

Terrorism Monitor

In-depth analysis of the War on Terror

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YEMEN: HOUTHİ DRONE ATTACK AND FRAGILE CEASEFIRE

Brian M. Perkins

The fragile Stockholm Agreement ceasefire in Yemen's port city of Hudaydah that was agreed upon in Sweden on December 18, 2018 continues to hang in the balance. Talks between the Houthis and Yemen's Saudi-backed government that took place in Amman, Jordan ended mostly with each side accusing the other of continued hostilities ([Jordan Times](#), January 24). The two sides have yet to agree upon the list of detainees for a planned prisoner swap that is among the key points of the Stockholm Agreement. Meanwhile, tensions between the two sides have continued to mount as there have been hundreds of reported violations of the ceasefire in Hudaydah and countless other hostilities in areas not covered by the agreement.

Among the most notable hostilities was a Houthi drone attack on January 10 that targeted a military parade at al-Anad Air Base in Lahij ([Aden al Ghad](#), January 10). Several high-ranking military officials were attending the parade when the Houthi drone exploded as it flew just above the crowd. The attack left seven dead and

more than a dozen others injured. Among those who were killed was Intelligence Brigadier General Saleh Tamah, a high-ranking intelligence official and previously a prominent member of Yemen's Southern Movement.

The Houthi's use of a drone was not entirely surprising as the group has long had access to various Iranian drones and have allegedly conducted several attacks using a variety of different platforms. Conflict Armament Research published a report in March 2017 on the Houthi's use of Kamikaze-style drones—such as the Qasef-1 variant—have reportedly been transferred from Iran. [1] What is more striking than the group's successful use of drones, however, is that the Yemeni government admitted that the Houthis had intelligence assets within the military that were instrumental in the attack on al-Anad ([Al-Arabiya](#), January 15). Yemen's Interior Ministry announced the arrest of members of a cell that worked with the Houthis in Aden and Lahij. Among those arrested was reportedly a senior military official who left the parade just minutes before the attack. Those arrested reportedly admitted to their involvement and likely provided further details that have not been released.

The Saudi coalition has since announced that it had identified the drone used as an Iranian-made Shahed-129 and that the group is housing drone stockpiles in residential areas. The coalition has conducted several airstrikes over the past two weeks reportedly targeting drone storage warehouses and manufacturing sites as well as training grounds in Sanaa ([Arab News](#), January 21).

It is unclear if the airstrikes did in fact destroy a significant number of Houthi drones, but the back and forth attacks between the two sides—even in areas not covered by the Stockholm Agreement—will continue to make the fragile ceasefire in Hudaydah less and less likely to hold.

Notes

[1] To access the March 2017, Conflict Armament Research report on “Iranian Technology Transfers to Yemen,” go to <http://www.conflictarm.com/publications/>

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SOMALIA: CLASHES BETWEEN ISLAMIC STATE AND AL-SHABAAB CONTINUE

Brian Perkins

Fighting between the Islamic State (IS) and al-Shabaab in Somalia has intensified significantly over the past several months. Al-Shabaab has executed and detained countless members who have defected, or shown loyalty, to IS since the group first began recruiting after gaining a foothold in Somalia in 2015. IS’ expansion and initial recruitment in Somalia has mimicked the tactics it has used in countless other countries—the group relies heavily on drawing disenfranchised members of preexisting militant organizations.

The fighting between the two groups began to escalate in November 2018, shortly after IS’ deputy leader, Mohad Moalim, was found dead on a beach near Mogadishu ([Garowe Online](#), October 23, 2018). Moalim was reportedly abducted several days prior while he was traveling in the city.

IS directly threatened al-Shabaab on December 20, 2018 in Naba 161, the group’s official weekly newsletter ([Jihadology](#), December 20, 2018). The issue detailed al-Shabaab’s efforts to detain and execute IS members and its crimes against the soldiers of the Caliphate. The IS leadership went on to warn of an impending response while detailing its own previous attack against al-Shabaab fighters in B’ir Mirali, in which the group claimed to have killed 14 members and injured several others.

On the same day Naba 161 was released, al-Shabaab’s al-Kata’ib Media Foundation released a document in which the group’s leadership discussed how IS was fomenting dissent amongst its ranks and lambasted its rival for committing acts in opposition of Islamic Shariah. Leadership also called upon its members to eliminate the “disease” of IS in Somalia.

The two groups’ areas of operation have increasingly overlapped in the past year as IS has expanded its presence beyond its base in Puntland. Most notably, IS has made its way into Mogadishu seemingly to help raise funds through similar schemes as al-Shabaab. Both groups extort taxes from local traders and merchants and attempt to force businesses to pay protection money. According to Somalia’s National Intelligence Agency,

IS has killed several notable businessmen and attacked other businesses for failing to pay taxes or protection money ([Garowe Online](#), December 4, 2018). In September, IS fighters reportedly detonated a bomb outside of Salama Bank in Mogadishu and attacked a senior bank official for failing to pay extortion money. According to intelligence officials, many businesses are paying extortion money to both IS and al-Shabaab. With al-Shabaab already capturing and executing IS members in Mogadishu, the likelihood of armed clashes between the two groups breaking out in urban settings is likely to increase as they both attempt to raise funds through the same channels.

The IS branch in Somalia is unlikely to overtake al-Shabaab in terms of members or operational capabilities in the near term. The ongoing rift with al-Shabaab, however, will be far more detrimental to the fledgling IS branch, but it will likely collectively weaken both groups, to a degree, as the two attempt to sow dissension among each other's ranks and slowly reduce each other's ranks through armed attacks and executions.

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BLA's Suicide Squad: Majeed Fidayeen Brigade

Farhan Zahid

Background

The Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) is considered one of the oldest Baluch nationalist-separatist terrorist groups operating in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan. The ongoing insurgency started in 2006. The BLA is led by Harbayer Marri, whose father, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, founded the BLA during the 1970s insurgency in Baluchistan. The current Baluch nationalist-separatist insurgency in Baluchistan is the fifth since the independence of Pakistan in 1947.

The Majeed Fidayeen Brigade, which was established in 2011, is an elite unit of the BLA and acts as a suicide squad (*fidayeen*) for the organization. The word *fidayeen* is an Arabic word to describe being martyred while attempting to carry out an attack on the enemy. Militant organizations ranging from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Hamas and Hezbollah to global Islamist terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State use the same term for carrying out suicide attacks. Pakistani jihadist organizations such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and others also use the same terminology for their suicide attacks, usually referring to them as martyrdom operations or *fidayeen* missions.

The elite unit is named after Abdul Majeed Baloch, one of former Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto's bodyguards. While on duty, Majeed attempted to assassinate Bhutto but was ultimately killed by other security guards. The assassination attempt occurred after Bhutto ordered a military operation against the Baluch insurgents in 1975 ([PICSS](#), November 26, 2018).

The Majeed Fidayeen Brigade has perpetrated a number of suicide attacks against Pakistani security forces and Chinese nationals working for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects in Baluchistan and Sindh provinces. The first suicide attack carried out and claimed by the Majeed Fidayeen Brigade was on December 30, 2011, when the group attempted to kill former Minister Nasser Mengal at his house in Quetta with a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device

(SVBIED). The attack, which was formally claimed by the BLA, left 13 people dead and 30 more injured ([Express Tribune](#), December 31, 2011). The second attack was carried out on August 11, 2018, against Chinese engineers traveling in a bus in Dalbandin. Three Chinese engineers and five others were injured ([Dawn](#), August 11, 2018). The third and most recent *fidayeen* attack was against the Chinese consulate in Karachi on November 23, 2018, in which two police officers and two visa applicants were killed as well as all three *fidayeen*, who were killed during a shootout with the security forces ([BBC Asia](#), November 23, 2018).

Leadership, Tactics and Operational Capabilities

BLA's central command provides directions for perpetrating suicide attacks against targets in Pakistan. Aslam Baloch a.k.a. Achu (original name was Takari Mohammad Aslam and son of Rahim Dad) headed the unit until his death in Kandahar during a suicide attack in December 2018 ([Daily Times](#), December 26, 2018). His son, Rehan Baluch, carried out the August 2018 suicide attack on Chinese engineers in Dalbandin, Baluchistan. Until his death, Aslam vowed to carry out more suicide attacks against Chinese citizens working on CPEC projects and Pakistani security forces. He used to primarily operate in the southern districts of Baluchistan. Second level commanders of the unit include Bashir Zeb, Noor Baksh Mengal, Rehman Gul, Agha Sher Dil, and Commander Hamal. Sindh's Counter Terrorism Department also named these commanders as masterminds of the attack in Karachi ([Dawn](#), November 24, 2018).

The group receives its funding from Baluch dissidents living abroad, such as in Europe and North America. It is widely believed that the Majeed Fidayeen Brigade and its parent organization BLA receive funding through Hawala and Hundi networks.

According to one security official, the commanders received direct orders from the commander of the unit to prepare suicide bombers and select a target for the suicide attack against the Chinese and Pakistani government. Leadership then provides money received from donors living abroad. The Majeed Fidayeen Brigade is well-equipped and has access to a number of high-grade weapons that have been used during operations. These weapons include improvised explosive devices (IEDs), anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, grenades,

RPGs and various automatic weapons as well as BM-12, 107MM, 109MM type rockets. [1] The Majeed Fidayeen Brigade militants also have sophisticated explosives such as C4 for making suicide vests, and they are also equipped with M4 rifles. The BLA has easy access to weapons as there are many illegal weapons industries manufacturing all kinds of arms—from pistols to anti-tank mines—in tribal areas (FATA) and some settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

After the death of Aslam Baluch, it is believed that he will be replaced by one of his second-tier commanders. It is also expected that the Majeed Fidayeen Brigade commanders and high command of BLA will attempt to avenge the death of Aslam and perpetrate more terrorist strikes. Overall, his mysterious assassination in Kandahar has raised eyebrows about his presence there, and of course about enmities the group has with local Islamist groups in Afghanistan.

Notes

[1] Author's discussions with a senior police officer

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Giza Bus Attack Threatens Egypt's Stability

Muhammad Mansour

Egyptian security forces killed 40 militants in a shoot-out during an operation that targeted three strongholds in Giza province and North Sinai on December 29. A statement by the ministry of interior stated "police confiscated a number of guns, ammunition and explosive charges that were in the possession of the targeted terrorists" ([Al-Masry Al-Youm](#), December 29, 2018). The counter-terror operation, which occurred one day before New Year's Eve, was aimed at foiling militant plans to "destabilize the tourism sector and Christian worship places during the new year and Christmas celebrations."

The security operation came in response to a terrorist attack, less than 10 hours earlier, wherein a roadside bomb hit a bus carrying 14 Vietnamese tourists along a route almost eight miles away from the Giza pyramids. The blast left four people dead and 11 others injured and was the first attack that targeted foreigners in almost two years ([Al-Youm Al-Sabae](#), December 28, 2018).

The Ministry of Interior explained that the improvised explosive device (IED) was hidden beside a wall but did not yet blame any suspects and no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Yet, it is likely that either the Hasm movement or Lew al-Thawra group—Islamist militants that emerged after the crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood in 2014—were involved, given "both groups were in charge of similar attacks in the past which left limited damage, also Hasm operates in the area where the operation is carried out" said Mounir Adeeb, a counter-terror expert in Cairo, "The attack is meant to scare the government of the return of larger-scale militant operations that hard-hit the tourism sector and affected the overall security situation in the 1990s" Adeeb added. [1]

The crackdown on Hasm militants a week earlier which resulted in the death of eight members and arrest of four others likely would not have prevented other potential members of the group from carrying out the IED attack on the tourist bus ([Al-Masry Al-Youm](#), December 20, 2018).

Egypt's Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly told local TV, "The bus deviated from the route secured by the security forces...We have been in contact with the embassy of Vietnam to contain the impact of the incident, and what is important now is to take care of the injured," he said ([Tahrir News](#), December 28, 2018). The bus driver later told local media he had followed a standard tourist bus route.

The bus bombing comes at a time when the tourism sector has showed some signs of recovery after nearly eight years of stagnation as a result of the political turmoil that followed the 2011 uprising. In the first six months of 2018, tourism revenue had increased by 77 percent to \$4.781 billion amid an upsurge of visitors. More than 5 million tourists visited the country compared to 3.6 million, an increase of 41 percent compared to same time frame in 2017 ([Al-youm Al-Sabae](#), August 29, 2018).

Over the past two years, the intensive military operations, coupled with the defeat of the Islamic State (IS) have undermined the scale of terrorist operations across the country, compared to 2015-2016 which witnessed the peak of terrorism in Egypt.

Yet, nothing was more tragic on both the tourism and security situation than the downing of the Russian passenger plane by a bomb planted by IS which left all 224 people on board killed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in October 2015. The terrorist attack has indeed embarrassed the Egyptian government to the point President Abdul-Fatah el-Sisi had only admitted that it was a terrorist act almost four months after the crash ([Al-Hayat](#), October 31, 2015).

Considering the 224 tourists killed, the terrorist attack is one of the deadliest in Egypt's modern history, and the deadliest air disaster both in the history of Russian aviation and within Egyptian territory. The blow that the attack dealt to Egypt's security situation pushed the Egyptian government to intensify counter-terror campaigns in Sinai.

The campaign has remarkably undermined the IS threat in Sinai but a by-product of the Sinai operation is the emergence of cluster cells such as Hasm, whose members are scattered throughout Egypt's mainland. Hasm members focus more on softer targets, using IEDs detonated remotely or on a timer.

Beside targeting tourists, one of the key soft targets is the Coptic Christian community, a minority in Egypt but the biggest Christian community in the Middle East, with a population between 10 to 15 million. For instance, on January 5, a policeman was killed and two other injured as they were trying to defuse an explosive device planted near a church in a slum area in Cairo ([Al-bawaba News](#), January 5).

Conclusion

After sustaining heavy losses in the past two years from the military's counter-terror operations, which mainly focused on hard-core militants in Sinai, militant groups in Egypt's mainland are likely to focus on softer targets such as tourists or Coptic Christians rather than directly clashing with the security forces. The militants' goal is engaging in a war of attrition to weaken and embarrass the government. This threat requires extra intelligence work and the launching of preemptive attacks on members of such groups while eliminating the environment that allows extremism to grow, especially in disadvantaged communities and slums.

The Sisi government is working to dismantle slums in the Egyptian mainland where extremism grows and replacing them with satellite cities and compounds. In January, the government inaugurated the country's biggest mosque and cathedral in Egypt's new capital, dubbed the New Administrative Capital, located 30 miles east of Cairo. Security forces have demolished several houses in a populated area adjacent to the Pyramids, close to where the bus blast occurred.

Overall, the government is imposing emergency law in Sinai, and the military has built buffer zones alongside the borders between North Sinai and Palestinian Gaza. In Egypt's mainland, police have carried out several preemptive attacks that killed a significant number of armed militants. Yet, the struggle continues on both sides as the counter-terror operations drive militants to hide in more populated areas in the Delta.

Notes

[1] Mr. Adeeb was interviewed by the author on January 8, 2019.

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A Tumultuous, Informal Polyarchy: Algeria Between Clans, Old Threats and a Boiling Youth

Dario Cristiani

Introduction

As Algeria enters a crucial year for its future, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's health remains extremely poor and, despite the ambitions of many in Algeria, it is unclear whether the president will be fit enough to run for a fifth term. The Algerian president never fully recovered from the stroke he suffered in 2013. The president struggles to carry out most of his basic tasks, as many Algerian media outlets pointed out after a public appearance at the El Alia cemetery to commemorate the martyrs of the revolution of November 1, 1954—the day the Algerian war of independence began ([DZ Video](#), November 1, 2018). If Bouteflika's health allows him to run for a fifth term, he will undoubtedly win. Despite all the problems, Bouteflika's legitimacy remains significant in the eyes of many Algerians. He was the architect and main protagonist of the national reconciliation, taking the country out of the *décennie noire* (the black decade) of the civil war. The incumbent president still enjoys the support of the most important political, social and economic actors of the country—the army, although with different degrees of intensity, the major parties (FNL, RCD and others), the Forum of Business Leaders (*Forum des Chefs d'Entreprise*) and the General Union of Algerian Workers (*Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens*) ([Le Point](#), September 7, 2018; [Le Soir d'Algerie](#), September 19, 2018; [Algerie Focus](#), November 6, 2017). In addition, there is no political figure in the current Algerian political landscape capable of winning an election against Bouteflika.

That being said, the Algerian *Pouvoir* (the plethora of opaque and informal elites that represent the backbone of the regime) has already entered into a new phase, independent of the Bouteflika's clan. The elites have started repositioning themselves. The political maneuvering became evident in the aftermath of the Oran cocaine scandal, when authorities seized about 701 kilograms of cocaine at the port of Oran in late May 2018.

The cocaine was found in boxes marked 'halal meat' belonging to Kamel Chikhi, a major import baron with substantial links to the political and military establishment ([Tout Sur L'Algerie](#), May 29, 2018). This scandal triggered a major purge in the security forces, beginning with the dismissal of the once-powerful head of the General Directorate for National Security (*Directeur Général de la Sûreté Nationale*—DGSN), Major General Abdelghani Hamel, who was replaced by Colonel Mustapha Lahbiri ([Jeune Afrique](#), June 27, 2018).

While this latest development is not necessarily something new in Algerian history, the scale, rapidity and depth of this reorganization has been so significant and abrupt that it appears to be the beginning of a systemic shift toward a new balance of power. It also raises questions whether these changes might impact the efficiency of the Algerian security forces as old and new threats weigh on the country as it goes through the presidential elections in a time of economic instability and increasing uncertainty.

The 'Return' of the Army: Purges, Clans, and New Cleavages

One of the major achievements of the Bouteflika's era has been the return of the presidency to the center of the national political landscape. Although the military favored his rise to the presidency at the end of the 1990s, he progressively brought the main reins of control back to the presidency, a process that culminated in the dismissal of the once powerful Department of Intelligence and Security (*Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité*—DRS) and its historical leader, General Mohamed Mediène (a.k.a. Toufik). However, the dynamics of the recent months suggest that this trend is somehow reversing and, paradoxically, the demise of Toufik can also be considered the beginning of a new trend. The end of the DRS encouraged and strengthened the role of the Army Chief of Staff and Deputy Minister of National Defense, Ahmed Gaïd Salah, who also played a crucial role in the dismissal of the former DRS leader. Salah's opposition to Toufik became increasingly evident between 2013 and 2015 ([Jeune Afrique](#), June 16, 2015). The marginalization of Toufik, the deterioration of Bouteflika's health and increasing friction between Salah and the presidential entourage concurred to reinforce Salah, whose centrality to the system is now very significant. Some press sources consider Salah the actual referee in shaping the future of the country and Boutefli-

ka's succession or reelection ([HuffPost Maghreb](#), January 8, 2018).

Salah's increasing centrality and freedom of action became evident as the reorganization of the security forces started at the end of June 2018. Three distinct groups and clans seem to be emerging within the Algerian military—Salah's clan, officials loyal to Toufik and those loyal to General Bachir Tartag, the current head of the Department of Surveillance and Security (*Département de Surveillance et de Sécurité*—DSS)—heir to the DRS—and the military clan considered closer to the presidency ([Monde Afrique](#), January 9, 2018). However, one striking element of this reorganization and rising fragmentation is that all of these officers are rather old. Salah can play the card of belonging to the "generation of 1954" to boost his legitimacy while Mediène and Tartag—the latter is much younger—entered the security forces between the 1960s and the 1970s. There is little trace of the emergence of new, younger players within the security forces. Before his dismissal, Hamel was, to a certain extent, the representative of a new generation; a military generation that was on the frontline against jihadism in the 1990s and wanted to promote a less politicized and more professional army. The continuous marginalization of this generation, however, might represent a further problem that the Algerian leadership and security forces will have to cope with in the coming years, and will interlock with the current power competition within the army. The above-described dynamics are occurring in a security environment in which security risks are diversifying. There are classic security threats, such as jihadism, but also new and more fluid threats associated with economic problems and the potential for youth protests and discontent.

A Still Relevant Terrorist Threat

The regional presence of jihadist organizations, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State (IS), while not being systemic threats, still represent a problem. The latter has struggled to establish itself in Algeria, but its reorganization in Libya and the freedom of movement it enjoys there represents a significant concern for the Algerian leader (See [Terrorism Monitor](#), December 3, 2018). After eradicating the domestic threat posed by AQIM's predecessors—the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (*Groupe Islamique Armé*—GIA) and the Islamic Group for Preaching and Combat (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le*

Combat—GSPC)—between the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Algerian counter-terrorism pressure pushed the organization away from the national territory. AQIM went through a major, strategic change, becoming more focused on the Sahel, while the Maghrebi area serves more as a logistics base (See [Terrorism Monitor](#), May 5, 2017).

While AQIM does not represent the existential threat that its predecessors represented, it still has the capability to strike Algeria, as the In Amenas attack proved. The memory of this attack is particularly relevant as the Algerian oil sector continues to suffer from numerous problems and the country's leadership is desperately trying to revive it ([Le Bourse {Algiers}](#), January 13; [Liberte Algeria](#), January 13). The CEO of Sonatrach, Abdelmoumene Ould Kaddour, has increased efforts to bring international oil companies back to the country. Eni and Total recently signed agreements with Sonatrach to start offshore explorations ([El Watan](#), October 30, 2018). An increased presence of international oil companies in the country, however, could represent a tempting occasion for a group such as AQIM, which has recently released statements and threats concerning the potential for "economic jihad" in the Maghreb.

Economic jihad could represent a cost-effective opportunity for the group to regain greater operational capability in the Maghreb, not necessarily with an attack as sophisticated as the one of In Amenas, but potentially with less sophisticated attacks involving smaller cells that require less training and resources and have greater freedom of movement. Against this backdrop, an increasingly divided army could exacerbate Algeria's vulnerability to such threats. The abrupt changes in the leadership of several units, military regions, etc. might reduce the short-term capacities of local units in the transitional period while the new leaders get acquainted with the realities in which they are called to operate. Although many of the military chiefs that took over are seasoned military officers, the local peculiarities of each Algerian territory necessarily require time to adapt and grasp their complexity. The perception of uncertainty burdening the army might reduce its efficiency, as local military chiefs put more energy into playing politics to avoid problems or take advantage of the situation. Lastly, ambitious lower-ranking officials might perceive this period of increasing fragmentation and shifting balances within the army as an opportunity to pursue their ambitions. While these elements do not necessarily imply a

weakening of the Algerian security capacities—which remain significant particularly on a regional level—at the same time they can create short-term vulnerabilities that regional terrorist actors can exploit.

Economic Fragility, Youth Ambitions, and New Risks

Traditional security threats are not the only significant threats Algeria will face in the coming months and years that can be exacerbated by growing fragmentation within the army and the political elites. The economy represents a major problem with the potential to undermine stability more than terrorism. Algeria has experienced a tumultuous economic period since 2014, when global oil prices plummeted. However, as global oil prices regained some momentum, Algeria increased government spending by 7.9 percent, turning slightly away from years of austerity. ([Jeune Afrique](#), November 28, 2017, [La Tribune](#), October 10, 2017).

The next five years will likely be particularly troublesome. The first generation that did not experience the civil war in person will enter the job market as low-skilled workers or as young, ambitious graduates. While many of them have family stories concerning the brutality of those years, they have not experienced this violence directly. In addition, these new generations are not used to the methods and the logic that have characterized protest movements in Algeria over the past twenty years. While the Algerian population is often misleadingly described as apathetic, it is in fact very lively. Protests and strikes are widespread in Algeria.

In many cases, protests serve as a means to access material benefits and, from a functional perspective, replace ballots. The protests rarely question the legitimacy of the regime and the system, and security forces have avoided cracking down on them too harshly to avoid turning them into a unified, national protest front. These protests often have a local and material focus and fade as soon as demands are met. However, for the younger generations, this logic might not be valid. First, they are not "socialized" to these methods of protests, and might express their dissatisfaction in more troublesome and violent ways. Secondly, there is a shift in the models of life and the ambitions of Algerian youth. This is evident in the rapid and widespread success of Algerian hip hop, rap, and trap singers and the symbolic universe this music promotes.

The videos and the songs of these artists receive millions of views on YouTube and other social media platforms, and represent a microcosm of the ambitions of many young Algerians: living a more glamorous and materialist life compared to that of their parents, with global brands, shopping in European capitals, powerful cars, and an opening to the external world that represents a rupture with the classic Algerian obsession for autarchy. The Algerian elites are increasingly aware of the threat represented by this dynamic. In October 2018, the Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia said openly that the riots of October 5, 1988—the beginning of the process that culminated in the elections in which the FIS won—did not signal the beginning of the democratic development of Algeria, but were instead what brought the country towards "anarchy, then instability and finally barbaric terrorism" ([Algerie Press Service](#), October 6, 2018). In early 2019, Salah also warned that without stability there could not be development ([Maghreb Emergent](#), January 10).

These younger generations, while having family memories and narratives of violence, will be the first generation that did not experience the direct destruction of the civil war. As such, the psychological buffer represented by the memory of the civil war will inevitably erode. They are not accustomed to the logic of protests which have characterized Algeria over the past 20 years. This implies that the logic of protests to access material benefits might soon be replaced by the logic of protest against a system that does not allow them to live the life they desire. This can increase the potential for instability, or worse, create a social environment in which radical ideologies can spread.

Conclusion

Independent of Bouteflika's decision to run for a fifth term, the transition and reorganization of the Algerian *pouvoir* has begun, and the restructuring and purges in the security forces are a clear signal that this reorganization has systemic depth and that elites' infighting is becoming more visible to the public. Against this backdrop, Salah is playing an increasingly central role and becoming more independent from the presidential clan as he tries to place himself at the center of the system to influence the process in the coming years. This dynamic has triggered the reaction of other key power players within the security forces, causing increased factionalization within the army. This evolution interlocks with the

presence of old threats, such as terrorism, and new ones, such as the emergence of major economic problems and the presence of youth with a lifestyle more open to the world and less autarchic. Jihadism is not the existential threat it was in the 1990s but is still an underlying threat, particularly for the ailing Algerian oil sector. Algerian youth are not accustomed to the methods of protests that have characterized Algeria. They are the first generation entering the job market without a direct memory of the civil war, and their specific models of consumption and behavior suggest that they have the ambition to live a more globalized and materially richer life than their parents. A troubled political transition and increasing divisions within the security forces will exacerbate the potential impact of these threats and can pose severe problems for Algeria in the coming years.

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