

The Ideology and the Programme of Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in Algeria: an Analysis

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the ideology and programme of *Islamic Salvation Front*, which is the largest Islamic organization in Algeria. The socio-economic and political programme of FIS is the major theme of discussion in this chapter. It analyses how far the influence of Islam in the formation of political programme of FIS. The contradiction between the programme and the realities is very important in this regard. The ideological differences among various groups in FIS and its impact on the political development in Algeria are also discussed.

KEYWORDS: Islamic Movements, Political Liberalisation, Radicalism

Introduction

Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) was founded on February 19, 1989 at the al Sunna mosque in Babel Oued in Algeria. Several hundred preachers and members of different groups had participated in the rally, which was conducted as a part of the formation of FIS. Many of them had been active in clandestine fundamentalist groupings that had sprouted up over the years and had served prison sentences during the repression of the Islamists in the mid 1980s (Frank, 1992; 40). They were the members of Islamic organisations like *Movement Islamique d' Algeria* (MIA) and *Organisation Speciale* (OS).

Islamic movements emerged as a major political force in Algeria as part of the awakening of the Arab Muslim Consciousness in the Middle East and North Africa during the period between the two world wars. Islam had played the role of a unifying force since French colonized the country in 1830s. The earlier uprisings against the French - 1849 to 1879 were mainly due to various socio-economic and religious reasons. Once the authority was established, the French started the policy of suppression through various repressive and discriminatory laws. The Muslims in Algeria were considered as second-class citizens and their movements were strictly controlled and heavy penalties were imposed on political activists under colonial rule.

During the course of time, Islamic movements have grown to the extent of challenging power structure in various states. According to this movement, Islam is not merely a religion but a political ideology that should be integrated into all aspects of society. As happened in the case of other Arab countries, in Algeria also Islam functioned as a unifying force since the colonization of the country. Later it has become the most potential ideology that could influence the politics of state. Different groups, both Islamic fundamentalists and western scholars, have projected it as an alternative to communism and to fight against western/liberal democracy. The *Salafiyya* movement in 1930s had aimed to create a national identity -based on Islam throughout the region. This identity played an important role in the independence

movements in the Arab world especially in the Algeria war of independence, due to its popular and violent- nature of functioning. Moreover, this domination of Islamic identity was the major reason for the incorporation of Islam in 1962 by the state. The nationalist movement of Algeria was a complex-whole of different currents of political thought within the Islam/Islamic movements. The fundamental question is that how this spirit of Islam functioned in Algeria in different phases of national development in different ways.

Islamic ideals, symbols and institutions offered powerful instruments of inspiration and mobilization for those who challenged the French domination in Algeria from the beginning. Dozens of charismatic leaders emerged on the basis of ethnic brotherhood or regional allegiances in different parts of North Africa and led movements of reform resistance and revolution to free the homeland from the hands of nonbelievers.

The newly developed situation in Algeria during late 1980s, of political liberalization and formal introduction of multi party system had given a space to the Islamic organisations to intervene in the political process of the country. Above all, the socio-economic situation of the country was highly suitable for a radical political transformation. This new order was mainly institutionalized by the adoption of a new constitution through a national referendum, which suggested the end of socialist era, introduction of multi party system, introduction of elections, abolition of censorship over press etc. Islamic groups had flourished as Algerian state socialism failed to resolve country's socio-economic problems. The FIS with a national programme and effective intervention in mosque and social life of the people, which resulted in its emergence as the largest of these groups, has become a regime challenging ideology (Esposito and Piscatorie 1999; 432).

The FIS emerged in 1991 as Algeria's dominant political party. FIS got a landslide victory in the election that was held on June 1990 on the basis of a new constitution (Mortimer, 1996; 19). Until this election, the authorities and the state controlled media in general underestimated the growing strength of FIS. Front was an amalgam of different currents of political thoughts within the Islamic movement but their ultimate goal- the formation of an Islamic state based on *sharia* united them. The inherent contradiction in their ideology reflected both in strategy and tactics.

Emergence of FIS

FIS was founded by Dr. Abbassi Madani-a western educated University Professor- and Sheikh Ali Belhadj- a schoolteacher and a preacher- on 18 February 1989 (Haifa, 1994; 43). FIS got support from almost all sections of the society. However the most important support base of FIS was, the marginalized, frustrated unemployed men under the age of 30 who constituted a large segment of the Algerian society (Frank, 1992; 42). This was the group, which gave FIS an identity of social protest movement against the oppressive regime. They are the group who suffered the most from the failure of economy. It is important to note that their support to FIS was more out of anger with FLN led military backed regime and deteriorating conditions of everyday life than in support of the FIS's ideology, programme and world view. FIS drew support from many- the educated class to the common masses. Most of its leaders are from highly educated aristocratic background. Number of leaders and supporters were engineers and technicians by training and the largest concentration of

Islamist support was among University students especially in science departments and technical faculties.

FIS contained three major schools of thought of political Islam during the early years. The first group was Islamic nationalists who advocated Islam as a solution to Algerian problems. The second group was the traditional Islamic Universalists. They advocated the restoration of Islamic state and social order. The third group was more violent and aggressive radicals who were called Afghanists, (Entelis 1994; 14-16) trained from Afghan Mujahiddin ramps. They advocated violent confrontation with the government/state, which only has any meaning.

In its initial stage FIS was indeed less a political party representing interest than a social protest movement against the power structure. But the usurpation of power by military in Algeria affected the FIS mainly in its mode of operation. As a result of this, the leaders of FIS decided to enter into political sphere. In the meanwhile many small ultra orthodox religious groups and terrorist groups were formed in Algeria, They started operating under the shadow of mainstream political organisations like FIS. The differences among the FIS leaders -both ideological and on modus operandi - were very clear and it increased the tensions in the political scenario in the newly developed political situation. Some of these leaders acted as patrons of such ultra orthodox religious groups. The army justified their action (interference) because according to them that was done to preserve the Algerian state and constitution. The newly emerged political discourse in Algeria in 1990s was fundamentally between proposed Islamic state by FIS and the existing undemocratic ruling party apparatus of the military state. Anyhow the ideological hegemony of Islam that dominated the Algerian politics was helpful to FIS to strengthen their roots in the society.

Rejecting all models of forced Islamic society, the nationalist leaders of the FIS like Abbasi Maddani, Anwar Haddam and Abdel Kader Hashani supported the gradual application of *sharia*. They advocated an electoral strategy for assuming power. But Ali Belhedj who was supposed to be the internationalist in FIS leadership even supported holy war (jihad) as a strategy to assume power. After the capture of power in certain Municipalities and provinces by 1991-92, Islamic Salvation Front followed a dual strategy of politics and diplomacy on the one hand and military resistance on the other (ibid; 15-16). It was mainly to put pressure over the ruling military group. Moderates and reformers among the FIS considered violence as a tactic of last resort. However, radicals considered it as central to establish a new social order. They proposed violent actions against the state and they tried to destruct the corrupted nation state totally and to create a pure authentic Islamic state.

The impact of military intervention on the ideological orientation of FIS was very critical. The revolutionary project of ideological transformation of the society was replaced by a plan to immediate implementation of the *sharia*. But the political, economic and social programmes of state were challenged only in words. The major strategies FIS followed in this phase were the entry into political life and reinvestment in the social spheres like mores, customs and the policy to reconquer the society through social action. The rapid spread of Islamic themes into the society was the inevitable result of this development.

Different Ideological Currents in FIS

There are two schools of thought in FIS on the course of action (ibid; 14). One group advocates an Algerian solution for Algerian problems rejects all models of pan Islamic society and proposes electoral strategy for assuming power. They support the gradual application of *sharia*. They are the mainstream leaders - Abbasi Maddani, Anwar Haddam, Abdelkader Hachani and Rabha Kebhir. They seek a political solution. Ali Benhedj and Kamareddine Khebane lead the other group that advocates a holy war. There was another group, which emerged in the latter phase called Afghanistes - violent, nihilistic radicals. The division between religious Islamists (preachers, led by AN Benhedj) and reformist Islamists (politicians, led by Abbasi Maddam) has appeared only in the second phase of the war. In this phase FIS followed politico-diplomatic strategy on one hand and military resistance on the other hand. When moderates take violence as a last resort to pressure the oppressive regime, radicals consider violence central strategy. When regime followed a policy of suppression, the supporters of moderate leaders are also forced to support armed resistance.

The first group - which advocates an Algerian solution for Algerian problems, rejected the authenticity of official and state sponsored Islam and instead they promoted non-political actions like education, culture and social activities. The second group is committed to a mass authentic Muslim society - they proposed direct political action to attain the same. Reforms in both state and society were the basic character of the programmes in their agenda. They conducted political organisation and mobilization in order to attain it. Militant hardliners followed the means of violence, terrorism and assassination to capture power. The suffering of a serious loss of legitimacy to the ruling regime by various political and economic reasons ignited the process of opposition.

While these movements were sharing the common goal of an Islamic state, they were divergent in views, practices, strategy and ladies. The nationalist group in FIS considered the jihad as a religiously justified rebellion to attain power but through the electoral process and access to institutions of governance. The major religious demands which were raised by FIS and implemented by the provincial governments like the Arabisation of education, prohibition of alcohol and prohibition of mixing of sexes were taken from the fourteen points of Abbasi Maddani (Lebat, 1994; 107). Another important stream of discourse in FIS was between historical founders and the new generation. Most of the historical founders were either from highly educated professionals or preachers. They were partly identified with *Salafiyya* - the reformist movement - and had participated in the war of independence. Abbasi Maddani a prominent figure among them had even an ideological fight with FLN for many years during the war of independence.

The second was the radical Islamists who were mainly from the new generation of Salafis. They were the proponents of radicalization. Mustafa Boyali - the leading ideologue of this group proposed an armed struggle against the military state in the name of *Jihad* (Entelis, 1994; 18). They criticized the liberal nature of society and reforms. They argued that the only solution to the problem was that the complete overturn of the regime through an armed struggle based on the principle of disobedience. Ali Belhadj, a representative of the radical militant group, even stated that it is impossible to build an Islamic state by starting with impious institutions

(ibid). They were ideologically committed; they failed totally to address the socio-economic problems. It is also important to note that the state repression played an important role in the formation development and the continued influence of this group in the Algerian society of that time.

The third ideological group in the FIS/Islamic opposition was Islamo-technocrats. This group represents the first generation graduates since independence. They were highly educated and generally from University campuses and were products of the political socialization that was spread by Islamism in Universities during 1970s and 80s. Islamo-technocrats were more political in their orientation. Unlike their predecessors they have given little importance to the theory of gradual action/ Islamisation (Lebat, 1994; 114). They even did not seek the installation of a theocratic state. They opted for an electoral strategy to capture political power.

The Preachers group considered FIS as a channel to continue the collective-secret struggle that they had started against the state after the attainment of independence. Violence continued as a means of capturing state power for militant *Salafis* in FIS. For Islamic-technocrats, FIS was a vehicle of individual political advancement - through cooperating with electoral strategy. Preachers were concerned with the Islamisation of social order and defending the interest of the class of *Ulema* (ibid; 78). The Islamo-technocmts were integrating themselves into the functions of a power structure and followed participation strategy that they considered capable of running and perpetuating power. Radical Islamists identified themselves as an alternative to the nation state. At the same time both functioned within and against the nation state and tried to mobilize people.

All these groups functioned under the banner of FIS for a long time, till the radicals were expelled from the organisation. But the institutional and legal strategy of the FIS ultimately failed to overcome a system of authoritarianism, where democratisation was perceived as functioning exclusively in the service of a minority who were a part of a single party system. The militant elements in the FIS who opposed the participation strategy were strengthened by the highly authoritarian and oppressive nature of the regime. Though FIS brought together the diverse factions of the Islamic movements the inherent contradiction and conflicting concerns of different groups in the organisation resulted in the breaking of the organisation within a short span of time. The new generation of Islamic radicals, who has been intellectually inspired by FIS figures, has turned away from the movement following the suspension of the elections.

Serious constitutional reforms were the immediate impact of the food/civil riots (1988) in Algeria. The situation in Algeria was very volatile. It had adequate resources and a large active unemployed population. Its people were proud but outward looking. Algeria's professional intellectual ideologues influenced people through debates at youth centers (Entelis, 1994; 13). They conducted mass rallies; large demonstrations and public assemblies and youths overwhelmingly participated in it.

Political Islam in Algeria aims at reestablishing Islam as a way of life through the institutionalization of a stable governing system, which ought to be representative of Algerian society in its plurality. The intention of the Algerian political Islam is not to replace the present by a mystical past, but to restructure the modern social order so that it conforms to Islamic principles and values. Under this, a selective-interactive approach to western political, economic and social expressions can be undertaken so long as there is no violation of Islamic moral principles.

Because of the increasing differences among the different ideological groups in FIS fundamentalist orientation got strengthened. It created a general atmosphere of tension in Algerian politics that FIS may use the victory to convert Algeria into an Islamic state through the change of constitution. This was further strengthened due to the warning of Islamists that their victory would change the fundamental nature of the Algerian state, which had been defined by the Algerian war of independence. Women were insisted to wear veil, alcohol and night clubs were prohibited and mixing of sexes were strictly banned by FIS as if those were the real problems to be addressed immediately. They concentrated on morality and implementing Islamic order. The fear became deep rooted in the society, thanks to such activities of FIS in their provinces. Here the focus of discourses shifted from state to society on the one side and political/economic problems to morality and Islamic character of state on the other. It was clear by then that Islamists/FIS was not interested to focus on the economy and functioning of politics, which were the root causes of the problem. FIS has a well-organized structure. The directing organs of FIS are Consultative Council (*Majilis al-Shura*, 35-40 members) and National Executive Bureau. The compositions of these two bodies were never made public until 1991; even the identities of the most of the principal figures in the FIS were unknown to the public. The secrecy of the FIS in this regard exceeded even that of the FLN during the war. The organisation was formed in a structure as in the communist/Leninist parties. Until the spring of 1991 the only FIS leader to give interviews to the media and issue formal public statements was Abbassi Madani, the official spokesman and its effective President (Frank, 1992; 41). People in the leadership are dedicated adherents and the periphery consists of followers who are willing to support the organisation to achieve its material goals.

Political Programme of FIS: An Analysis

FIS, as a political party, has emerged from the people of Algeria as an expression of their identity and aspirations. Its mission is political, social, cultural, and civilisational. This compels its protagonists to recognize and adhere to the principles of global security, market economy, respect of human rights and the coexistence between Western and Muslim civilizations. Indeed the FIS has come to existence in a part of the world where people have gone through different frustrating experiences at all levels of human life. It intends, once in power, to implement these concepts and build its relations with other nations on the basis of mutual respect of these principles.

The ideological frame presented by the FIS is based on the fact that Algeria is part of the Muslim Nation. However, it takes into consideration the political culture of the Algerian society as a whole, for every Muslim country has its own specific problems that are to be solved internally. It is argued that FIS does not intend and will not attempt to build a theocratic system.¹

The political programme of FIS is found in many sources. One version is published in the book *the Islamic Movement in Algeria and the Crisis of Democracy*, written by Ghanim in 1992 (Ghanim 1992; 142). It had appeared as a form of pamphlet – *the Islamic Revolution in Algeria in 1991*. Besides, Gamal al Banna published a letter-an abbreviated version ‘A letter to those who call to Islam’ (Stenburg, 1996; 142). al Banna’s version excludes those parts, which discuss the role of the army and foreign affairs. All three texts were published in Egypt. The actual text of the charter is given in its original version in all three editions. Besides FIS

¹ *Socio-Economic and Cultural Programme of FIS*, cited in www.fisalgeria.org.

programme, Ghanim's work contains the Programme of Algerian Hamas and some of the official proclamations and statements presented by different Islamic movements in Algeria (ibid). The political programme of FIS is popularly called 'Revealed Word'. *Quran* and *sunna* are the text content of the political charter. Sharia (Islamic Law) is the foundation/core of the programme. The political ideology of the movement is based on the sources of Islam. The political program of the FIS aims at institutionalizing a stable governing system, which has to be representative of the plural Algerian society. The means to achieve this is through political pluralism, which fully guarantees, implements, and preserves minority rights. The FIS adheres to the election in principle, multiparty system and the change of power.

The leader of the Algerian Islamic Movement, the late Sheikh Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis, stated in a paper titled 'Basis of Governship in Islam' in January 1938; "No one has the right to manage the affairs of the people without their consent. It is incumbent on the people to delegate power or to take it away. He also said in the same paper that the people would not be governed except by the Law that they chose and knew the benefits for themselves. Therefore they obey the Law because it is their own Law, not because any other authority does impose it on them, be it of an individual or of a group. He continued by promoting multiparty system: "The people reserve the right to discuss their matters with those in position and hold them accountable for their actions and make sure they follow the choice of the society, not their own" (www.fisalgeria.org).²

The introduction of the charter emphasizes the significance of the Quran and the Prophetic tradition. In the second passage of the political programme Algerian people and their history is described. Here, the charter explains the programme particularly for Algerian people. Economic policy, agriculture, commerce, industry and financial situation are the subject matters in the next paragraph of the programme. The following paragraph deals with their ideas on social political and civil rights. The subject matter of the next paragraph is education - how to finance education, how to train teachers etc. Domestic and foreign policies are outlined in the following paragraphs. The features of reformation of Algerian society in the girdle of 'Islamic Sharia and the complete social reformation' (*islahal-ijstimai ash-shamil*) are some other topics of discussion (Stenburg, 1996: 143-4). Programme for health, politics and culture are discussed in the following paragraphs. The closing paragraph of the programme is dealing with army and foreign affairs.

At the beginning of the Programme, there is a short paragraph establishing the principles of the political platform of FIS. The programme quotes four verses from the *Quran*, which emphasize the omnipotence of God and the significance of being a Muslim. The authority of the book of God and Muhammad's guidance is emphasized. The introduction to the section or the political goals of FIS is divided into five parts. The importance of *Sharia*- just Islamic order - is substantiated by quotes from the *Quran*. The *Quranic* quotations are given extra emphasis in each and every occasion. The second part deals with the importance of acquiring knowledge and technology in treating free future Islamic Society. It shows the desire for a society free from colonialism, which shall be achieved through Islamic faith and submission to the will of God. The Programme emphasizes the establishment of a political project that will work as an incentive for the political actions of the FIS (ibid, 144).

The part on political project says – "Truly, the FIS, with its characteristic methods, does not work in isolation from the people, but always starts from the

² *Socio-Economic and Cultural Programmes of FIS*, www.fisalgeria.org

principle of working with it in every step of the historical process. The implementations (of the methods) are fruits of its ‘endeavor’ (*lijahdihi*) and ‘struggle’ (*jihadihi*). And this was the method of the companions of the prophet as they said.

“If you had set forth before us the we and you have dived into it, we should certainly have dived with you, and no one of the us should have stayed behind you” (Ghanim, 1992: 144) - here the method - to follow actions of prophet-is clearly mentioned. The most important among this is jihad -holy war- in the sense of war against unbelievers as a religious duty in accordance with the regulations for such a war set down by Islamic law. It also means the individual's personal struggle for Islam.

The doctrinal frame of the programme suggests that the political doctrine and ideology governing Algerian society should be drawn from the sphere of Islam. Islam is described as significant for Algerian history and culture. The programme says that Islam is the most solid doctrinal girdle for the political project of Algeria that has the power to confront the crisis (ibid) and Islam is the straight path and true religion. The programme says that FIS works to make a room for popular initiatives and that it will endeavor to accomplish a free and equal society. It promises that equality shall be applied in society. The idea of consultation is stressed over and again as a part of Islamic democracy. There are twelve paragraphs constituting the basis for the fronts work to restore the political order to health, under the title ‘The Political Axis’ (*fashihan-mizam as-siyasi*). This paragraph – ‘Political Axis’ (*al-mihwar-as-siyasi*) vehemently condemns a state, which is governed by secular legislation. The beginning paragraph refers to verses from the *Quran*, which is the first passage of the verse 21 in the *shura* of consultation (ibid). The usage of sacred source in this paragraph serves to uphold the few that a situation where the state is governed by secular legislation. For them, a secular legislation (law promulgated by human being) is to associate man a companion with God- that is to worship another besides God.

The programme emphasizes an Islamic mission- to divert man from false attitudes and selfishness and direct him towards the supposed Islamic spirit of unity or an equal society.³ The section (*igna*)- named Political Axis emphasizes the need of consensus among Algerian people for the implementation of the policies and programme. It underlines the importance of popular initiatives, which will endeavor to accomplish a free and equal society. To achieve this, monopoly of all- including party- is to be eliminated. FIS is said to be striving for an advancement of the collective Islamic spirit in society and condemns selfishness and favoritism. 'The Right of Election, Nomination of Candidates and Participations' (*haqq al- intikhah wa' l- tarshih wa Musharaka fi' l- tasyi*) discusses the election processes such as running of election campaign. Here Islam is described as the religion of freedom. It is verified with a reference to utterances made by Caliph Omar i.e., ‘how can you enslave people when his mother delivered them as free?’ (Stenburg, 1996; 148)

Economic Aspects in the Programme

The economic part of the programme criticized the economic mismanagement of the regime, but failed to suggest specific alternative programme to meet the economic crisis of the state. The economic program is based on the principle of economic growth. The diversification of the internal economic structure and of the foreign trade is the first priority of the FIS economic reform and this is suggested as the best way to deal with the foreign debt. The FIS programme says that it would honor payments of

³ see the commentaries on verse 5:53, in Yusuf Ali’s translation of *Quran*.

all debts accumulated by the State of Algeria prior to the *coup d'etat* of January 11, 1992. The attraction of capital to revitalize the economy is seen as a necessary measure, since the FIS foresees the participation in the 'Global Free Economy' as a building block of any country's economy nowadays (www.fisalgeria.org).⁴ At the same time, the relations between countries and between institutions are to be built on a partnership basis to avoid over-exploitation and guarantee proper and sound management of human as well as material resources. The FIS, however, knows that being part of a global economy has good and bad effects on the domestic economy. Nonetheless, central command economies, FIS argues, have proved everywhere in the world that global markets are unavoidable. This is pointed out, as a reason for FIS's participation in the global free economy. Economic liberalization, it is argued, has to be driven by state policies in which one will have to favor certain sectors of the economy (export-oriented sectors as example) at the expense of others. Obviously, to implement such a policy one needs to have political stability, which cannot be achieved without political democratization.

Economic liberalism, open market and support to private sector were the important aspects of the economic orientation of the FIS. These were similar to the economic policies of the existing regime. A clear-cut demarcation has been proposed between public sector and private sector in industry (Frank, 1992; 140). FIS enjoyed support from private sector and different commercial groups including the groups, which engaged in parallel markets. Their support was an essential outcome of the liberal policies of the FIS on matters relating to trade, commerce and industry. The considerable financial support to the organization from this section was another important outcome of this link. The ninth paragraph of the programme calls for the re-examination of agricultural policies. According to it the support of the farmers should be secured, but the method to achieve this is not clearly expressed. Time anti again the programme mentions the problems of administrative malpractices but no remedy has been suggested to tackle this.

Social Programme

The major reason of the mass support of FIS was its social programme. FIS strengthened its social space through various kinds of social welfare activities. The supply of food grains during the Ramadan is very important in this regard. They made good use of worst ever economic situation of the country and functioned as a parallel to government. The popular support assumed by this reflected in the elections. They opened '*Islamic souks*' which provided consumer goods with a considerable low price. They had done a remarkable relief work during earthquake in Tripuza in 1989- FIS sponsored assistance units were often there first to aid to the victims. FIS has opened its own medical clinics and also distributed free water to victims where the Government failed to supply. These activities gave them public acceptability though the public was suspicious about their democratic credentials.

The section on social policy refers to several verses in *Quran*, and it deals with the rights of subjects within the state. The FIS bases its social program on the principle that man is the main axis of the universe and he creates civilizations. The FIS aims at building a balanced society where the right to life, right to health and welfare benefits, right to education at all levels for all components of the society are guaranteed. The FIS has envisioned its program based upon the fact that the Algerian

⁴ *Social, Economic and Cultural Programme*, www.fisalgeria.org.

society is family oriented and that man and women will be guaranteed the same status.

The Programme clearly mentions the right to live, right to social security and rights of the subjects. It emphasizes on mutual societal solidarity and the cooperation between different classes and groups. The programme says that man's right to existence (*haqq al-wudjud*) is founded on divine respect or honoring the Lord (Stenburg, 1996; 149). The social policy of the programme is based on the principles of equality in Islam. The social programme states that man is the axis of existence due to his capacity, which is different from the rapacity of the animals. *Umma* claims to give security to its subjects and every one in society is regarded being born equal. The section titled the 'Right of the Subjects' and the 'Right to Social Security' (ibid) outlines the rights of the Algerian people in all stages of the country's progress. Hence, the possibility of establishing perfect society is linked to the degree in which its Muslim inhabitants behave in a correct Islamic manner.

Revealed Word makes a connection between the right of existence and the right of education. The right of education presupposes that every mother is responsible on matters of importance for the education of her children. The last part of the social policy sums up FIS's position on equality that is the movement's idea of Islamic equality. As common in the case of every fundamentalist group the programme was against the rights of women in public life. It condemned the mixing of sexes in all aspects of public life. Though it called for the payment to women for their work at home, it did not address the issue/ right of women working outside the home.

The eleventh paragraph of the programme discusses the courts of justice. It says "the reform of the judicial ranks is to take place by the return of the respect for the independence of justice and the immunity of the judge just as the Islamic *sharia* defines it" (Ghanim, 1992; 151). The quotation stresses the fact that FIS cares to enlarge public confidence in law officials and courts that is needed-to strengthen position of the judicial apparatus.

The application of the sources of Islamic tradition is vehemently used to legitimize the claims of FIS. In the document, *sharia* is the foundation of political system. It is perceived as the foremost and most comprehensive principles to the true Islamic order, because they are not subordinated to the power of God. Algerian political system, as proposed by the FIS, can name candidates for general elections but the candidate should be a fit and qualified Muslim. According to the programme FIS encourages general elections not between parties representing different ideologies but between most qualified Muslim individuals (Steinburg, 1996; 151).

FIS is against all kinds of innovations because it considers innovation anti-Islamic. The laws shall not be promulgated by assembly because the Islamic law already exists and it is to be applied through interpretation. FIS's technique of argumentation is traditional in terms of style and structure.

According to the FIS programme Islam is comprehended as the foundation for every action in all spheres of society, individual or collective. It is a common supposition shared by almost all Islamic Movements in the Muslim World. The concept of one God (monotheism) is intimately connected with the concept of an ideal Islamic 'society'. The term implies the idea of a society based on the Islamic principles. Thus the movement strives to unite the Algerian *Umma* on principles to be found in *Quran* and in *sunna*. The sources of Islamic tradition are used to legitimize the claims of FIS.

The cultural programme put forward by the FIS relies on the concept of coexistence of civilizations. It aims at the preservation of the cultural and historical traditions of the Algerian society as these (Islam and Arabism) constitute the elements of its identity According to the FIS programme; Ideologies besides Islamism – i.e. Communism/ Liberalism – would be an expression of idolatry or to associate something with God. These ideologies are viewed as a threat to the true Islamic order because they are not subordinated to the power of God (www.fisalgeria.org).⁵

FIS programme proposes the principle of consultation (*shura*) to do away with arbitrariness. The choice of the most qualified Muslim individual will lead Algeria away from arbitrariness. Arbitrariness here signifies the presence within a society of despotism or competing ideologies where none of them is subordinated to the will of God. The traditional meaning of consultation is a mutual, first hand consultation between high-level religious and worldly officials (Steinburg, 1996; 145). In the FIS programme consultation means allowing the people to choose their Muslim representatives to the national assembly. Moreover, these assemblies are not capable to promulgate laws.

With regard to international relations and diplomacy, the OS bases its approach on moderation and equity in addressing world problems. The FIS unequivocally supports all oppressed people and put the issue of human rights as a guiding principle for foreign relations. Honoring treaties with regional and international bodies and organizations concluded prior to the *coup d'etat* of January 11, 1992, and which respect the strategic and national interests of the Algerian people is seen by the FIS as a necessity, since complex geopolitical and economic ties require involvement on the world scene.

A significant aspect of the programme is that FIS considers Islam in Algeria as a domestic affair and that every Muslim country has its own specific problems that are to be solved internally. This is totally against the concept of Islamic Universalism. The FIS believes in coexistence between the West and Political Islam; Political Islam does not play the role that communism played for forty-five years.

All the statements in the programme are substantiated by quotations from *Quran* and it is interesting to note that sometimes it is difficult to understand the connection between the statement and the Quran passage. Such quotations from the sacred source create an impression that the programme is just and of an Islamic nature. The correlation between the contemporary situation in Algeria and the interpretation is relevant as it deals with corruption, unemployment, administrative malpractices etc. Besides, it gives an idea that every word and letter of *Quran* is applicable in every context.

Even though the FIS document is concerned with individual and state morality the programme is basically a part of a political discourse. Though it is rhetorical it can be characterized as a draft constitution and a normative social order that can be applied as a political system in the state. The self-image of FIS is that movement's ideology is the only correct interpretation of the Revealed Word. The usage of the Revealed Word and of the religious symbols serves to legitimize the standpoint of the FIS and also function as a religio-political language understood by most Algerians. The fundamental aim of this was to create an impression that an Islamic state may be founded on a divinely guided political authority.

⁵ *Socio Economic and Cultural Programme*, www.fisalgeria.org

Many leaders of the FIS do not belong to *ulema* class. One of the striking features of FIS's interpretation is the fact that it is made by layman outside the control of the traditional, top-level religious leaders (Westerlund, 1996; 153). This layman's interpretation expresses an endeavor to play a part in the decision making process and its wide spread appeal suggests that these problems of state are also the problems of the people. The Islamic jargon can be summed up as a link between the core of FIS and the periphery. Though the followers in the periphery may not be willing to establish the Islamic republic of Algeria and to accept living in accordance with FIS's interpretation of Islamic law, they are willing enough to support the movement as an alternative to the politics of present regime. The socio-economic projects like community projects, welfare activities like the distribution of food grains, clothes and money, and the neighborhoods and schools played an important role in influence the people and to ensure their support.

The colonial theme is clearly expressed in the document and it considers Islam as an ethnic marker that is it gives Algerians their true identity. The FIS's program and interpretation of Islam are closely related to the contemporary situation as a form of theorizing Islam on the specific circumstances of the present time (Stenburg, 1996; 156). It is true that FIS's usage of the Revealed Word does not actually reveal more about the socio-economic difficulties of contemporary Algeria. Besides, it only gives a vague idea of what they would do if they gain power. The Programme very rarely addressed economic issues, and the programme does not give a concrete plan to solve the economic problems of the country. The usage of the term '*shura*' to construct an Islamic form of democracy is stressed throughout the program, and it is an instance of giving political meaning to a Quranic word. Moreover the term is used in a weak and imprecise manner. According to this, the religious duty of an individual and the community is to work for the development of an Islamic political system. Therefore the participation in election or voting is mandatory to the citizens of Algeria. Likewise the primary obligation of the elected government is nothing but to apply *sharia* in the society (ibid; 160). According to the FIS program not only religious scholars but even a layman can interfere and play a role in the application of *sharia*.

The verses from *Quran* and *sunna* used in the FIS document act as symbols presenting a possible line of action for the people to meet the situation in contemporary Algeria. The sacred sources and Islamic terminology are a political language understood by the people and its interpretation also tied to social predicaments. This is the reason of high support to FIS from Algerian political sphere. FIS supports the principles of right to expression and the right to hold general elections, which includes nomination of candidates, the right to be accepted as a candidate in elections and participation in election campaigns. According to this, four fundamental rights of man in Islamic view are expressed such as right to choose leadership and the right to administer. According to the programme the political institutions have a role to reform Islamic Algeria and the work of reform will continue until all institutions are based on Islamic law.

Majilis-al-Shura, which is dominated by religious elements in the organisation, had become the power center, which surpassed the popularly elected assemblies in most of the provinces and municipalities controlled by FIS. This was the major reason of the neglect of the real socio-economic and political questions. Naturally religious leadership underestimated these issues. Besides, the Intervention of *Majilis al Shura* in the administration had given a different colour to these elected bodies.

Despite repeated references to the *sharia*, the overall tone of the programme was relatively moderate. Even then, some extremist FIS leaders like Ali Belhedj often condemned the concept of democracy un-Islamic. The elements of democracy, which are mentioned in the programme of FIS, are superficial because the fundamental political rights of man such as the right to choose the leadership and administer are expressed in an Islamic vision. For Example, it never gives freedom to form political parties on the basis of different ideologies rather than Islamism. It clearly suggests that election can be conducted only within the framework of Islam. The question of government accountability, which is mentioned time and again in the programme, is totally skeptical in this context. The programme, which suggests *sharia* as the constitution of state, can't support an administrative system, which is accountable to the people. Further the programme emphasizes the role of political institutions like political parties and parliament to reform and strengthen the Islamic character of the Algerian state. The ultimate aim of this reform process is proposed as to change all such institutions Islamic (Ghanim cited in Westerlund; 1996; 146). The question of accountability of state/ruling regime is again revealed here. The accountability of the government is the most important question related to the participation of FIS in elections as a political organisation. A proper understanding of the programme and the function of the provincial governments led by FIS gives a clear idea that the government will not be accountable to people who elected them. Since the programme of FIS overwhelmingly stresses on the implementation of *sharia* as the constitution, it is clear that an FIS run state would be more accountable to God than the people.

The first instance of KS coming in to power was in 1990 after the municipal and provincial elections of the country. FIS got power in majority of the Municipalities and Provinces through a democratic process. As it is obvious from the programme, FIS failed to implement policies and programmes to tackle such problems. They totally failed to handle such problems on the ground. This is the biggest challenge faced by political organisations, which are organised under certain religious dogmas. They can highlight such issues in a peripheral manner by using certain dogmas and by exploiting the belief of people, as long as they are out of power. Once they become the part of power structure, they can't go ahead without addressing such key issues. It is not easy to sideline or escape from the realities of running the state. This is the crisis faced by FIS when they captured power in the local bodies in Algeria. In such a situation FIS run Municipal and Provincial councils concentrated on culture, religion and morals. The running of state is more a question of tactics of governance than a question of social transformation. Moreover, unlike the understanding of FIS leadership, the victory of FIS in the election was not a victory of ideology-Islamism- of FIS but the reflection of the disappointment and popular sentiments against the authoritarian state.

In spite of getting huge public support in Algeria the programme has failed to generate a better understanding of the social, political, religious and economic situation, even among the FIS followers. The view of the leadership was contradictory on certain issues. It is true that, FIS had worked within the political system in Algeria abiding by the terms and conditions of the state's constitution and functioned as a political alternative in the Provinces/Municipalities, based on its interpretation of the Islam till 1992. It is also true that it participated in the election, won, lost and accepted victory and defeats alike. In principle, The programme of FIS may be considered as step to pluralism. When FIS got control over many local governing bodies of the country, they couldn't implement their vision of society in the communes under their

control in a significant manner. It happened because of two reasons; (a) the political compulsions which they faced while in power. (b) Lack of administrative experience and inability to consolidate power, which is essential to challenge the strong central government.

Once it came to power FIS was forced to face certain fundamental political and economic issues like underdevelopment, radical changes in the state and society, uneven distribution of resources etc. However, they failed to address those problems and concentrated on some peripheral issues like dress code, alcohol consumption and separation of sexes in schools. The most important aspect to be noted that, when FIS came to power, the decision-making was shifted from the elected assemblies (APC) to a local *majilis al-shura*, in FIS controlled municipalities, after the 1990 election (Frank, 1992; 41).

Conclusion

The formation FIS was one of the major impacts of political liberalization in Algeria. The organisation could consolidate the Islamic sentiments, which had existed there for decades. As a result of this, the organisation emerged as the dominant political group in Algeria within a short span of time. The election results of 1990s underlined this fact. As we have seen, FIS was an amalgam of different Islamist groups from moderates to extreme fundamentalists. There was crucial difference among them on different issues. But the positive aspect of this was that due to the representation of various ideological currents in FIS, it has got an identity of popular movement against regime.

As discussed above, the political programme of FIS emphasizes the significance of Quran and prophetic traditions. The programme, which is popularly known as 'Revealed Word', describes the socio-economic and cultural agenda of FIS. The programme considers Sharia as the foundation and uses Islamic terminology. The major drawback of the programme is that it didn't suggest a clear-cut solution to the real problems of the State. besides, it concentrates on cultural and religious aspects that are more important in the formation of an Islamic State. Contradictory to this the economic programme of FIS is more close to a market economy, which encourages the private sector and global participation in economic activities.

It is very clear that there is an inherent contradiction between the FIS programme and the objective of the organisation. The programme was more or less a moderate one in its substance. The objective is proposed as the formation of an Islamic State based on *sharia* and the statements in the programmes are substantiated by quotations from Quran. Most of the time, such quotations were used in out of context.

It is true that FIS usage of the 'Revealed Word' does not actually reveal more about the socio economic difficulties of the state. The fundamental question of the accountability of State is the most important issue related to the participation of FIS in elections. The elements of democracy, which are mentioned in the programme of FIS, are superficial because the fundamental political rights such as the right to choose the leadership and administer are expressed in an Islamic vision. It never gives freedom to form political parties on the basis of different ideologies and suggest that election can be conducted only within the framework of Islam. Further a proper understanding of the programme and the function of provincial governments led by FIS give a clear idea that the government will not be accountable to the people who elected them.

Though one prominent group within FIS proposed some democratic measures to form an Islamic State but the general position regarding this was that the *sharia* should be considered as the law of the land. If we take this in totality, it is clear that the FIS was not committed to democracy as such and what they have done was only a lip service.

To conclude, the study of FIS document 'Revealed Word' shows that the phrases are not primarily constructed to give the reader a concrete meaning of the text. It consists of certain words and sets of slogans- mainly pictured out from Islamic sacred sources. The document seems to address the present socio-political and economic problems and functions as a mobilizing force to create public support. But it has clearly failed in both to form a better understanding of the existing social political and economic situation in Algeria.

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