. In reference to a leader of

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another Islamist party, Madani said, “We like Sheik Sahnoun, but we like the truth above all.”

He was recorded in 1990 asking, “Do we make people afraid with our wisdom?” From statements such as these, it seems that Madani assumed that the FIS was the wise, true party and that opposition could exist, but its purpose was to correct the FIS, not necessarily to remove it from power. For example, he said, “We are ready… to listen to opposition even if it is a minority, when it is right and benefits us.”

He connected this sense of legitimacy to the FIS’s claim to represent the entire Algerian populace: “… We are using the dialogue of understanding and integration in order to cooperate on the scene of action. They form parties to isolate themselves. We, in contrast, are open to everyone. They measure things in terms of their followers; we take the interests of all people into consideration.”

By presenting the FIS as representing all Algerian people, not just a group with its own interests, Madani argued that his party was closer to the “truth” and thus opposition and pluralism existed only to keep the FIS on the correct path towards the truth. This assumption was also mirrored in the fact that Madani claimed he was not surprised that the FIS won the June 1990 elections.

This assumption of the FIS’s “correctness” or “wisdom,” presumably connected to the Front’s model and goal of Islam, was therefore a nuanced way for Madani to mediate his apparent openness to opposition and pluralism.

The second major concept in Madani’s conception of democracy is liberty and freedom. For Madani, “liberty” was an abstract concept, but it also denoted specific liberties. Broadly
speaking, “liberty is a necessity of existence.” On 5 June 1990, Madani declared: “We found ourselves before the beginning of a test with an eye to raise up the word of God and to introduce liberty in different capacities.” The abstract notion of liberty then took on more specific meanings, such as “liberty of expression, of opposition… to avoid errors of which the price will not be paid by those who committed them, but by the people.” He connected liberty to a certain notion of justice in which the people did not have to pay for their leaders’ mistakes. Freedom was thus an important aspect of creating a just society for Algerians. Madani claimed that the FIS would guarantee freedom of opinion after winning the 12 June 1990 elections. As for other public liberties, these “are guaranteed. We will secure the people’s rights and liberties, including freedom of ownership, freedom of living, freedom of work and freedom of expression. We will make Algeria a Hyde Park not only for expression, but also for choice and behavior. It will be a free place, God willing.” Moreover, “a multiparty system cannot be conceived without the liberty to say ‘no’ when necessary.” Liberty in democracy thus also included freedom of “choice” and “behavior,” not just freedom of opinion and opposition.

Although closely tied to the notions of pluralism and liberty, the third aspect of democracy, choice, had some of its own important dimensions for Madani. Throughout the one-party rule of the FLN following independence from France, Algerians had no ability to choose their leaders. For Madani, “The important thing is that the Algerian people will be the winners when they make the choice [in the national legislative elections]. What is important is that the

20 Madani, quoted in Hamdi, p. 82.
22 Madani, quoted in Hamdi, p. 82.
24 Madani, quoted in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans.” Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic (22 June 1990), p. 22.
Algerian people’s right to choose their representatives is restored…”26 Hence, the freedom and ability alone to make a choice in their representatives was a victory for Algerians, for they could willfully make their collective choice in their leaders. In this way, choice was both individual and national, as seen when Madani said that in democracy “people are a will entirely free in their choice.”27 As each person exercised his or her own free choice, the collective will of the people would emerge, a simple and obvious point, but it was a condition that had not existed in postcolonial Algeria. As for the victory that came from the people exercising their right to choose, one still wonders whether Madani’s confidence in the vote itself comes from his assumption that the FIS was the “true” party that would be victorious. Nevertheless, the three intertwined ideas of pluralism, liberty and choice give some insight into the ways in which Madani conceived of democracy as he claimed that the FIS supported it as a means to solving Algeria’s problems by choosing new leaders. Although his support for opposition and pluralistic politics was nuanced, Madani did at least theoretically support the existence and expression of opposition as part of the necessary liberties of the Algeria people, particularly as it related to their right to choose their leaders.

The other side of Madani’s rhetoric to be examined concerns the more concrete plans he had for democracy in Algeria. So far, the more theoretical notions of democracy, pluralism and choice have been addressed, and he was cited on the subject of civil liberties that would be guaranteed. Yet, one still wonders what the Algerian Islamic state would look like according to the moderate members of the FIS: how the *Front Islamique du Salut* planned to rule Algeria and, in particular, if it would be a freely multiparty state. The discussion will turn first to a few of Madani’s statements on the participation of the FIS in the local, municipal and national elections

27 Madani, quoted in Hamdi, p. 82.
in order to find his and the moderates’ attitudes towards democratic elections and if they planned to keep holding elections once they came to power.

Madani’s rhetoric on elections must be surveyed chronologically because it was dependent on events occurring in Algeria between 1989 and early 1992. At the end of 1989, Madani was supportive of democratic elections as the means to solve Algeria’s crisis:

Elections are the means to reaching a solution. The state considers us the opposition. Opposition means disagreement, and we say there is a need for change. But how can such a change be made? Via violence or dialogue. And we repudiate violence and say it is wise to choose and adhere to dialogue. And the best way to conduct a serious dialogue is to refer the issue to the people so they can choose what they want. And we will accept any official the people choose.28

Here, Madani made a clear distinction between violence and dialogue, saying that dialogue and elections constituted the best manner in which to reach a solution. In the same interview, he also stated that the FIS was considered “the legal framework through which the Algerian people are working to put a limit to their sufferings by achieving desired solutions and restoring their status in order to contribute to the Islamic nation’s progress and salvage humanity and civilization.”29

Clearly, elections and the political party of the FIS were not only the “best” way to solve Algeria’s problems through the Islamic solution, they were the “legal” way. At this point, elections carried the utmost legitimacy for Madani.

Another important part of Madani’s statements about the electoral process involves what would happen if the FIS was not elected to a majority and whether the FIS would respect the decision of the Algerian people. In an interview in April 1990, Madani discussed what would happen in the case of the Front’s electoral defeat: “…Our position will be to accept and to respect the will of the people… there exists in this country some people who demand Islam, and

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others who do not... we understand each other on a minimum, that is to say the will of the
people.”30 As elections were the way of the people to express their will, Madani appeared to be
respectful of the results of elections, even if the FIS did not win them. This attitude is especially
important in analyzing the attitudes of the moderate wing of the FIS towards ceding political
power. This position was somewhat qualified by Madani when he said:

[The FIS believes] that the elections are a determinant for everyone. No
matter what the results are, we will respect the majority… We consider, in effect,
that he who has been elected by the people reflects the will of the people. In
contrast, what we will not accept is this elected person not acting in the interests
of the people. He must not be in contradiction with the Sharia, its doctrine, its
values. He cannot make war on Islam. He who is the enemy of Islam is the enemy
of the people.31

For Madani, Islam was part of the will and interests of the people. So, while the FIS would
supposedly respect the decision of the people to an elect their leader, Madani qualified this
acceptance of electoral results by appealing to the accountability of the leader to his people. This
accountability involved respect for the interests of the people seen in the adherence to the
principles of Islam. In this way, Madani argued that the electoral process and its results would be
respected as long as they fit within the framework of Islam. Thus, Madani presented a refined
acceptance of electoral results, although he did at least demand some accountability from
political leaders along the lines of Islam.

In May 1990, Madani was also quoted on the relationship of elections and Islam to the
goals of the FIS: “For the FIS, the elections are not an end in itself... Islam is not a means. The
FIS will not sacrifice Islam for the elections and does not consider power as being an
objective...”32 From this statement, Islam was clearly the first priority of the FIS, even for the

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30 Madani, quoted in an interview with Algérie Actualité from April 1990, cited in Burgat and Dowell, p. 128.
31 Madani (date unknown), quoted in Burgat and Dowell, p. 131.
32 Madani, quoted in El Moudjahid (4-5 May 1990), p. 2.
moderates. The group planned, then, to retain its Islamic character if it came to power or not, meaning it was not just using an Islamic platform to gain control of Algeria. Moreover, the people had the right to judge the FIS on its Islamic values. At the same time, elections were not considered “not an end in itself,” in the sense that he was not necessarily arguing for the perpetuation of elections in the way that he argued for the permanence of Islam. Certainly, they were a means to gain power, but this statement is ambiguous as to whether elections were an “end,” or goal, at all. Thus, Madani was vague about the status of elections if the FIS gained power, though he made it clear that the model of Islam was nonnegotiable for the moderates.

In June 1990, after the local and municipal elections, Madani, as the spokesman for the Front, began calling for the reelection of the National Assembly, of which the members all belonged to the FLN.33 The government hesitated and was slow to respond in the following months. In May 1991, like that of Benhadj, Madani’s rhetoric had clearly hardened at a rally during which he called for a political strike:

The Islamic Salvation Front says we are ready to embark on the elections, however, with guarantees; legitimate methodological guarantees, the first of which is not to act according to these repressive laws, as we cannot achieve legitimacy through illegitimacy, unless the president of the Republic complies with the opinion of the Islamic Salvation Front. One of the characteristics of the Islamic Salvation Front is to demand and to struggle. When claiming does not prove convincing enough, striving to achieve what is right becomes necessary, God willing. It is a general strike, a political strike, not one for partial unionist conventional demands.34

Here, the word “struggle,” which will be redefined in the rhetoric of Benhadj, has appeared. Between June 1990 and May 1991, Madani called for reelection of the National Assembly numerous times, and it seems that the lack of response from Chadli Benjedid’s government,

33 See, for example, Madani’s interview in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans,” Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic (22 June 1990) 22.
34 Madani, quoted in “Islamic Front Leader Calls for ‘Political Strike,’” Algiers Domestic Service in Arabic (1 May 1991).
which alienated the Islamists by promulgating an electoral law aimed to weaken the FIS, frustrated even Madani and the moderate wing of the FIS.

A clear divergence in Madani’s rhetoric occurred in the spring of 1991, when he was recorded on multiple occasions calling for “jihad.” However, his definition of jihad was different from that of Benhadj, or at least more closely resembled Benhadj’s early conception of nonviolent struggle, as will be seen below. In April 1991, Madani was quoted again on the strike:

We are continuing to realize our goal, which includes building an Algerian Islamic state whose source is the holy Koran – a state in which the governing is not for power or wealth. The FIS stand has become clear today and if these demands are not realized then there will be a jihad, not a jihad of the individual, as some are claiming. The jihad which we will wage will be the jihad of all the Algerian people beginning with the number one item of the FIS… a strike that will be political and enlightened and in the form of a popular referendum, which will compel the authority to submit… The FIS does and will not tolerate the spilling of any blood, as we do not want this to happen.35

Most obviously noteworthy from Madani’s above comments is that he was not calling for any kind of violent struggle against the regime; instead, he spoke of a strike and a popular referendum. Nevertheless, this notion of struggle was notably absent from Madani’s earlier statements, when, for example, he discussed dialogue, elections and choice in December 1989.

On 1 June 1991, not long before his arrest, he was recorded in a video, speaking after Ali Benhadj and leading the crowd in a chant: “There is no god but God [“Il n’y a de Dieu que Dieu,” meaning that there is only one God]. God is the most grand, and He makes his servant triumph. He blessed his soldier, and He triumphed over those who oppose him. For the Islamic State, we live. For the Islamic State, we die. And in the way of God, we carry out jihad. And for that, we are going to meet God.”36 The connection of jihad to death here represents an even

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further divergence from Madani’s rhetoric, particularly because six weeks earlier he defined *jihad* as nonviolent. He made this speech with Benhadj, so it is possible he was intentionally addressing Benhadj’s followers with this more radicalized rhetoric. Although Madani’s rhetoric appears to have hardened, which has concerned observers and scholars, he spent the majority of the period from 1989 until his arrest in 1991 proclaiming the importance of the elections as the means to change Algeria’s leadership and solve the country’s social and economic problems.

Indeed, elections were seen as a means to change Algeria’s leadership, but did the moderate FIS plan to keep democratic elections for good? Madani claimed to support pluralism and tolerate opposition, but those claims were rather nuanced. More importantly, even the moderate Madani became frustrated and hardened his rhetoric when the political situation was not in favor of the FIS. When asked about his plans for opposition parties in Algeria, Madani’s typical answer was that allowing opposition to exist if the FIS were in power would be decided by the people.  

37, 38 His ambiguity was evident when he placed the responsibility of pluralism on the people, who in turn had to be responsible to the principles of Islam. One might argue that these comments meant that the FIS had no plans for allowing opposition parties. At the same time, deferring to the Algerian people was arguably the plan itself, and this was in accordance with democratic principles, especially those of pluralism, liberty and choice put forth by Madani.

The last aspect of Madani’s rhetoric that relates to the moderates’ plan to govern Algeria is that of the concept of *shura*, or “consultation.” As will be seen below, Benhadj clearly supported *shura* as the Islamic way for Algerians to express their opinion over the state of their community. Interestingly, however, this author was only able to find one instance where Abassi

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38 Madani, quoted in an interview from *Jeune Afrique* n° 1543 (25 July – 1 August 1990), p. 21.
Madani discussed *shura*, but it is a crucial quotation. This statement from Madani’s interview in *Jeune Afrique* answers some questions about the plans of the FIS to govern Algeria: “There are many conceptions of democracy. And there is also *shura* (consultation), which presents advantages that one does not find in democracy. The FIS will adopt *shura* as the method of government the day when it governs. But it will not force the others to adopt it.” Madani explicitly said here that the FIS would govern according to *shura*. He clearly saw *shura*, the Islamic concept of power, as different from democracy, but he also implied that they could exist within the same pluralistic framework when he said the FIS would not impose *shura* as a way of governing on all Algerians. In this way, Madani did not see the FIS coming to power to impose its Islamic ways of governing onto those who did not choose them.

The above statement is arguably the most important piece of rhetoric that came from Madani, and possibly from the entire *Front Islamique du Salut*, that concerns the one and done democracy accusation. Madani acknowledged the existence of choice, freedom and pluralism – his three facets of democracy – while he reconciled his framework of democracy with the Islamic concept of *shura*. Although one would like to know how he thought this would have played out in practice, the ability of Madani to reconcile these two concepts is crucial. It presents a framework under which the moderates such as Madani could incorporate the radicals’ denunciation of democracy: if the radicals were content with ruling only those who desired it through *shura*, then there was at least the possibility of the moderate and radical wings of the FIS being content to govern Algeria in a democratic and pluralistic setting. Of course, such musings are only conjectural, and the radicals certainly did little to suggest that they would be content

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39 This discussion of *shura* was the only instance found by this author in the primary sources, and it was not found in any of the secondary literature. It cannot be concluded that no secondary work makes reference to this quotation or another quotation about *shura*, but its absence from the literature found by this author is noteworthy.

40 Madani, quoted in an interview from *Jeune Afrique* n° 1543 (25 July – 1 August 1990), p. 21.
ruling through shura within the framework of democracy. Yet, Madani’s comment proves that he at least, and quite likely most of the more moderate wing of the FIS, was able to conceive of the coexistence of Islam and democracy beyond merely using democracy to come to power, and he was able to do so in a way that incorporated some of the radicals’ beliefs. Thus, this comment by Madani, although it is just one in a much larger collection of statements, is crucial for addressing the plans of the moderate FIS once it came to power to maintain the democratic setting. It does not answer every question that the one and done democracy accusation incites, but it at least represents an important clue as to the plans of the FIS.

The wealth of statements by Madani from speeches and interviews allow for a rather complete characterization of his conception of democracy, particularly as it relates to pluralism, liberty and choice. Despite the later hardening of his rhetoric, he claimed that free and fair elections were the only legitimate means of coming to power. Finally, in terms of a positive vision for Algeria, he emphasized the people’s choice and will, especially in terms of allowing for opposition, while also claiming that the FIS planned to rule Algeria through shura in a pluralistic framework. His statements on tolerating opposition were the most nuanced, and it has been suggested that his rhetoric was often varied depending on the audience that he was addressing.41 Such an observation is a reminder of Madani’s role as the president and spokesman of the Front who addressed a wide audience, ranging from Western media to Algerian citizens. Therefore, the moderate discourse of the FIS as promulgated by Abassi Madani is necessary to any discussion about the democratic nature of the Front Islamique du Salut because it shows some theoretical and practical amenability of the Islamic values and goals of the FIS to democratic principles, especially those of the sovereignty of the people and political pluralism.

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Ali Benhadj and the Radicals

An analysis of the radical rhetoric of the Front Islamique du Salut, as articulated by Ali Benhadj, provides little arsenal to the scholar attempting to find fault in the one and done democracy charge, and so the radical rhetoric has been a convenient source for those advancing accusations of the anti-democratic nature of the FIS. The radical rhetoric of Benhadj represents the current of FIS discourse that was less amenable to democracy. Benhadj made no secret about the fact that he did not believe in democracy; he denounced democracy and its ‘vices’ at every possible opportunity. Nevertheless, what concerns the current discussion most is the logic behind Benhadj’s denunciation of democracy. This is not to say that his logic was always reasonable, but analyzing his statements and writings provides insight into the reasons Benhadj and the radical group within the FIS were so strongly opposed to democracy. These reasons were especially grounded in the radicals’ understanding and perceptions of democracy. The first part of the discussion draws from Benhadj’s articles published in the 23rd and 24th editions of El Mounquid (The Savior), one of the Front’s newspapers. In addition, the discussion will analyze as many other statements and writings as possible, particularly those concerning his attitudes towards electoral participation and plans for Algeria, in order to put forth as complete a picture of Benhadj’s rhetoric as achievable.

Ali Benhadj, as the unofficial second-in-command and representative of the radical wing of the FIS, identified many problems with the concept of democracy: its origin, its definition as popular sovereignty, the rule of majority, the notion of individual liberty, its moral implications and its associations with secularism. The first major qualm that Benhadj had with the concept of

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42 William Quandt makes the same point in Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria’s Transition from Authoritarianism (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), p. 104: “Those who suspected his view of elections would be ‘one man, one vote, one time’ in the event of a FIS victory had plenty of evidence on their side.”

democracy was that of its origin. It is a “Greek word… a word born in the land of impiety, corruption, and tyranny.” In other words, democracy as a word and a concept was foreign to Islam and Algeria: “We find do not find a trace of this word in either the dictionaries of the Arab language, in the book of God, in the Sunna, or from any of our grand authors.” For Benhadj, then, the “foreignness” of democracy to Islam and Algeria was already a problem in itself.

The second problem Benhadj saw in the concept of democracy was its meaning. Benhadj defined democracy as the “government of the people’ or [the] ‘power of the people.’ From this definition comes what is arguably the broadest framework for his denunciation of democracy, for he saw the sovereignty of the people in direct conflict with the sovereignty of God. More specifically, he argued, “In our religion there exists only one power: That of Allah over men.” The power of God is revealed by the Qur’an, the shari’ah and the Sunna, and Algerians had to submit to that power and its sources only, not to the power of the majority. To obey the power of the majority instead of the power of God was not just undesirable; it was disbelief or blasphemy [kufr]. Moreover, he insisted that “one does not vote for God. One obeys Him.” Put this way, one cannot be both a democrat and a Muslim.

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45 Benhadj, quoted in Hamdi, p. 77.
46 Benhadj, “Un coup de massue…”, quoted in Al-Ahna and Hamdi, p. 87.
47 Benhadj, quoted in Hamdi, p. 77.
48 Abdelasiem El-Difraoui, “La critique du système démocratique par le Front Islamique du Salut,” Exils et royaumes : les appartenances au monde arabo-musulman aujourd’hui : études réunies pour Remy Leveau, ed. Gilles Kepel (Paris : Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1994), p. 114. In his article, Abdelasiem El-Difraoui carries out a very good analysis of Benhadj’s articles and the logic behind them. However, for whatever reason, his article refers to Benhadj’s rhetoric as that of the FIS as a whole on multiple occasions without mentioning the existence of a more moderate constituency propagating its own attitudes towards democracy. For example, on p. 123, he writes “The rejection of democracy by the FIS is total.” This statement is certainly debatable, and, consequently, this misstep will be omitted from the analysis because it does not represent the full range of FIS rhetoric.
49 Benhadj, quoted in Hamdi, p. 77.
50 Benhadj, quoted in Hamdi, p. 75.
52 El-Difraoui, p. 112.
characterized democracy as a religion,\textsuperscript{53} such as when he wrote, “They worship it [democracy] from day to night, forgetting that it is a mortal poison of which the foundation is impious.”\textsuperscript{54} As a result, Benhadj made the incongruity between Islam and democracy all the more black-and-white because a person can only have one religion. Choosing the “religion” of democracy, therefore, was painted as the equivalent of choosing to be an infidel.

Third, Benhadj took particular offense at the notion of the rule of the majority. In democracy, “the measure of what is good remains the majority.”\textsuperscript{55} Even more problematic was the idea that “if democracy means for certain liberty, democracy also means fifty [percent] plus one. If fifty [percent] plus one thinks that alcohol should be tolerated, so it will be tolerated… In America, many social words [“mots sociaux”] are legalized in the name of democracy.”\textsuperscript{56} Some examples of such “mots sociaux” that were legal in the West because the majority approved of them, at least some of which Benhadj most likely had in mind, included gambling, drugs, prostitution and pornography.\textsuperscript{57} The rule of the majority was also problematic because Benhadj did not think the people can govern themselves directly, but they must do through their representatives.\textsuperscript{58} In this way, the rule of the majority becomes a dictatorship of the minority of those elected, because “the will of the people is placed between the hands of their elected representatives. And [the people] cannot revise their decisions, or annul them, or modify them.”\textsuperscript{59} Therefore, the rule of the majority did not represent the will of all the people because only “fifty [percent] plus one” is needed to enact a law, and he saw representative democracy becoming a dictatorship of the elected minority.

\textsuperscript{53} El-Difraoui, p. 112. Also noted by Zoubir, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{54} Benhadj, “Un coup de massue… ”, quoted in Al-Ahnaï et al., p. 87
\textsuperscript{55} Benhadj, quoted in Hamdi, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{56} Benhadj, 14 June 1990 speech, quoted in Hamdi, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{57} Hamdi, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{58} Benhadj, “La démocratie justifiée par la majorité” [“Democracy Justified by the Majority”], \textit{El-Mounquid} n° 24, quoted in El-Difraoui, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{59} Benhadj, “La démocratie justifiée par la majorité,” quoted in El-Difraoui, p. 114.
The notion of individual liberty was the fourth concept that concerned Benhadj. Benhadj saw individual liberty, meaning the freedom of choice, as liberty without restrictions or limits. He perceived liberty as a way of disorganizing and intoxicating the world, and as a way to “liberate thought from every constraint, in particular from religious doctrines.” This idea of choice was problematic, especially when coupled with the fact that only “fifty [percent] plus one” is necessary to legalize a behavior, for having the freedom to choose independently from religious thought meant that behaviors could be legalized that are contradictory to Islam and the shari’ah, an idea that was unacceptable to Benhadj. Really, the only choice to which the people had a right was “to choose the Muslim sovereign who governs according to the shari’ah,” though he did not specify whether this choice involved a vote. For Benhadj, then, “in Islam, liberty is chained by the shari’ah and not by right nor, as they say, by the worry to not harm other people.” Interestingly, Benhadj saw the “most fundamental democratic liberties,” the “liberties of belief, of the person, of expression and of property,” as “made sacred en bloc in Islam,” whereas they were “divisible in the decadent conception of the West.” Here, Benhadj seemed to say that Islam guaranteed liberty in its own way, and that the liberties articulated by democracy already existed as a whole in Islam. Accordingly, to articulate them separately from Islam was not necessary. Therefore, Benhadj did not necessarily deny religious and personal liberties to Muslims, but he clearly articulated them in an Islamic framework.

60 El-Difraoui, p. 111.
61 Benhadj, “Un coup de massue...”, quoted in El-Difraoui, p. 111.
62 El-Difraoui, p. 110-11.
63 Benhadj, “Un coup de massue...”, quoted in Al-Ahna, et al., p. 93.
64...*enchaînée par,* most likely meaning figuratively “chained,” as in “tied to.”
65 Benhadj, “Un coup de massue...”, quoted in Al-Ahna, et al., p. 90.
66 Benhadj, “Un coup de massue...”, quoted in Al-Ahna, et al., p. 90
Since these liberties exist in an Islamic way, they are molded – or limited – by the “moral constraints of Islam.”67 This observation points to the fifth point of conflict which Benhadj sees between Islam and democracy: morality. Benhadj and the radical wing associated democracy with a degeneration of the values of spirituality and morality.68 This purported loss of values threatened not only the individual and his or her salvation, but also the ummah and society, for Islam outlined a flawless and divine way of organizing society. Because this model of society was seen as sacred, any change to it that did not fit into the framework would threaten or destroy the Islamic society’s perfection.69 Thus, in defining democracy as anti-Islamic in its origins and morals, democracy was seen as and argued to be a threat to the Islamic social and religious order.

To Benhadj and the radical Islamists of the FIS, articulating notions of liberty separately from Islam was linked to the independence of politics from religion, otherwise known as secularism, the sixth and final issue that Benhadj found in the concept of democracy. According to Benhadj, “to separate religion from the State… you would then have faith in one part of the Book [the Qur’an] and would disown another.”70 This was inadmissible to Benhadj – one was completely obedient to God, the Qur’an and the shari’ah, or one was blasphemous. The problem with democracy was that it “put impiety and faith in the same level.”71 Ultimately, Ali Benhadj’s denunciation of democracy resulted from the opposition of Islam and democracy based on the mutual exclusivity of the two “religions.” In particular, this opposition came from a certain interpretation of popular sovereignty – especially as it relates to majority rule and individual liberty – that was seen in direct conflict with the sovereignty of God over mankind, thereby enabling Benhadj to categorize it as kufr, or blasphemy.

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67 El-Difraoui, p. 117.
68 El-Difraoui, p. 117.
69 El-Difraoui, pp. 111-12.
70 Benhadj, “Un coup de massue…”, quoted in El-Difraoui, p. 111.
71 Benhadj, “Un coup de massue…”, quoted in Al-Ahnaf et al., p. 87.
Benhadj’s discourse concerning democracy as *kutr* is not without its contradictions or its complexities. The radicals’ rejection of democracy was arguably a propagandistic tool in their strategy to gain power.  

Certainly, the goal of any rhetoric is to mobilize support for a cause. The issue becomes more complicated when one considers that in the period from 1989 until early 1992, the radicals were willing to participate in democratic elections. Indeed, one might want to argue that this was a onetime participation in order to gain power and rid Algeria of the “heresy” of democracy. Yet, Benhadj never explicitly articulated any belief in using democratic elections only to come to power. Overall, his discussions of *shura*, the existence of opposition, and his plans for Algeria shed some light on his more practical views of democracy.

While denouncing democracy as heresy, Benhadj did allow for the governing Algeria through the Islamic concept of *shura*, or “consultation.” Benhadj did not give a clear definition of *shura*, perhaps because he assumed his followers knew its meaning, but it has been described as the deference of legislatures to experts in economics, science, politics and technology and those in touch with the realities of society, as much to those trained in Islamic jurisprudence [*fiqh*], in the formulation of new laws. It has also been explained as the way in which Muslims can voice their opinion over the state of their community to their leaders. Benhadj looked to democracy in the West and all that it has legalized through the rule of “fifty [percent] plus one,” and countered that “No, we, we have *shura*. This provision in *shura* for political dialogue and legitimate representation meant that the FIS rhetoric, even that of the radicals, cannot be dismissed as entirely undemocratic although these provisions were vague and incomplete.

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72 El-Difraoui, p. 123.
73 Hamdi, p. 80.
74 Al-Ahnaf et al., p. 86.
75 Benhadj, quoted in Hamdi, p. 76.
76 Heristchi, p. 122.
In addition, Benhadj contrasted *shura* with democracy in saying, ‘There is no democracy in Islam. There exists only the *shura* with its rules and constraints… We are not a nation that thinks in term of majority-minority. The majority does not express the truth.’ This quotation reiterates several of the parts of the concept of democracy with which Benhadj took issue, as detailed above, but it also introduces the idea of the way Algerians think. *Shura* represented a different way of thinking than the ‘majority-minority’ mindset of democracy, and, as Benhadj took issues with the rule of the majority, *shura* represented the Islamic way of governing, ‘with its rules and constraints.’ Yet, Benhadj did go into the specifics of ruling Algeria through *shura*. For Benhadj, *shura* was the sole possible way for a Muslim to exercise his right and duty of opinion, though this opinion could only be exercised over the good progress of the community, according to the *shari’ah*, not over every issue.

An important qualification to the voicing of opinion comes from Benhadj’s attitudes towards pluralism, opposition and multiparty politics. For Benhadj, the opposition of other parties had to be within the principles of Islam: ‘Multi-partyism is not tolerated unless it agrees with the single framework of Islam… If people vote against the Law of God… this is nothing other than blasphemy. The ulama will order the death of the offenders who have substituted their authority for that of God.’ Apparently, Benhadj also advocated changes to the Algerian constitution that would connect multi-party politics to the Islamic framework. This qualification thus suggests that in reality Benhadj and the radicals would have accepted opposition and pluralism as long as they were “Islamic.”

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77 Benhadj, quoted in *Algér Républicain* (December 1989), cited in Willis, p. 144.
78 El-Difraoui, p. 123.
79 Al-Ahnaf et al., p. 86.
80 Benhadj, quoted in *Horizons* (23 February 1989), cited in Willis, p. 145.
81 Willis 67n, p. 145.
The final section of the discussion of Benhadj turns to other clues to plans that he and the radicals had for governing Algeria were they to come into power. Overall, the questions constantly asked concern the expiration date of the radicals’ participation in the democratic process: was this a one-time occurrence, or is there evidence that they were planning to be committed to the democratic process once they gained power? Unfortunately, the second-in-command is quoted sparsely throughout both the primary and the secondary literature. Arguably, Benhadj is quoted so rarely due to his role as the leader of the Islamist movement represented by the FIS, as opposed to Madani, the leader and spokesman of the political party who had to interact with the press and the Algerian political scene.

The local, regional and national elections appear to have played a complicated role in Benhadj’s rhetoric. On one hand, he said in a mosque on 15 June 1990:

> We would never think that in a Muslim country where the men fought to raise the word of God, Islam was going to be subordinated to elections. Is it conceivable to vote for Islam in a Muslim country? We will win with or without elections… They said that the great success is that of democracy. We say, no, it is the victory of Islam… We won with the voices that agreed with us, but we are going to win over the land. Our victory over the land is the most important. Our victory by our conduit, our civism and our comportment is the most important. \(^{82}\)

Even after just winning the local and municipal elections, Benhadj did not think that elections were necessary to the victory of Islam. Interestingly, he also saw the victory of the FIS coming from its behavior, not from the ballot box. Yet Benhadj also said, “The day of the elections, we will know who a Muslim and who is kafir [an unbeliever].”\(^{83}\) Here, Benhadj placed importance on the elections as a measure of one’s loyalty to Islam. To a man who denounced democracy, participation in democratic elections was still a way of showing one’s faith, which shows that Benhadj had a complicated – if not contradictory – way of articulating Algerians’ participation in

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\(^{82}\) Benhadj (speech from 15 June 1990), quoted in Hamdi, pp. 19-20.  
\(^{83}\) Benhadj, quoted in El-Difraoui, p. 123.
the elections. In addition, Benhadj also said that “the FIS is a means and not an end. We do not want to divide Islam into parties, but we saw that it was the way to work for Islam, and the action is not only political, as one thinks it. Its domains are multiple: education, the elevation of the people’s conscience and politics…” The formation of a political party was not the goal of the movement in Benhadj’s mind. This resonates somewhat with Madani’s statement that elections were not the goal of the Front; together, one can conclude that both leaders did not see their political participation as the ultimate goal of the movement, but as a means of expressing itself at that time. Finally, Benhadj was recorded in May 1991 demanding “guarantees as to the absolute respect of the rules of the game. What is the use of going to legislative elections when we know they are rigged in advance?” So, even in May 1991, Benhadj did see some reason for having elections and for the FIS to participate in them if they were legitimate. These statements on elections show that Benhadj’s discourse on participation in democratic elections by the FIS and by Algerians was complex, particularly in light of his denunciations of democracy.

Perhaps the most powerful – albeit unwritten and therefore difficult to locate – source of rhetoric is Benhadj’s Friday prayer sermons. The prayers that Benhadj led were even broadcast over loud speakers while hundreds, if not thousands, of worshippers listened. The Friday prayers reached thousands of Algerians who were listened to messages such as this:

… For [FIS opponents], “jihad” is the grand evil wolf! [To us,] jihad is an obligation. There are many duties and jihad is one of them. Our prophet, the salvation of God be upon him, said: ‘It is better to stay an hour in my ranks than to bow down sixty years in front of me.’ Next to God, jihad is a very important duty. In the Muslim world today, jihad is an obligation…”

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84 Benhadj, quoted in an interview from December 1989 in al-Bayane, p. 66-70, excerpt in Al-Ahnaf et al., p. 71.
85 Benhadj, quoted in El-Watan (27 May 1991), cited in Amirouche, p. 95.
Generally speaking, Benhadj’s Friday prayer services denounced non-Muslims, foreign governments, other political parties and liberals. This message was heard by almost 20,000 followers each week.\(^{87}\) While other transcripts of his Friday sermons have been difficult to locate, Benhadj’s prayer services were crucial to spreading the message of the radical wing of the FIS, and they served as important points of mobilization for the FIS.

Like the information available on Benhadj’s Friday prayer services, few sources reveal much about the ideology concerning and plans for democracy of the radical wing of the FIS. Located reports of Benhadj’s statements will be reproduced chronologically and analyzed below, for the historical context played a part in the kinds of statements coming from the radical wing. In particular, one sees more references – or at least more observed and noted references – to jihad after the government’s response to the protests and riots of May 1991, just as one saw a radicalization of Madani’s rhetoric during this same time.\(^{88}\) Such appeals to jihad were thus more plausibly an indication of the further intensification of his radical rhetoric as the more radical leaders and supporters felt themselves being increasingly pushed to the margins of the political system. With this in mind, one cannot assume that the radical members of the FIS planned to take up arms against the government all along.

One of Benhadj’s earlier statements on democracy in Algeria occurred during the 20 April 1990 rally:

…”We speak the word of Islam… And it is for that that this place is inundated with people coming from all the regions of the country. To those who claim that Islam divides, today they can note that it is a religion that unites men. To those who claim that Islam triumphs by the sword, tell them if it is the sword that brought you here today or the call of God… Our policy excludes violence. It rests on the word of God and of His Prophet. It is inspired by neither the East nor

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87 Willis, p. 145.
88 It is possible that such appeals to the responsibility to take up arms existed before June 1991. Yet, one would think that at any point in the career of the FIS from 1989 until early 1992 if such claims were made, they would have been disconcerting enough to an observer or journalist that he or she would have taken note.
the West. But, [it is inspired by] the Book of God and the Sunna of his Prophet…
We will struggle [“nous combattrons”] until the word of God is at the highest. In this important statement from the rally during which the FIS delivered its Plateforme des Revendications Politiques, Benhadj differentiated between (violent) imposition of the Front’s vision and the attraction of Algerians to Islam. Benhadj made the distinction between the “call of God,” which one chooses to answer, and the “triumph by the sword,” to which one is forced to submit. In this way, Benhadj seemed to say that the movement as he saw it concerned an answered invitation from God, as opposed to a forcible imposition. Benhadj also directly stated that the policy of the FIS excludes violence. Indeed, any such rhetoric merits at least some suspicion of being a political maneuver. Nevertheless, compared to the explicit call to jihad a year later quoted on the previous page, repudiating violence does seem to indicate some kind of acceptance of pacifism in the movement at that time. Finally, there is in turn this notion of “struggle,” which, as discussed in the footnote on the previous page, can be understood in different ways. Namely, what exactly “struggle” entailed – be it “opposition” or “armed conflict” – was debatable and, more importantly, malleable. This term is arguably the most important concept that was redefined by the radical FIS members throughout the Front’s participation in the democratic process until early 1992. Therefore, this quotation from April 1990 suggests that the plans of the radical FIS excluded violence and imposition and were more of an invitation.

Two video clips of Benhadj in June 1991 are of particular interest, especially because he was arrested on 30 June 1991 and remained in prison for the rest of 1991. In other words, these two videos comprise some of his last publicly recorded statements. On 1 June 1991, four days before President Chadli Benjedid declared martial law, the first video depicts Benhadj, with

89 “Nous combattrons” can be translated as “We will struggle” or “We will fight.” The choice has been made to translate it as “We will struggle” in the figurative sense because “Nous combattrons” does not necessarily involve a physical fight and, just several lines before, Benhadj says their “policy excludes violence.”
80 Benhadj, quoted in El Moudjahid n° 7.733 (22 April 1990), p. 5.
Abassi Madani at his side, speaking in front of a crowd during the protests and strike that began in April 1991. Benhadj begins: “We ask God to accept us as martyrs. I swear and I swear again that we fear neither the police, nor the army, nor the gendarmerie, nor planes, nor tanks. We only have fear of our creator, and we are ready to die as martyrs.”91 On 18 June 1990, twelve days before his arrest, Benhadj held a press conference declaring:

I will not wait for Chadli, Khaled Nezzar [an army general] or another to come to prohibit me from taking up arms. You want to punish me while you are the aggressor? You lay down your laws then you come to tell me that I am outside the law when I take up arms? Yes, I am outside the law. But I am not outside the holy Qur’an. You, you are outside the Qur’an and the tradition of the Prophet. Me, I am outside the law! They want to make us afraid so that we do not take up arms! If it is like that, I take up arms, I take up the Kalashnikov [AK-47]! They want to make us afraid. God said in the holy Qur’an: “They would like to see you ignore your arms and your baggage, so as to come down on you in a single blow.” God states to watch out and to guard [your] arms. Me, I do not abandon the word of God to follow that of men. The word of God has priority.92

Reflecting back upon Benhadj’s statements in April 1990, one sees a clear difference in tone. Here, Benhadj has redefined the parameters of the term “struggle.” In April 1990, it was nonviolent, perhaps because he and the radicals were not convinced of any need for violence and because they planned to participate in the June 1990 elections. However, in June 1991, he seemed convinced of the need for explicitly armed struggle against the regime. Thus, whereas in April 1990, the “call of God” was distinguished from the “sword,” in June 1991 they appear to be the same.

It does not appear that this call to the taking up of arms against those threatening to deny the law of the Qur’an – the FLN regime and the military – was present all along, at least to such a degree that it was recorded twice in fewer than three weeks. Instead, the changing political climate of Algeria, seen specifically in the strikes and protests that degenerated into riots in the

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91 Benhadj, 1 June 1991, video clip in Arabic with French subtitles in Aït-Aoudía and Labat.
spring of 1990 and spurred the declaration of martial law, pushed the radical Islamists of the FIS towards the edge of the political arena and further radicalized their already extreme rhetoric. In this way, the different strands of rhetoric of the FIS must also be evaluated in terms of historical context and particularly in light of the relationships the FIS had with the state and the democratic process, for both relationships were considerably different in April 1990 and in June 1991. This appearance of radicalization as the FIS was marginalized in 1991 also mirrors the further radicalization and militarization of the FIS in the spring of 1992 when the FIS was banned, ultimately pushing the FIS out of the political and legal arena altogether. This exclusion from the legal sphere was explicit: “I am outside the law. But I am not outside the holy Qur’an.” Benhadj was clearly more concerned with being inside Islamic law than inside national law.

Arguably, Benhadj was never fully within the political sphere. Unlike Madani, he was not the spokesman or president of the Front, nor was he the negotiator or the interviewee. His lack of involvement in such roles, except during the major events, made him less of an apolitical leader and more of a social leader. The power of his rhetoric mobilized Algerians sympathizing with the FIS in the settings of the mosques and the rallies, the more grassroots points of mobilization of the movement that the FIS embodied. Accordingly, Benhadj was less prolific on the subject of political ideas and plans; rather, his rhetoric primarily attends to religious, social, cultural and value-oriented criticisms and articulation of goals. This conclusion is especially supported by the difficulty in even finding statements made by Benhadj. Overall, Benhadj and the radical wing appear to have had a certain social and religious vision for an Islamic Algeria that did not include democracy. Perhaps if democracy could have respected the Islamic law and tradition, then they may have made room for it in practice. Yet in a way, the new electoral law promulgated by the FLN regime in March 1991 betrayed the democratic process, ultimately leading to a
“radicalization of the radicals,” who no longer saw the need – or perhaps even the ability – to work within the “impious” laws and rules of democracy.

Comparisons and Conclusions

Overall, the discourse of the Front Islamique du Salut includes three major sources: the Front itself, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj. The rhetoric of the FIS as a political party said more about the Algerian “crisis” than it did about concrete plans for governing Algeria, except in the concept of shura. Two “platforms” were discussed, but the list of political demands presented on 20 April 1990 was likely to have been read by many more people, as the demands were published in several newspapers. In short, little of the FIS rhetoric came from the organization as a whole. Both the press at the time and secondary writers have thus turned to the top two leaders of the party, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, to analyze the discourse of the FIS. From an analysis of the statements of the president and the second-in-command, it has been seen that one can hardly speak of the FIS having just one discourse.

The above discourse analyses show that the attitudes of Madani and Benhadj towards democracy were clearly different. Although they agreed that democracy entailed the sovereignty of the people, after this point their views of democracy diverged. On the one hand, Madani did not seem to take issue with the idea of the people ruling, claiming that they have a right to express their opinions, especially if they do not approve of their leaders. Moreover, Madani did not characterize democracy as a competing alternative to Islam; thus he was able to connect democracy to the legitimacy of the Islamic solution. On the other hand, Benhadj got “stuck” on the notion of popular sovereignty. Unlike Madani, he saw the sovereignty of the people as violating the sovereignty of God, and thus democracy was unacceptable kufr, or heresy.
Ultimately, the two different attitudes of the radical and moderate members of the FIS came from the different ways in which they conceived of the notion of the people’s sovereignty: for Benhadj, it was blasphemy, and for Madani, it was a necessary right. Thus, one can see how these different conceptions of democracy and its relationship to Islam led these two leaders of the FIS down such different paths.

At the same time, Madani and Benhadj did agree on some important points, and perhaps this is where they saw the unity in the Front. Both leaders agreed that the Islamic concept of power, *shura*, placed constraints on the will of the people, unlike democracy which left the will of the people unbridled. Both supported pluralism within an Islamic framework, though Madani less explicitly so. Finally, both saw political participation not as a goal of the movement, but as a means of expressing itself. Therefore, a close analysis of the statements of Madani and Benhadj shows that they did agree in some important areas, areas which could have important ramifications for discussions of democracy in Algeria under the rule of the FIS.

In December 1989, Abassi Madani characterized the Front as both a “party and a movement.”93 These two facets of the FIS were reflected in the leadership roles played by Madani and Benhadj. One sees in Madani more of a political leader and spokesman. He spoke more on political subjects, including democracy and pluralism, and appears to have been more in touch with the concerns of the party. On the other hand, Benhadj emerged as the leader of the Islamist movement that the FIS represented. His radical rhetoric was intended to mobilize people at the grassroots level, particularly in the settings of the rallies and the mosques. Benhadj also had a much larger following than did Madani.94 When examining the rhetoric of Madani and Benhadj, it is also therefore necessary to keep in mind that they were speaking to rather different

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94 Brumberg, p. 65.
groups of people. Madani addressed “middle-class intellectuals, businessmen, and reformist or modernist *ulema,*” whereas Benhadj aimed to mobilize “Algeria’s impoverished urban youth.” Moreover, in 1991 over half of Algeria’s population was under the age of 19 and approximately a quarter of the population was unemployed, thus Benhadj “[held] the cards in the FIS.”

Therefore, although Benhadj was speaking to a much larger group of Algerian Islamists, they were a relatively uniform group. On the other hand, Madani had to appeal to a more varied group of supporters, which helps to explain nuances and complexities in his rhetoric.

Above all, a comprehensive discourse analysis of the *Front Islamique du Salut,* and particularly one that discusses democracy, necessarily involves understanding that the discourse of the FIS was not contradictory or alternating. Two distinct ideologies existed under the umbrella of the *Front Islamique du Salut,* and, as Madani and Benhadj both made clear, these two lines of thinking were not seen as contradictory to one other – they even overlapped at times. Moreover, this explains why there is little or no evidence of a power struggle between Madani and Benhadj; these leaders, their rhetoric and their supporters were seen as complementary, not competing. They both wanted the same thing, an Islamic state, but they argued for it in different ways. Because they did not see themselves as negating one another, it is thus not wise for the scholar to use the discourse of Benhadj to negate that of Madani, as has tended to happen in discussions of the one and done democracy charge. At the same time, the moderate discourse of Madani was not so overwhelmingly convincing of its respect for democracy that it can be argued to override the radical discourse of Benhadj.

Ultimately, it is most useful to think of Madani and Benhadj in the same way they ended the period from 1989 until 1992: side by side (in jail). Because they were both arrested on 30 June 1990, they were quoted very little after their arrests. However, their last “statement” with

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95 Brumberg, p. 65.
which they leave the scholar of this time period was a joint hunger strike they carried out in prison in September 1991. As reported in *Jeune Afrique*, “As for the two charismatic heads of the FIS, it will be necessary for them to assure their authority over the movement. With their hunger strike, they are discrediting in advance all candidates to their succession.”96 In other words, even from jail, Benhadj and Madani reminded their supporters that they still exercised their dual leadership of the FIS. In sum, the above discourse analyses have shown that the FIS and its leaders put forth a variety of statements about democracy, but only a minor portion of these statements, especially those concerning *shura*, pluralism and political participation, addressed what would happen to democracy once the FIS came to power. Yet above all, rhetoric is just words, and so the next chapter depicts the behavior of the FIS when it took power in local government.

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Chapter V

The Local Behavior of the FIS: The Push for the Islamic Social Order

As a party and a movement, the FIS looked to the ideal of the “Islamic state” as the solution to the problems faced by Algeria in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This Islamic state, reached through adherence to the principles and values of the *shari‘ah* as laid down in the Qur’an and Sunnah, was ultimately a social model: the Islamic state was to be built foremost around the return to Islamic values in Algerian society. In other words, “the goal [was] to create an authentically Muslim microsociety” within the larger Algerian society, which was not seen as authentically Muslim.¹ To the FIS, the achievement of this social model on the national level would also mean the end of the political problems, such as corruption, and the economic suffering that the Algerian population had endured. In fact, the program of moralization of society according to the values of Islam was clearer to observers compared to the vagueness of the economic program of the FIS and to the elusiveness and apparent contradictions of the Front’s political plan for Algeria.² Thus, although democracy had different meanings as a strategy to gain power for the various tendencies within the movement, there is little doubt that the Islamists agreed on the necessity of the Islamic social order.³ The actions taken by the FIS to achieve this social order after winning the local and provincial elections in June 1990 and until the army coup in January 1992 have been of particular concern to those pushing the one and done democracy accusation. Both observers and scholars of the *Front Islamique du Salut* have

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used reports of the behavior of the FIS in local government to indicate its plans to come to power through democratic means only to install a one-party Islamic state.

While there does seem to be an implicit connection between the social order and the type of government in a nation, this connection has rarely been articulated, particularly in the secondary literature. Rather, the connection between the reports of the Front’s behavior and its plans for democracy is often assumed. In order to truly analyze the one and done democracy accusation, the connection needs to be not only named, but also contextualized within the discourse of the FIS on the Islamic social and moral order. Overall, those looking at the FIS have judged its social policies to be threatening to, if not outright violating, civil liberties, especially in the ways that the FIS attempted to implement the Islamic social model by controlling Algerians’ behavior. Attacks on individual liberties were seen by some as the primary component of the local policies and actions of the Front. These concerns over civil liberties have also been related to the extent to which the FIS implemented or planned to implement its vision for Algerian society. Therefore, individual civil liberties, such as freedom of opinion and choice, that have been argued to be essential to democracy were perceived as negotiable or even disposable to the FIS, thereby inciting fears over the commitment of the FIS to democracy.

While acknowledging the validity of such concerns, one must make attempt to explain FIS actions within its own rhetoric on society and the Islamic state for which it was striving. This is not to say that the actions taken by the FIS can be justified, but they can at least be made intelligible. First, the behavior of the FIS will be detailed, presenting pre-June 1990 activities

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5 Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 158. Willis is one of only a few authors found who names the concern over civil liberties as the connection between concerns over democracy and fears of the Islamic social order.

6 These reports will often be specific to certain cities and provinces in Algeria. Reference will be made to their locations, but their locations can also be found in the maps of Algeria included in Appendix A.
primarily as a point of contrast with the post-election reports, which tend to be more negative. The treatment of women by the FIS will also receive focused attention, both in reporting FIS behavior and in its explanation. As will be seen, women figured prominently into the FIS conception of the Islamic social order: their bodies and behavior were seen as symbolic measurements of the morality of Algerian society as a whole.\footnote{See, for example, Cherifa Bouatta and Doria Cherifiati-Merabtine, “The Social Representation of Women in Algeria’s Islamist Movement,” \textit{Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective}, Ed. Valentine M. Moghadam (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, Inc., 1994). In their article, Bouatta and Cherifiati-Merabtine describe the important place of Algerian women in the Islamic social order using FIS articles from its newspaper \textit{El Mounquid} (The Savior).} As a result, FIS efforts to bring about the Islamic social order often targeted the dress, behavior and lifestyles of Algerian women, which critics saw as threatening to take away the rights and liberties of a huge class of Algerian society. Therefore, reports of FIS behavior\footnote{The reports of FIS activities have been assembled from both primary sources and secondary sources, as other scholars have been able to locate various reports of the FIS in local government that were unattainable by this writer. The secondary literature tends to use both Algerian and Western periodicals as well.} and an analysis of the rhetoric concerning the Islamic social order are crucial tools for connecting the Islamic social order to discussions of the Front’s commitment to democracy.

\textit{Pre-Election Activities: Services and Mobilization}

The actions of the FIS before the elections in June 1990 tend to show the more positive aspects of FIS behavior at the local level. Indeed, the period between the Front’s formation and the June 1990 elections was a time of mobilization of sympathizers and resources, so the FIS was not motivated solely by a desire help others. Nevertheless, the FIS provided a wide range of social services to Algerians, presenting itself as a benefactor of the needy.\footnote{I. William Zartman, “The Challenge of Democratic Alternatives in the Maghrib,” \textit{Islamism and Secularism in North Africa}, ed. John Ruedy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), p. 215.} Perhaps the earliest example of FIS social welfare services, as well as of the Front’s capacity to mobilize its
members,\textsuperscript{10} came in October 1989 with the earthquake in Tipasa, a \textit{wilaya}, or province, in the north of Algeria on the Mediterranean coast. The FIS, “in trucks emblazoned with the front’s logo,” was the first to bring supplies, food and tents to the affected countryside.\textsuperscript{11,12} In the months leading up to the elections in June 1990, the FIS engaged in other “grass-roots social welfare and charity”\textsuperscript{13} activities, such as the establishment of soup kitchens, health clinics, tutoring services and emergency assistance. In addition, the FIS activists put pressure on the FLN governments, which were unable or unwilling to assist people and communities.\textsuperscript{14,15} Ultimately, the FIS was able to demonstrate to Algerians that it was able to bring benefits to them, even before it was in power. While this does speak to an effective way of attracting supports by offering them material benefits, these social services were also aligned with the notion of an Islamic social order based on justice, including the guarantee of a certain level of welfare.

FIS activists indeed attempted to enforce \textit{shari’ah} law and the Islamic social model in the period leading up to the June 1990 elections, reportedly “harassing single women and disrupting nightclubs in Algiers.”\textsuperscript{16} In addition, concerts, restaurants and a theater were attacked.\textsuperscript{17} During the month of Ramadan in 1990, Islamists shut down a restaurant for serving alcohol to Western tourists.\textsuperscript{18} Finally, in an apparently “makeshift attempt to enforce their version of Islamic law,” a

\textsuperscript{10} Patrick Girard, “Que vont faire les islamistes de leur victoire?” \textit{Jeune Afrique} n’ 1538 (20-26 June 1990), p. 8.

\textsuperscript{11} Kim Murphy, “Algerians Confront Freedom: Perestroika has replaced one-party rule. Fundamentalists have mobilized. The nation is in turmoil on the eve of a free-for-all elections, \textit{Los Angeles Times} (5 June 1990), p. 1.


\textsuperscript{15} Zartman, p. 215.


\textsuperscript{18} Murphy, \textit{Los Angeles Times} (5 June 1990).
crowd apprehended a thief and tried to amputate his hand in a car door. While these activities were continued and even intensified in some areas after the 1990 elections, it is difficult to determine whether this kind of behavior resulted from orders by the FIS leadership to begin to establish an Islamic social order or from FIS activists’ own initiatives. Without discounting these more negative reports, the FIS did also provide some positive social benefits to its supporters and to Algerians in the period leading up to the 1990 elections. Moreover, the Front’s pre-election activities arguably enabled it to capture “cultural hegemony,” or unquestioned social and cultural power, in some areas of Algeria before it gained political power in the cities and provinces.

Reports of the FIS in Local Government

After the FIS took power in local and municipal governments in 1990, its activities appear to have shifted more towards policies meant to bring about the Islamic social order, which were the kinds of policies that gave rise to the belief that the FIS threatened civil liberties. The likely explanation for this perceived shift is two-fold. First, the victory of the FIS captured the attention of the press, and particularly that of the Western media, in new ways, so that it was more attuned to the behavior of the FIS, especially concerning threats to various liberties. Second, and more importantly, the fact that the FIS had gained some power allowed it to more systematically begin to implement its vision of the “Islamic state,” using the municipalities as the building blocks. The FIS governments appeared to feel “mandated” by its electoral success to

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19 Murphy, *Los Angeles Times* (5 June 1990). NB: Amputation of the hand is the punishment prescribed in the *shari’ah* for theft.
21 A few reports of FIS actions are unclear as to whether they describe pre- or post-June 1990 behavior, so they will be considered primarily by their publication dates unless the dates of the events are otherwise discernible.
“install in their communes… a little Islamic republic.” Therefore, the changes in the types of reports of the local behavior after the elections most likely resulted from a combination of the alarm felt by observers that the FIS could actually gain power and the intensification of the FIS attempts to implement the Islamic social order.

A final disclaimer about the verity of the reports of the actions and policies of the FIS must be made. Some FIS decisions were reported in a distorted manner, and some were even complete fabrications by the government. For example, the supposed war on rai, a mix of traditional and rock music, was not entirely true. In other instances, controversial policies attributed to the FIS, such as the ban on shorts outside of beaches and the closure of some places providing alcohol, had actually been enacted by the previous FLN councils with little opposition. Presumably, the FIS kept enforcing this legislation because it fit with the Front’s social vision. Nevertheless, there were other reports that were accurate, as well as some that contained grains of truth, even if they were still contestable as a whole. It is therefore worthwhile to remember that reports of FIS behavior were politicized, and, depending on the observer’s or reporter’s sources or political stance, they may be exaggerated to a certain extent.

The following sections on the local behavior of the FIS begin with continued reports of FIS social services in order to show that the Front did not abandon its social welfare activities once gaining power, meaning that these services could not have been entirely a ploy to win local votes. Next, the discussion provides reports of various social policies related to the Islamic social order, such as the banning of alcohol and rai music. Lastly, reports of the policies towards and  

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23 Burcat and Dowell, pp. 284-85.
24 Willis, pp. 158-59. Willis goes on to cite from Burcat and Dowell the same instances of questionable reports of FIS policies.
25 For present purposes, as many available reports as possible will be included, especially because some were provided by reputable Western media sources. Thus, it is this author’s estimation that they have some semblance of truth for the sake of scholarly study.
treatment of women will be given, particularly as they relate to the *hijab*, or veil, and to *mixité*, the mixing of the sexes, which were two major areas of contention between the FIS and those opposed to the social program of the Front. In addition, an assessment of the FIS in local government will be given to explain the range of FIS behavior. It is impossible to paint a uniform picture of the FIS as it acted in local government inasmuch as the FIS vision of the Islamic social order was implemented to varying degrees, depending on the strength of the Front in each area, and used various methods, ranging from discouragement to outright prohibition of certain behavior. Moreover, the FIS was working at the level of local and provincial governments, which seemed to have considerable autonomy from the Front’s national leadership.

*Social Services, Continued*

The FIS did not abandon its services to Algerian society after its success in the June 1990 elections. In fact, in the days following the elections, one of the group’s first acts was to clean the streets of Algiers, where garbage had been accumulating due to a sanitation workers’ strike. Other examples include FIS activists providing help to families during funerals in the preparation of receptions and the observance of religious rites in the burial of the deceased. The aid given by the FIS for certain social services, such as helping a family at a loved one’s funeral, was arguably not motivated solely by providing help to Algerians, although one could argue that to help a family observe the proper religious rites was seen as a form of aid by the FIS activists. Either way, this description of the funerals speaks to an example of FIS behavior that was both in service to society and prompted by the goal of implementing the Islamic social order.

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During Ramadan (March) 1991, the FIS also set up Islamic restaurants and food vendors to sell food at a lower price than was the market cost at the time,\(^\text{28}\) due to shortages in official markets and high costs on the black markets. These ‘Islamic markets’ also sold back-to-school supplies at a lesser cost at the beginning of the school year.\(^\text{29}\) A variety of FIS efforts therefore marked its ascent to municipal power, as seen below:

[The] work [of associations incorporated by the FIS after its legalization] expanded after the FIS won the municipal elections of 1990. In Sidi Said [a city in northern Algeria], for example, the associations began to clean up the housing project. You have to imagine what it’s like in these neighborhoods. It’s desolate. You go out, you come back with 15 kilos of mud on your shoes. Public space is abandoned. The Islamist groups started planting trees and rose bushes, creating a green space. They painted stores, facades of buildings. They marked out a soccer field, put up goal posts and cleaned the field every day. In these housing projects household garbage is just thrown outside where children play. Through this municipality, they brought in big garbage bins with lids. A truck comes, empties the bin and takes away the garbage…\(^\text{30}\)

This description is particularly interesting because it attributes a fair amount of dedication on the part of the FIS activists to create and foster public, social space, as well as to provide more immediate services such as garbage removal. The FIS appears to have been reshaping Algerian society along Islamic lines, rather than trying to break society apart. Even after winning local and regional elections, the FIS was furthering its credibility as a party able to provide economic justice, social responsibility, and moral observation and consideration.\(^\text{31}\) Thus, the program of social services provided by the FIS continued after its success in the June 1990 elections and contributed to the building of the Islamic social order.

\(^\text{28}\) Entelis, p. 240
\(^\text{29}\) Roy, p. 81.
\(^\text{31}\) Entelis, p. 240.
**Threatened, Discouraged, Banned**

Far more common were reports of the FIS policies to restrict certain behaviors that it saw as threats to the building of the Islamic social order and, ultimately, of the Islamic state. The application of the Islamist ‘moral order’ intended to cleanse Algerian society of the ‘sins’ with which it had been burdened, thereby making it healthier and more pious. Two major targets of FIS local policies were the sale and consumption of alcohol and *raï*, a genre of music mixing traditional and rock music. Other threatened, discouraged or banned areas of life included television antennae, beaches, courts and FLN symbols. Alcohol was the target of some of the first prohibitions enacted by the FIS after it gained local and municipal power, and its prohibition was based on a reading of the Qur’an that finds alcohol to be un-Islamic. In Constantine, for example, the sale of alcohol was made illegal, including in the large hotels designed for tourists. Yet, the FIS had some sympathizers and supporters, such as businessmen and civil servants, who were ‘drinkers.’ Not wanting to alienate these supporters, the FIS moved cautiously, often preaching against the consumption of alcohol, rather than completely banning it. In addition, realizing that individual consumption was hard to control, the FIS also focused its efforts on wine merchants, demanding that they close their shops. The FIS even went around neighborhoods of Algiers asking citizens to sign petitions to have legislation passed to shut down stores selling alcohol. Not surprisingly, signing these petitions was framed as a “Muslim duty,” therefore almost every person signed so as not to risk “being designated as a bad Muslim compared with his neighbors.”

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33 Rouadjia, pp. 87-88.
Although from such descriptions the FIS appears to have been quite stringent when it came to its policies on alcohol, its efforts to stop alcohol consumption had varying degrees of success and severity. This variation was dependent on the Muslim identity of different areas of Algeria: in places where traditional Islam was accepted throughout society, such as in certain Saharan regions in the eastern part of Algeria, the FIS faced few obstacles in closing alcohol shops and bars, but in coastal areas, which tend to be more “Westernized,” the FIS often had to retreat from its stance on alcohol because of open hostility. Therefore, the diverse implementation of policies concerning alcohol refutes the argument that the FIS implemented a uniform social policy across Algeria and shows that the implementation was at least somewhat determined by the social values already in place in certain areas.

A second major target of FIS social policy was music, particularly the genre of *raï*, a mix of traditional and rock music. For example, in the town of Tipasa, the capital of the Tipasa province, *raï* music was outlawed by municipal and regional councils, and in Oran, the festival of *raï* music was banned as “unlawful” (*haram*). In a commune near Oran, the FIS-controlled municipal government prohibited a concert, arguing that the *râï* and modern songs were ‘in contradiction with the sacred book of God and the Sunna of his prophet.’ Accordingly, the policies of the FIS to implement the Islamic social order even involved bans on certain types of music that it saw as contradictory to the values of Islam. There were also reports of FIS activists demanding the severing of connections of *antennes paraboliques*, or parabolic antennae – which they called “*antennes paradiaboliques*” or “para-diabolical antennae” – that were broadcasting French television shows perceived as threatening to Islamic morality. Finally, in terms of other

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35 Rouadjia, p. 88.
36 Rouadjia, p. 87.
forms of entertainment, the Front shut down movie theaters, and it closed nightclubs and stopped funding athletic activities. The Front also prohibited New Year’s celebrations, dancing in public and some theatrical performances. Thus, the policies of both FIS-controlled councils and the actions of FIS activists after the June 1990 elections targeted some forms of entertainment in Algerian society that were viewed as hostile to the Islamic social order.

Women were mostly the targets of FIS policies that concerned Algerian beaches, but Algerian men were not entirely unaffected by these policies. Most of the prohibitions concerning men were related to the wearing of shorts, which were forbidden on the beaches in some places. On other beaches, many men could only wear the ‘Islamic swimsuit,’ Bermuda shorts covering the knees. The above reports are also examples of the Front’s overall push for ‘Islamic attire,’ a set of rules of modest clothing. In two provinces, Chlef, to the west, and Batna, to the east, the Front’s governments set up tribunals parallel to the existing court system to adjudicate issues of civil law. The FIS clearly felt itself empowered in some places to decide issues beyond religious law, although in Islam religious law is indistinguishable from civil law. In addition, the Front’s local and regional councilmen established a ‘moral police’ in two towns. Abassi Madani denied that the ‘Islamic Police’ were using violent tactics that violated individual liberties, but according to some sources, as early as June 1990 that the “movement’s

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40 Roy, p. 81.
41 Karima Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal: Fundamentalism, Family Law, and Feminist Struggle in Algeria,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 17.1-2 (Winter-Spring 1995), pp. 51-77. NB: Only the pages for the document as it appeared in *Arab Studies Quarterly* are known, as ProQuest did not provide the original document or any page numbering. Accordingly, the article will only be cited in its entirety.
42 Rouadja, p. 87.
44 Roy, p. 81.
45 Rouadja, p. 88.
46 Rouadja, p. 87.
tendency toward harsh, anti-democratic activity [was] well-established. though few reports of these moral police have been found, the creation of various moral enforcement authorities certainly speaks to the responsibility the Front felt in the implementation and enforcement of the Islamic social order.

Other than the activities ranging from discouragement to prohibition of certain behaviors, the FIS took local measures to reject and discredit the *Front de Libération Nationale* government and its “betrayal” of the national revolution in 1962. One example of such behavior is the replacement of the FLN decades-old motto, ‘By the People, For the People’ on the public buildings of the FIS-controlled areas with the words ‘Islamic Commune’ [or ‘Islamic Community’]. When FLN security forces began tearing down the Front’s signs in June 1991, FIS activists responded to calls from loudspeakers in mosques to retaliate, ultimately attacking the security forces. These events illustrate a rejection of the FLN’s betrayed promise to the Algerian people and of the FLN’s existing authority, even in the face of the government’s security forces. The symbols of the FLN were even called the “incarnation of jahiliyya,” or paganism, referring to the pre-Islamic period of paganism. Such a justification for its attacks on the FLN fit into the frame of impiety used to denounce and delegitimize the FLN regime. Overall, reports of the actions of FIS activists and the policies of FIS-controlled local and provincial governments depict an organization that both aimed to bring social justice to Algerian society through welfare services and to control it through measures intended to achieve the Islamic social order.

50 Rouadjia, p. 90.
The Algerian Woman: The Measure of the Islamic Social Order

The actions taken against Algerian women are among the most widely cited examples of the purportedly anti-democratic nature of the Front Islamique du Salut because such policies were seen as threats to the civil liberties of a large portion of Algerian society. In some arguments, Algerian women were “those with the most at stake” in the political events of 1990-1991, and what appeared to be at stake was their freedom of dress, behavior and lifestyle. This section of the discussion on women details the kinds of policies and activities the FIS championed during its time in power in certain local and regional governments, though instances of an “aggressive” stance towards women were seen before the elections of June 1990.

Discussions of the threats to individual liberties have centered around three major issues, the first of which concerns the dress of Algerian women. In particular, the debate over the hijab, the veil worn by Muslim women, has been fueled by reports of imposition on or encouragement to women to wear the hijab. As in discussions of Islam and democracy in other societies, the veil took on symbolic meaning for FIS critics inasmuch as it was seen as a threat to women’s liberties, especially of choice of their dress. Second, the FIS rhetoric and actions to discourage or ban mixité, the mixing of the sexes, have been cited as threats or impingements on women’s civil liberties, particularly their freedom of movement. The third major area of FIS policies encompasses some general lifestyle choices of women. Overall, the appearance and behavior of Algerian women were measures of the society’s morality and piety for the FIS. For those concerned about civil liberties, Algerian women’s clothing and comportment were symbols of civil liberties and freedoms threatened by FIS policies and attitudes towards women. In other

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51 Kapil, p. 36.
52 In Algeria, the headscarf was the particular form of the hijab, the traditional veil imported from the Middle East, in question. Susan Slyomovics, “Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria”: Women and Public Space in Algeria,” Middle East Report No. 192: Algeria: Islam, the State and the Politics of Eradication (Jan.-Feb., 1995), p. 10
words, the Algerian woman – her body and her behavior – became a kind of symbolic battlefield for the FIS in its push for the Islamic social order and for critics who have seen the policies of the FIS as menaces to democracy in Algeria. The discussion will open with more general comments about FIS measures concerning women before focusing more specifically on the three major aforementioned topics as manifested in FIS behavior. A later overview of FIS discourse on women will serve to explain some of these actions taken.

The policies of the FIS towards women, which targeted their dress, movement and behavior, ranged from intimidation to flat-out attacks on women, as well as improvised activities, and “systematic harassment” of women in neighborhoods that were FIS strongholds.53 Between 1989 and early 1992, when the FIS was a legalized political party, the number of both individual and mass instances of aggression towards women soared.54 The FIS also used the mosques to claim that women were at fault for crime and for the unemployment and housing crises. In addition, the policy of coeducation was seen as “diminishing boys’ academic achievements.”55 Many FIS policies intended to keep women out of public spaces such as cultural centers and other public facilities.56 Moreover, it appears that if the FIS could not discourage or prohibit women from certain public places altogether, its members at least tried to control the way that women presented themselves in public, as seen in issues of women’s dress.

The first of the FIS policies to target women’s bodies through the medium of their clothing was the hijab, the headscarf often worn by Muslim women. In early June 1990, it was reported that the number of women wearing the hijab had already “increased dramatically,” even

53 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
before the FIS came into local and provincial power.\textsuperscript{57} This suggests a kind of social pressure on women, for the FIS was not implementing governmental policies at that time. At the same time, women already tended to “dress conservatively and many [wore] veils” in areas where the FIS was powerful in June 1990.\textsuperscript{58} While this also may suggest this same social pressure on women, it does not exclude the possibility that some of these women were also sympathetic to the FIS if not FIS supporters, so the reasons for these women wearing the hijab are difficult to discern. One Islamic charity organization even gave out free hijabs to women ‘who wanted to wear it but also did not have the means to buy it.’\textsuperscript{59} Thus, there was a fair amount of social pressure on women by the FIS to wear the hijab.

While it seems that women who wore the hijab did not face much intimidation or violence from FIS activists and governments for their clothing choices, those who resisted the Front’s policies on the veil were not spared – they were specific targets of FIS harassment.\textsuperscript{60} In Constantine, an attack on a woman who refused to veil was reported in which the ‘Islamic Police,’ mentioned above, threw acid on the young woman.\textsuperscript{61} After the FIS took power in local and regional governments, one of its first policies in some areas was to have non-veiled women fired from their jobs.\textsuperscript{62} Dressing in Western clothing was seen also as an affront to the Islamic social order, for “The West” fell into the category of impiety in the Front’s frame of morality. Even before the June 1990 elections, Algerian women in Western clothing were assaulted.\textsuperscript{63} The same kinds of attacks on women in Western dress continued after the FIS town councils took

\textsuperscript{57} Murphy, \textit{Los Angeles Times} (5 June 1990).
\textsuperscript{59} Heller, \textit{Le Monde} (27 June 1990).
\textsuperscript{60} Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal."
\textsuperscript{62} Medgahed, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{63} Murphy, \textit{Los Angeles Times} (5 June 1990).
office in June 1990.\textsuperscript{64} In addition, there were attacks on women in bathing suits before and after the beginning of the implementation of the “Islamist ‘moral order’ in the summer of 1990.\textsuperscript{65} If it did not attack women for wearing bathing suits, the FIS still strongly advised women against wearing two-piece bathing suits, with the result that even some technically mixed-sex beaches were practically deserted by women in FIS-controlled communes.\textsuperscript{66} Clearly, while in local power the FIS tried to enforce, either subtly or violently, a certain vision of how Algerian women were supposed to dress by emphasizing the \textit{hijab} and denouncing Western forms of dress in order to make women visually fit into their vision of the Islamic social order.

The second major area concerning FIS policies towards women involved the social practice of \textit{mixité}, the mixing of the sexes. Prior to 1990, schools, offices, beaches and other public places were generally desegregated, meaning that women had a fair amount of freedom to move around in public places.\textsuperscript{67} In addition to attempts to control women’s physical appearances in public places, many FIS policies aimed to restrict women’s presence itself in public areas. The Front’s attacks on \textit{mixité} were thus a way to keep women out of certain public spaces. These moves against the mixing of the sexes were contrary to constitutional and statutory laws of Algeria, and they created, according to one scholar, a “sexual apartheid.”\textsuperscript{68} Even on beaches where \textit{mixité} was technically allowed, FIS policies on bathing attire succeeded in keeping women so far away from men that they stayed away from the beaches altogether. In response, some women changed the meaning of the acronym “FIS” from “\textit{Front Islamique du Salut}” to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[64] Mortimer, p. 586.
\item[65] Rouadjia, p. 87.
\item[66] Marion, \textit{Le Monde} (17 July 1990).
\item[67] Mosques were still segregated.
\item[68] Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
\end{footnotes}
“Fatma: Interdit de Sortir,” or “Fatma, forbidden to go out.” Despite their more indirect ways of keeping women off of the beaches, FIS activists were also known to chase women off beaches. Beaches were thus one example of public spaces that the FIS pushed to segregate according to sex.

Another set of targets of sex segregation were the schools in FIS-controlled communes. As noted above, the FIS blamed the boys’ lackluster academic achievements on coeducation, though it seems that they blamed the effects of the presence of girls, not girls’ own academic achievements, for decreasing boys’ academic performance. In affected schools, the abolition of mixité ranged from recommendation to enforcement by the FIS. In one town west of Algiers, Saoula, the town council prohibited coeducation in its schools. When the Ministry of Education, which was still controlled by the FLN government, blocked this municipal legislation, FIS activists and representatives began to protest in October 1990 with banners declaring ‘No to co-education!’ In Constantine, the FIS municipal council abolished coeducation in July of 1990, whereas, the provincial assembly of Algiers waited until the beginning of the school year. Clearly, the FIS prohibitions of mixité in the school systems moved at different paces and with varying degrees of success, but such prohibitions of coeducation were rather widespread.

Other public areas where men and women had typically mixed were also targeted by the policies of the FIS councils. For example, some buses were segregated, as were cultural centers. Marriage ceremonies in public hotels were not allowed to be mixed. Attacks were even made

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70 Rouadjia, p. 87.
72 Rouadjia, p. 88.
73 Rouadjia, pp. 87-88.
on a mixed-sex recreational facility. Overall, the Front’s moves against mixité encompassed
many areas of the Algerian woman’s public life. The prohibition of mixité is especially
interesting to a discussion of the FIS in local government because it seems to have been more
policy-driven, rather than the effect of loosely directed, undirected or improvised actions of FIS
activists. In this way, gender segregation is a clear example of the effects on women’s liberties
resulting from the policies of the FIS-controlled governments, which were themselves enhanced
by the behavior of FIS activists.

The third and final overarching target of FIS policies and actions involved the lifestyles
of women, particularly of those who were unmarried, working or students, as well as those who
left home at night. The FIS had a very specific vision of the “moral” Islamic woman, a vision
that centered on the woman’s role in the family and household. Women who did not fit this mold
were thus seen as threats to the Islamic social order, hence the FIS attention given to women’s
behavior and “responsibilities,” which included the care of the family and household. Single
women were common targets for FIS on the local level, including widows who did not remarry
and women who lived by themselves for various reasons. For example, an apartment building
for single women was targeted, and the furniture was brought out onto the street and set on fire.
There was also a rather well-known incident in 1989 of a divorcée, living alone with her
children, whose home was burned down by “religious fanatics” who claimed her lifestyle was
“loose” and immoral.

75 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
76 See discussion of FIS attitudes towards women below.
77 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
78 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
80 Murphy, Los Angeles Times (5 June 1990).
The second category of women targeted by FIS activists were working women. Impromptu harassments were reported concerning women in their professions. Additionally, businesses owned by women were attacked. Women were also harassed or threatened if they did not make religious standards take priority over professional standards. The third category of women threatened because of their lifestyle choices included female students. In 1989, three hundred FIS activists surrounded the women’s dormitories at the University of Blida, allegedly led by Ali Benhadj, and imposed their own curfew by not letting any students in or out of the building. In an attempt to control the curriculum of schools, the FIS banned technical training and athletics for women in schools. Fourthly, the FIS purportedly harassed women who went out at night. Algérie Actualité, an Algerian newspaper, reported that “paramilitary groups” had been formed in Blida, in northern Algeria, to “patrol the conduct of women,” exclaiming that ‘All girls who go out at night will die!’ Therefore, one sees attempts by the FIS to control women’s lifestyle in its treatment of certain groups of women.

The FIS did try to rally support for its organization and movement among Algerian women. In December 1989, the Front organized “hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, busing them into Algiers from across the nation, for a march to celebrate the ‘honor of the Algerian woman.’” In December 1991, another march was organized which “thousands of veiled women attended.” Despite its policies and actions towards women, the Front tried to show its support for women, or at least the “ideal woman.” Interestingly, however, no women

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83 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
85 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
87 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
88 Murphy, Los Angeles Times (5 June 1990).
89 Murphy, Los Angeles Times (26 December 1991).
were present at the 20 April 1990 rally. Yet, some women listened to the Front and were drawn to the cause of the FIS for complex reasons:

What is paradoxical, among other paradoxes, is that the party narrowed enormously the space of liberty for women – restricting speech, returning to a strict surveillance of women. Yet, at the same time, you saw militant women, including university women, who worked extremely hard for the charitable associations and for the electoral campaign. How to explain this? Most women didn’t have that much liberty to lose. When they left the house they were subjected not only to family and social pressure but also to the obscenity of the street. Then the Islamists ask them – or, in some cases, imposed on them – the wearing of the *hijab*. There was some imposition, say from a father or husband who says, ‘You can’t work if you wear this.’ *But there was also consent by women* (emphasis added). A woman putting on the *hijab* puts on virtue, respect and freedom of movement. Wearing the *hijab*, she can go out and not have to submit to insults. From the point of view of relaxed access to public spaces, it’s important.

The *hijab* thus played a complicated symbolic role for the FIS and for women, for even though women were encouraged or forced to wear the *hijab*, it also allowed them other freedoms in public places. Still, the fact that women had to wear the headscarf in order to be “free” in the public places in which they were allowed merits further analysis and will be partly explained in the overview of FIS conceptions’ of the role of women in the Islamic social model. In addition, “The FIS touched on issues which are the most sensitive: concerns about women, about the degeneration of moral values. On their side were upright women, as guardians of moral order. They were cleaning up public space. On the other side were bars, alcohol, urban degradation.”

Such comments clearly show the symbolic role of women for the FIS, for “upright women” were contrasted with the immorality of consuming alcohol and other practices.

This framework may have also encouraged women to join the cause of the FIS, either from the desire to be a “guardian of the moral order” or from the pressure felt to conform to the

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91 Bekkar, p. 15.
92 Bekkar, p. 15.
standard of the moral Islamic woman. While an examination of women’s reasons for joining or supporting the FIS would require lengthy analysis unsuited for the present discussion, the fact that there was some support for the policies and ideals of the Front indicates that the FIS did not entirely alienate all women. Overall, the controls of women’s clothing, their ability to mingle with men in public spaces and the affronts to women’s lifestyles are evidence of the Front’s use of women’s bodies and behavior to enforce a particular vision of the moral Algerian woman that fit into its notions of the Islamic social order.

Assessment of the FIS in Local Government

Estimations of the effectiveness of the FIS in implementing its policies are varied and tepid. It is clear that the FIS was unable to completely establish the Islamic social order within Algeria, though it was successful in creating some social control. First, the effectiveness of the Front’s actions and policies appear to have at least partly depended on location, for in the very pious and Arabized regions of the interior, the discouragement and prohibitions of various behaviors, such as drinking and mixité, were less noticeable, presumably because many of these behaviors were not practiced.93 In other words, certain FIS social attitudes and policies clashed less with practices in some areas of Algeria, especially those areas that were less Westernized than the areas along the coast. Also, the implementation of the Islamic social order itself was varied. Despite reports of prohibitions, one scholar of Algeria noted that “When in August 1990 I spent a day at the beach in Chenoua in the Tipasa commune controlled by the FIS, I saw no evidence of any restrictions. Bikini-clad Algerian women sunbathed freely, and men ordered bottles of beer at nearby cafes without incident.”94

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93 Entelis, p. 231.
94 Entelis, p. 232.
One explanation is the localized nature of the Front’s social policies. Even Madani commented that the councils moved ‘too quickly,’ trying to enforce their policy through law rather than through more soft or cultural power. In addition, the FIS-controlled municipal councils faced resistance from FLN-controlled provincial governments, which were known to overrule FIS council rulings, and the FLN national regime. Competition over jurisdiction was especially evident in the criteria used by FLN and FIS officials to legislate together, for while the FLN was more or less secular, the FIS was religious; therefore, local and regional officials often disagreed over moral issues. The local councils also did not have the authority to address economic and social problems, which were the “main attraction” of the FIS. For example, the councils did not have control over their budgets, so sometimes FIS councils’ legislation was little more than symbolic. Hence, some of the ineffectiveness of FIS social policies came from political obstacles to carrying out its social agenda through legislation.

An interesting aspect of the *Front Islamique du Salut* in local government was the type of power and control that it exerted its push to establish the Islamic social order in Algeria. Reports of FIS attacks on women, on beaches, on places serving alcohol and other threatening aspects of Algerian society certainly suggest that the FIS exercised some hard power in “persuading” people to conform to its vision. At the same time, the FIS exercised indirect and subtle cultural power. In painting its vision of the moral Islamic society, the FIS denounced anything outside of this vision as outside Islam and thus as *kufr*, or heresy. As *Le Monde* noted in 1990, as the FIS went around Algiers asking for inhabitants to sign a petition to have the sale of alcohol banned,

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95 Entelis, p. 233.
96 Willis, p. 160.
97 Rouadjia, pp. 88-89.
“The social pressure is too strong and no one want to take the risk of being designated as a bad Muslim compared with his neighbors.” The report of FIS control in *Le Monde* elaborated:

Rare are measures taken under the influence of only brutality. The coercion is more subtle: the ‘brothers’ speak and the people to whom they are talking conform to their opinion, by conviction, conformism or prudence. That is the veritable victory of the FIS. Under the influence of the crisis, the walls evolved towards more rigorism and the majority of the population has no spirit, good or contrary, towards the prohibitions agitated by the FIS. *Even the voters who did not vote for the FIS do not know how to resist* (emphasis added).

*Le Monde* also reported the “presence of Islamists in pretty much all sectors of Algerians’ social life,” noting that “this constant presence, this penetration of society is equally synonymous with social control.” These descriptions suggest that the kind of pressure exerted by the FIS was often less direct than the hard power suggested by depictions of stringent FIS governmental policies and activists’ violent behavior. Thus, one can argue that FIS power was concentrated in a kind of social and moral hegemony, rather than in Algerian political institutions.

Overall, the success of efforts of the *Front Islamique du Salut* to bring about the Islamic social order while it was in power in some local governments was varied. Many observers and scholars have suggested that there was not much of an overall effect to the FIS social policies, and that the results of the policies were mixed. In some places, the FIS was so ineffective that complaints, particularly from secularists, were lodged against the Front’s handling of municipal affairs, and some people were became disenchanted with the organization. At the same time, the Front’s more direct policies such as the prohibition of *mixité*, its activists’ actions, and its more subtle social control seemed to have achieved some conformity with its vision for

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103 Willis, p. 161.
104 Entelis, p. 232.
106 Burgat and Dowell, p. 284.
Algerian society. Moreover, the Front’s further electoral success in December 1991 did validate its rule in local government to a certain extent by showing it had not lost a significant amount of support through its handling of local and provincial affairs. Therefore, the FIS may have not governed too effectively, but its social control was almost absolute in some places, and its Islamic social model did not lose significant support in the first round of the national elections.

*Overview of FIS Discourse on the Islamic Social Order: A Kind of Explanation*

While descriptions of FIS policies and behavior in local are undeniably important to a discussion of democracy because of the threats – real or perceived – to civil liberties, FIS actions did not stand alone. There exists a body of FIS statements and writings about the Islamic social order and the place of women in this order. These sources of FIS rhetoric should be considered when looking at the actions of the Front because they serve to explain some of the Front’s behavior, although they by no means justify the Front’s actions. Rather, a glimpse into the rhetoric of the Front on its vision of the Islamic social order allows one to make sense of the specifically Islamic framework of FIS behavior, rather than simply comparing threats to civil liberties to Western standards of democracy. Certainly, one might argue that the ideas behind various behaviors, whether or not it appeared to support democratic conceptions of liberties, do not matter in the face of the threats and attacks themselves. In other words, one can argue that FIS actions say it all. However, a survey of the rationale behind some FIS behavior is necessary to evaluate the plans of the Front to keep or discard democratic government because one can begin to discern what kind of society – democratic or otherwise – the FIS envisioned.

As a reflection of the structure of the reports given above, the discussion turns first to more general statements about the Islamic social order before looking more specifically at FIS
discourse on women. Lastly, statements about civil liberties will be addressed in order to show that the FIS had some of its own conceptions of civil liberties that it wanted to guarantee. Generally, the Front saw the return to an authentic Islamic social order as the source from which all other solutions to Algeria’s political and economic problems, such as corruption and unemployment, would emanate.\textsuperscript{107} Curing society through Islam would eventually cure all else, hence the motto “Islam is the solution.”\textsuperscript{108} As noted in the beginning of this chapter, there was little disagreement about the need for increasing morality in Algerian society, despite different conceptions of the path that should be taken to gain political power.\textsuperscript{109} Moreover, the FIS saw its electoral success as the electorate’s approval of its superiority in moral and social issues.\textsuperscript{110}

The path to the Islamic order was an important part of the Front’s rhetoric on social and moral order. After the victory of the FIS in local and provincial elections in 1990, Madani described the importance of the “Islamic municipality” as being the “foundation stone of the pyramid of the Islamic state. We will move from the municipality to the governorates [provinces]… I believe that with this victory, we have taken the first step out of the crisis, God willing.”\textsuperscript{111} This emphasis on the municipal governments shows that the FIS did not just consider its local victories to be a way to simply gain legitimacy in order to enact its Islamic state on the national level. Rather, the municipal policies were a part of the Front’s plans for Algeria and must be considered as such, especially in the absence of the experience of the FIS in national government. Moreover, Madani claimed that the municipal, provincial and national governments

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\textsuperscript{107} Murphy, \textit{Los Angeles Times} (26 December 1991).
\textsuperscript{108} This also serves as a partial explanation for the much observed vagueness of the Front’s political and economic agenda.
\textsuperscript{109} Rouadjia, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{110} Entelis, pp. 236-37.
\textsuperscript{111} Abassi Madani, in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans,” \textit{Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic} (22 June 1990), p. 22.
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needed to complement one another, so one cannot necessarily assume that the FIS intended to enact any radically different plans on the national level than those implemented in the cities.

In its statements, the moderate FIS generally allowed for the gradual implementation of the Islamic social order. In an interview in July 1990, Madani said that the shari’ah could be applied slowly, meaning that some “problems,” such as mixing of the sexes and coeducation, would be “resolved in steps.” Madani even said that the “more draconian measures” of the shari’ah, including amputating the limbs as punishment for theft and expelling women from their workplaces, would not be adopted. Madani also spoke of educating Algerian society: “You improve a culture through education. You raise the human being free but armed with values.”

Such a comment also speaks to a more subtle way of implementing the Islamic order: by educating the person, certain beliefs are not imposed, but instead they are learned through socialization. At least from Madani’s standpoint, the FIS would not impose its vision in any radical way, and he even expressed frustration with FIS-controlled councils acting ‘too quickly.’ This speaks to a lack of direction in – or at least a lack of regard for the organization’s overall plans for – the implementation of the Islamic social order. In this respect, not every action of FIS activists or even FIS-controlled governments between June 1990 and January 1992 can be considered an endorsed or supported act of the Front, which in part explains the range of FIS behavior noted earlier.

The commentary on FIS-enacted policies or FIS-inspired actions is not abounding, but it does provide some idea of the framework in which the FIS was behaving. The FIS focused

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112 Madani, in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans,” Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic (22 June 1990), p. 22.
114 Kapil, p. 34.
mainly on the clothing of women through the veil and Western dress, but it also did not support
certain men’s attire. For example, Madani was in favor of banning shorts in tourist towns,
arguing that “it is a question of defending our Islamic values which do not allow people to
parade through town half-naked.”117 Clearly, some notions of Islamic values centered on the
human body and conceptions of modesty. In addition, Madani said that nightclubs would be
“organized,” but that the FIS was more concerned with more serious problems, including
unemployment and housing shortages. However, he said, “Those who want to dance have no
problem. They have the sea, the ships, and the plans. They can dance wherever they like. They
have Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and France.”118 He seems to refer to Westernized Algerians or
Algerians who closely identified with the French when he mentioned “those who want to dance,”
for he cited the two other North African countries that were under the influence of the French. In
this way, he contrasted “Western” and “Islamic” priorities and forms of behavior. Above all, he
was not calling for the immediate closure of nightclubs, although it did occur in some places
after the June 1990 elections. In all, few statements about specific policies were found, though
they no doubt existed. The Front, through its spokesman Abassi Madani, apparently spoke of the
gradual implementation of the shari’ah and abolition of some practices, yet these statements
were not always followed by local governments in the hands of the FIS. If anything, these
municipal governments had a fair amount of autonomy in their interpretation of the Islamic
social order with regards to the central leadership of the Front.

FIS attitudes towards women are more discernible than those concerning other aspects of
the Islamic social order. The subjects of women’s dress and behavior, seen in reports of FIS
actions, were present in the Front’s discourse on women. In addition, two other registers aid the

118 Madani, in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans.”
explanation of the Front’s treatment of women: FIS ideas about the ideal Algerian Muslim woman, including her role in the Islamic society, and about male and female sexuality. In the Front’s attitudes towards the clothing of women, the veil plays a central role as a measure of Algerian society’s morality and piety. This attention and importance given to the hijab was not unique to the FIS; the wearing of the hijab was used as a form of resistance to French colonialism in Algeria during the struggle for independence in the 1950s and 1960s.

Therefore, the hijab had the symbolic value of a kind of cultural authenticity in the Algerian mindset. One of the more militant leaders of the movement said that women in the Westernized cities and towns of Algeria had to start wearing the veil again so as to not look like ‘cheap merchandise that is bought and sold,’ thus illustrating that the Front was concerned with the meaning of women’s appearances. A woman’s body was the expression of her femininity, and thus it had to be covered by the veil, a sign of pureness and dignity. Thus, in the attitudes of the Front, the hijab represented morality and piety in response to the exhibition of the female body that it considered pervasive in Algeria and contributing to Algeria’s social problems.

One major concern of women and other observers was that the FIS planned to impose the hijab on women. Abassi Madani claimed that the veil would not be imposed, but his explanation was somewhat nuanced:

*Jeune Afrique*: There is also the hijab. Some women fear you would impose Islamic dress on them.

Abassi Madani: Dear brother, with or without the veil, they are our daughters. We respect them and they have rights in all our considerations. Those who want to wear the hijab do it. As for those who do not want it, we are not responsible for them.

J.A.: What must one understand? The wearing of the veil will not be imposed?

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120 Slyomovics, p. 9.  
122 Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine, p. 191.
A.M.: Never! Not on your life!
J.A.: You promise it to women who do not want to veil themselves?
A.M.: We will not impose with force a given conduit. The Muslim woman who does not wear the veil is a believer, but she cannot harmonize her faith and her behavior. The problem is thus of the educative order. It cannot be resolved by a penal sanction, because we would make an executioner from a doctor. We want to fight against the sickness, not the sick person.123

One first notices his rather ambiguous statement that the FIS was not responsible for women who did not want to veil. He qualified this statement somewhat by saying that a Muslim woman who did not veil is not a heretic, but she did not show her faith in her appearance. Madani, and likely the rest of the moderate FIS, wanted women to veil and saw the way to achieving this through education about their faith, not through imposition. This raises some questions about the social control of the FIS described above, for if they were educated in such a way, the choice in their clothing and behavior would not really be their own. Nonetheless, statements about the wearing of the *hijab* show the important place given in the Islamic moral order to the Algerian woman who “harmonizes” her appearance and her faith through her appearance.

particularly controversial statements were made about the “place” of a women being that of the home, not the workplace. Such attitudes were manifested in the FIS policies and actions taken against working women and female university students, though the FIS appeared to have been tolerant of primary and secondary education for girls provided that it was in sex-segregated schools. Ali Benhadj claimed that the primary role of women was to reproduce men, and thus they have no role outside the home.124 The party itself was noted for its belief that the home was the fundamental place for a woman, for that is where she monitors the care and education of her children. This view was unanimous among the Front’s leadership, who only really approved of

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124 From an interview in *Horizons* 23 February 1989, cited in Kapil, p. 34.
widows and divorced women with children in the workplace. This view of women was also seen in the Front’s political program, *Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqad:* ‘Her work must be legitimately considered as a social and education function, giving her the right to a pension.’ This at least depicts a kind of respect for the Algerian woman who stays home, for the program suggested that the role of caretaker of the family would be the “occupation” of women.

The ideal, moral Algerian Muslim woman was one who stayed at home and cared for her children and husband. This idea was expressed by Madani in his articulation of education in the familial setting: “Our principle concern is with education and the family. It is impossible to achieve an Islamic society without mastering education and this equally demands a healthy and conscientious family.” This ideal woman was seen as the primary source of an Islamic education for her children, which in turn depended on her own religious education. The ideal of the family, through the figure of the mother, appeared as a vehicle or kind of building block for the Islamic society. Without the Algerian woman at home, performing her social function, no such ideal family can exist, and so the Islamic society would fall into disarray. Hence, one ideal kind of woman was appropriate to the FIS, and this image became sacred and inviolable in its own way. Such an ideal at least demonstrates the fact that the Front held the ideal role of mother and wife to be a legitimate and important occupation in its own right, but this ideal also confined woman to one social function, the violation of which would disturb the entire Islamic social order.

The final register of FIS discourse on women involved notions of sexuality, both female and male. These conceptions of sexuality were especially visible in the FIS policies banning

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126 Willis, p. 141.
127 Madani, in Willis, p. 142.
128 Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine, p. 190.
129 Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine, p. 191.
mixité. Madani was quite clear about the intention of the FIS to ban the mixing of the sexes:

“There should be no mixing at offices. This is also the case in mosques. This change will take place in the municipal system in which the FIS achieved victory.”130 Benhadj also denounced the immorality of women and men working together in offices.131 Like the policy of prohibiting mixité itself, it does appear that there was a fair amount of consensus in the rhetoric itself of the Front and its leaders concerning the need to stop the mixing of the sexes. The FIS saw mixité as a kind of social ill, and thus it aimed to cure this illness. In its newspaper, one member of the FIS wrote: ‘Despite the disastrous consequences of this frightening epidemic [the mixing of the sexes] that we see around the world, people do not wish to draw the appropriate conclusions and instead try to defend this cancer.’132 The FIS thus advocated the end of mixité in schools, of allowing women to teach boys and thus “corrupt” their minds, and even of women doctors treating men and vice-versa in hospitals.133 The interaction of men and women in public places was clearly a threat to the Islamic social order, for when men and women interacted, it could only lead to uninhibited demonstrations of their sexuality.134 Interestingly, the Front’s fear of the showing of sexuality was tied more to attitudes about men’s sexuality: the belief that it was uncontrollable.135 Hence, the prevention of the mixing of the sexes was mostly a way to control men’s sexuality. Of course, such concerns over men’s sexuality ultimately disadvantaged women. The FIS seemed to accept men’s uncontrollable sexuality as part of the perfect Islamic order, so all temptation needed to be removed. But what of educating men to control themselves, to “harmonize” their faith and their behavior, as Madani spoke of educating women so that they

130 Madani, in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans.”
131 Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh (the political platform of the FIS), quoted in Willis, p. 141.
133 Bennoune, “Between Betrayal and Betrayal.”
134 Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine, p. 192.
135 Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine, p. 192.
would veil? Thus, the reasoning of the FIS included certain apprehensions of sexuality; hence, the prohibition of *mixité* was to meant keep male (and female) sexuality from being unleashed.

Women, through their physical appearance, ideal role in the family and sexuality, were clearly a concern for the Front, and the attitudes described above manifested themselves in policies and actions to control women’s bodies and behaviors. The Algerian woman had a key role in the Islamic social order: if she wore the veil, stayed in places designated for women and performed her sacred function in the home, the Islamic society would be in order. However, if the taboos and rules prescribed to woman were violated, the order would fall apart. As a result, if a woman opposed these restrictions on her body and behavior, she was labeled heretical.\(^{136}\) Thus, the ideal Algerian woman was an all-or-nothing model: she either conformed entirely, or the entire social order was sacrificed because of her immorality and impiety. This conception was disseminated in many issues of the Front’s newspaper, *El Mounquid (The Savior)*,\(^{137}\) so it is also reasonable to conclude that this framework inspired at least some of the behavior of FIS governments and activists. This conception of woman at least partly explains the FIS behavior towards women, though it by no means justifies the Front’s treatment of woman before and after the elections in June 1990.

The final sector FIS rhetoric addresses civil liberties, as these were considered threatened by FIS conceptions of social order and democracy. Madani himself said that civil liberties would be “guaranteed. We will secure the people’s rights and liberties, including freedom of ownership, freedom of living, freedom of work, and freedom of expression. We will make Algeria a Hyde

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\(^{137}\) Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine. These authors carry out an interesting analysis of FIS attitudes towards women in *El Mounquid* in their article, “The Social Representation of Women in Algeria’s Islamist Movement.” Their analysis could only be summarized in this setting, but a reading of this article provides more information about the Front’s conceptions of the role of women.
Park not only for free expression, but also for choice and behavior.” At the same time, the FIS was concerned by the idea of freedom, because it associated the concept of freedom with ‘taking liberties.’ When it comes to women, therefore, the FIS could not conceive of women taking liberties without degrading the dignity of men. At least for women, then, Madani’s claims to guarantee civil liberties appeared to be qualified. Yet, some FIS writings claimed that women’s rights were already guaranteed by Islam, thus discussing their rights was a kind of nonstarter. El Mounqid articles advocated the rights of women to education (primarily religious), to vote, to free opinion, to spread the word of God and to inheritance. These rights, especially the right to vote, were not necessarily violated or denounced in other FIS rhetoric on women or in treatment of women. Of course, one cannot be certain what would have happened had the FIS gained national power, but at least the Front did not seem to openly denounce or attack women’s ability to choose their leaders.

The other important aspect of the FIS conception of civil liberties involves the relationship of the individual to the community. The political and economic well-being of the people as whole took precedent over the individual’s self interest, as evident in Madani’s criticism of the West for its perceived favoring of the individual’s rights to the detriment of the community as a whole. Accordingly, in the FIS conception of civil liberties and individual rights, certain kinds of freedom were accepted as long as they served the interests of the community, and, ultimately, the Islamic social order. In this way, the notion of civil liberties of the FIS had to fit within the Islamic framework of community and order, which is indeed a qualification to any apparent support for civil liberties.

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138 Madani, quoted in “Islamic Front Leader Outlines Future Plans.”
139 Rouadjia, p. 86.
140 Bouatta and Cherifati-Merabtine, p. 188.
141 Esposito and Voll, p. 159.
Additionally, the FIS gave little attention to minority rights, which is somewhat surprising considering Algeria has a significant Berber minority.\textsuperscript{142} In the June 1990 elections, the FIS gained very little support from the Berber regions of Algeria, so perhaps it did not feel the need to appeal to Berbers, and the Berbers were notoriously independent, as noted in Chapter I. At the same time, although Berbers are not Arabs, they are Muslim, so it was also possible that the FIS felt it was still including them. The Muslim identity of almost all Algerians speaks to a larger assumption of the FIS in its plans for the Islamic social order: ‘\textit{Le peuple est musulman au fond},’\textsuperscript{143} or, “The people are Muslim at heart.” In this assumption, the Front seemed to believe that Algerians would be receptive to the vision of the FIS. This can also be connected to Madani’s assumption about the “wisdom” of the Front, for even if some Algerians were not immediately receptive to the mission of the FIS, there was a belief that they would eventually come around and return to their Muslim identity. Moreover, it is possible that the Front saw Algerians who accused it of violating civil liberties simply as people who had not yet reconciled the “wisdom” of the FIS and their Muslim identity.

Ultimately, this discussion of the attitudes and statements of the FIS towards the Islamic social order is only a glimpse into the vision it had for Algerian society. The implementation of the Islamic social order was to guide Algerian society, politics and economics onto the pure and true course, and the idealized Algerian Muslim woman was a major component of this vision. More importantly, this discussion shows that the policies and behavior of the FIS while it was in local government did at least have some organizing principles, although it is more difficult to determine the implications of these principles for plans to keep or do away with democracy. One

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Heristchi, p. 122.
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can at least conclude that the framework of the Islamic social order meant that the Front’s notions of civil liberties existed within a specifically Islamic context and were thus limited by certain beliefs about the ordering of society. Yet, the FIS and its members may not necessarily have seen this limitation as a threat to the individual because of the perceived need to protect the community – if anything, it appears that some FIS members saw the Islamic social order as liberating to Algerian society because it would be freed of political and social corruption and economic suffering. Thus, the Front’s conceptions of civil liberties and the Islamic order serve to make some sense of its actions, and these conceptions show that one must understand the notion of civil liberties in its Islamic context before judging it in terms of any standard of democracy.

Conclusion

The hard and soft social control exercised by the FIS returns the discussion to the issue of civil liberties introduced at the beginning of the chapter. From its rhetoric, the FIS appeared to believe that it was actually guaranteeing the liberties of Algerians within an Islamic framework, especially in the face of the corrupt and “immoral” FLN government. Those behaviors that violated the Islamic social model had to be eradicated. Comparing this concept of civil liberties within an Islamic context to the concept of civil liberties within a democratic context is extremely difficult. Does the restriction of some liberties to achieve social order violate democratic principles? Does this kind of restriction never happen in democracies? Consider, for example, a democracy like that of France that is so secular that it restricts religious expression in some public places. On the other hand, the potential Islamic democracy of the FIS would restrict expressions of secularism and behaviors perceived as anti-Islamic. Both models of democracies
are restricting some freedom, and no democracy in practice has allowed for absolutely unlimited liberties, even of expression.

So one wonders, is there anything inherently secular about the concept of democracy? It seems that democracy could exist in an Islamic framework, but then again one must consider what kinds of liberties are being restricted. For example, does the restriction of the sale and consumption of alcohol mean the FIS was hostile to democratic principles? Well, the United States outlawed alcohol at one point in its history. More seriously, does restricting women’s choices in behavior and lifestyles, including limits to their freedom of movement in public spaces, constitute a threat to democracy? Here the answer becomes murkier, for while some may not articulate the freedom of movement in public places as a democratic right, one might nonetheless expect a democracy to guarantee such a freedom. In addition, one must ask whether attitudes count, or does practice say it all? Does the ability to contextualize the Front’s behavior within its own Islamic framework matter when looking at the behavior itself? For example, some members of the FIS saw their Islamic social model as a means to liberate women, even if the reality of this model restricted some women’s liberties compared to Western standards. The contextualization is important, however, in making sense of the motivations for certain behaviors. One sees that some of the treatment of women was motivated by the perceived importance of women to the Islamic social model of the FIS, not necessarily a view that women did not deserve certain rights, so one cannot argue that FIS were wholly sexist.

These questions are complex, and no answer is easy to find. Indeed, Abassi Madani may have advocated for pluralism in the political sphere, as seen in the previous chapter, but the Islamic social model did not allow for a completely pluralistic society in the sense that one was expected, by force or by pressure, to conform to a specific vision of the Algerian man or woman
in the Islamic society. If the FIS did not accept a plurality of views and practices in Algerian society, what does that say about the Front’s plans for political pluralism and for maintaining democracy? It is difficult to be entirely conclusive, for answering this question would likely involve referring to the Western experience of democracy, which is not an entirely satisfying measure for assessing democracy in the Middle East and North Africa. Nevertheless, the push for the Islamic social order evident in the behavior and policies of the FIS while in local government does suggest that its promises to maintain pluralism once it came to power were nuanced, for without a pluralistic society it is difficult to imagine truly pluralistic politics. Moreover, even if the FIS planned to keep holding democratic elections after winning the national elections, it is fairly clear that it wanted to exert control – mostly soft but also hard – over Algerian society. Thus, the FIS in local government does provide some insight into the accusations of one and done democracy leveraged against the Front Islamique du Salut in that the Front’s behavior qualifies the notion of pluralism in the discourse of the FIS, particularly as advocated in Madani’s moderate rhetoric that was more amenable to democracy.
Conclusion

The “One and Done” Democracy Accusation Reassessed

As a subject of historical study and analysis, the Front Islamique du Salut, at least in terms of the one and done democracy accusation, has had history work against it because it was never given the chance to come into national power. This has allowed scholars to make various comments and conjectures about what it might have looked like once in power, but the historical facts of the Algerian army’s cancellation of the national elections, coup and banning of the FIS do not take away the need for responsible scholarship on the subject of the FIS. The FIS, especially through its two main leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, said much about democracy, though less about its continuance. The FIS did in fact come into municipal and provincial power through the June 1990 elections, so one cannot say it was given no chance whatsoever at power. Its rhetoric and behavior between 1989 and early 1992 thus provide some insight into what kinds of plans it had for an Algerian Islamic state and, more importantly, how it saw and acted in terms of the possibility of keeping the democratic process that had brought it into local power and could deliver national power into its hands.

There is nothing inherently incompatible about Islam and the concept of democracy. ¹ Rather, where the principles of Islam and the principles of democracy can appear to come into conflict is in their interpretations.² So, what this study has in a way been examining are the interpretations of Islam and democracy of the Front Islamique du Salut, and how FIS interpretations coincide or conflict with observers’ and scholars’ interpretations of democracy.

Part of the problem with the one and done democracy accusation is that people looking at the FIS

¹ Obviously, scholars agree with this statement. See, for example, Zoubir, p. 65 and Entelis, p. 224.
² Zoubir also points to this difference between the concepts themselves and their interpretations, p. 65.
have assumed that there is one Western standard – in other words, one interpretation – of
democracy that can exist, and they have rarely taken into account the interpretations put forth by
the FIS. As seen in Chapter IV, the moderate and radical wings of the Front, represented by
Madani and Benhadj, respectively, conceived of democracy in distinct ways that had very
different implications for democracy’s place – or lack thereof – in the Islamic society that they
envisioned for Algerian society.

The mutual existence of the moderate and radical views of democracy, which
respectively saw democracy as an acceptable way to power and as unacceptable heresy, has
made it difficult for scholars to assess the one and done democracy accusation in terms of
rhetoric alone. Drawing conclusions about the charge of one and done democracy from rhetoric
alone has generally meant either that scholars decide the two forms of discourse were utterly
conflicting and thus did not assuage observers’ fears, or that they play down the moderate
rhetoric and pay more attention to the more inflammatory interpretation of democracy of the
radical wing. These are indeed two possible ways of thinking about the rhetoric of the FIS and its
plans for democracy, but Chapter IV proposed looking at both forms as complementary, not
conflicting.

Their complementary coexistence still does not get one very far in assessing the one and
done democracy accusation, other than to establish that both wings wanted to rule through shura,
but only the moderates might have done so in a democratic or pluralistic framework, whereas the
radicals were intent on a solely Islamic framework for society. In addition, the rhetoric of
Madani and Benhadj overlapped on ideas about an Islamic context for pluralism and that a return
to Islamic principles, not political participation, was the nonnegotiable goal of the movement.
These similarities are significant, but reports of the policies of the FIS-controlled municipal
governments and the actions of FIS activists must be examined in order to understand the vision that the FIS had for the Islamic social and moral order. Its rule in local governments beginning in June 1990 also means that scholars do not have to be entirely hypothetical in their studies of the FIS in power. The Front seemed intent on building the Islamic society from the municipalities up, so it does not seem that its policies would have been radically different if it had gained national power. The only difference is that national policies might have been more homogenous, for, as seen, the actions of FIS governments and activists were rather localized and varied due to a lack of national direction. Overall, the behavior of the FIS has been cited by those concerned about its plans for Algeria because of perceived or real threats to civil liberties, particularly those of women. The Islamic social order is also crucial as an area of study because although the radicals and moderates may have differed in their attitudes towards democracy, their vision for Algerian society was agreed upon and unquestioned.\(^3\) Therefore, the plans the FIS had for Algerian society were more or less the same across the board, even though various factors accounted for differences in their implementation, and thus these plans are a valuable source of evaluating whether this vision of Algerian society had room for democratic principles.

As seen in Chapter II, what exactly “democratic principles” constitute is not entirely consistent throughout the secondary literature. Moreover, the FIS had its own interpretations of the meaning of democracy and its principles. In examining the discourses of Madani and Benhadj and the writings of scholars, one sees that they have most broadly agreed that democracy means “popular sovereignty.” Included in the “rule of the people” is the freedom and right of the people to choose their leaders in a fair and accountable way, and this has been my overarching way of understanding the concept of democracy. In addition, this concept addresses

\(^3\) Also noted by Labat, “Islamism and Islamists: The Emergence of New Types of Politico-Religious Militants,” p. 107.
the one and done democracy charge because that charge speaks to the fear that the FIS had no plans to let the people choose their leaders on a free and regular basis (or ever again). So, if democracy is, broadly speaking, the freedom to choose, this implies the freedom of choice. Choice can exist only within a pluralistic society, in which different opinions and behaviors are tolerated. With this notion of political and societal pluralism enters the complexity of addressing the accusation of one and done democracy against the FIS. Although Madani argued for the necessity of political pluralism, he qualified this claim in many ways, ultimately making it seem that pluralism had to exist within an Islamic framework. Not surprisingly, Benhadj was explicit about pluralism being tolerated as long as it was “Islamic.” This Islamic context for political and social pluralism is perhaps best reflected in the structure of the FIS: the Front allowed for different political ideas as long as they were Islamic and fit within the Front’s vision for Algerian society. When we look at the behavior of the FIS, its actions taken to implement the Islamic social order suggest the same thing: liberty, choice and freedom existed to the extent that they did not contradict Islam, its values and its laws, or the shari‘ah.

The fact that both leaders insisted on an Islamic framework itself was not automatically anti-democratic if one lets go of the secular tradition of democracy in the West; how they interpreted this framework merits attention, however. According to the Front, its vision of the Islamic society did not exist in Algerian society in the early 1990s. Hence, its plans involved a certain amount of enforcement and conformity. As seen in Chapter V, some of this enforcement involved hard power, but most of it was in the form of subtle, yet pervasive, social control, through discouragement, education and denunciation of certain behaviors as heresy. This kind of control speaks to a process of socialization, which was indeed worrisome to some observers, and it can be seen as a way to make people conform, thus reducing their freedom of choice. Yet, it
should be remembered that all societies, even our own American nation, use socialization to a certain extent as social control. (In fact, America very rarely uses hard power to control its society.) So, does denouncing certain behavior as “heresy” mean something radically different in terms of civil liberties and the freedom to choose one’s leaders than denouncing certain behavior as “deviant,” or going against social mores? I cannot answer this question in this setting, but asking questions such as these allows us to free ourselves from our own contexts and to understand the experiences of other societies from their own perspectives, especially when it comes to the “contested term” of democracy.4 The case of the FIS is particularly complicated because while historians and outsiders might see the goal of fitting Algerian society into an Islamic model as restrictive to basic freedoms, FIS leaders and supporters often argued that this Islamic model was liberating. Thus, understanding the Front’s attitudes towards democracy and society has been crucial to addressing the one and done democracy accusation.

In the fall of 2009, I began this study with the premise in mind that “actions speak louder than words,” meaning that one can analyze FIS rhetoric forever, but the answer to the questions raised by the one and done democracy charge lies in the Front’s behavior. Months later, I am not entirely sure I still agree with this premise. If anything, and not surprisingly, the two should be given equal attention. Yet, the misgivings I found in much of the secondary literature involved inattentiveness to the complicated nature of the rhetoric and behavior of the Front Islamique du Salut. Looking at its violent behavior and radical statements is certainly an easy way to support the accusation of one and done democracy, but it is not complete or responsible scholarship. The FIS was still accountable for its moderate statements, its justifications for its behavior, its vision for Algerian society and the more subtle control it exerted while in local government. Even still,

4 Esposito and Voll, p. 17.
analyzing all of these factors does not lead to a clear assessment of the verity of the one and done
democracy accusation.

What such an analysis does show, however, is that any discussion of the Front’s plans to keep or do away with democracy must, without question, take all of these factors into account and establish a definition or standard of democracy that has space for these factors to be fully analyzed with all of their nuances. Moreover, this task requires “thinking outside the Western box” by, for example, separating the concept of democracy from its secular experience in the West. In this way, we can begin to find a common ground between Islamists’ notions of democracy and shura and our own conceptions of democracy. Thus, a reassessment of the one and done democracy accusation in the case of the Front Islamique du Salut cannot argue that the FIS either planned to keep or to discard democracy if it gained national power. Yet, the one and done democracy charge has been unjustified in scholarly writings insofar as scholars generally have not accounted for the complicated nature of the Front’s discourse and behavior. In this way, the nuanced rhetoric and reality of the Front Islamique du Salut between 1989 and 1992 do show that accusations of one and done democracy against any group must analyze every relevant factor in order to fairly and adequately judge the complexities of the group’s plans for democracy.
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*NB: Al-Ahnaf et al. provide articles written by Benhadj in *El Mounquid.*


*NB: This article was found through ProQuest. The pages of the article in the journal are given, but the ProQuest document did not have the original document with pages, so I only cite the document as a whole in Chapter V.*


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*NB : Hamdi also provides a considerable amount of quotations from Madani and Benhadj.


*NB: Rouadjia also provides several excerpts from Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh, which this author was unable to locate.*


*NB: Willis also provides quotations from Madani and Benhadj in newspapers that were not located by this author, as well as quotations from *Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li al-Inqadh.*


A Note on the Primary Sources

As can be seen from my bibliography, all of my primary sources are in English and French, for I do not read Arabic. Algerian newspapers proved quite difficult to locate. The only newspaper I could find for the years 1989-1992 in French was *El Moudjahid*, of which the issues are on microfilm at the Library of Congress. *El Moudjahid* was published six times each week, with a joint issue for Fridays and Saturdays. It is an interesting source because it was also the newspaper of the *Front de Libération Nationale* government. I noticed an overall lack of mention of the *Front Islamique du Salut* except on major occasions, i.e. the 20 April 1990 rally and the 12 June 1990 elections. I had expected *El Moudjahid* to at least depict the FIS negatively, given reports in other sources of violent behavior of FIS activists in various parts of Algeria, and especially because the FIS was the main opponent of the FLN. Nevertheless, *El Moudjahid* rarely mentioned the FIS and seemed especially hesitant to quote FIS leaders, perhaps due to an unwillingness to even acknowledge the FIS. Despite the difficulties in finding other daily Algerian newspapers, *Jeune Afrique* was especially useful and consistent in discussion the FIS and the political situation in Algeria between 1989 and 1992. I had originally been hesitant to turn to Western newspapers, but reputable sources provided a considerable amount of information on the behavior of the FIS. *Le Monde* was particularly useful, and Youssef Ibrahim of *The New York Times* mentioned on 4 July 1991 that *Le Monde* was one of the few Western newspapers capable of reporting from within Algeria. It perhaps would have been useful to locate other Algerian newspapers, especially those in Arabic, but I found the range and diversity of primary sources, in addition to the quotations and descriptions provided in the secondary literature, to be satisfactory in formulating my argument.
Glossary of Terms

Commune: Municipal units, or urban communities, in Algeria.

Fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence.

Hadith: The reports of the actions and words of the prophet Muhammad, as well as his companions and early Muslims.

Hijab: Traditional Muslim veil worn by women in the Arab East. In the case of Algeria, the hijab refers to the headscarf, though in other discussions it can refer to face covering, headscarf or full body covering.

Islamic: Pertaining to principles of the religion of Islam.

Islamic Fundamentalism: Movement of Muslim groups seeking a return to the principles of the Qur’an and the Sunnah in the moral sphere of life

Islamism: movement of Muslim groups seeking a return to the principles of the Qur’an and the Sunnah in political, social, moral and economic spheres of life.

Kafir: Heretic.

Kufr: Heresy.

Majlis al-shura: The Consultative Council, or national body, of the FIS.

Mixité: The mixing of the sexes.

Qur’an: The sacred text of Islam, believed to be revealed directly by God, hence it is the word of God.

Rai: A genre of music mixing traditional and rock music

Shari’ah/Shariah: Islamic law as set forth in the Qur’an and Sunnah. Interpretation exists in the application of the shari’ah, i.e. in punishments prescribed for certain behaviors.

Shura: Consultation. Refers to Islamic concept of power in which the rulers consult with experts about the realities of society

Sunnah: The tradition of the prophet Muhammad as embodied in the hadith.

Ulama: Muslim clergy, or those with knowledge of Islam (the Qur’an, the hadith, the Sunnah, the shari’ah, fiqh)

Ummah: The Muslim community

Wilaya: Algerian province (for a map of the provinces, see Appendix A)

NB: These definitions are generally drawn from The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World and from The Oxford Dictionary of Islam.
Appendix A: Maps of Algeria

Algeria in Africa

Source: CIA World Factbook

Major Cities of Algeria

Source: http://media.maps.com/magellan/Images/ALGERI-W1.gif
The name of each province is generally taken from the name of its largest city.
Appendix B

Results of the Municipal (APC) and Wilaya (Provincial) (APW) Elections of June 1990

### Results of the Municipal (APC) and Wilaya (Provincial) (APW) Elections of June 1990

#### Municipal Elections Results

**55.42% pour cent des communes**

**Results des élections aux APC...**

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Appendix C

*Images of Madani, Benhadj and the FIS*

Abassi Madani, leader du FIS.
« Craignez Dieu pour ce peuple musulman. »

Abassi Madani.
Source: *Jeune Afrique*

n° 1531 (7 May 1990), p. 30

Abassi Madani, electoral meeting in Algiers.
Source: *Jeune Afrique*

n° 1539
(27 June-3 July 1990), p. 17
Ali Benhadj.

Ali Benhadj (left, sitting) and Abassi Madani (middle, standing).
Source: El Moudjahid (20-21 April 1990), p. 3.
20 April 1990 FIS rally. Banner reads: “Our crisis is a crisis of faith and of morality.”
Source: *Jeune Afrique* n° 1531 (7 May 1990), p. 31.
Collective prayer during a meeting of the FIS at the Hydra stadium in Algiers. 

NB: The poor quality of these images comes from the fact that they have been scanned from photocopies of Jeune Afrique and from microfilm issues of El Moudjahid.
Acknowledgments

Having reached the end of nine months of research and analysis, I offer my gratitude to several people whose input was crucial to the writing of this thesis. I would first like to thank Dr. Jonathan Wyrtzen for introducing me to the *Front Islamique du Salut* and the one and done democracy accusation in his class about nationalism in the Middle East in North Africa in the spring of 2009, and for guiding me to choose the one and done democracy accusation as the topic for my thesis. Second, I would like to thank Dr. John Voll, my faculty advisor, for his input and guidance and for his unwavering support and encouragement in these past months. I also thank Dr. Howard Spendelow for his advice, comments, enthusiasm and encouragement in all of our seminar meetings and for patiently answering my countless questions. Finally, I would like to thank my fellow classmates in the Senior Honors Seminar for their good cheer, support and editorial and substantive input.