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THE US AND THE ALGERIAN MASSACRES

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1. Introduction	800
2. Official Reactions to the Massacres	801
2.1. Condemnation of the Massacres	801
2.2. US Reminders to the Algerian Government	802
2.3. Allegations about Perpetrator Identity	803
2.4. Position with regard to a Commission of Inquiry	804
3. Assessment of the American Response	809
4. Algerian Policy of the United States	811
4.1. Algeria in US foreign Policy	812
4.1.1. Algeria and the Middle East	812
4.1.2. The US and Political Islam	813
4.2. Evolution of the Algerian Policy of the US since 1992	813
4.3. Accounting for Changes in US Policy	815
4.3.1. Political Concessions	815
4.3.2. Economic Concessions	815
4.4.3. French Pressure	816
4.3.4. Reassessment of the Balance of Power in the Insurgency	817
4.3.5. Understanding US Response in the Winter 1997-1998	817
5. Dealing with War Crimes: US Policy Inconsistencies	818
5.1. Prevention and Detection of Genocide	818
5.2. Repression of Genocide	821
5.3. Implications for the Algerian Case	821
6. Conclusion	823
Appendix 1	824
Appendix 2	826

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1. Introduction

The United States enjoys an unchallenged position of leadership in the world. Being the only superpower, the position of the US is decisive in international relations. Its weight in the Security Council and its privileged place in NATO give it a real influencing power on the course of events at a global level. In the past, the US has used its might, especially military, to assume the role of the 'world's cop'. According to US state representatives, its interventions around the world, have sought 'to defend the values of the rule of law, freedom and human rights.' These interventions have been numerous and have stretched from Central America to the far East, including the Gulf.

The aim of this article is to record and assess the position of the US with regard to the massacres in Algeria. It is known that powerful bystanders have a strong influence on the course of events in countries where massive internal repression and violations of human rights unfold. Passivity or complicity confirms the perpetrators in their criminal intents and programmes, whereas protestation, refusal to co-operate and sanctions can deter them from pursuing their criminal policies.¹ Given the US's power to influence events in the world, many questions about the nature of its bystanding behaviour towards the massacres in Algeria arise. Has the US government condoned or condemned the massive internal repression and the massacres? Or has it stood by passively? Has it met its international humanitarian obligations or used pressure to put a stop to the massacres? Has it taken advantage of the plight of Algerians to extort economic and strategic concessions and further its meanly defined national self-interest? Or has its bystanding behaviour been a blend of both types of response? What are the underlying US interests and policies that may account for its bystander response?

Section 2 of this article surveys the different official reactions of the US to the massacres in Algeria. Section 3 presents a brief assessment of the American position on the massacres. Section 4 reviews some of the key aspects of the US's Algerian policy which may account for its bystanding behaviour. Section 5 highlights inconsistencies in the American policy regarding the prevention, detection and repression of war crimes. Section 6 concludes this report.

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2. Official Reactions to the Massacres

2.1. Condemnation of the Massacres

The government of the United States has been consistent in its condemnation of the horrible massacres that ravaged Algeria during the summer of 97 and winter of 98. On 3 September, five days after the massacre of Rais which had taken place on 29 August, James Foley, of the State Department declared:

We were horrified by the massacres that occurred over the last week. They really seem to have reached yet another astonishing threshold of barbarity. We condemn them unreservedly. [...] These events of the last week, as I said, it's hard to match in words the horror that they inspire. They were truly stupefying.²

Four months later, at the beginning of January 1998, when another wave of massacres hit Algeria, James Rubin, spokesman of the State Department, reiterated, in a declaration on 5 January, the American position on the massacres: 'We condemn the massacres and bombings in Algeria that have killed so many civilians in recent days. These attacks merit condemnation from the international community and all Algerians.'³ This position was reiterated the next day:

These massacres have been condemned by the entire international community. Statements from Cairo to Tehran have condemned these massacres. It is very clear that these acts of terrorism must be condemned and must be stopped.⁴

On 11 January, Thomas Pickering, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, declared, for his part, that the geographic distance could not leave the United States indifferent to what was happening in Algeria: 'Although we may be further from the consequences of the ongoing carnage in Algeria than our European colleagues, we do not, as a consequence, enjoy the luxury of ignoring the horrors the Algerian people are experiencing.'⁵ At the end of January and on the occasion of the Muslim festival of Id al-Fitr, it was the American President who 'expressed concern for those who are suffering in Algeria' and declared: 'Today, our sympathies are with the people of Algeria.'⁶

On 5 February, Ronald Neumann, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, who was the US ambassador to Algeria from September 94 to September 97, declared:

The world, rightly, reacts in shock and horror to the brutal massacres occurring on a daily basis. The United States vigorously condemns the atrocities being committed against innocent men, women, and children in Algeria. We extend our deepest sympathies to the victims of these crimes.⁷

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His senior in rank, Martin Indyk, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, declared on 11 March that ‘the horrendous slaughter of civilians in that country [Algeria] continues. It is unacceptable and we unequivocally condemn it.’⁸

Condemnation of the massacres by the United States was also voiced by Ambassador Bill Richardson, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, during his statement on 25 March at the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva:

The United States, along with the international community, have been outraged by the massacres of innocent civilians over the past year in Algeria. [...] Women and children are not being spared from this unspeakable horror, with young women often being taken hostage and held in cruel and inhumane captivity. The United States condemns these monstrous crimes.⁹

2.2. US Reminders to the Algerian Government

While condemning the massacres, the American authorities have constantly reminded the Algerian government of its responsibility to protect the civilian populations. On 5 January, James Rubin stated ‘it is the responsibility of the Algerian Government to protect civilians while also respecting the rule of law and human rights.’¹⁰ The next day, on 6 January, he added: ‘I can repeat that it is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the Algerian Government to protect civilians, while also respecting the rule of law.’¹¹ On 11 January, Thomas Pickering declared, for his part, that ‘the Algerian Government has the responsibility of protecting its people, but it should do so within the rule of law.’¹² On 12 January, James Rubin stated once again:

We condemn these atrocities, that the Algerian Government should do all it can to protect civilians and bring the perpetrators to justice, while meeting the standards of the rule of law that we have long sought.¹³

On 28 January 1998, David Scheffer, U.S. Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues, declared in his turn:

Beyond our own outrage over the massacres in Algeria, we need to see more done to protect women, children and men from these terrorists, consistent with the obligations of all governments to respect the rule of law and human rights.¹⁴

On 5 February, it was the turn of Ronald Neumann to declare:

We also call upon the Government of Algeria to do more to fulfill its duty to protect its citizens within the rule of law and respect for human rights. [...] The government has a right to protect itself, and a duty to protect its citizens against this bloodthirsty group, consistent with the rule of law.¹⁵

On 11 March, Martin Indyk stated:

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Clearly, the Algerian Government must live up to its responsibilities to protect its citizens. But it must do so within the rule of law, or it will jeopardize the hesitant steps it has taken toward democratic government.¹⁶

2.3. Allegations about Perpetrator Identity

Statements of US officials making claims about the identity of the perpetrators of the massacres can be divided into three groups. The first one alleges that the Islamist insurgents are responsible for the killings. The second category imputes responsibility to both the government and the insurgents, indirectly and implicitly for the former and explicitly for the latter. The third set suspends belief about the identity of the perpetrators and calls, instead, for investigations into the massacres.

On 23 October 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright attributed the massacres perpetrated in Algeria to Islamic extremism: ‘we have seen extremists engaged in a grisly campaign of terror against their co-religionists in Algeria.’¹⁷ On 11 January 1998, Thomas Pickering declared:

[We cannot] ignore the broader lessons of the devastating effects of extremism. We condemn the violence and extremism. [...] Extremist terrorism must end. Violence cannot be an option to further political goals.¹⁸

However, Ronald Neumann widened the range of alleged perpetrators when he declared on 5 February that:

We continue to believe that the Islamic extremist organization, the GIA, is responsible for the great majority of the atrocities. You will recall that in October 1997, we included this vicious group in our designation of foreign terrorist organizations. [...] However, some security forces personnel may also be involved, to some extent, in some of the killings. The situation is complex, and as long as there continue to be differing accounts of what is going on, and many questions about why civilians are not better protected, the need for greater openness remains.¹⁹

Most of the statements calling for the Algerian government to protect its population (section 2.2) and respect the rule of law may be interpreted, given the context of massacres, as an implicit statement that the Algerian government violates the rule of law, and hence the connotation of its involvement in the killings.

In the same way, Ambassador Bill Richardson declared on 25 March in Geneva that: ‘So called Islamic terrorists are murdering thousands of innocent people. [...] There are many allegations inside Algeria about the killings, and the paramount need is for a credible, independent verification of the facts.’²⁰

In September 1998, in his opening remarks to the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, President Bill Clinton mentioned the

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phenomenon of terrorism and said that no people was sheltered from this phenomenon. He then cited some examples among which 'the people of Algeria enduring the nightmare of unfathomable terror with still no end in sight.'²¹

2.4. Position with regard to a Commission of Inquiry

When questioned on 3 September 1997 on the readiness of the United States to support the involvement of the United Nations in the resolution of the Algerian conflict, James Foley replied that his country was disposed to support the efforts of the General Secretary who had responded to the massacre of Rais four days earlier: 'I think, really, that's a matter between the United Nations, the Secretary General, and the Algerian authorities. I shouldn't take a position on it. I think we would support the Secretary General in his own efforts.'²²

During the intensification of the massacres in the next winter, James Rubin declared, for his part, on 5 January 1998, that the United States was encouraging the Algerian government to authorise inquiries into the massacres and was also supporting the German initiative expressed by the foreign affairs minister Klaus Kinkel:

We do encourage the government there to allow international inquiries into the human rights situation, and we're also encouraging independent NGOs to undertake such inquiries. It is only then we can get to the bottom of some of these issues to determine the extent of the massacres, perhaps begin to pin more clearly the blame for them. So we would support allowing NGOs and greater investigations.

As far as what an international inquiry would look like, I would point out that the Algerian authorities have told us that they would accept a visit by a UN human rights rapporteur, and we encourage this step. That is, presumably, the same kind of step that the German Government is envisaging.²³

On 6 January 1998, James Rubin insisted on the necessity of allowing external observers to investigate the situation of human rights in Algeria. His statement involved the notion of establishment of facts:

We are encouraging the Algerian Government to allow outside observers to view and study the human rights situation there. Algerian authorities have told us they would accept a visit by UN human rights rapporteur, and we encourage this step. We are also encouraging independent NGOs to undertake such inquiries.²⁴

Exactly what form this outside fact-finding takes is not as important to us as that it takes place. Let's remember that the facts of many of these massacres are often unclear. The perpetrators are sometimes unclear. The best way to get to the bottom of the horror that is going on in Algeria is to get outsiders in so that they can make an assessment. That will put us in a better position, hopefully, to see what steps can be taken to stop them.²⁵

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US Responses

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This declaration was badly received in Algiers. On the same day, i.e. on 6 January, the Algerian foreign affairs minister summoned the American ambassador in Algiers, Cameron Hume, asking for an explanation about the State Department's declarations, and reminding him that the idea of an inquiry mission amounted 'objectively to an exculpation of the terrorists.'²⁶

The next day, James Rubin was asked about the position of the United States regarding the official Algerian reaction and whether the latter was going to dissuade him from calling for an investigation into the situation of human rights in Algeria. The spokesman of the State Department replied that such was not the case and then dwelt on the exchanges he had with the United States' ambassador to Algeria:

I spoke to Ambassador Hume this morning, and he described the circumstances that unfolded yesterday. The short answer to your question is no. We share the concerns of other nations in the international community with regard to the massacres in Algeria. An international interest in the ongoing tragedy is normal and understandable.

But let's focus first on the culprits. These terrorist attacks must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. The terrorists must be condemned by the entire international community. The question is, what's the best way to get at some of the fact situations; not blaming the government, but getting at the fact situation. We do believe that outsiders may provide additional information on the scope and the source of these heinous crimes.

Ambassador Hume told me that we continue to discuss with the Algerian Government the idea of a UN human rights rapporteur. There are different ways in which the fact situation can be determined, and that idea, as far as we know, has not been rejected by the Algerian Government, and it is still a possibility. Other options include outside NGOs being able to go in and inquire and get to the bottom of this and be in a position to provide us with information that the international community has not had - how many people are really dying; what are the sources of this; what additional steps were or weren't taken.

The point is that this is a terrible situation, and that we have encouraged the Algerian Government to allow outside observers to visit and to look at the situation. They told us that they would accept a visit by a UN human rights rapporteur. What we are reiterating here is that the terrorist acts are condemnable; they're something that the entire international community is right to condemn. We want to see these barbaric attacks stopped. We're encouraging the Algerian Government to do all it can to protect civilians, bring the terrorists to justice, while also respecting the rule of law and human rights.

We support the idea of outside NGOs being able to go. We think that the prospect of deterring, and ultimately stopping, these terrible atrocities would be improved if outsiders, like a UN human rights rapporteur, like NGOs, were in a position to provide the world and the Algerian Government with additional information on the scope, nature, and source of these crimes.

I can state to you what the US position is - that a special rapporteur ought to be able to go; that in our discussions with the Algerian Government, they have not re-

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jected that idea; and that is an option we are pursuing in conjunction with the idea of outside groups, NGOs, other people who can help get to the bottom of this.

It is our view that outsiders and a UN human rights rapporteur would help the world know better what's going on in this terrible tragedy that's unfolding in Algeria.²⁷

On 9 January, it was again James Foley who, when asked if the United States envisaged an international inquiry into the human rights situation in Algeria, replied:

We have been encouraging the Algerian Government to allow outside observers to view and study the human rights situation. Algerian authorities have told us that they would accept a visit by a UN human rights rapporteur. We encouraged this step. We note the press reports that the EU is planning to send a delegation to Algeria, I believe, before the end of the month. We share the concerns of the EU and other nations in the international community with regard to the massacres in Algeria, and the need to gain a clearer picture of what is happening in Algeria. So we support the EU efforts in this direction.²⁸

Not satisfied by the answer, the journalist, who had asked the question, called James Foley's attention to the fact that the Algerian government wanted neither an inquiry nor an investigation, and that the use of these terms was avoided in the reply of the State Department's civil servant. James Foley reacted to the questioning by stating: 'We encourage the visit by the UN rapporteur, but we're not seeking an international commission of inquiry.'²⁹ Three days later, on 12 January, the State Department moderated its words by declaring, through the voice of James Rubin, that the majority of the atrocities perpetrated in Algeria against the civilian populations were attributable to the GIA, while maintaining nevertheless that militiamen close to the government were partially implicated:

I can say that we have been seeking to encourage a fact-finding effort to make sure that the basic facts in this area are as well-known as they can be, including a UN special rapporteur, including NGOs, including the media, to try to encourage the Algerian Government to that effect.

As for the general question of responsibility for the atrocities which the Algerian people are suffering, we believe that the Islamic extremist organization, the GIA, is responsible for the great majority of these atrocities, and we condemn these terrorist atrocities in the strongest possible terms. Some personnel in local government guard groups may also be involved to some extent. [...] The situation is complex, and that is why we've encouraged groups like fact-finding missions to go in and try to clarify what's going on.³⁰

On the same day, according to Barr Seitz of ABS news, Hadri Kemal, public relations consul at the Algerian Embassy in Washington, reiterated the official position of Algeria which consisted of rejecting the idea of a commission of inquiry:

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US Responses

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We reject the idea of a committee to ask for an international inquiry. We are against an inquiry because everyone there knows who is killing. The people of Algeria know that it is the terrorists who have been doing the killing.³¹

Also according to Barr Seitz, John Entelis, Director of the Middle East Department at Fordham University in New York, gave an explanation on the Algerian refusal:

The Algerians have always been very insistent on maintaining their national sovereignty, which is often an excuse to do whatever they want. Any investigation that started outside could lead to an implication of the security personnel involved in killing, or in not responding well to the massacres.³²

On 14 January, James Foley was asked about the position of the United States after the refusal of the Algerian government to grant access to a European Union mission to establish the facts about the massacres. The official of the State Department expressed the regret of the American authorities concerning this decision:

As you know, we supported EU efforts in this direction. Therefore, we regret the decision by the government of Algeria concerning the EU mission. We believe that the Algerian Government has lost an opportunity to respond to the legitimate concerns of the international community. We continue to encourage the Algerian Government to allow outside observers to view and study the human rights situation in the country. [...] We think that the international community has a legitimate right to information on the situation involving the loss of so many hundreds and even thousands of innocent men, women and children in Algeria.³³

On 28 January 1998, David Scheffer, for his part, declared:

The United States has been strongly encouraging the Government of Algeria to allow outside observers to view and study the human rights situation there. We supported the recent mission from the European Union to Algeria, but are disappointed at the brevity and limited scope of its inquiry. We also encourage visits under U.N. auspices or by NGOs as well. International attention is essential when crimes of this magnitude occur. This is especially so when crimes of sexual violence occur as widely as they may have in Algeria.³⁴

On February 1998, Ronald Neumann declared:

Along with many in the international community, we have repeatedly asked the Algerian Government for more transparency to let respected organizations conduct objective, factual studies into the massacres and other human rights concerns in Algeria. Toward these ends, we have suggested to the government that facilitating visits by international non-governmental organizations would not violate Algerian sovereignty since such groups have visited before. We welcomed the Algerian Government's intention to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Executions, and another on Torture, to visit. We have urged these organizations to go to Algeria to perform such fact-finding missions. The real issue here, however, is increased transparency. I underline this because it cannot be obtained without the willing co-

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operation of the Algerian Government and, even then, objective reporting will be a difficult task. Therefore, it is important for us to keep the focus on transparency – that is, the quality of information – not the particular means by which that transparency is attained.

Transparency is also important for the government's credibility within the international community. We, along with others in the international community, continue to impress this point on Algiers in our respective dialogues. We think it is the advice of a friend. However, the Algerian Government has yet to respond positively or definitively. Recently, they also rejected offers made by the European Union of humanitarian assistance for the victims.³⁵

On 11 March 1998, it was the turn of Martin Indyk to declare:

We are second to none in our commitment to the fight against terrorism, but Algeria should recognize that it cannot expect the international community, including its friends, to stand silently by while atrocities such as those we have witnessed continue. Algeria needs credibility if it wants support and it should work to provide greater transparency. There are ways to do so that do not impinge on Algerian sovereignty. I will be in Algeria soon and intend to discuss these issues with the government there.³⁶

On 25 March 1998, Bill Richardson declared in Geneva on the occasion of the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC):

In our view, a visit to Algeria by the UN Special Rapporteur on Summary, Extrajudicial and Arbitrary Executions and by international NGO groups would be a positive step for improving transparency in Algeria.³⁷

A month later, at the end of the 54th session of the UNHRC, Nancy Rubin, head of the US delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission, declared on 24 April:

It is with great regret that we must note that the Government of Algeria has so far refused to take [a] step toward transparency and cooperation with the Commission. The failure of member states to work constructively with UN bodies challenges the ability of UN human rights mechanisms to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms effectively. We therefore urge the Algerian Government, once again, to avail itself of the assistance of the fact-finding mechanisms of the Commission. [...]

The appalling violence in Algeria is not simply an internal problem. It is one that concerns us all. The United States will continue to urge the Algerian government, both privately and publicly, to provide greater transparency and agree to access by the international community.³⁸

Finally, it should be noted that some segments of American civil society have urged the US government to work for the setting up of a commission of inquiry and to suspend all support to the Algerian regime. For instance, at

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the end of January 1998, a joint letter^A, co-ordinated by the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism^B and signed by a number of organisations^C, was sent to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. These organisations called upon the U.S. government to encourage an international inquiry into the massacres and declared that: 'The U.S. and the international community cannot turn a blind eye to these massacres', and that 'It is imperative that we not become numb to the pain and suffering of others and turn our backs to those who need our help.' At the same time, Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark, Chairman of the US Catholic Conference International Policy Committee, sent on 26 January 1998 a letter^D to Madeleine Albright in which he stated that: 'In the five years since election results were cancelled by the Algerian government the international community has been witness to crimes against humanity which are intolerable.' And the archbishop added: 'As religious leaders we cannot remain silent as hundred of innocent civilians are killed on a weekly basis.'

3. Assessment of the American Response

The official position of the United States on the massacres in Algeria for the period between the summer of 97 and the winter of 98 is characterised by a constant condemnation of the massacres and regular reminders to the Algerian authorities about their responsibility for the protection of the civilian populations. Although the US has regularly stressed the need for more transparency with regard to the human rights situation in Algeria, it has not been consistent in its demand for a commission of inquiry into the massacres. During the massacres of January 1998 various US officials did call for such an investigation but some weeks later there was a rescission from this stand. This is consistent with US attitude towards the massacre campaign, which has not subsided since May 1996, including its posture in the summer and autumn 1997 that witnessed the worst killings. We also note that, even in its earlier calls for openness on human rights, it has not taken any initiative in this direction, and that its role has consisted in supporting the initiatives of third parties (UN secretary General, European Union, NGOs, etc.) and encouraging the Algerian government to take transparency measures,

^A The full text of the letter is given in the Appendix.

^B The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism is the Washington office of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, representing 1.5 million Reform Jews and 1,800 Reform rabbis in 875 congregations throughout North America.

^C US Catholic Conference, National Council of Churches, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, Church Women United, General Board of Church and Society, Seventh Day Adventist, International Religious Liberty Association, Presbyterian Church (USA), Church of the Brethren, and the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

^D The full text of the letter is given in the Appendix.

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that would result in enhancing its credibility, without, however, exerting pressure so that these measures would be implemented.

During the singular period in which calls for an inquiry were made (January-February 1998), one observes that the American officials used a varied terminology such as 'international inquiries', 'investigations', 'UN rapporteurs', 'outside observers', 'outside fact-finding', 'fact-finding missions', 'fact-finding mechanisms of the [UN Human Rights] Commission', 'objective factual studies' into the massacres. These are expressions which indicate explicitly or implicitly the idea of an independent and expert body. However, as pointed out earlier, when the Algerian government reacted angrily to James Rubin's declaration of 6 January 1998, the State Department, in its quest to moderate its position, went as far as declaring on 9 January, through the voice of James Foley, that it was not demanding an international commission of inquiry.

The other remark to be made on this matter concerns the position of the US regarding the perpetrators of the massacres. It is time-dependent. We can distinguish on the whole three periods: the year 1997, the winter of 1997-1998 and afterwards. In the first and third periods, the American position regarding the authors of the massacres is quite clear-cut, as expressed in the declarations of senior US foreign policy officials, the president and the secretary of state, who have pointed to '[Islamic] extremism'³⁹ and 'terrorism'⁴⁰, adhering thus to the thesis of the Algerian regime. The second period, which covers the winter of 1997-1998, is characterised by a discourse which attributes the major part of the massacres to terrorist groups while making it clear, however, that certain massacres could be the work of groups linked to governmental forces.

The change in the US position on the subject of the identity of the perpetrators of the massacres in Algeria during the 1997-1998 period stands out clearly when we compare the various editions of the Country Report on Human Rights Practices on Algeria, released by the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, for the year 1997 (published on 30 January 1998) and for the year 1998 (published on 26 February 1999). In the first, it was stated that:

There were also reports that on some occasions security forces failed to intervene to prevent or halt massacres of civilians. Questions have been raised about the security forces indifference to, or complicity in, civilian deaths. Amnesty International (AI) reported that security forces did not intervene to stop the killings in three terrorist massacres near Algiers. In Hai Rais on August 28, hundreds of persons were attacked, although an army barracks is about 300 feet away and other security forces were nearby. Security forces neither came to the assistance of the villagers nor apprehended the killers when they left. In Beni Messous on September 5, at least 60 persons were killed. When villagers telephoned the nearby army barracks for help, security forces refused to intervene, saying the matter was under the mandate of the gendarmerie. Telephone calls to the gendarmerie received no reply, and the attackers

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escaped without any difficulty. In Bentalha on September 22, some 200 persons were killed over the course of several hours. Survivors reported that security forces with armored vehicles were stationed outside the village and stopped some villagers trying to flee. However, the attackers were able to leave. The Government asserts that security forces cannot respond to attacks against civilians because an attack might be a setup for an ambush, because the security forces lack night-fighting equipment, and because terrorists might have mined the area.⁴¹

This report was presented to the media by the Acting Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor John Shattuck. Commenting on the report which deals with Algeria, John Shattuck declared:

In Algeria, alarming brutality, including massacres, systematic rape and other sexual violence against women continues. In the light of the differing accounts about the origin of these abuses, the need for a credible international fact-finding mission is clear.⁴²

The effect of this was to irritate the Algerian authorities. On 2 February, the Algerian foreign affairs ministry spokesman considered that the US report stood out 'through a remarkable lack of rigour.' Alluding to the sworn enemies of the Algerian regime, the Human Rights NGOs, the spokesperson regretted that 'the State Department felt obliged to back allegations and tendentious calculations fed by some sources having lost all credibility on account of their known prejudice.'⁴³

However, in the second report, the 1998 edition of the Country Report on Human Rights Practices on Algeria one finds that:

Armed groups targeted both security force members and civilians. In many cases, terrorists randomly targeted civilians in an apparent attempt to create social disorder. They carried out massacres in numerous towns and villages and also massacred civilians at roadblocks. They also used bombs to kill civilians and create panic. [...] There were numerous massacres committed by rebel^E forces.⁴⁴

4. Algerian Policy of the United States

Algerian-American relations can be traced back to 200 years ago, to the time when a peace treaty was signed with the Dey of Algiers in 1795, and the first bilateral agreement was signed in Algiers by Joel Barlow, envoy of George Washington. In the fifties, the backing of the United States, under President J. F. Kennedy, helped put the question of Algeria as a colonised country aspiring for independence on the agenda of the United Nations. After independence, the ideological orientation of the Algerian government did not prevent it from having rather friendly relations with the US. American busi-

^E We discover in the following paragraphs of the report that it meant 'Muslim rebels'.

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ness was present in major Algerian industries like the oil sector. After the demise of Boumedienne in 1978, President Chadli Bendjedid's 'liberalization' opened up a new era of relations with the United States which appreciated Algiers' active involvement in the liberation of the American hostages in Tehran.

On the strategic level, one must differentiate when analysing Algerian-American relations between two periods. First, the time when Algeria was known on the international scene for its anti-imperialist stand, its anti-Zionist rhetoric, its active advocacy of a new international economic order more favourable to the South, and participation in the non-aligned movement. In the second period Algeria has given up the foreign policy doctrines and principles since independence; the sole recognisable pattern underlying its foreign policy has been mobilising international support to the military regime. Since 1992 Algerian diplomacy has devoted most of its efforts to trading Algeria's resources and strategic interests in exchange for shoring up support to the military regime, rendering its dismal human rights record acceptable, and getting international co-operation for silencing the political opposition overseas.

4.1. Algeria in US foreign Policy

4.1.1. Algeria and the Middle East

Algeria shares the geography, the history, the language and above all the religion (Islam) of the Arab world. Given the importance of Washington's economic and strategic interests in the Middle East and that of Israel and its security for the US, in a context of rising Islamic movements all over the Middle East and the Maghreb, but particularly in Algeria in the 1990s, Washington has considered Algeria as being closely linked to the Middle East. The perception of the Algerian political situation has been conditioned by one main factor: the Islamic revival. The debate within America's academia has dealt with the Algerian issue within the context of the Middle East where the issues of Islam, Israel and terrorism are closely linked in the American policy.⁴⁵

When outlining the United States' strategy for the Middle East before the Senate in March 1998, Martin Indyk listed the promotion of democracy, the respect for human rights and for the rule of law in the seventh position out of eight principles. Israel had the first two priorities, relations with 'Arab allies' and Middle Eastern oil security the third, and fighting 'terrorism' the fourth.⁴⁶ Democracy and human rights seem to rank quite low in the priorities of the Clinton government.

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4.1.2. *The US and Political Islam*

Officially, the United States has no problem with Islam. Muslims in America, unlike in France, write and publish Islamic literature, whether political or otherwise, and practice their religion without impediments. Bill Clinton has, for some years, adopted the habit of addressing his best wishes to American Muslims and stated on many an occasion that Islam is a great religion and a non violent one.^F However, the United States is not indifferent to the political expression of Islam in the Muslim countries: what has been named 'political Islam' in the US.

Addressing the Council on Foreign Relations on 8 May 1996, Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs Robert Pelletreau stated that the United States had 'no one-size-fits-all policy toward Islam.' However, he specified that 'Islamic political activism becomes a factor for us only when it impinges on a specific U.S. foreign policy goal or interest.'⁴⁷ He explained this view further: 'We carefully examine how specific countries or groups, including those that identify themselves politically with Islam, affect issues of importance to the United States, such as the Middle East peace process, terrorism, free markets, political stability and respect for human rights. Then we react accordingly.'⁴⁸

In his address, Robert Pelletreau left no major field of activity without designating it as affecting its 'foreign policy goal or interest.' Elaborating on the detailed implications of such a policy statement is outside the scope of this study. Suffice it to mention the first two most important principles of America's Middle Eastern strategy that are, in fact, closely related and include the Middle East 'peace process' and the 'ironclad commitment to Israel's security and well being.'

4.2. Evolution of the Algerian Policy of the US since 1992

When analysing the US policy towards Algeria after the 1992 coup, one finds two distinguishable periods: before the November 1995 presidential elections and afterwards.

Officially the Clinton Administration criticised the interruption of the first ever free elections in Algeria in January 1992, but no more, and went on to keep a certain stable but ambiguous attitude towards the Algerian crisis.

Washington consistently called for dialogue, reconciliation and political reform and denounced the violence, albeit in a detached manner. 'We are convinced' said Assistant Secretary Robert Pelletreau in 1995, 'that the best hope to end the violence in Algeria lies in the establishment of a political

^F E.g. his best wishes to American Muslims on the occasion of the Muslim festival of *Eid al-Fitr*, 1 March 1995.

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process which would enable Algerians to make a constitution [...] such a process will need to be perceived as free, fair, and credible by the Algerian people and the main political parties, both Islamist and secular.⁴⁹

In January 1995, the United States was swift to lend support to the Sant' Egidio Rome agreement, which was reached by a wide spectrum of Algerian opposition parties, including secular and Islamic parties (FIS in particular): 'We felt encouraged by the Platform signed by the principal opposition parties in Rome in January 1995. This ought to be the starting point to discussions with the regime. The categorical rejection of this initiative by the government is regrettable,' French journalist José Garçon wrote, quoting Pelle-treau.⁵⁰

Since the end of 1995, the United States has made a spectacular change of policy on Algeria. From a balanced position, which consisted in disavowing the interruption of the political process and calling for a political solution to the Algerian conflict which would include all the political forces of the country, the United States has shifted to a position of support of the Algerian regime and the economic and security policies of Zeroual.

Abdelmalek Amine, journalist at the Algerian daily *El Watan*, a paper largely known for reflecting the opinions of the eradicator tendency within the army and for privileged access to military intelligence sources, admitted in the edition of 6 January 1998 that:

The United States has in fact offered its full support to the political steps of the [Algerian] authorities by even going to the extent of backing the military option in the fight against the fundamentalist *maquis*, at a time when Algeria was finding itself at the centre of a vast political and media campaign which had thrown discredit on the Algerian authorities accused, as they were, of being directly implicated in the atrocities committed against civilians.

At a time when a heated controversy was fuelling a debate in Europe around the question of 'who kills whom?' in the tragedy that rocks Algeria, the State Department has, on the contrary, displayed a never-failing serenity, not hesitating at any time to accuse directly the armed Islamist groups, which, by the way, they have included in the list of the most dangerous terrorist organisations in the world, against which a continuous struggle is to be waged.⁵¹

The change in American policy in favour of the Algerian regime manifested itself, among other things, through the arrest of Anwar Haddam, President of the FIS Parliamentary Delegation, who is incarcerated to this day for motives which have to do more with politics than justice, and through the declarations of the US embassy in Algeria. For instance, before leaving his post in Algiers, Neumann declared that Washington did not oppose the security measures of general Zeroual.

The new Algerian policy of the US administration has also shown itself in the political and economic declarations of various US officials such as Mar-

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tin Indyk who visited Algiers on 13 March 1998, and Stuart Eisenstat, Under Secretary for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs. It also expressed itself through the bilateral military naval exercise organised at the beginning of October 1998 which, according to Ronald Neumann, 'has nothing to do with war.'⁵² Trying to justify this unprecedented military collaboration between the armies of both countries, a statement qualified as a 'bad move'⁵³ by John Entelis^G, Ronald Neumann declared:

We do something periodically to show that we are not anti-military. But we are not going to get close to them or join their war until we are sure they are for reform and the human rights situation gets better.⁵⁴

4.3. Accounting for Changes in US Policy

Several factors need to be considered in order to explain the change in US policy regarding the Algerian conflict after 1995.

4.3.1. Political Concessions

On the political level, the principal contribution to the shift in US policy has been a change in the official attitude of Algeria as regards the Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinian question. With respect to the Palestinian issue, the regime of Zeroual had reversed Algeria's long-standing anti-Israeli policy. Credible diplomatic sources reported that Algerian diplomats in Washington contacted the Zionist lobbies in America, on behalf of the regime of Zeroual, to reverse the US's relatively balanced approach to the Algerian conflict as well as its support for the San Egidio initiative. In exchange, the deal was that Algeria would lift the boycott of Israel and normalise its relations with it through the 'peace process'. These diplomats are said to have explained that the process of recognition of Israel would have to be gradual in view of the Algerian people's hostility to it. Bouteflika's statement about the recognition of the state of Israel in Crans Montana in June 1999 and his hand-shake with Barak at the funeral of King Hassan II in Rabat in July 1999 are evidence of this process and its gradual pace.

4.3.2. Economic Concessions

On the economic level, the government of Zeroual had adopted from the very beginning a policy of economic openness towards the United States. Everything was done to attract American investors (new legislation on foreign investment, preferential conditions, etc.). A considerable number of concessions have thus been granted to American oil and petrochemicals

^G Director of the Middle East Department at Fordham University in New York.

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companies which arrived in force in Algeria despite the security and human rights situation.^H

4.4.3. *French Pressure*

In Washington, Algeria is seen as a French zone of influence. Robert Pelletreau, former US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs summed up the US position when he stated, in 1998, that 'Algeria is not an American priority', adding that 'Algeria is a difficult problem that concerns the French in the first instance.'⁵⁵ James Rubin stated, for his part, that the French Government 'has unique influence in the area.'⁵⁶

Thus, the authorities have not been insensitive to the French pressures which sought to harmonise the American position with that of France, given that during the first three or four years of the Algerian conflict the positions of both countries, at least the professed ones, were not at all in phase. Washington's interest in post-coup Algeria was a source of major friction with France. America's advocacy of a reconciliation that would include the Islamists had been met with alarm in France which adopted a different policy towards the Islamist movements.

The State Department's regular policy statements on Algeria and the presence of Algerian Muslims – including some activists – on American territory generated further bickering between the two countries in the first half of 1994. The US were accused by the French, who propagated the Algerian official discourse, of hosting Algerian terrorists, referring to the presence of FIS MP Anwar Haddam in the US. In the summer of 1994, Clinton's reassurances of a shared and similar analysis of the Algerian situation by the two countries contributed to easing tension.⁵⁷ Not for long though. France soon started showing impatience again vis-à-vis Washington. The latter's open support of the Algerian opposition's Rome Platform of January 1995 was a further source of discontent in Paris which had refused to support the event - and even criticised it unofficially - since it had fully backed in the 'total war' policy of the Algerian generals to help them eradicate the political expression of the Islamic movement.⁵⁸ Moreover, the French accused the Americans of being guided by economic interests⁵⁹ in an area which Paris considers its zone of influence.

France has exerted a strong pressure on the US through diplomatic channels and the media, and it appears to have contributed to the change in the Algerian policy of the US.

^H See M. Tinkicht and A. Benhadid, *Transnational Companies and the Massacres: Business as Usual*, paper No 25, in part IV.

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4.3.4. Reassessment of the Balance of Power in the Insurgency

Another factor to be considered is the balance of military power, between the military regime and the Islamist insurgents, which tilted decisively in favour of the regime of Zeroual in November 1995, the very month in which the presidential elections were held, consecrating Zeroual. This decisive military victory was the achievement of the Direction du Renseignement et de la Sécurité (DRS – military intelligence). Throughout 1995 its counter-guerrilla force, the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA – Armed Islamic Group), assassinated scores of FIS political cadres and guerrilla commanders, its campaign culminating early in November 1995 when it assassinated about one hundred political and military leaders of the insurgency within a few weeks. US policy doctrinal antagonism towards political liberation forms of Islam notwithstanding, this evolution in the balance of military power, concurrently with the election of general Zeroual to the presidency, has been an important element in the US change of policy. This causal contribution is not widely acknowledged but Dana Priest, of the *Washington Post*, wrote on 12 November 1998, commenting on the joint military exercise between the Algerian and American armies:

The military overture ends a hands-off policy pursued by the Clinton administration toward Algeria, and follows an assessment by U.S. defense and intelligence agencies that the military controlled government has gained the advantage against extremists.⁶⁰

4.3.5. Understanding US Response in the Winter 1997-1998

Several theses have been put forward to explain the unusual attitude of the United States towards the Algerian regime during the winter of 1997-1998. The vocal demand for an inquiry did not match its strong support for the regime of Zeroual. There have been claims that the change stems from the American authorities' wish to recover some credibility in international opinion after having shown excessive support for the Algerian regime since the end of 1995. Other claims correlate the change to the pressure exerted by the major human rights NGOs. According to Abdelmalek Amine of the *El Watan* newspaper:

This surprising change, to say the least, of the United States regarding the Algerian crisis may find an explanation in a wish to moderate its attitude, thought to be too favourable, and strongly smelling of oil, by the European media and political circles, towards the Algerian authorities.

It may be also the result of lobbying work and pressure on the part of internationally known NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International which exercise a big influence on a Western public opinion that is sensitive to matters of human rights.⁶¹

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Other explanations have sought to interpret the attitude of the US within a purely tactical frame. The claim has been that US statements alleging partial responsibility of the security forces and calls for a commission of inquiry were simply pressure means to wrest more concessions, of a political and mainly economic nature, from the Algerian regime. In support of this thesis they point to the US reversal of tone, back to 'normal', in March 1998, as the number of visits, economic contracts and military co-operation increased.

The latter may well smack of over-cynicism. But the low priority accorded by the US, in practice not in rhetoric, to human rights and the rule of law in Algeria, in particular, and in the Arab world, in general, justifies to some extent this cynicism about US intentions and behaviour.

In the next section we review the US gap between practice and rhetoric, especially with regard to international obligations for detecting, preventing and repressing massive human rights violations.

5. Dealing with War Crimes: US Policy Inconsistencies

5.1. Prevention and Detection of Genocide

Conflicts of interest among the influential members of the Security Council and their lack of political will have rendered inefficient early warning systems of massive human rights violations and genocides.¹ In the case of the Rwandan genocide, states that hindered the UN initiatives include the United States. The US blocked in particular the despatch of 5500 soldiers to Rwanda.

What also retarded the process of making the international community aware of the Rwandan catastrophe was the rhetoric, started by the American authorities in the spring of 1994, on the subject of the definition of the concept of genocide and its applicability in the situation of Rwanda. Between April and June 1994, while hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were being massacred and the situation was taking the form of a real human catastrophe, the spokespersons of the State Department were engaging in endless semantic battles whose lack of decency was not to the taste of public opinion. On 28 April 1994, when Christine Shelley was asked whether what was going on in Rwanda was a genocide, she answered that 'the use of the term "genocide" has a very precise legal meaning, although it is not strictly a legal determination. There are other factors in there as well.'⁶² On 25 May 1995, her colleague, Mike McCurry, was asked by the press whether the Admini-

¹ Section 10.3 of A. Aroua, *L'Organisation des Nations Unies et les Massacres en Algérie*, paper No 22, in part IV, discusses the failure of the UN human rights mechanisms, including the US contribution to this tragedy.

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stration had taken a decision on the qualification of what was going on in Rwanda as a genocide, he answered:

I'll have to confess, I don't know the answer to that. I know that the issue was under very active consideration. I think there was a strong disposition within the department here to view what has happened there certainly constituting acts of genocide that have occurred.⁶³

Once again, when Christine Shelley was asked, on 10 June, 'how many acts of genocide does it take to make genocide?', she answered:

That's just not a question that I'm in a position to answer. [...] Well, is it true that you have specific guidance not to use the word 'genocide' in isolation, but always to preface it with these words 'acts of' [...] I have guidance which I try to use as best as I can. There are formulations that we are using that we are trying to be consistent in our use of. I don't have an absolute categorical prescription against something, but I have the definitions. I have phraseology which has been carefully examined and arrived at as best as we can apply to exactly the situation and the actions which have taken place.⁶⁴

Three and a half years later, at the end of 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared in Addis Ababa: 'We [and] the international community should have been more active in the early stages of the atrocities in Rwanda in 1994, and called them what they were – genocide.'⁶⁵ On 25 March 1998, the head of the White House, Bill Clinton in person, did apologise for the lack of sensitivity that his administration had displayed towards the victims of the Rwanda genocide. In Kigali he declared that:

The international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy, as well. We did not act quickly enough after the killing began. We should not have allowed the refugee camps to become safe havens for the killers. We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide. We cannot change the past. But we can and must do everything in our power to help you build a future without fear, and full of hope.⁶⁶

To show his intention of taking concrete measures to prevent future genocides, President Bill Clinton announced on the same occasion that he had given instructions to his administration 'to improve, with the international community, our system for identifying and spotlighting nations in danger of genocidal behaviour, so that we can assure world-wide awareness of impending threats.'⁶⁷ Eight and half months later, on 10 December 1998, David Scheffer announced during a conference on 'Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity: Early Warning and Prevention', given in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, that concrete measures were being taken in the White House:

This morning the President announced at the White House the establishment of a genocide early warning system in the U.S. Government. The core of the system will

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be the Atrocities Prevention Interagency Working Group, which I have the honor to lead. It will strengthen our capabilities to detect and analyze the warning signs of genocide and make recommendations for possible counter measures. The group will enable our policy makers to understand better what is occurring at the earliest possible stage and be better prepared to consider possible responses to stem the tide of killing. Our diplomatic and intelligence communities will collect and analyze information with a keen perspective on the warning signals of these heinous crimes against humankind.

At the State Department, Secretary Albright has just established the War Crimes and Atrocities Analysis Division in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research.⁶⁸

In the same speech, David Scheffer presented the results of preliminary work carried out for the American government on the conditions that predispose a country to a genocide or a politicide. He stressed their importance because, according to the ambassador, 'to better determine how to prevent genocide and other atrocities, we must know its origins.'⁶⁹ The work of two experts, Barbara Harff of the US Naval Academy and Ted Gurr of the University of Maryland, has led to the identification of the factors that are most closely related to occurrences of genocide and politicide between 1956 and 1996. These factors include:

- 1) a ruling elite whose ethnicity is politically significant but not representative of the entire population,
- 2) a ruling elite that adheres to an exclusionary ideology,
- 3) a previous state failure,
- 4) autocratic rule,
- 5) and low trade openness.⁷⁰

Assessing the attitude of the United States towards the massacres perpetrated across the world over the last decades, Ambassador David Scheffer confessed that 'our collective inability to prevent states from failing or collapsing in recent decades has been instrumental in the proliferation of atrocities.'⁷¹ Furthermore, he emphasised that the lessons drawn from past experiences should be remembered in the future, especially:

- We need to heed the warning signs of genocide.
- Officially-directed massacres of civilians of whatever numbers cannot be tolerated, for the organisers of genocide must not believe that more widespread killing will be ignored.
- 'Neutrality' in the face of genocide is unacceptable and must never be used to cripple or delay our collective response to genocide.
- The international community must respond quickly to confront genocidal actions.
- The consequences of genocide are not only the horrific killings themselves but the massive refugee flows, economic collapse, and political divisions that tear asunder

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the societies that fall victim to genocide. The international community will pay a far higher price coping with the aftermath of genocide than if it were prepared to defeat genocide in its earliest stages.⁷²

5.2. Repression of Genocide

Genocides and war crimes perpetrated over the last years in Europe and Africa, especially in Rwanda, have shown the importance of an impartial, credible and effective international justice system for the prosecution and repression of the instigators and perpetrators of the crimes. In presenting to the press the 1996 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared on 30 January 1997 that:

A far higher use of law is reflected in the International War Crimes Tribunal for Rwanda and the Balkans. The task of apprehending and prosecuting those guilty of atrocities in these regions is a landmark effort and not an easy one. Success matters to the societies immediately affected because justice is a parent to reconciliation. It matters to all of us because success or failure may well affect the likelihood that future genocides will occur. Those are high stakes.⁷³

On 10 December 1998, David Scheffer, for his part, was keen to make it clear that, beyond its mission of prosecution and repression, the international justice systems 'stand as preventive shields against atrocities and, through greater respect for the rule of law, deter crimes against humanity.'⁷⁴

On another occasion, David Scheffer spoke of the reasons which justified the necessity of such justice systems, especially the failure of national jurisdictions to fulfil their mission of prosecution and repression of authors of atrocities:

National systems of justice are the front-line defense but they have proven problematic. In the ideal world, every war crime, every crime against humanity, and every act of genocide would be prosecuted either in the territory where it was committed or by the state of nationality of the defendant. Yet there are significant cases in which no one is prosecuted by responsible domestic authorities.⁷⁵

5.3. Implications for the Algerian Case

When David Scheffer discussed, at the beginning of 1998, the question of ineffectiveness of national legislation, he took the case of Algeria as an example and declared: 'A real-time example of the challenge we face today [is] Algeria [which] is receiving increased attention in the international press for the continuing violence in which as many as 70,000 people may have been killed since 1992.'⁷⁶ At the end of the same year, he stated that: 'Today a significant number of countries are vulnerable to an outbreak or continuation of atrocities in the near future.' And the ambassador added: 'Algeria, where

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massacres of civilians continue to terrorise that society, represents two emerging examples.⁷⁷

But what has the United States done regarding the massacres in Algeria which can be argued to be genocidal or, at least, to constitute a politicide? It can equally be convincingly demonstrated that the power structure of the Algerian regime does meet the factors causally correlated to politicides and genocides, as outlined by Harff and Gurr in section 5.1. What initiatives conforming to the new policy of the United States for the prevention, detection and repression of such atrocities have been taken regarding the Algerian case? It seems, from the official attitude of the United States regarding the massacres in Algeria, that, apart from indignation, episodic condemnation and verbal encouragement of the Algerian regime to show more transparency, no concrete and effective measure has been taken to put an end to the massacres. Why, after the experience of Rwanda, has the United States, and the rest of the international community, failed a second time to react to massacres of genocidal proportions?

A clue to this question might be contained in the declaration of David Scheffer on 10 December 1998:

We must be realistic. The United States cannot promise effective responses in every case. There is no cookie-cutter approach to the complex madness of atrocities. Nor is the United States necessarily prepared to go it alone unless our national security or other critical concerns are at stake.⁷⁸

Hence before humanitarian obligations and ethical considerations, it is national security and economic interests that determine the response of the United States even in situations of massive human rights violations and war crimes.

In Algeria, it is not just the case that the massacres threaten neither the security nor the interests of the United States, but the Algerian regime keeps an eye on the strategic, political and economic interests of the United States in the region. The military regime's political programme and its propensity to cause massacres of larger genocidal scales^K, and the Algerian people's right to life and freedom from abuse, the calls for assistance of the victimised populations in their hour of need count for nothing in the US scale of strategic interests.

^J See M. Ait-Larbi *et al.*, *An Anatomy of the Massacres*, paper No2, in part I.

^K Such massacres are a real possibility if the regime were to collapse and, as happened in 1962 after the defeat of France, retributive killings of the families and over 250,000 militiamen and security forces were to take place.

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6. Conclusion

The US has unambiguously and repeatedly condemned the massacres in Algeria. Several times it has reminded several times the Algerian government of its responsibility to protect the civilian population. Some US officials have alleged that the Islamist insurgents are the perpetrators of the massacres, other have claimed that both the incumbent regime and the insurgents are responsible, while a third category of officials has suspended its pronouncements, if not beliefs, on the matter and called for an inquiry commission instead.

But the US positions on the commission of inquiry into the massacres have evolved with time. In January 1998, the US administration was unequivocal about the necessity of such an inquiry, but later declarations conflicted with each other and, in the case of some officials, rescinded on the matter. In doing so, America's position became consistent with the government's bystanding behaviour toward the massacre campaign up to January 1998 and from March 1998 onwards.

In order to account for the US behaviour towards the massacre campaign in Algeria, we reviewed the relevant US foreign policy doctrines toward Algeria and sketched out how the Algerian policy of the US has evolved since the military coup of January 1992. We pointed out that 1995 saw an inflexion in US foreign policy. It shifted from advocating a negotiated solution inclusive of all political parties to a strong support of, and co-operation with, the military regime. As explanation for this evolution, and ultimately for accounting for US bystanding behaviour towards the massacres, we discussed several causal contributions: political and economic concessions, French pressures and shifts in the balance of military power in the insurgency. We also surveyed explanations for the short-lived positive bystanding response of the US in January 1998.

This paper also discussed the US obligations for preventing, detecting and repressing genocides. It was shown that the US pursuits of strategic and economic interests in Algeria conflict with, and override, these moral and legal obligations.

'The silence and indifference of the Western powers and public opinion have put my country on a very slippery slope towards an all out slaughter, likely to assume rapidly the dimensions of a genocide,' Hocine Ait-Ahmed, founder of the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), said.⁷⁹

How many massacres does it take to make a genocide?

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Appendix 1

Text of the letter signed by several American religious organisations⁸⁰

Dear Secretary Albright,

On behalf of the undersigned religious groups representing a diverse segment of the American population, we are writing to express our dismay and outrage at the recent massacres in Algeria.

As religious groups, we are particularly disturbed by the hundreds of killings which have occurred during the holy month of Ramadan, beginning on December 30, 1997. Each subsequent day brings horrifying accounts of massacres, including the slaughter of over 100 people yesterday while praying in a mosque. In the six years since the Algerian military canceled elections, over 75,000 innocent people have been mutilated, tortured and killed as the Islamic fundamentalists have tried to gain power from the secular, military government. As Americans, and as people of faith, we cannot remain silent. That these killings have been done, at least in part, in the name of religion makes it even more imperative for us to speak out.

Men, women and children live in fear in Algeria, hoping their government will put an end to this nightmare, and not enough is being done. The Algerian government has not effectively responded to the latest killings, and insists that only “residual violence” remains from the Islamic fundamentalists who oppose the secular government. While the facts are uncertain, it is clear that a thorough investigation is necessary to develop a strategy in order to end this violence. The government has recently made movement toward allowing an international inquiry into the violence, and we fully endorse this measure.

We support the Administration’s efforts in encouraging outside observers to investigate the killings in Algeria, and we urge our government to continue this pressure. The Bible admonishes us that we cannot ‘sit idly by the blood of our neighbors’ (Leviticus 19:16). The U.S. and the international community cannot turn a blind eye to these massacres, but rather we must try to protect the innocent citizens who are suffering at the hands of the internal power struggle between the current government and the Islamic fundamentalists, beginning at least with providing the kind of accurate information and attention that international observers can provide.

While the U.S. cannot be the only peacekeeper in the international sphere working to secure peace and the protection of human rights, it is imperative

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US Responses

825

that we not become numb to the pain and suffering of others and turn our backs to those who need our help. History is replete with examples of the suffering that occurs when the world turns its back on evil. Let us, please, not allow that to happen again.

We stand ready to assist you in any way we can in responding to this urgent humanitarian crisis.

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826

International Responses

Appendix 2

Text of Archbishop McCarrick's letter⁸¹

January 23, 1998

The Honorable Madeleine K. Albright

Secretary of State

Dear Secretary Albright,

As Chairman of the United States bishops' International Policy Committee, I wish to express alarm over the continued massacres which have traumatized the North African country of Algeria. In the five years since election results were canceled by the Algerian government the international community has been witness to crimes against humanity which are intolerable.

As religious leaders we cannot remain silent as hundreds of innocent civilians are killed on a weekly basis. We deplore the recent barrage of attacks which have claimed the lives of more than 1,000 individuals since the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan at the end of December. We believe that our government has a humanitarian and moral obligation to support and encourage all efforts to bring peace, stability and reconciliation to all sides in the Algerian conflict.

With every good wish, Madam Secretary, and asking God to bless your efforts for peace and justice, I am

Sincerely yours,

Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick

Archbishop of Newark

Chairman,

International Policy Committee

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US Responses

827

NOTES

- ¹ E. Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and other Group Violence*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1989.
- ² Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, September 3, 1997.
- ³ Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, January 5, 1998.
- ⁴ Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, January 6, 1998.
- ⁵ Remarks at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ⁶ Released by the US embassy to Indonesia (Web site: www.usembassyjakarta.org).
- ⁷ Statement before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee On Africa. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ⁸ Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Near East and South Asia Affairs, Washington, D.C. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ⁹ Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ¹⁰ Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, January 5, 1998.
- ¹¹ Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, January 6, 1998.
- ¹² Remarks at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ¹³ Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, January 12, 1998.
- ¹⁴ Address at Fordham University School of Law, New York, New York, January 28, 1998, entitled 'Witness and Victim Protection in International Criminal Courts'. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ¹⁵ Statement before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee On Africa. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ¹⁶ Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Near East and South Asia Affairs, Washington, D.C. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ¹⁷ Remarks at the Columbus School of Law, The Catholic University, Washington, D.C., released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, October 24, 1997.
- ¹⁸ Remarks at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).
- ¹⁹ Statement before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee On Africa. Released by the Department of State (Web site: www.state.gov).

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²³ Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, January 5, 1998.

²⁴ Daily Press Briefing released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, January 6, 1998.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

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US Responses

829

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830

International Responses

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