

**HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ALGERIAN
NATIONALISM: SOME IDEOLOGICAL
ASPECTS**

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes, from a political and historical perspective, the impact of each of the political groupings on the Algerian nationalist movement. Based on some of the old and recent works, the study shows that the ideological basis of the Algerian nationalism was determined by the interrelations between liberal and conservative organizations in their struggle against the colonial power. Religion soon appeared to be the appropriate means to reach the Algerian public opinion. This factor largely explains the weak impact of secular control over political and social institutions in an independent Algerian society.

The analysis of the ideological basis of Algerian nationalism still arouse interest and devotion of many writers. What is proposed in this short paper cannot be considered as an exhaustive study of the subject-matter as it exists an abundant literature about it. However, we try to look into the interactions of the existing political tendencies and their impact on the Algerian nationalist ideological basis through the on-going debate.

To some writers the evolutionary framework of the Algerian nationalism was affected by the Algerian conceptualisation of Western European political culture. Closely linked with national consciousness and the rise of Western European concept of the nation-state, the Algerian nationalism is best understood in relation to the developments that produced the First World war.

Simultaneously, some others consider that some Arabic-educated intellectuals, who graduated from oriental universities and schools (Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere), gave the Algerian nationalism a historical legitimacy and an ideological basis, as they were very much influenced by the Arab nationalist movement and the Arab-Islamic traditional political culture.

This is why it is contended that the Algerian reformist movement sprang from the Panislamism which aimed at reaching a self-defending Arab-Islamic culture through a unified Muslim community.

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However, according to the British historian, Alistair Horn, there were three separate strands of Algerian nationalism; the Liberals, represented by the French-educated intellectuals, the Revolutionaries, and the Ulema whose education was based on Arabic culture and influenced by religious aspects.¹

The first decades of colonial rule were marked by a dramatic decline in literacy. The French régime hastened the destruction of the Algerian educational system which was expected to foster the spirit of resistance. Moreover, the traditional rural élite, and religious lineages (Muslim lawyers, religious men, and tribal notables) worn down. In his parliamentary report of 1847, Alexis de Tocqueville declared:

Everywhere we have put our hands on these revenues... we have ruined charitable institutions, dropped the schools, and dispersed the seminaries. Around us lights have been extinguished, and the recruitment of men of religion and men of law has ceased. In other words we have rendered muslim society much more miserable, disorganised, ignorant, and barbaric than it was before knowing us².

The resistance put up by some religious men,³ from 1830 till the turn of the century, to safeguard the Algerian identity, could not succeed as it is no longer possible to fight the French power, by exclusively traditional means. Thus, by the end of the century their resistance was waning.

On the eve of the First World war, the Algerian political scene witnessed a new form of resistance to the events and situations that were brought about by French régime whose disruptive force has been a blow to the traditions, beliefs and social structures of the inhabitants. In fact, a modern nationalist movement was put forward by a new nationalist élite.

To be member of this élite⁴ - whether as a lawyer, pharmacist, doctor, official, teacher – a French education was virtually required. But according to Ali Mérad, there is a lot of controversy about this given definition. To him, the élite was not only limited to those categories of intellectuals but can be extended also to some other Algerians who

¹ Alistair Horn, *A Savage War of Peace 1954-62*, New York: The Viking Press, 1977, p. 38.

² Alexis De Tocqueville, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris: Gallimard, 1962, III, p. 323.

³ Such as, the Emir Abdul Kader, from 1832 to 1847; Mokrani, from 1870 to 1871; Bouamama, from 1879 to 1881.

⁴ Such a definition is given by many authors, such as, Chérif Benhabilés, *L'Algérie Française Vue par un Indigène*, Algiers: 1914, pp. 707-710; Belkacen Saadallah, "The Rise of the Algerian Elite, 1900-14", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, NO. 5, 1 (1967), pp. 69-77; Cl. H. Moore, "Old and New Elites in North Africa", *Actes du Colloque d'Aix-en-Provence*, Mai 1970, *Les influences Occidentales dans les Villes Maghrébines à l'époque Contemporaine*, Editions de l'Université de Provence, 1974, pp. 17-38.

combined Arabic culture with French education, whom he defined as bilinguals. Besides this, he included those who acquired Arabic culture only.⁵

Most writers agree that the Algerian nationalism was slow to develop, due mainly to the repressive policies of the colonial power. It is just as they consider, as Mahfoud Kaddache⁶ did, that this nationalism was enhanced by the political activities of the "Young Algerians", led by Emir Khaled⁷. This movement that appeared before the First World war, in 1908, attempted to obtain political equality with the French in Algeria, and paved the way for further political parties⁸. It gathered a group of French-educated intellectuals⁹, who became to be identified as "Liberals",¹⁰ or "moderates"¹¹. The main feature of those people lies in the fact that they were admirers of the French revolution principles¹². What they valued in this revolution was the creation of a state.

A similar view was later expressed by writers like Servier, who compared the "Young Algerians" with the "Young Turks" and the "Young Egyptians" in ambition and aspirations for political leadership. They were proud, self-conscious, cherishing bad ideas (anti-French thoughts), discontented, and dreaming of playing a major role in the affairs of their country. Though, he observed later on that this Algerian group did not claim "Algeria for the Algerians", as did the Turks or the Egyptians.¹³

Before the First World war, they sought a full integration with France, and asked for the emancipation of the Algerian society, that will enhance a reconciliation with the French one. Their immediate demands,

⁵ Ali Mériad, "La Formation de la Presse Musulmane en Algérie, 1919-1939", Tunis. Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes, (XXVII), 1964, p. 13.

⁶ Mahfoud Kaddache, *La Vie Politique à Alger de 1919 à 1939*, Alger: Editions SNED, 1970, p. 120.

⁷ According to Jean-Claude Vatin, Khaled, the grandson of Emir Abdelkader, sent a memorandum to President Wilson, who attended the Peace Conference in Paris, asking the USA to put Algeria under a mandate system.

⁸ Jean-Claude Vatin, *L'Algérie Politique, Histoire et Société*, Paris: Presse de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, II éd., 1983, p. 174.

⁹ According to the French historian, Ch. A. Julien, their number did not exceed 1200, in the immediate First World war period. See also Ali Mériad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940. Essai d'une histoire sociale et religieuse*, Paris, La Haye: Mouton, 1967, p. 48.

¹⁰ Alistair Horn, *A Savage War of Peace 1954-62*, op. cit., p. 39.

¹¹ Abou Al-Kacem Saadallah, *La Montée du Nationalisme Algérien, 1900-1914*, 2me éd., Alger: ENL, 1985, p. 280.

¹² Those principles were: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. See Ferhat Abbas, *La Nuit Coloniale, Guerre et Révolution en Algérie, I*, Paris: Julliard, 1962, p. 114.

¹³ Cited by C. Benhabilés, *L'Algérie Française Vue par un Indigène*, op.cit., pp. 108-109.

observed Saadallah, were neither extremist in outlook nor difficult to bring about by the French administration, as they stood within the bounds of the French laws.¹⁴ In the opinion of many writers, those few intellectuals seemed to be the results of the established French "native educational system" of 1892, such as the "mixed schools" and the "Imperial College". The aim was the creation of a new Algerian social class that will favor the "Assimilation policy" and the French presence in Algeria.¹⁵

Indeed, this élite asked the French government to put into practice the principles of the "assimilation" decision. This would accordingly lead to the suppression of the "*Code de l'Indigénat*",¹⁶ and the passing of some other exceptional measures as the implementation of parliamentary representation for Algerians, equal education, taxation, and opportunity.

However, Saadallah observed that despite their willing to enter the French "family"¹⁷ most of those intellectuals, namely Emir Khaled, refused to give up the Muslim Status, as stipulated by the *Senatus-Consult* of 1865¹⁸. By 1919, some members of the élite were opposed to Khaled who accused them to sustain the French proposal project. In 1923, the French government decided to exile him to France.¹⁹

The First World war broke out over national entities²⁰ The emergence of new entities in post-war Europe affected to a large extent the Algerian intellectuals. The nationality principle came to loom much larger, with the famous Fourteen Points introduced by President Wilson in

¹⁴ Belkacem Saadallah, "The Rise of the Algerian Elite 1900-1914", op.cit., p. 73.

¹⁵ Mohamed Chérif Sahli, "De l'Assimilation à l'Intégration, une mystification politique", *Les Temps Modernes*, N° 116, (Août 1955), pp.591-615. See also, Magali Morsy, *North Africa 1800-1900, a Survey from the Nile Valley to the Atlantic*, London, New York: Longman, 1984, p.161

¹⁶ Decrees and exceptional measures to be used by the French in their repressive actions and the control of the natives. They were established in 1874 and used till the Second World war.

¹⁷ Most of them married French women.

¹⁸ The two laws voted by the French Senate on 22 April 1863, and On 14 July 1865, are known as the *Senatus-Consult*. The First, which intended to protect Algerian from European claims on their lands, defined the tribes as land-owning communities. It resulted in the loss of about one-third of tribal property. The Second one defined Algerians as French subjects, but not citizens with full rights. They could enjoy the privileges of French citizenship only when they give up their Muslim Status. See Ali Mériad, *The Algerian Muslim Reformism*, pp.53-54.

¹⁹ Abou Al-Kacem Saadallah, *La Montée du Nationalisme Algérien*, op.cit., p. 280.

²⁰ Elie Kédourie, *Nationalism*, New York: Praeger, 1960, p. 22.

January 1918.²¹ According to Saadallah, the members of the élite came to compare their situation with that of the Austria-Hungary peoples and with that of the Polish, or the Geecks. It was seen as a turning-point in the history of the modern Algerian nationalism.

Ali Mérad considered the role, played by those liberal intellectuals, in the formation of an authentic Algerian opinion, as fundamental. He described them as claim-makers and even the precursors of modern Algerian national²², though some other writers,²³ denied them such given role arguing that they did rarely speak their language and knew nothing about their own culture and education. In their opinion those French-educated intellectuals illustrated very well what Fichte said about the damaging effects of cultural assimilation: "... the translated words lose their sensitive meaning and their sensual impression and reactions, cogitated by the mother-language"²⁴. In this way they receive the flat and dead history of a foreign culture, but not in any way a culture of their own. They get symbols which for them are neither immediately clear nor able to stimulate life, but which must seem to them entirely as arbitrary as the sensuous part of the language.²⁵

The between-two-wars period witnessed a general awakening in the Third World - from Indochina to India, to Indonesia - where the tide of nationalism was "irresistible", remarked Richard D. Mahoney.²⁶ According to several writers, the Algerian intellectuals were very much involved in it.²⁷

The Algerian historian, Saadallah, described the Liberal attitude to Arabism movement as "naive". As they were accused by French settlers in Algeria to have diffused through the Algerian masses, the anti-French ideas and exploited their religious feelings, the French-educated intellectuals refuted such accusations. Moreover, they denied to have a hand in any disloyal acts or to have any connexion with any Arab

²¹ Ibid., p. 23.

²² A. Mérad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie 1925-1940*, op.cit., pp.47-49.

²³ See for instance, M.C. Sahli, "De l'Assimilation à l'intégration, une mystification politique", op.cit.,p. 611; Ch.R. Ageron, *L'Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine, de l'insurrection de 1871 au déclenchement de la guerre de libération (1954)*, Paris : PUF, 1979, p. 236. Claude Vatin, *L'Algérie Politique, Histoire et Société*, op.cit., pp. 168-69.

²⁴ M.C. Sahli, " De l' assimilation à l' intégration", op.cit., p.613.

²⁵ Cited by Elie Kédourie, *Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 67.

²⁶ Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK Ordeal in Africa*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 20.

²⁷ Abou Al-Kacem Saadallah, *La Montée du Nationalisme Algérien*, op. cit., pp.82-83

²⁸ Ali Mérad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie*, op. cit., p. 52

religious movement. They asserted that their political activities and propaganda were carried out generally within the limits of French laws.

Nevertheless, the acquisition of some important posts in French administrative and political authorities enabled those intellectuals to act as spokesmen for Muslim community. Their French way of thinking made their mission easier in conveying the immediate needs of their fellow men to the colonial power. Many writers stressed the role, they played in implementing some of favoring social and economic measures, for the natives. However, despite their good intentions, they failed to meet with the aspirations of their fellow countrymen. Though Ali Mériad considered that, thanks to their efforts at political opposition and their various activities, the political consciousness of the Algerian native society was awakened. Their moderate programme based on equality, justice and tolerance, was good enough to serve as a background for a new Algerian nationalism.²⁸

The impact of the Liberals on the development of the Algerian nationalism made the French settlers in Algeria grow more suspicious, and urged French administration to take new repressive measures against them. Alistair Horn observed that, despite this the members of the liberal movement, as Ferhat Abbas, remained passionate protagonists of assimilation until the Second World war. They kept on not believing in an Algeria with separate identity²⁹. Such allegations were refuted by Georges A. Taliadoros in his recent study on the ideology of the Algerian nationalism. According to him, the Algerian liberals were in favour of a republic in Algeria federated with France, where the uniqueness of Algerian identity, her own socio-economic needs and her own historical evolution, will be recognized without her political entity. Moreover, Abbas and his followers, believed that, a good democratic political process is the one that respects the historical reality of the Algerian Arab-Islamic culture³⁰ The same idea was raised by Hassan Sayed Suleiman who mentioned that, the Liberal leaders, Abbas and Benjelloul, hoped for the transformation of the "colony to province"³¹.

According to many writers the collapse of the Blum-Viollette Bill³² in 1937, brought about a bitter disillusion among Abbas'

²⁸ Ali Mériad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie*, op. cit., p. 52

²⁹ Alistair Horn, *A Savage War of Peace*, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁰ Georges A. Taliadoros, *La Culture Politique Arabo-Islamique et la Naissance du Nationalisme Algérien (1830-1962)*, Alger: ENL, 1985, p. 56

³¹ Hassan S. Suliman, "The Nationalist Movements in the Maghrib. A Comparative Approach", Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Research Report N°78, 1987, p.24

³² Blum-Viollette: The French Government led by the Popular Front proposed such a law according to which the Algerian Muslim élite is granted French citizenship without loosing Muslim personal status. But was strongly opposed by the French settlers in Algeria

supporters. From this moment, noted Alistair Horn, they began to move away from the ideal of assimilation towards some form of autonomy of Algeria.³³ In fact their disappointment pushed them to take part into the First Algerian Muslim Congress, organized by the religious movement in 1936.

To Mohammed Harbi, such a sudden shift in the Liberal policy, and its alliance with the religious Ulema, was inappropriate, unless we relate it to bourgeois origins of both movements. It is not surprising, he argued, that both of them favored liberal conception and supported assimilation.³⁴ Ben Badis was quoted saying that the Algerian people a weak people and still less evolved. It is of a vital importance for it to be guided in its further development and progress by a strong and civilized nation,³⁵ meaning France.

Such critics, however, were rare, particularly since the shift of the Ulema towards a political commitment policy and claim for the establishment of a native political nationality, argued Charles Ageron³⁶. According to Mao Tsé-Tung, the local "bourgeoisie" in a colonized country, is extremely weak from the economic and political points of view. It usually shows a kind of compromise with the colonial power. However, being colonized and oppressed by imperialism, this "bourgeoisie" keeps to a certain extent - even during the colonial period - a revolutionary character in the struggle against *foreign imperialism*.³⁷

The leftist French historian, André Noushi, pointed to the effects of the failure of the Liberal peaceful revolution on Abbas and his supporters. By 1950, they developed the idea of creating a Social and Democratic Algerian Republic, with its own flag and government.³⁸

It is clear, argued Saadallah, that the European ideas of nationalism, conveyed by French-educated intellectuals, contributed, to a certain extent, to Algerian renewal.³⁹ To Taliadoros, the political and nationalist emphasis of these intellectuals should be accompanied by economic and intellectual development that will provide structural means to the national liberation of Algeria⁴⁰. Later on, William B. Quandt,

³³ Alistair Horn, *A Savage War of Peace*, op.cit., 40

³⁴ Mohammed Harbi, *Aux Origines du Front de Libération Nationale: la Scission du PPA-MTLD*, Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1975, p. 69.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68

³⁶ Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie Contemporaine*, op.cit., p.332

³⁷ Cited by Jacques Jurquet, *La Revolution Nationale Algérienne et le Parti Communiste Algérien, 1939-1945*, (tome 2), Paris: Editions du Centenaire, 1980, pp. 223-224

³⁸ André Noushi, *La naissance du Nationalisme Algérien*, Paris : Editions de Minuit, pp. 155.

³⁹ Abou-Al-Kacem Saadallah, *La Montée du Nationalisme Algérien*, op.cit., p.106

⁴⁰ Georges. A.Taliadoros, *La Culture Politique Arabo-Islamique et la Naissance du Nationalisme Algérien*, p. 56.

showed such influence through the doctrinal structure and political instruments of independent Algeria.⁴¹

The Liberal movement was not acting alone in the Algerian nationalist movement. By the end of the Second World war, the nationalist feelings spread out among the Algerian workers in France.⁴² Saadallah attributed such an attitude to a large extent to the political activities of some Algerian soldiers who remained in France after the war.⁴³ Those Algerians took advantage from the relaxed attitude of the French authorities especially in France. In addition to the improvement of their socio-economic conditions, they were involved in political activities. In fact, most of them were affiliated to the French Communist Party⁴⁴ and the related trade unions, mainly the famous Trade-union CGT. Through such groupings, the Algerian workers became aware of the proletarian exploitation.

As a consequence of such an intensive political agitation melted with fervent national feelings, a political movement was born in metropolitan France in 1924 under the name of the North African Star (ENA) that grouped the North African workers in France. This movement soon declared publicly itself as a political party independent from the French Communist Party to which it had been connected. Since then, it became a militant nationalist movement aiming at the separation of Algeria from France, in other words, its political independence. The description of the birth of the ENA and its programme was discussed and developed by most of the historical research works on Algerian nationalism.

Ageron sustained that the main feature of the ENA was its use of European mode of protest. The anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism aspects were borrowed from the international communist movement, promoted by the French communists. The movement and its leader Messali Hadj have been and still be the subject of huge number of academic and research works. The study of Michel Camau of the ideological evolution of this revolutionary movement, and its impact on the Algerian nationalism,⁴⁵ is still be considered as a primary source. He thought that, the emergence of the movement marked a transition between

⁴¹ William B. Quandt. *Revolution and Political Leadership, 1954-1968*. Boston: MIT Press, 1969, p. 42

⁴² Between 1900 and 1914, there were about 10.000 Algerian workers in France.

⁴³ Abou-Al-Kacem Saadallah, *La Montée du Nationalisme Algérien*, op.cit., p. 98.

⁴⁴ Charles R. Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie Contemporaine*, op.cit., p. 305-6.

⁴⁵ Michel Camau, *La Notion de Démocratie dans la Pensée des Dirigeants Maghrébins*, Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, , 1971, p. 69.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.69

the rural patriotism of the previous century and the new urban nationalism.

Besides this, he gave an accurate description of evolutive phases of the movement, from ENA to MTLD.⁴⁶ When the movement moved to Algeria it took the name of the Algerian People Party (PPA), as it became more concerned by the national cause. It succeeded to enlarge its popular base, to involve new small groups of urban bourgeois. Being composed of intellectuals, this bourgeoisie soon dominated the new Triumph of Democratic Liberties Movement (MTLD), in the 1946 Congress.

According to Taliadoros, this revolutionary movement evolved synchronically with the ideological evolution of its leadership. By the end of the first decade, the movement witnessed a shift towards the Arabism ideology. This was partly due to the new established relationship between Messali and the leader of Panarabism movement, Chekib Arslan, in Geneva in 1936. This shift was somehow dictated by the failure of the proletarian ideology promoted by the movement. The use of communist methods of action melted with a legitimate secular policy, had no effective impact on the masses. Messali used therefore new political culture based on the use of some religious terms to exploit the feelings of the masses, and on some Algerian traditional institutions and revolutionary ideas.⁴⁷

Later on, most of the writers agreed that, the movement influenced to a large extent the political institutions of the National Liberation Front (FLN) and its ideological and political structures. Taliadoros considered that the revolutionary aspect of the FLN was without doubt inherited from the MTLD.⁴⁸ As we noticed, both liberal and revolutionary movements had no deep impact on the mass population, before the Second World war.

However, the religious movement of the Ulema, succeeded to present itself as the defender of Algerian nationalism. Its leader was Abdulhamid Ben Badis who was influenced by the Arab Orient and the modern Muslim reformism led by al-Afghani and Mohamed Abdu.⁴⁹ Because of Algeria's unique status as an integral part of France, which cut it from undercurrents of Arab nationalism in the outside world, the Algerian reformists wanted to concentrate on the Algerian identity through the revival of Islamism and Arabism in Algeria, argued Hassan S.

⁴⁷ Georges A. Taliadoros, *La Culture Politique Arabo-Islamique et la Naissance du Nationalisme Algérien*, op.cit., p.54

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.55

⁴⁹ It should be noted that Mohamed Abdu visited Algeria in 1903 and came in contact with Algerian Ulema. See in this respect, A. Nadir, Le Mouvement Réformiste Algérien, son Role dans la Formation de l'Idéologie Nationale, Paris: 1965. I. Carret, L'Association des Oulama d'Algérie, le Réformisme en Islam, Alger: 1959.

Suleiman.⁵⁰ Both Ben Badis and Arslan agreed that, due to the French colonization, Algeria could not be included into a political Arab union.

Mérad wrote that the Algerian reformists adhered totally to the Arab nationalism. Their commitment was mainly revealed through their press and personal relationships. The writer went on saying that unlike the other Arab countries, Muslim reformism in Algeria aimed at the creation of a cultural cohesion through a universal teaching of Arabic language and the principles of the Coran as well as the separation of religion and state.⁵¹ Referring to the same idea, Taliadoros wrote that Ben Badis was propagating the ideas of patriotism and national identity through his teachings.

According to Ahmed Nadir, the secularism of the Ulema disappeared on the eve of the Second World war, due to the increase of French intervention in Islamic affairs such as the appointment of imams of prayers, and the restraints onto Arabic instructions and press.⁵² Such an attitude was also discussed by B. Tabrizi. By 1936, the Ulema denounced French policy of assimilation. To Ben Badis:

the nation of Algeria has its history...,its religion and linguistic unity, its culture, its traditions good or bad like any other nation of the earth, and next, we state that this Algerian nation is not France, cannot be France and does not wish to be France.⁵³

The rejection of "naturalization" through French citizenship, was developed by Le Tourneau. He observed that Ben Badis looked to the future of Algeria, when saying: "Independence is a natural right for every people on earth"⁵⁴. His aim was the independence of Algeria but over the long term and after a certain stage of evolution.

The French historian, Charles Ageron, showed that the Algerian nationalism was enhanced to a certain extent by the propaganda of the Ulema that started in 1936. He explained such an attitude by the fact that in Islamic orthodoxy there is no separation of politics from religion. Hence, from a sentimental defense of Arabism, the Ulema Association moved to political Panarabism. According to Merad, the political viewpoints of the Algerian Muslim Association of Ulema responded to Islamic traditional ideology. Its political activities were moral trustworthy necessary to both Algerians' devotion and traditional Arab

⁵⁰ Hassan S. Suleiman, "The Nationalist Movements in the Maghrib", op.cit., p.24.

⁵¹ Ali Mérad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie*, op.cit., p.51

⁵² A. Nadir, *Le Mouvement Réformiste en Algérie*, op.cit., p.130. See also Hassan S. Suleiman, "The Nationalist Movements in the Maghrib", op.cit., p.25.

⁵³ Tabrizi Bensalah, *La République Algérienne*, Paris: 1979, pp. 55-56

⁵⁴ Roger Le Tourneau, *Evolution Politique de l'Afrique du Nord Musulmane, 1920-1961*, 2d ed. Paris : A. Colin, 1962, pp. 313-319.

states' support. According to him, Ben Badis and Tewfik al Madani were seen as the fathers of the Algerian revolution. Their role in educating young generations, made them providing the nationalist movement with the needed cadres.

Independent Algeria as an Arab-Islamic community is without doubt due to the action of the *Ulema*. The whole Algerian revolution was characterized by such an assertion, wrote Vatin.⁵⁵ The same viewpoint was developed by H. Sayed when he observed that,

In Algeria, the Ulema stood firmly for the Islamic and Arab character of Algeria against the French policies of integration and assimilation. This was confirmed by the nationalist struggle for independence which took Islam as its basis⁵⁶.

The religious aspect of the revolution was raised by Le Tourneau who observed that, the FLN declared, in the proclamation of the revolution, that it was not a war of religion but a struggle for liberty and national independence. According to the proclamation text, the objectives were not religious but rather political ones.⁵⁷ However, the influence of the Ulema appeared clearly through the title given to the Algerian fighters -al-Moudjahidin - and to its press organ, al-Moudjahid, which is still existing. It has been remarked that this gave to the practice of the Algerian revolution an Islamic character that corresponded to the state of mind of many of the Algerian fighters⁵⁸.

In fact, Islam was an essential factor that enabled a group of an unknown men to mobilize the peasants to defend and liberate the "land of Islam" from foreign domination. After the independence the Algerian leaders stressed the role of Islam as an important factor in the Algerian personality and in the struggle for freedom. They also revealed that they did not openly declare Islam as the basis of their uprising because they wanted to attract the support of non-Muslim countries as well as international public opinion for their cause. The worldwide diplomatic success of the FLN during the war confirmed such a statement.

With the independence of Algeria in 1962, the FLN faced the process of state-building and nation-building. It established a new political system to preserve uniformity of the society and sovereignty, and to determine the Algerian ideological options in the different political, economic, social and cultural fields. This determination was shaped by the political forces existing inside the FLN. Thus, a socialist republic of

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁵⁶ Hassan S. Suleiman, "The Nationalist Movements in the Maghrib," op.cit., pp.83-84

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 451

⁵⁸ Ibid

one-party system (FLN) on the basis of a popular democracy was adopted. This system was abolished after what is generally called the "events of October 1988," that saw the birth of more than sixty new political parties, dominated by a religious one. Since the independence Islam became the state religion and arabic a national language. These two aspects are the main tools used by the religious opposition parties during the last decade in Algeria.