

# Old and new challenges and threats in Algerian political life

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**Abstract.** This article analyzes changes, which occur in Algerian political life, as well as threats of terrorists and interests of the outside forces toward Algeria. Religious extremists of the previous age led to Civil war in this region. However, successful operations of Algeria against terrorist lead to cooperation with neighboring countries and fight against terrorists.

**Key words:** Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), Jund al-Khilafah in Algeria (JAK-A), ISIS-Algeria, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), Khenchela, Chlef, Ain Djelfa, Tissemsilt and Medea, Adrar, Tamanrasset, political spring, Dark Decade.

The relatively recent change in leadership and the prolonged economic stagnation could lead to continued stability in Algeria, with serious consequences for the security of the country and the region as a whole, as well as for the interests of outside forces, particularly the US, EU, Russia and China.

In recent years, Due to increasing activities of extremist and terrorist organizations in North Africa and the Middle, Algeria's role as a regional base in the fight against terrorism has increased significantly.

According to annual report of the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) in 2020. Terrorist groups remain active in the Sahara region. AQIM, AQIM-allied groups, and ISIS elements, including the Algerian affiliate locally known as Jund al-Khilafah in Algeria (JAK-A, now calling itself ISIS-Algeria), are present. These groups aspire to attack Algerian security services, local government targets, and Western interests. Almost all reported terrorist attacks in 2018 targeted Algerian security forces and involved improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or ambush tactics as suspects actively fled through rural mountainous regions.<sup>1</sup>

Experts say the number of terrorist groups in Algeria has decreased, however terrorist networks continue recruiting militants in neighboring countries, including Libya and Mali. Algerian terrorist groups sought out new members in Algerian schools and mosques in the early 2000s, particularly targeting young unemployed. Regular raids by Algerian security forces show that the problem of terrorism remains in the country, and threat of it will increase if disagreements among Algerian society and elite of the government escalate.

The Algerian government is cracking down on terrorist activities with the security apparatus. In 2018, the national army destroyed nearly a dozen terrorists, during a series of cleanups. In January 2018, a major operation took place in the province of Khenchela, where security forces killed a group of terrorists trying to unite the remaining groups in Algeria, including prominent leaders of the Tunisian AQIM. Police have also arrested more than 50 terrorists across the country. Furthermore, 129 terrorists have surrendered, who were active in the south of the country.

The Algerian army on Tuesday eliminated the leader of the terrorists in the valley of Ain Djelfa, located southwest of the capital city of Algiers. In 1997, he joined terrorist groups, was the leader of terrorists operating in Chlef, Ain Djelfa, Tissemsilt and Medea.<sup>2</sup> Algeria has also reportedly deployed tens of thousands of troops along its borders with Mali and Libya to prevent terrorist attacks and arms transfers. Despite positive results in uncovering terrorist plots, reconnaissance warns Algeria that direct cross-border threats remain.

<sup>1</sup> Algeria 2020 Crime & Safety Report // U.S. Department of State. Overseas Security Advisory Council. - 6/9/2020 . - <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/aceef5ea-f045-453b-8fc9-18e3d2222273>.

<sup>2</sup> Новости «Синьхуа». - RUSSIAN.NEWS.CN. - 13 мая 2020 г. - [http://russian.news.cn/2020-05/13/c\\_139053240.htm](http://russian.news.cn/2020-05/13/c_139053240.htm).

On September 17, 2020, in the annual report of US intelligence on global threats to Congress Christopher Miller, Director of the US National Counterterrorism Center said, "ISIS is able to rebuild itself by continuing to pursue an aggressive global strategy toward Africa. At present, the group has 20 interconnected groups around the world, especially on the Black Continent, which frequently attacks local law enforcement agencies and expands its territory".<sup>3</sup> Outside the mountainous border with Algeria, ISIS terrorists have not given up trying to expand the battlefield to an important area for Tunisia. ISIS terrorists are not giving up their efforts to expand the battlefield beyond the mountainous border with Algeria to an important zone for Tunisia, expanding the scope of operations to countries with a low terrorist threat in the African tropics, particularly Cote d'Ivoire and Mozambique.

In Algeria, the number of seizures of firearms, explosives, grenade launchers has increased, and security forces are destroying terrorist hideouts in various parts of the country, especially in the border areas of the southern desert of Adrar and Tamanrasset. More recently, in December, the government intercepted deep-air heavy artillery, including air-to-surface missiles, sent to local terrorist groups through regional arms smuggling networks. According to the report fighting on the border led to a reduction in the main areas of human trafficking, and in the summer of 2018, additional guard towers, patrols and trenches were set up. This is in line with the record number of terrorists who surrendered in 2018, the increase in the number of weapons confiscated, and the number of terrorist hideouts.

With the most unfortunate clash of domestic and foreign political and economic factors, it is undeniable that the situation in the country in the second decade of the 2000s could once again spiral out of control. Religious extremism and tribal opposition still remain a problem for Algeria's internal stability, as well as the precarious situation on its borders with Libya, Morocco, Western Sahara and Mali. Wide areas across the country and borders that are difficult to manage by the DPRK pose a potential threat to stability within the country.

In general, the situation in North Africa in the fight against the threat of terrorism remains a threat to the security of all countries in the region. Although terrorist groups in Africa are known to have mostly local targets, they are colluding with their brethren outside the continent, which has created local al-Qaeda cells and trying to build "the Islamic State". On the African continent, especially in the Sahel region, it has lost ground in Iraq and Syria. The number of foreign terrorists is increasing on the African Continent on the border of large-capacity countries. They exploit local dissatisfaction, poverty, lack of public services and security, engage in cross-border criminal activity and pose a serious threat to national and regional security. At the same time, with the help of foreign troops, the ongoing war in Libya is intensifying terrorist activity in the region, adversely affecting the situation in North Africa.

Social agitation in the nation can occupy the administration of the Democratic Republic of Algeria from the battle against psychological warfare, and surprisingly open up space for the exercises of different radical associations and aggressor associations in Algeria. This will permit criminal fanatic and psychological militant gatherings in the district to move all closer and possibly to adjoining Europe.

Such a development of the situation would be associated with additional risks and problems. In particular, the growing threat of instability and terrorism in Algeria may increase the interest of outside forces, in particular the United States and the European Union, in interfering in the country's affairs. American researcher J. As Porter pointed out: "Instability in Algeria would affect the United States' regional partners, including Nigeria and countries in southern Europe, which are concerned about spillover from potential terrorist activity in Algeria's south and increased migration to Europe from its north. Although the United States has limited influence on events in Algeria, Washington can take worthwhile steps to manage the risk

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<sup>3</sup> Hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security. // Published in the National Counterterrorism center (NCTC) Newsroom. Office of the Director of National Intelligence. - Thursday, 17 September 2020. 16:58. - <https://www.dni.gov/index.php>.

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of growing political instability, including precautionary measures to safeguard its interests should the worst happen.”<sup>4</sup>

Most analysts in the region and in the West say that despite long-standing problems such as failed political systems and ineffective economic policies, the Algerian leadership and ordinary people, who have suffered from the effects of the civil war, attach great importance to domestic political stability. Due to this factor, Algeria has managed to maintain its current political "status quo" for many years.

However, the country is vulnerable to unpredictable threats such as unrest and violence during the so-called "political spring" of 1988. At the time, Algeria's economy was in a crisis due to extremely low oil prices, and civil society questioned the legitimacy of the government.

Russian scientist R.G. Landa: “The religious fanaticism of the second half of the 1980s, as well as ethnic identity, were partly reflected in the growing popular discontent with the deteriorating economic situation, the polarization of incomes, and the widening gap between the upper and lower classes. Encouragement from private sector administrators has yielded positive results, as well as at sea.” The unrest, which began in the country in October 1988,<sup>5</sup> led to political and economic liberalization, resulting in the civil war of the 1990s, which is known as Algeria's "Dark Decade."

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<sup>4</sup> Porter G. D. Political Instability in Algeria. // Contingency Planning Memorandum No. - Center for Preventive Action. Council on Foreign Relations. - Washington, 35 March 07, 2019. - <https://www.cfr.org/report/political-instability-algeria>.

<sup>5</sup> Ланда Р.Г. История Алжира. XX век. – Институт востоковедения Российской Академии наук. – М., 1996 г. – 309 с. - С. 201.