

# Fused Together and Torn Apart

## *Stories and Violence in Contemporary Algeria*

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This article explores the constraints of contemporary history writing about Algeria. It analyzes the historiographical blocks and blind spots to show the centrality of the question of unity/plurality within Algerianness. Borrowing from anthropologist Françoise Héritier, it uses the notion of *entre-soi* to elaborate a new chronological framework, a continual sequence of war between 1945 and 2002. It also examines the impact of the rapid succession of these episodes of political violence on individual memories, and how moments of paroxysmal violence are reactivated during interviews, and considers the emotional cost for historians when they become the last recipient of narratives of forms of violence intended to terrorize.

Historian Soria Karadach teaches at Ben Aknoun University in Algiers and writes for several scholarly journals in the country and abroad. Her research deals with the violence and killings that followed Algerian independence day, in July 1962. To “rehabilitate an officer and correct history,” this driven woman needs all the help she can get.<sup>1</sup> In Yasmina Khadra’s novel *The Dead Man’s Share*, only the hero, inspector Llob, can help her. The absence of history is a leitmotif in this and other novels by Khadra. More generally in Algerian society, history is expected to play a role in *straightening out* the past:<sup>2</sup> daily conversations, the press, and various forms of online exchanges express the notion that the past still weighs heavily on the present and remains largely unknown, with a (possibly much fantasized) potential for disruption of present political life if secrets were to be revealed. And despite the huge number of publications concerning the War for Independence, regular scandals *do* shake public debate.<sup>3</sup> In the novel, the impossibility of history is implied by the fact that after her case

is solved, Soria Karadach is exposed: she was in fact part of a plot, and acted out of a desire for revenge against a politician rather than in pursuit of truth, knowledge or—simply—history.

Is a history of contemporary Algeria possible, in particular with regard to periods of time whose actors are still alive? The overwhelming number of publications concerning the War for Independence—and more generally the colonial period—in contrast with the scarcity of historical works dealing with the country after it became independent casts doubt on the very possibility. There are abundant reasons explaining the difficulty of writing national history *about* and *in* Algeria: the lack of access to—and indeed the very dearth of—archives; the material and intellectual conditions within Algerian universities during Arabization;<sup>4</sup> and, of course, the repression wielded by a one-party regime that used national narrative as a means to anchor its legitimacy. These factors have appeared sufficiently self-explanatory as to make any further enquiry into the possibility of writing a history of the post-independence period seem unnecessary.

This article reflects upon the conditions and constraints of writing a contemporary history of Algeria. By exploring some of the historiographical characteristics (notably the lacunae in the huge corpus concerning the colonial period, and the absence of history of the post-independence period), it shows that what remains unseen is linked to plurality within Algerianness: discussions, negotiations and violence related to the competition between several definitions and experiences of Algerianness remain to be described and analyzed. It then shows how the competition between several “entre-soi,” in anthropologist Françoise Héritier’s terms, that is, between three experiences of Algerianness, structures the history of the country. This analysis leads me, in the last section, to explore the importance of using individual life stories to tie together pre- and post-independence history, and thus reestablish continuity, and also to reflect over the specific conditions of using oral history in Algeria. It suggests new objects and methods for historians to work with despite the difficulties, arguing that a contemporary history of Algeria is indeed possible, regardless of the emotional cost of being confronted with narratives of terrorizing violence.

INCONCEIVABLE PLURALITY, UNTHINKABLE CONTINUITIES

Looking back at the experience of historians working on pre-independence political history, conducting interviews and collecting written material, reveals the concealments and taboos that constrained both historians and witnesses under the one-party regime. My hypothesis here is that these restrictions on free thought extend beyond independence and shed light on the absence of history in the post-independence period.

Past failed futures

Struggles for independence have often been served by an effort to elaborate a national narrative, history being one of the tools used to construct a nation. In Algeria, the version of events developed by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) regime turned into an official history imposing a one-dimensional and linear narrative of the nationalist past. This narrative took shape in official texts such as the 1976 National Charter (a political framework for the constitution ratified the same year) and was institutionalized in academia during the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> It appeared in textbooks and *lieux de mémoire* such as street names and monuments. Univocal in nature, this narrative promoted values and attitudes that were those of the FLN, the only authorized political party after independence. It glorified armed struggle over political reformism; it was populist, referring to *the people* as the sole driving force for political change; it defined Algerian culture as Arabic in language and Muslim in religion, thus symbolically and (to an extent) practically excluding any other language and religion. Last but not least, these principles had, it claimed, been conveyed by a unique political trend, born with the Algerian nationalist organization, Étoile Nord-Africaine, created in 1926, via its successors, the Parti du peuple algérien (PPA, established in 1937) and the Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques (MTLD, established in 1946), and culminating in the FLN (established in 1954).

This narrative was incorporated into official texts such as the successive constitutions. Thus, the preamble of the 1963 constitution stated:

For more than a century, the Algerian people has waged a permanent armed, moral and political struggle against the invader and all

its forms of oppression following the 1830 aggression against the Algerian State and the occupation of the country by the French colonialist forces.

On November 1, 1954, the National Liberation Front called for the mobilization of all the energies of the Nation, the struggle for independence having reached its final stage of realization.

The war of extermination waged by French imperialism was intensified and more than a million martyrs sacrificed their lives for the love of their homeland and liberty.

In March 1962, the Algerian people emerged victorious from the seven and a half years of struggle led by the National Liberation Front.

Upon recovering its sovereignty after 132 years of colonial domination and feudal regime, Algeria gave itself new national political institutions.

The 1976 constitution clearly glorified the War for Independence:

The Algerian people gained their independence at the cost of a secular struggle and a liberation war fought under the aegis of the National Liberation Front and the National Liberation Army (FLN-ALN), which shall remain in history as one of the greatest epics that marked the resurrection of the peoples of the Third World.

The new constitution of 1989 also invoked the War for Independence, asserting that “The State guarantees the respect of the symbols of the Revolution, the memory of the *shuhada* [martyrs] and the dignity of their beneficiaries, and the *mujahidin* [war veterans].” This narrative was institutionalized in Algerian academia during the 1970s: the state monopoly on publishing left no outlet to competing narratives. The state also had total control over the production of history textbooks, ensuring that these reflected the dominant narrative: certain themes, figures or organizations were simply written out of the curriculum.

It was hardly surprising that history written by the victor (the FLN) excluded rival political forces such as Messali Hadj’s Mouvement national algérien (MNA) and exalted its own political standpoint during the conflict with France. More striking, however, was the effort to present itself as rooted in an old and single-strand political struggle by concealing and

denying the multiplicity of legacies and political traditions developed in Algeria prior to 1954.

Several political organizations suffered this exclusion from the national narrative. The Union démocratique du manifeste algérien (UDMA), Ferhat Abbas's political party founded in 1946, was long considered a bourgeois party, francophone, intellectual, secular and law abiding, at a time when the preferred national narrative was Arabophone, Muslim and revolutionary. By the same token, the Algerian Communist Party (PCA), also perceived as an atheist organization, was discredited for promoting, as did the UDMA, an independent republic that would unite both former colonized and former colonizers under one common Algerian citizenship.<sup>6</sup> By preventing the formation of groups that may have opposed it, notably by outlawing all associations that could have brought together former activists, the one-party regime sought not only to conceal the preexisting political plurality but also to undermine the social framework of any partisan collective memory.<sup>7</sup>

This effort at concealment affected the forms of memory and shaped the traces of the past in the present. In other words, it directly influenced the material available to historians and determined the questions they could—or could not—ask. Thus, for example, glorification of armed struggle generally makes witnesses eager to tell the story of “their” war during interviews. The situation is different, however, if their narrative does not accord with this glorious version. My research on the UDMA generated several observations in this regard.<sup>8</sup>

First, very few former UDMA members wrote memoirs or autobiographies accounting for their past political struggle.<sup>9</sup> In a country where, the official slogan claimed, there had been “but one hero, the people,” only martyrs could be glorified as individuals.<sup>10</sup> Until the 1990s, there were remarkably few individual accounts of the War for Independence, a silence that was all the more striking in a political party in which many leaders were educated and had literary ambitions. It is only in the past decade that the self-censorship has relaxed and a few autobiographical narratives have been published, written by younger members of the party. Prior to that, Ferhat Abbas's memoirs and autobiographical essays, which had been published in France in the 1970s and 1980s, were banned in Algeria.<sup>11</sup> None of the other leaders, including Abbas's lieutenant, Ahmed Boumendjel, one of the negotiators of the 1962 Evian agreements that

put an end to the Algerian War and a minister in Houari Boumediene's government after the 1965 military coup, ever wrote their memoirs, nor were they granted the honor of an academic biography. It is therefore evident that the constraints set by official history not only influenced public commemoration and vernacular narratives but also affected the writing of academic history both in Algeria and in France. Until Benjamin Stora published a biography of Messali Hadj in 1986<sup>12</sup>—an undoubtedly subversive endeavor both in form and topic—(auto)biography had been a genre absent from Algerian modern history.

The second consequence of this “memorial context” of post-independence Algeria is how it affected both the ability of historians to locate the witnesses of pre-independence political activity and the quality of their accounts. Again, former UDMA activists, for instance, appear to have been rather reticent about their past political involvement and are not generally known as such in their community. It is therefore hardly possible to conduct interviews with random grass-roots activists. Generally, only figures that have been identified from other sources—such as police surveillance reports—as local activists of the UDMA can be located. Moreover, interviewees often have only little information to give in response to questions concerning the UDMA. Their memories of times of political struggle lack the abundance of detail of their wartime memories. Indeed, their attention seems to be drawn to heroic episodes linked to the War for Independence, making it difficult to maintain the focus on pre-independence politics.

Since revolutionary methods and guerrilla warfare were regarded as the only means to obtain independence, what I have called the “decade of political parties” between World War II and the War for Independence appeared to be only “dilatoriness and pointless discussion,” in the words of historian Mohammed Harbi.<sup>13</sup>

There seems therefore to be a lost memory, if not a concealment, of this sequence in the history of Algerian nationalism during which three nationalist parties—alongside a number of non-partisan organizations—competed, and sometimes coalesced in legal elections, seeking to mobilize the colonized population of Algeria. The pressure for support exerted by the one-party regime on those who used to be politically active, notably after the 1965 coup when many were imprisoned, led them to lie low and deprived them of any opportunity they may have had to tell their story,

either for fear of danger or, simply, because of the lack of luster and distinction granted to their former political involvement. In other words, their past political experience was considered illegitimate, and therefore silenced.

As in the case of biographies of political leaders, very few studies were dedicated to their organizations: historian Mohammed Harbi worked on the PPA-MTLD, his former party, which was the so-called forerunner of the FLN. However, apart from a study on the PCA written by Emmanuel Sivan in 1976, precious little was published on the political opposition until Benjamin Stora's work on the Messalists.<sup>14</sup> Historians both inside and outside Algeria have been influenced by the sense of illegitimacy that tainted the defeated political parties and their members, as is indicated by the widespread view of the 1946–56 period as one of “loss of time” and useless division of nationalist strength. This view is frequently expressed by the actors themselves, but it also finds its way into historical discourse.<sup>15</sup>

Historians therefore appeared to have been caught up—as were nationalists themselves—in a teleological form of narrative, according to which war was the only and inescapable path to independence.<sup>16</sup> They are patently impatient with the “failed attempts” that appear to have slowed down the course of history.<sup>17</sup> Yet, a study of the UDMA reveals that far from being negligible, this ten-year-long partisan experience was, for many of its members, essential. Within the party, proper political habits and rituals were created, and a discourse was elaborated at various levels of the party hierarchy; and it is equipped with this partisan experience that many “udmistes” entered the war, most of them in the FLN.<sup>18</sup> According to the UDMA-FLN agreements of 1956, Ferhat Abbas dissolved the UDMA and invited its members to individually join the FLN, if they had not already done so. The question that naturally arises is what happened to them.

The intensity of their experience during the decade of political parties makes it difficult to imagine that it simply vanished. What happened to the activists' political experience and political cultures? What happened to the men and women involved in politics prior to the war during the conflict, and later, after 1962? Historians or sociologists have never, to my knowledge, raised this issue. Historians should be wary of accepting that the decision to join the FLN or withdraw from politics meant vanishing from the political scene completely and permanently and should consider the possibility that it merely led to a temporary lull in internal debates, opposition and conflicts. In other words, what is still missing is a more

complete rendering of plurality within Algerianness, be it a peaceable, confrontational or even internecine war-like form of plurality: the plurality of political projects within the national movement, during the War for Independence but also in the first years of independence. This failure to apprehend plurality is at the core of the other main characteristic of contemporary history writing about Algeria: the absence of historians in the field of post-independence history.

#### Unthinkable continuities

In Algeria itself, the total absence of historians in the field of post-independence history deserves more careful exploration. In order to understand it, the context of historical research should be examined, and to begin with, the role played by the state in determining areas of research and the kind of narrative that should be presented to the people. For historians working in Algeria, the year 1962 (the end of the War for Independence) seems to be the end of history, with virtually no historian or doctoral student working on any topic beyond this date.<sup>19</sup> Obviously, the lack of archives makes things all the more difficult: while the state archives of the colonial period are to an extent available in France and Algeria, the Algerian National Archives never granted broad access to state archives for the independence period. Moreover, there seems to be a consensus shared between most scholars and students in Algeria that anything after 1962 is simply not history.

History as a discipline suffers from this context, to which should be added the trauma of Arabization. Today history students are Arabophones, but, especially when dealing with the colonial period, the vast majority of relevant archives are in French. Arabization also created a gap between students and the generation of their prolific professors, trained by Charles-Robert Ageron, Mahfoud Kaddache and René Galissot, who were more comfortable writing in French. The linguistic, cultural and political turmoil has apparently made it difficult for members of this generation—all of whom will most likely have retired in less than ten years from now—to transmit to younger historians the practices of critical reading of documents and interest in the more recent international debates about contemporary history methodology or epistemology.



However, the absence of historians in the field is dire. While there is an abundance of publications on the colonial period, works on post-independence, or even texts covering both colonial and postcolonial times, are rare. Historians Benjamin Stora, Martin Evans and John Ruedy endeavored to give a chronological overview of the modern history of the country, but their books are not source-based studies, but rather very good syntheses, valuable in particular for learning about social and economic transformations of the country.<sup>20</sup>

The Islamist movement and *la Décennie noire* (the Black Decade), as Algerians refer to the years of terrorism (*Snin al-ibrab*) of the 1990s, gave rise to a number of publications, notably by political scientists: the work of François Burgat concerning Islamism in North Africa and that of Luis Martinez, more specifically focusing on Algeria, are fundamental tools for the historian.<sup>21</sup> Written in times of crisis, these publications sought to explain the rise of violence. Martinez argued in favor of the influence of economic factors, although he also insisted on the role of an “imaginary of war,” according to which the Islamist emirs were in fact heirs to a long line of political bandits. Anthropologists have examined issues of violence, identity and memory,<sup>22</sup> but few historians have attempted any analytical research encompassing a longer chronological sequence.

Two historians must, however, be mentioned for their work on violence and the Black Decade: in several articles, Omar Carlier analyzed continuities of political involvement and reflected over genealogies of violence;<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Stora wrote a short piece on the 1990s as early as 2001.<sup>24</sup> With considerable insight and acuity, both of them use in-depth knowledge of the past to illuminate the present. The fact that these works are not based on a defined body of primary sources (whether oral or written) does not detract from their value. There are few texts such as those produced by historian James McDougall, who analyzes the culture of nationalism focusing on several issues, notably the ways in which history and violence are narrated, certainly producing the richest and most thoughtful, chronologically broad historical analysis of the country.<sup>25</sup> Apart from these studies, post-independence history is mainly informed by the works of anthropologists such as Fanny Colonna or Judith Scheele.<sup>26</sup>

As a result, the discrepancy between the two distinct periods of Algerian history is striking. There is now an international academic community, including historians, studying colonial Algeria, bringing together research-

ers for regular academic events, training dozens of doctoral students and capable of voicing their analyses in the public arena. There is however no equivalent for independent Algeria: no conferences that would enable regular exchange between the few researchers interested in this period, who are therefore unable to produce an academic historical narrative for the broader public. The stories that circulate in Algeria about this period are linked to a strong political agenda (for example, the government makes intense use of the Black Decade to legitimize its repressive policies) or are narrated within informal settings such as commemorations within families and groups of friends.

With limited research led by political scientists, anthropologists and historians, mostly writing like journalists or essayists, the political history of the post-independence period seems to lack two important elements. First, historians have yet to reflect over what body of sources they can use in writing a research-led history of these events, which would enable new researchers to verify and discuss their results and learn from their experience. Second, there is a need for a chronological framework that would encompass what still appear to be discrete political episodes (the nationalist struggle; the War for Independence; Boumediene's socialism; multipartism in 1989; the Black Decade of the 1990s). Seeking to reestablish continuities between the colonial and postcolonial periods, I propose here an analysis focusing on political experiences and collective mental representations, which can suggest an alternative scansion (or rhythm) to the classical colonial/postcolonial divide in Algerian history.

#### THE NECESSITY FOR A HISTORY OF THE *ENTRE-SOI*

A kind of history that analyzes such issues considers how individuals envisaged their future and what choices they made in order to bring it about. It thus reveals the underlying debate on Algerian identity and on the political projects defining what it means to live together in the new nation. Anthropologist Françoise Héritier considers that all humans have in common the need and desire to live amongst those with whom they feel identical, the need to be “entre-soi.”<sup>27</sup> The *entre-soi* involves a definition—sometimes a mere feeling—of who “we” are and is often connected with a collective project of what togetherness is or should be. A historical

anthropology of political experience can approach the makings and the contents of three definitions of this togetherness, of the Algerian “vivre ensemble,” in their post-independence expressions: the FLN’s Arab and socialist definition; the democrats’ nationalist and pluralistic definition; and the Islamic fundamentalists’ theocratic and millenarian definition. It is the combinations and conflicts between the three imagined Algerias defined by these three “vivre ensemble” that to a great extent structure Algerian history, and their analysis provides an alternative chronology to the Great Divide between colonial and postcolonial.

### Imagined Algerias: Competing definitions of togetherness

Algerian political life has been invigorated by the competition and confrontation between three projects. Each one entailed a different form of polity, as well as a definition of who should—or should *not*—be Algerian, by defining the fundamental characteristics of shared identity and the basic rules of society, by distinguishing “us” from the “other.”

Each project delineated the community’s future, a horizon that was expected, hoped for or predicted and eventually fought for in a variety of fashions. These horizons differ in the scale at which they apply. Some outline a project for the Algerian nation; others refer to another level of community, envisaging a larger nation than the existing state, or disregarding the nation altogether. They also differ according to the time frame they sketch. Some have a utopian or eschatological dimension that defines a possible future; others demand an immediate transformation of the present.

#### *1. Imagined futures: The utopian future of socialist Algeria*

Despite being strongly anticommunist, part of the FLN adopted a socialist orientation, which had strategic importance in the Cold War context in which the War for Independence was waged. In apparent conformity with the communist roots of the PPA, the first president of the republic, Ahmed Ben Bella, introduced the notion of *autogestion*, self-management, in the economy. This project soon became a rallying cry for those who believed the FLN should remain a revolutionary party. The Charter of Algiers, adopted at the FLN congress of 1964, affirmed the socialist option taken by the regime and officially dubbed the FLN a “revolutionary vanguard.”

Those were, however, the years of the strongest leftist opposition to the regime: Aït Ahmed's Front des forces socialistes (FFS), as well as the Parti de la révolution socialiste (PRS), led by Mohammed Boudiaf claimed to be fighting for a future that would be both socialist and democratic.<sup>28</sup> The former organized an armed struggle against the regime until its leader was arrested. Those were also the days of left-wing opposition from the Parti de l'avant-garde socialiste (PAGS, the underground offspring of the PCA founded in 1966), which remained the main opposition party until the emergence of the Islamists as a political force in the late 1980s, but was nevertheless used by Boumediene to spearhead the land reform in the 1970s. For a time, the ideal of a socialist *entre-soi* was therefore shared by competing political groups without preventing the FLN's right wing from using political violence against its rivals: Aït Ahmed was arrested, Mohammed Boudiaf went into exile and the PAGS was forced to remain underground. Part of the opposition had acquiesced in the one-party regime, notably with the leftward inflection of Boumediene's rule; others had been silenced when, in 1976, Boumediene proclaimed the "revolutionary readjustment" in order to make Algeria a bridgehead on the way to the new social order and the champion of Third World socialism under revolutionary peasant leadership.

All parties involved, whether in opposition or in power, intended this socialist *entre-soi* to be nationalistic. Their discourse made no reference to a rejection of the nation or even to reliance on an international revolution. For the FLN state, the socialist dimension of the revolutionary movement was not incompatible with the Arab and Muslim conception of Algerian identity, as a kind of "Islamic socialism" purged of class struggle.<sup>29</sup> After the country's independence, this definition of the self had several consequences: the relative exclusion of non-Muslims; the exclusion (and assassination) of the Harkis (Muslim auxiliaries in the French army);<sup>30</sup> the Arabization and stigmatization of Francophones and Berberophones;<sup>31</sup> and the repression, imprisonment and exile of the democratic opposition. A close examination of the political violence endured by opposition members after their arrest following Boumediene's military coup in 1965 is telling: during arrests or torture sessions, several Algerians of French origin were threatened with losing their Algerian nationality or with the deportation of their families. Several French militants, as well as Algerians of French origin were indeed driven into exile.<sup>32</sup> For some of the French

who had made the choice to become Algerian, the coup was a turning point, the moment when they relinquished Algerianness and chose to leave the country.

These forms of exclusion and episodes of political violence appear over the years as a means of promoting the emergence of a purified collective self, tempered in the violence of these events, in order to bring about the advent of the radiant and utopian future of socialist Algeria.

*2. Imagined futures: Foreshadowing the kingdom of God.*

Other movements shared with socialism the desire to solve the political, economic and social problems of the country, but intended to do this by restoring the integrity of religious doctrine. Fundamentalist groups—or Islamists (*islamyyun*) as they call themselves—viewed the application of *shari‘a* law, whether based on the Quran or on both the Quran and Sunna, to be a response to modernization, which they considered to be largely a foreign phenomenon. The country’s political and social problems were to be solved by reinstating the integrity of religious dogma, whether in the public space and political arena or in the private domain. Resisting moral decay and the perversion of moral standards was perceived as the cure to the ailments bestowed upon the country by the West. For the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), founded in 1989, or for the Salafist Armed Islamic Group (GIA), this was the way to construct a nation compliant with God’s word that would foreshadow the advent of His kingdom at the end of days. As well as defining beliefs and religious practices for the present and the immediate future, which would define the behavior and rules of the future collective life were they to come to power, these movements developed an eschatological dimension.

According to the GIA, scrupulous compliance with Quranic principles would lead to the advent of a theocratic political regime that would solve the issues created by modernity, economic development and the problem of the definition of the collective self. Again, the rhetoric of purification was expressed very clearly, even in the FIS of 1991, before the practice of violence was widely adopted, as demonstrated by a rally held in the Algiers stadium on December 23, 1991. The FIS had just obtained a large electoral victory, and the party leaders (Ali Belhadj, Abassi Madani

and Abdelkader Hachani) had been arrested. Following Ali Belhadj's very young son, 100,000 activists chanted together the FIS slogan:

There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his prophet.  
For her sake [of the Islamic state; of the *shahada*, the Islamic creed]  
we live, and for her sake we die.  
On the path to her we fight, and for her we meet God.

One speaker cried out “we are ready, to purify this country and create an Islamic state, to kill two million of its inhabitants.”<sup>33</sup>

From theological texts to threats of assassination posted on walls during the decade of terrorism, from the legalist strategy developed by the FIS—exploiting the tools of democracy in order to overthrow the regime—to the use of political violence, a complex discursive and symbolic language defined the shapes and rules of a collective life in the making: whom and what are we fighting against? What are we fighting for? And ultimately, who are we? Oral and written texts—leaflets, newspapers, press releases, sermons in mosques that produced the theological bedrock for the political and murderous practices of the armed groups—reveal how Algerianness was defined, notably through exclusion—and assassination—of foreigners, and delineated the contours of a theocratic political project.

### *3. The struggle for a democratic present*

Other representations of Algeria (and of the collective self) compete with the socialist, nationalist and Islamist imaginaries by presenting opposing projects for the present, projects based on plurality within a democratic regime. For instance, the UDMA, which promoted a democratic Algerian Republic, provided its own definition of Algerian citizenship, encompassing Christians and Jews born in Algeria. Well into independence, heirs of the Communist Party also continued to defend a conception of Algerianness as integrating inhabitants of European origin in a pluralistic society diametrically opposed to the vision promoted by the FLN. Their very existence bore testimony to the plurality of Algerian political life. Proof of its vitality, despite years of repression, was clearly seen when in 1989, only a few days after the establishment of political associations was legalized, several dozen of such organizations were founded almost instantaneously.

They revealed just how vigorous these political projects were, projects that were immediately applicable here and now.

The fact that this *entre-soi* is democratic does not mean that it is tolerant of all others and willing to acknowledge other conceptions of the Algerian collective self. The interview I conducted in 2011 with Fadhila Chitour, former president of the Medical Committee against Torture, created in 1988, reveals how—prior to the Black Decade—intolerance characterized not only those who would later become identified with the Islamist movement. The committee was created immediately after the October 1988 riots, during which several hundred people were killed in the streets of the major cities of the country, and opposition activists, as well as youths, were arrested by security forces and tortured. Dr. Chitour is herself considered to be a democrat: however her narrative of the first meetings of the committee reveals the tension between two groups. While those she calls the “future Islamists” advocated establishing a permanent committee against repression and torture (in order to target repression beyond the ongoing events), the “future left-wing, democratic parties’ doctors” were much more reluctant since that would mean “that we condemned repression in the name of the rights of all humans, whoever they may be, whether they had been repressed for being Pagsists [PAGS members] or Islamists.”<sup>34</sup> She depicted the “future democrats” demanding that the “future Islamists” answer questions before giving in: “If tomorrow we obtain change and democracy, I want to hear you tell me will *shari‘a* law be applied? Will you condone mutilations? What will your position be as a doctor?” Beyond her shock at discovering the reluctance of her fellow “future democrats” to apply human rights to Islamists, what she describes is a scene in which the democrats symbolically demand, in essence, abjuration of the Islamists’ opinions before offering to extend human rights to them.

All three of these forms of *entre-soi* therefore share a strong urge to suppress and negate the other. It is the power of the envisaged *entre-soi*, and not ideology alone, that can account for the desire to purify the collective body, the advocacy of killing as a means of constructing the nation, the denial of humanity to the other: ideology alone cannot account for these phenomena with the same depth as the notion of *entre-soi*.

## From dynamics of union to centrifugal logics

These various imagined Algerias generated logics of union, but also powerful centrifugal logics. It was the oscillation between these two forces that determined the historical rhythms of an alternative chronology to the dominant FLN national narrative emphasizing the simplistic opposition between colonial and postcolonial. It is possible to discern discrete moments in the political history of the country when either of these logics is clearly at play and show how these different forms of *entre-soi* have been articulated through specific institutions pertaining to the political field but dealing with the most intimate aspects of individuals' lives.

In the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, nationalists tended to form congresses or associations,<sup>35</sup> thus ending a period during which collective action amongst the colonized population was fragmented and rare. This phenomenon culminated with the establishment of the Association des Amis du manifeste et la liberté (AML), which brought together a wide range of politically involved figures in support of the nationalist Manifesto of the Algerian People (1943). However the repression of the May 1945 demonstrations in the northern Constantine region caused nationalist unity to fall apart: friends of Ferhat Abbas accused the more radical supporters of Messali Hadj of having irresponsibly launched the riots that allowed for murderous repression.<sup>36</sup> Partisan identities developed and vied. Generally, the democrats of the UDMA or PCA members did not perceive the existence of competing partisan identities as a divisive factor as their strategies were defined in terms of alliances. However, other nationalists regarded the very existence of rival parties as a sign of factionalism and dissent. There were constant discussions on the necessity and possibility of maintaining these separate identities in the context of the struggle for independence. The conflicts between parties and trends were expressed in attacks on the personal behavior and identities of their rivals. Thus, Messalist activists advocated the use of Arabic, on the assumption that the UDMA leaders, having been educated in French, could not speak Arabic, and when the latter did speak French, they would heckle them, demanding that they spoke Arabic. Similarly, they criticized Ferhat Abbas for his marriage to a French woman.<sup>37</sup> That Messali Hadj himself was *also* married to a French woman, and that Ferhat Abbas was in fact perfectly capable of speaking Arabic dialect, reveal the strength of this process of



“othering.” Neil MacMaster points out, however, that the subject of mixed marriages caused conflict even within Messali’s party, with certain militants supporting the Ulama Association’s claim that such marriages corrupted Algerian identity.<sup>38</sup>

By 1955, the FLN had gradually overcome its rivals, either by negotiation or by force, integrated them or managed to make them disappear. The use of constraint endured after the War for Independence, without ever succeeding in entirely silencing opposing voices. The conflict between the FLN and Messali’s MNA was the main source of internecine violence during that war and had a huge impact on Algerians’ intolerance for such partisan divisions in the postwar period. The figure of the traitor became prevalent at that time and remained salient even after independence. To this day, in historical conferences and public talks, heated discussions regularly reveal that the wounds of this particular civil conflict are still raw, with accusations of treason often bandied about against the Messalists, including by public figures.<sup>39</sup> But the FLN was not merely a political party or an army: as a state in the making it also aimed to impose individual behavior that appeared to combine Muslim morality with militant asceticism on both combatants and civilians, under the threat of physical mutilation.<sup>40</sup>

These different imagined Algerias were sometimes irreconcilable: nationalist hostility towards communists resulted in the physical elimination of several of them who had joined ALN fighters in the field (the *maquis*) during the War for Independence.<sup>41</sup> Another telling example took place more recently between the first round of the legislative elections of 1991 and the interruption of the legislative process: after the success of the Islamist FIS in the first round of the elections, it was uncertain whether the authorities would let the electoral process continue (and allow a legal Islamist victory) or forcefully interrupt the process to prevent them from seizing power. In the few weeks’ interval, there was a clash between two forms of *entre-soi*, the secularist *entre-soi* of the FLN and the democrats, and that of the FIS, who advocated a theocratic regime and a deeply Islamized society. Logics of confrontation were embodied in both discourse and practice, revealing the magnitude of what was at stake: the prospect of the arrival to power of the FIS concerned individuals in very personal ways. For certain women, it was a question of the very possibility of occupying public space or of being forced to dress differently and alter their way of moving about. Later during the Black Decade, many women, particularly

in the cities, claimed to have carried headscarves in their bags, *just in case*, but ended up never wearing them despite the danger. In this case, body and clothing became a means of resistance. For the Berberophones or the Francophones, the crucial point—as in other moments of their history—was the threat of having to acquire and use a language that was not their own. In short, everything was jeopardized—everyday existence, bodies and souls. Part of their experience therefore remains unutterable, dealing as it does with paroxysm, communion and the tearing apart of a community. Analyzing this experience thus requires a specific historiographic approach, borrowing concepts from the historical anthropology of belief and violence, which can enable us to apprehend liturgies, rituals, and violent gestures as forms of language. This type of history transcends the classic disciplinary boundaries: not a political, social or cultural history, but a *total history* that allows us to understand the periods of terror (attacks, massacres) in both 1954–62 and in 1992–2002, as well as the moments of grace and collective fervor that followed or preceded those periods, times of democratization or recovered freedom that held out the hope of a brotherly and prosperous country.

ACTORS AND CHRONOLOGICAL DISCONTINUITIES: THE HISTORIAN AND THE RISK OF PAROXYSM

To describe how the different *entre-soi* are articulated at various levels in individuals' experiences, but also to move beyond the discrete episodes described in the previous section towards a genealogy of these *entre-soi*, requires the study of new objects. Continuities can be reconstructed through individual life stories. For instance, why and how a number of political activists retreated from politics under the one-party regime raises the issue of inner exile and practices of withdrawal, which may constitute a culture of political refuge in times of intense repression. Associated with this phenomenon are strategies of enduring, bearing and resisting, which allow for a reprise of political activity in more liberal times.

Reconstructing continuity

The life story revealed in interviews I conducted between 2003 and 2011 with Sadek Hadjèrès, former leader of the Algerian Communist Party, provides an instructive example of this process. Born in 1928, Hadjèrès led the FLN-PCA negotiations in 1955–56: unlike the UDMA negotiators—who accepted the disbandment of their organization—he managed to maintain his party throughout the War for Independence and went underground to take part in the armed struggle, giving up his life as a medical doctor. Independence, in 1962, allowed him to resume legal activity and bring the PCA briefly back to political life until it was banned in November 1962. The political circumstances of an increasingly authoritarian regime led the communist leadership to create an underground organization, the Parti de l'avant-garde socialiste (PAGS), after the military coup of 1965, which many understood as a termination of the PCA. Hadjèrès therefore went underground again, living in Algeria and abroad, estranged from his wife and three children, until the establishment of a multiparty system in 1989. He later left the country during the decade of terrorism, still living today in France and Greece.

In this itinerary, two periods of underground activity, before 1962 and after 1965, share certain characteristics: both were times of underground political struggle, with similar practices, knowledge and skills; both were also times of political marginalization vis-à-vis the dominant strand of nationalism. Interviews reveal how, faced with the same challenge of a single-party regime, other political activists chose to gradually withdraw from politics in the years after independence: despite their past intense involvement in politics and collective activities, they lay low, dissatisfied by the regime that was emerging.

Hadjèrès's example—amongst thousands of others—suggests the importance of considering individual itineraries and, more broadly, the political evolution of the country, over a longer period. Zooming out to contemplate the period beginning with these men's entry into politics in the 1940s up to the period of pluralism after 1989 and the decade of terrorism ending in 2002 changes the perspective dramatically. Beyond the great divide of independence, this approach reveals continuities in political involvement and struggle against the authorities, whether colonial or national. It also leads the historian to listen to how the actors themselves

survey the chronology and organize their narration of the events in their lives.

Not entirely surprisingly, in our various interviews, Sadek Hadjérès's analysis of events pertaining to the colonial period was always much more explicit and expressed more articulately, as though he had had the opportunity of verbalizing it many times already. However once we moved beyond 1962, he constantly moved back and forth between the various events, without a clear chronology. Hadjérès's experience is also interesting because he himself has attempted to elaborate his own narrative and analysis. For example, in different periods of his life, he tried to find out what had become of those with whom he had worked in order to better understand the evolution of Algerian society. After independence he went back to areas where the Communist Party had led important protests to find traces of the peasants or workers who used to support the communists. Even today, via the Internet, he makes contacts with former comrades to exchange versions of past events, find documents that have been lost, and accumulate documentation. In other words, he has tried to create continuity between the discrete episodes of his political life. What is striking, however, is how his continued political involvement in fact prevented him from pursuing his attempts at elaborating the continuity within his own political experience between different periods: going underground in 1965 interrupted his efforts, as did again his exile in the 1990s. As he explains, "The entire life of the Algerian communist parties was interspersed with periods of underground action and legal action, brief moments of legality during which we had no time to assess the results of our actions, to reflect over past periods and learn from our experiences."<sup>42</sup> But his words apply to his personal involvement also: moments of political violence (the War for Independence, the military coup of 1965, the Black Decade of the 1990s) not only interrupted the sequence of his political life but also interrupted the process of constructing his memories and reflections about it.

In this context, interviews allow actors to weave (often for the first time) continuity in the fabric of their lives, continuity that the recent history had in fact prevented. Things are different when the historian focuses on the colonial period, in particular on the War for Independence, whose stories have acquired a strong coherence through many forms of public and private narratives.

Interviewed about her detention in 1965, and asked whether she had been arrested and tortured, G.C. a communist activist answered simply that she had indeed, “for the second time.”<sup>43</sup> She then proceeded to tell a story according to which, during World War II, she had already been tortured by the French authorities under the Vichy regime. Her story is one where the questions she was asked by the French during World War II and by the Algerians in 1965 are precisely the same: asked what the name of her father was, she surprised her interrogators each time by answering “Abraham” (you mean “Ibrahim”? she was asked by her Algerian interrogators). When asked what religion she was, she perplexed them twice claiming she was an atheist. And when they insisted she *should* have a religion, she answered both times that in that case she would be Jewish, creating a certain commotion. She laughingly concluded her story by explaining that a guard in 1965 at the Serkadji prison had congratulated her for not having wavered in her answers, thus implying that he had had access to her file dating back to her imprisonment by the French twenty years earlier.

What is relevant here is not whether the anecdote is true or not, but her effort to tie together the two episodes. The rest of the interview was made even more complex when she referred to several of her comrades who were also arrested and tortured during the War for Independence. The case of one of them is known through other sources: Jacques Salort was tortured during World War II, during the War for Independence and again in 1965. On several occasions during the discussion with G.C., I had to ask her to which of the three episodes she was referring to because of the confusing similarities.

During interviews about the war, to whose narratives witnesses have been so extensively exposed (in books, films or discussions), interviewees are able to organize their answers in chronological order—sometimes sounding as if they are reading out of a textbook. Once the barrier of 1962 is crossed, the stories they give acquire a multilayered, *mille-feuilles*-like form, with constant circulation from one period to the other. This disrupted and tormented history affects not only the ways in which people process their memories, but also the ways in which they accumulate other traces of the past. In a country where state archives of the post-independence period are virtually inaccessible, historians rely on private archives. And here again, the process of accumulation of documentation

was constantly interrupted by further events: during our second meeting, a former PAGES members finally explained that the political bureau meetings used to take place at his house and that he remembered having been asked to burn all the minutes of the meetings when, in October 1988, PAGES members were being arrested by the police. "I couldn't do it, my wife had to burn them," he added. He then fell silent for a long moment, as if contemplating the extent of what had thus been lost.<sup>44</sup> By the same token, the anti-torture groups that organized after the repression of October 1988 managed to put together careful documentation of events in an attempt to count and identify the victims. The Black Decade that followed not only interrupted their work, it also put an end to their reflection, and in several cases, to their lives. Several of the anti-torture committee members were killed during the Black Decade (such as psychiatrist Mahfoud Boucebc, stabbed to death in 1993) or are living in exile (such as writer Anouar Benmalek). Those who remain have lost track of the committee's archives, and—it also seems—of part of their memories. Any question addressed to the survivors about 1988 leads them forward, to the 1990s, to contemplate the immensity of the disruption they have suffered, and proving very disturbing for them.<sup>45</sup>

#### From one civil war to another: A history of paroxysms

The moments of collective emotion experienced by individuals and social groups leave a number of traces, despite their nonverbal quality: in other words, they can become an object for history. For example, applause, or even ululations, during rallies were conveyed by police surveillance reports during the colonial period. In a political party conceived as the matrix of the future nation, the elaboration of a political liturgy was equally indicative of a representation of the *entre-soi* of that nation. The physical organization of meetings (presence or absence of women, separation of men and women, presence or absence of children) staged the imagined society. A history of public displays and political meetings before the War for Independence, during the war, under the one-party regime and later, with the establishment of pluralism in 1988 and the rise of Islamism, reveals a paroxysmal experience, in the medical sense of the word: rallies, demonstrations and celebrations constituting moments of fervor were the most intense expression of the collective vision of an *entre-soi*. In other

words, what is suggested here is a cultural history of these symbiotic paroxysms of communion.

The heights of political violence also constitute paroxysmal moments of collective emotion, which suggest the need to examine the material conditions of violence during the first and second Algerian wars in order to render the coherence of imaginaries and murderous practices. The approach to violence employed by Denis Crouzet in his analysis of wars of religion in France provides a methodological framework that can help historians deal with the substantial, heterogeneous (and bilingual) corpus of immediate narratives of acts of violence in Algeria (frontline reports, NGO archives, novels, letters, and so forth).<sup>46</sup> Accounts of violence published in the Arabophone or Francophone press, for example, which underscored the demonstrative dimension of the gestures performed by the Islamists, contributed to making them widely known: their acts of violence, often graphically staged, contain symbolic meaning intended to be broadcasted beyond their victims and witnesses, through stories or even photographs. According to Denis Crouzet, gestures of violence are the expression of the culture that led to, or imposed, violence. Violence, he argues, “is a culturally ciphered system of meaning, which enables us to understand the causes of violence and, thus, of the religious crisis.”<sup>47</sup> It is therefore a discourse whose vocabulary is constituted by gestures and which must be analyzed as such.

Like Crouzet, who refers to the work of Alphonse Dupront, historians of Algeria can also benefit from the studies of anthropologists. Maria-Victoria Uribe’s research on *Violencia* in Columbia fascinatingly tackles questions of national identity through a local (and paroxysmal) history of the gradual violent appropriation of territory.<sup>48</sup> Her choice to anchor her research in local history reveals the links between political practices and practices of violence, thus restoring the relation between times of peace and times of war—the opposition between which mostly does not apply in Algeria. With regard to Algerian history, her work also suggests the need to inscribe the research in a longer chronological sequence linking the War for Independence to the end of the years of terrorism.

Myriads of documents were published during the heated debates that accompanied the decade of terrorism, notably the “qui tue qui?” debate (who is killing who?), which equated violence committed by the Islamist groups with that committed by the army.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in 2003 Mohammed

Samraoui, former second-in-command of the secret services in Algeria, published, in France, an account of the acts of violence committed by his services.<sup>50</sup> It is difficult to anticipate what types of image will emerge from these documents: the narratives related at the time focused on gestures of killing and brutality, emphasizing what appeared to be their lack of meaning: stories about cruel murders, the killing of women and children and the disembowelment of pregnant women were told in the first years so as to show that the perpetrators were not, in fact, Muslims. According to rumors, kidnapped young women had been raped repeatedly by non-circumcised men, or by men who did not speak Arabic and therefore were not even Algerians. One rumor even claimed that there were Black Muslims amongst them, seen as “proof” of the American involvement in the conflict. They thereby attempted to construct a politically meaningful story in order to grasp the events.

A specific feature of contemporary history—as opposed to Crouzet’s analysis of wars of religion for instance—is that the historian is confronted with these moments of paroxysm not only in sources produced in the past but also during interviews. Because of the very nature of the more recent events of Algerian history—the Black Decade—and because of the repetition of events identified by many of the actors themselves, the continuities that they interlace through the narratives of their political lives, interviews about contemporary Algeria often rekindle the paroxysmal emotion, so that the violence is vividly imparted to the historian via the narrative that is related.

During an interview with two militants concerning the riots of 1988, their repression and the anti-torture campaigns that followed, one of them, F.A. explained how he and others in Blida had mobilized against the repressive measures taken by the authorities, while his former comrade N.A. listened. His narrative referred to three different moments: the 1988 demonstrations and the repression that ensued, the Black Decade of the 1990s and the ongoing revolutions in the Maghreb in 2011.

F.A.: What I recall, in the current struggles for democracy, is that we have experienced it on our flesh, and we have paid a very high toll in terms of repression and in terms of assassination. I’ll give you the example of a comrade.... He was a secondary school teacher and PAGS activist. He fought determinedly. To be precise, he was



a member of the Committee against Torture [in 1988]. He was assassinated by the terrorists and hanged on a bridge in Tenia. They hanged him. They pulled out his eyeballs. It was...

*He stops and covers his face with his hands. After a moment:*

N.A.: He won't be able to finish the sentence because he had to struggle to get the firemen, the gendarmes and the police to take down the body. [*F.A. quietly leaves the room.*] We sometimes had to go and get our comrades' bodies. He can't stand it, to this day.

A sequence of war: 1945–2002.

This form of historical anthropology is based on a local history of practices of violence and allows for a long perspective over the entire period running from the repression of May 1945 to the end of the Black Decade in 2002, via the War for Independence. Political scientists have noted, in passing (as this was not their main focus), how the Islamists claimed the heritage of the nationalist combatants for independence, a phenomenon Luis Martinez dubs “the illusion of re-enacting the Liberation war.”<sup>51</sup> In their story, the independent state took on the role of the colonial state, and political legitimacy thus changed camps. The support given by France to the FLN regime in interrupting the electoral process in January 1992 only served to confirm Islamist accusations that the state was linked to *le parti de la France* (*Hizb França*), the metaphorical party of France, an expression used to discredit part of the population and in this particular case to underline that the state was a foreign body within Algerian society:

Some French leaders declare, as the Algerian regime has done since the coup d'état of 1992, that the problem in Algeria is not political but essentially economic. Both have been saying for more than three years that it is unemployment that has caused the swelling of the FIS ranks.... The Algerians heard the same ideas during the war of liberation between 1954 and 1962. Just as the nationalist ideal was obscured in 1954 by the colonial power, placing its hopes in the Constantine Plan and the revival of investment, so the nationalist ideal is obscured today by the dictatorial and repressive Algerian regime in its recourse to IMF [International Monetary Fund] treatment.<sup>52</sup>

The inversion is striking and raises the question whether other narratives equate the two war periods in a similar fashion. Research has shown, for example that in Kabylia and the Aurès witnesses—notably women—spontaneously link episodes from the War for Independence with later periods of violence: repression against the *maquis*, the nationalist combatant groups, in the first years of independence (sometime called by the Kabyle the “Arabs’ war”), and then the repression of the Islamist *maquis*.<sup>53</sup> In the Aurès, former nationalist activists recount their struggles against the independent state and in support of democracy—as well as the repression that they suffered—as a continuation of their struggle for independence.<sup>54</sup> This equation between civil violence and the anticolonial war waged against a foreign colonizer may be seen as an attempt to “make the state foreign,” as foreign as the colonial state had been. But it also suggests another question: is it possible that the FLN war against the colonizer was also a civil war? It was certainly seen in this way by some of the MNA and PCA activists, as well as the Harkis, because of the violence inflicted and sustained by Algerians, which made it no less a civil war than the violence of the Black Decade.

James McDougall has shown how the neo-Orientalist cliché of a society endemically plagued by violence has permeated academic analysis.<sup>55</sup> Beyond the idea of inherited or transmitted violence—that would present the resort to violence as a form of Algerian fatality—the intent here is to explore how the continuity is constructed within the narratives: the actors themselves make comparisons and define sequences so that the echoes of one episode of paroxysmal violence resound in the narrative of the following.

In these narratives, particular places are themselves bearers of history, practices and the ways in which they were transmitted or reused. The mountainous massifs such as the Aurès or Kabylia have seen the continued presence of *maquis* of various political affiliations; forests have acquired strategic and symbolic importance during guerrilla wars, but also, as interviews show, during times of political struggle when political meetings take place in forests or when deviant social practices find refuge under their cover.<sup>56</sup> During the War for Independence, both were of strategic importance, and the authorities were never able to control the mountainous massifs entirely. Narratives of former *mujahidin* concur in presenting forests as places of refuge, life and combat; they refer to repressive mea-

asures taken by the French, notably the use of napalm and defoliants.<sup>57</sup> The impossibility, in particular for the French, of simply going for a walk in the forest, especially on the outskirts of Algiers, was seen as an intrusion of war, a disruption of their daily lives. In the French media, the story was one of insecurity caused and forest fires lit by “terrorist groups.”<sup>58</sup> These areas remained a refuge for *maquisard* (combatant) groups after independence: the Bouyali *maquis* for example sought refuge in the Atlas mountains in the Blida region, which later became the battlefield of the war against Islamist terrorism.<sup>59</sup>

It is striking that recent narratives echo the former, describing forest fires as a tool used by the state in its fight against jihadi combatants. Journalist Daikha Dridi’s article on the Baïnem forest, published in 2002 at the end of the Black Decade, finds echoes of the previous conflict in the present one, while revealing the extent of forest destruction during the Black Decade:

They [forest rangers] speak as if walled within a fatalism that Algeria’s forests have always been victims and war just has not made their chances any better. The subject seems to be taboo. Not because fear has imposed silence on the country, but because to talk about an army that bombs and razes the country’s woodlands immediately triggers collective memories of the French army’s methods during the War of Independence.<sup>60</sup>

The narratives of forest rangers and former tourists concerning the Tikjda forest in the Djurdjura massif indicate that the forest represents the collective body. The very few who returned to the forest after the 1990s, after almost a decade when it was closed to the public, were deeply shocked by the view of vast swathes of the forest cut down by the security forces to rid the region of the jihadists. One informant recounts driving his daughter to the place where they used to go on holiday after her return from exile. When she saw the new landscape, all he recalls is the young woman’s physical reaction: “I was holding my little girl, she was shaking and sobbing as though she would never stop.”<sup>61</sup> Historians of other wars have shown that evoking non-human losses in war (in particular the death of animals) sometimes triggered spectacular emotional reactions, including amongst PTSD sufferers unable to express their grief otherwise.<sup>62</sup> In Algeria, the wounds inflicted on the forests are unbearable for those who experienced

ten years of civil conflict: not only do these wounds question the meaning of the war itself, the role of the state and its tactical choices, but they are also perceived as the durable trace of the pain inflicted on the collective body during the Black Decade, a body that—like the forest—had not yet recovered from the marks left by the previous war.

In the aftermaths of the sequence of violence running from the repression of May 1945 to the end of the Black Decade in 2003, the historian working on a contemporary history of Algeria is (or will be) necessarily confronted—if not struck—by the violence that has branded actors' experiences. The historian has no choice but to resort to oral history in this context, if only because—in the absence of state archives—the only possible archives are retained by individuals. Consequently, an encounter with actors' resurgence of emotion and their narratives of violence can hardly be avoided. However, the cases analyzed in this section have shown that beyond interviews, other sources exist that allow these upsurges of emotion to be objectified and made into a part of the history of this continuity of war and political violence.

## CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the recent history of Algeria should be studied in a longer historical perspective, as an alternating sequence of war and unsettled peace between 1945 and 2002. Arbitrary though any such periodization may be, this one responds to the pressing need to break free from the previous chronological framework, where history effectively ends at independence, in 1962. Shorter sequences within this chronology will become useful objects of study at a later stage; but for now, this change is imperative for addressing a question overlooked by the vast literature on the colonial period, that of unity and plurality within Algerianness—which is also the most urgent question of the “history-less” period since independence.

This change of focus opens up broad new areas of research that can circumvent the inaccessibility of Algerian state archives. The colonial archives, oral history and various forms of private archives can allow phenomena to be traced across the demarcation line of independence. It is

to be hoped that such historical research will emerge in the near future, while actors are still alive.

This longer chronology confronts the historian with upsurges of paroxysm, particularly the paroxysms of violence that occurred at several moments of Algerian contemporary history. Such a history comes at an emotional cost, for the interviewee as well as for the historian. Concerning the Black Decade, during which stories of violence in the media, through rumors, became a means of increasing the impact of violence by spreading terror, the historian (or the historical anthropologist) becomes the last recipient of the terrifying narratives. But this is the only way in which they are able to analyze the discourse itself and make use of it *as a source*. More than the absence of archives, what hinders the production of a contemporary history of Algeria is this difficulty of facing and understanding the bloody or enthusiastic efforts to fuse together the population and the subsequent wrenching periods of violence that tore it apart.

#### NOTES

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1. Yasmina Khadra, *La part du mort: Une enquête du commissaire Llob* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 222; translated as *Dead Man's Share* (New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2009), 181. (My translation is less elegant than that of Aubrey Botsford but closer to the original.)

2. “[J]’ai une histoire à redresser,” claims Karadach: “I have a story/history to straighten out.” Khadra, *La part du mort*, 220.

3. For one of the more recent and smaller-scale scandals, see “Le Général Schmitt m’a dit: j’ai encore mes hommes à moi en Algérie,” *El Watan*, 6 May 2011, concerning Louissette Ighilahriz, a well-known *mujahida* (war veteran), whose status as *mujahida* was publicly questioned by one of her prominent former comrades, Yacef Saadi, a senator appointed by the president. In her response to *El Watan*, she accused Saadi of having revealed information under torture, also expressing her wish that historians would be able to work independently.

4. Arabization refers to the process of switching from French to (classical) Arabic. The history departments were arabized early on, in 1970. See, for example, Gilbert Grandguillaume, *Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb: Islam d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1983); Mohamed Benrabah, *Langue et pouvoir en Algérie* (Paris: Segquier, 1999).
5. Hassan Remaoun, "L'intervention institutionnelle et son impact sur la pratique historiographique en Algérie: La politique 'd'Écriture et de Réécriture de l'histoire', tendances et contre-tendances," *Insanyat*, no. 19–20 (January–June 2003): 7–40.
6. Malika Rahal, "La place des réformistes dans le mouvement national algérien," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 83 (September 2004): 161–71.
7. See Maurice Halbwachs's seminal work on the concept of the social framework of collective memory, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).
8. These observations are based on a four-year Ph.D. research project involving fieldwork in Algiers, Oran, Tlemcen, Nedroma and France between 2002 and 2007, during which I interviewed a dozen former militants, mostly of the UDMA. See Malika Rahal, "L'Union démocratique du Manifeste algérien (1946–1956): Histoire d'un parti politique. L'autre nationalisme algérien" (INALCO, 2007).
9. See in particular Mohammed Benamar Djebbari, *Un parcours rude mais bien rempli: Mémoires d'un enseignant de la vieille génération*, 3 vols. (Algiers: Éditions ANEP, 2002); Kadda Boutarene, *Kaddour (1): Un enfant algérien témoin des débuts du 20e siècle* (Algiers: Société nationale d'édition et de diffusion, 1982); idem, *Kaddour (2): Un adolescent algérien à la veille du centenaire de l'occupation coloniale* (Algiers: ENAL, 1986); idem, *Kaddour (3): De Brézina au Palais Bourbon* (Algiers: ENAL, 1990). See also the memoirs that extend beyond independence: Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi, *Mémoires d'un algérien*, vol. 1, *Rêves et épreuves (1932–1965)* (Algiers: Casbah éditions, 2006); vol. 2, *La passion de bâtir (1965–1978)* (Algiers: Casbah éditions, 2008).
10. James McDougall, "Social Memories 'in the Flesh': War and Exile in Algerian Self-Writing," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 30 (2010): 34.
11. Ferhat Abbas, *Autopsie d'une guerre: L'aurore* (Paris: Garnier, 1980); idem, *Le Jeune Algérien Suivi de Rapport au maréchal Pétain: Avril 1941* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1981); idem, *L'indépendance confisquée, 1962–1978* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992).
12. Benjamin Stora, *Messali Hadj: Pionnier du nationalisme algérien, 1898–1974* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986).
13. Mohammed Harbi, *Le F.L.N., mirage et réalité* (JApres Publications, 1980), 6. See also Rahal, "La place des réformistes."

14. See in particular *ibid.*; Benjamin Stora and Zakya Daoud, *Ferhat Abbas: Une utopie algérienne* (Paris: Denoël, 1995); Benjamin Stora, *Messali Hadj: Pionnier du nationalisme algérien, 1898–1974* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1986). For the PCA, see the important but today outdated work by Emmanuel Sivan, *Communisme et nationalisme en Algérie, 1920–1962*, Travaux et recherches de science politique, no. 41 (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1976).

15. See Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN 1954–1962* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

16. Guy Pervillé, “Peut-on enseigner la guerre d’Algérie?” *Historiens et Géographes*, no. 308 (March 1986): 887–924.

17. Despite distancing himself from this type of discourse while analyzing “the exhaustion of politics (*l’épuisement du politique*),” Gilbert Meynier still expressed impatience with the nationalist movement when analyzing “les heurs et malheurs de l’union algérienne” (the good and bad fortunes of Algerian union) and narrating the various attempts at political unity in the light of the final and successful one, the creation of the FLN. Meynier, *Histoire intérieure*, 69–88. Sylvie Thénault gives a very good discussion of the notion of “failed attempts” in her *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne* (Paris: Flammarion, 2005).

18. Malika Rahal, “La tentation démocratique en Algérie: L’Union démocratique du Manifeste algérien (1946–1956),” *Insanyat* 12, no. 42 (December 2008): 79–97.

19. Personal communication with historians in Oran, Constantine and Algiers in March 2011. Sociologists and political scientists are indeed concerned with questions of historical relevance. I have nevertheless chosen to consider the situation in history departments as it is indicative of the way history in general is perceived.

20. See, for example, Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de l’Algérie depuis l’indépendance*, vol. 1, 1962–1988, 4th ed. (Paris: La Découverte, 2004); John Phillips and Martin Evans, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). See also John P. Entelis, *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press; London: Croom Helm, 1986); John P. Entelis and Phillip Chiviges Naylor, *State and Society in Algeria* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); John P. Entelis, *Islam, Democracy, and the State in North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); *idem*, *Comparative Politics of North Africa: Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1980).

21. François Burgat, *L’islamisme au Maghreb* (Paris: Payot, 1995); Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War, 1990–1998* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000).

22. See, for example, Paul A. Silverstein, “An Excess of Truth: Violence, Conspiracy Theorizing and the Algerian Civil War,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 75,

no. 4 (Autumn 2002): 643–74; Ussama Makdisi and Paul A. Silverstein, eds., *Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

23. See in particular Omar Carlier, *Entre nation et jihad: Histoire sociale des radicalismes algériens* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1995); idem, “Civil War, Private Violence, and Culture Socialization: Political Violence in Algeria (1954–1988),” in Ann-Emmanuelle Berger, ed., *Algeria in Others’ Languages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 81–106.

24. Benjamin Stora, *La guerre invisible, Algérie, années 90* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2001).

25. James McDougall, *History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria: Colonialism, Historical Writing and Islamic Modernism, 1899–2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); idem, “Martyrdom and Destiny: The Inscription and Imagination of Algerian History,” in Silverstein and Makdisi, eds., *Memory and Violence*, 256; idem, “Savage Wars? Codes of Violence in Algeria, 1830s–1990s,” *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 117–31.

26. See, for example, Fanny Colonna, *Le Meunier, les moines et le bandit: Des vies quotidiennes dans l’Aurès (Algérie) du XXe siècle* (Arles: Sindbad, 2010); Judith Scheele, *Village Matters: Knowledge, Politics & Community in Kabylia, Algeria* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2009).

27. Françoise Héritier, *De la violence*, vol. 2 (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005).

28. Alf Andrew Heggoy, “An Algerian Opposition to a One-Party System,” *African Historical Studies* 2, no. 1 (1969): 121–40.

29. Burgat, *L’islamisme au Maghreb*, 156.

30. See Mohand Hamoumou, *Et ils sont devenus harkis* (Paris: Fayard, 1993); and, more recently, Vincent Crapanzano, *The Harkis: The Wound That Never Heals* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011)..

31. Benrabah, *Langue et pouvoir en Algérie*.

32. Henri Alleg, ed., *Les torturés d’El Harrach* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1966).

33. For images of this rally, see the documentary directed by Séverine Labat and Malik Aït-Aoudia, *Algérie 1998–2003: Autopsie d’une tragédie* (Compagnie des Phares & Balises, 2005).

34. Interview with Fadhila Chitour-Boumendjel, medical doctor, Algiers, March 23, 2011.

35. Carlier, *Entre nation et jihad*, 75–82.

36. Repression was organized both by the army and by private militias of “Europeans” and killed thousands.

37. See Mohammed Harbi, *Une vie debout: Mémoires politiques*, vol. 1, 1945–1973 (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), 79–80. Also, my interview with Mokhtar Boughrassa, former MTLA activist, Oran, June 2007.



38. Neil MacMaster, "The Role of European Women and the Question of Mixed Couples in the Algerian Nationalist Movement in France, circa 1918–1962," *French Historical Studies* 34, no. 2 (May 1, 1990): 357–86. The Ulama Association was created by Abdelhamid Benbadis in 1931. It represented in Algeria the Islah movement, developed in Egypt by Muhammad Abdu and Rashid Rida in order to reform and modernize Islam, and created a vast network of schools to promote religious education in Arabic.

39. See, for example, the article recently published by the head of the Former Mujahidin Association under the title, "Messali est un traître," *El Watan*, October 11, 2011.

40. For an example, see a recent memoir, in which the author discusses the imposition of the ban on tobacco on civilians and the execution of a combatant for possessing tobacco. Hamou Amirouche, *Akfadou: Un an avec le colonel Amirouche* (Alger: Casbah Éditions, 2009), 155–56.

41. Meynier, *Histoire intérieure du FLN*, 183–84.

42. Interview with Sadek Hadjérès, Malakoff (France), December 6, 2010.

43. Interview with a former PCA then PAGS activist, Paris, February 2011. G.C. is of "European" origin, with a Jewish father.

44. Interview with Kamel Boualem, former PAGS member, Algiers, March 2011.

45. Interviews with several anti-torture activists, Algiers, March 2011.

46. Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 1990).

47. *Ibid.*, 49.

48. Maria-Victoria Uribe, *Anthropologie de l'inhumanité: Essai sur la terreur en Colombie* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2004).

49. For an example of this debate, see Habib Souaïdia, *La Sale Guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

50. Mohamed Samraoui, *Chronique des années de sang* (Paris: Denoël, 2003).

51. Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War*, 157.

52. Abdelhamid Brahim, "La faillite de l'économie algérienne," *El Mounqidh*, June 6, 1996, cited in *ibid.*, 218.

53. I am grateful to Coline Pellegrini for sharing this with me after her research in Kabylia in 2002–2003.

54. I am grateful to Andrea Brazzoduro for pointing this out, after his fieldwork in the Aurès.

55. McDougall, "Savage Wars?"

56. These themes also appear in novels such as Yasmina Khadra, *Morituri* (Paris: Baleine, 1997).

57. See, for example, narratives by former combatants: Mansour Rahal, *Les maquisards: Pages du maquis des Aurès durant la guerre de libération* (Alger: M.

Rahal, 2000), 214; Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: Karthala, 1994).

58. See for instance a television news report from August 16, 1956, about the Bainem forest near Algiers. Available at <http://www.ina.fr/economie-et-societe/environnement-et-urbanisme/video/AFE85006895/incendie-de-la-foret-de-bainem.fr.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

59. Burgat, *L'islamisme au Maghreb*, 176–83; Rémy Leveau, *Le sabre et le turban* (Paris: François Bourin, 1994), 132.

60. Daikha Dridi, “The Army: Friends of the Scorched Earth.” The article was first published on the website of Algeria Interface, January 25, 2002, which no longer exists. It has been republished on that of Algeria Watch: <http://www.algeria-watch.org/en/articles/2002/bainem.htm> (accessed October 10, 2011).

61. Interviews with a forest keeper and several informants who used to visit the Tikjda park, Tikjda and Algiers, June 2011.

62. On World War I and the importance of the death of horses in veterans' accounts, see Damien Baldin, “De la contiguïté anthropologique entre le combattant et le cheval: Le cheval et son image dans l'armée française durant la Première Guerre mondiale,” *Revue historique des armées*, no. 249 (2007): 75–87.