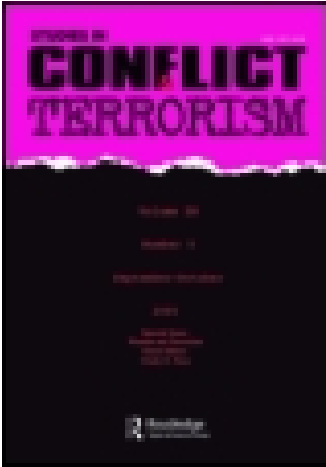


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Publisher: Routledge

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## Studies in Conflict & Terrorism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uter20>

### Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A “Glocal” Organization

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Published online: 16 Jun 2008.

To cite this article: Jean-Luc Marret (2008) Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A “Glocal” Organization, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 31:6, 541-552, DOI: [10.1080/10576100802111824](https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802111824)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100802111824>

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## Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A “Glocal” Organization

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*There are many conditions that push local terrorists groups toward internationalization. Similarly, many local conditions and roots seem to continue to influence groups. The current literature on terrorist groups has sometimes neglected to analyze this double phenomenon of internationalization and local roots. With a concrete assessment of the recent violence in Algeria, this article demonstrates that GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb is a good example of this dual nature, mixing local and global (e.g., “glocal”<sup>1</sup>), traditional and imported practices, and high- and low-tech technologies.*

Observers have highlighted the transformation of the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (known by its French name, *Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat*—GSPC) into “Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb.” Many articles have focused principally on the changed name and concluded that it is a manifestation of the continuing strength of Osama bin Laden’s global organization.<sup>2</sup>

This assessment seems incomplete. First, the issue of the link between local and global is not always clear-cut. A member of a clandestine and illegal group like the GSPC does not always demonstrate clear and obvious alliance to that group. A membership card never concretely demonstrates such an allegiance. Terrorist organizations do not act as Scandinavian political parties. In reality, a proof of membership is rarely easy to find. Most of the time, counterterrorist services have only limited evidence, such as unclear taped calls, or family/inter-individual relationships.

Second, their environment also shapes *jihadi* organizations. They are influenced by specific, and often local, historical, ethnic, and socioeconomic factors. Typical examples here are: The Arab traditional organizational culture is different from the Western—more formal and rigid. In theory, beyond clandestine life imperatives, an Arab-Muslim illegal organization like the GSPC is, by definition, highly designed by its culture: the North-

Received 22 April 2007; accepted 16 September 2007.

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African salafi or *jihadi fatwas* are very often written in Arabic dialect. A part of the *jihadi/salafi* corpus is often very old, contemporary to the Prophet's time.<sup>3</sup>

The "emir" (*al-'amir*) is much more than the Western "leader," both symbolically and concretely.<sup>4</sup> It means "the prince" in Arabic (from *amara*, to command). In the same way, the *majlis shurah* is a typical Islamic consultative body: it defines the good and the evil, the licit and the illicit, and is able to provide theological support to act, but is very different from a Western chamber.<sup>5</sup>

"Trabendo," an Algerian term of European derivation (*contraband* or *contrebande* in French), and emblematic of youth discourse, refers to the black market in contraband goods; a *trabendist* (sometimes a *beznessi*) is a contraband trader. Having appeared in Western Algeria, it spread throughout the European Union with criminal members of the Diasporas. It refers to traditional criminal activities (trade in stolen cars, hold-ups, robberies, trafficking, etc.).<sup>6</sup> The trade of more illicit goods, such as drugs or false papers is referred to as *bezness*, derived from the English word business (another term for *bezness* is *chippa*, meaning, "commission." This can be a million dollar kickback or just *baksheesh*—a pay off). *Trabendo* economics became, with time, so youth-dominated that it has been referred to as *iqtsad as-shabab* (the economy of youth). *Trabendist Islamist* ideology, after the 1988 riots, mixed Islamist ideology and underground economic activities (*iqtsad al-islami*), such as Islamic souks (*aswaq islamiyya*)—for example, the alliance of *hizb ez-zetla* (the party of hashish) to the *hizb ej-jami'* (the party of the mosque). Algerian salafi-*jihadi* groups, like the Islamic Armed Group/Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), were then able to legalize their criminal funds, obtained through *trabendo* activities, in 1994, when Algeria, submitted to intense pressure by the International Monetary Fund, started to liberalize its exchange market.<sup>7</sup> For instance, thousands of euros worth of counterfeit clothes and fake Italian identity documents were seized in April 2005 by an Italian security service (Digos) and the French Division Nationale Anti-Terroriste (DNAT), acting against a GSPC logistical support network. Another older example, the "Chalabi network," named after its leader, was dismantled in France on 8 November 1994. The financing was assured thanks to the transfer on the part of the funds coming from the trafficking of drugs and coffee vending machines.<sup>8</sup>

And third, the GSPC (certainly the most structured and departmentalized Maghrebian organization) has gradually developed in the past a community and a convergence of interests, with the possibility of reciprocation, with others salafi-*jihadi* North-African groups in particular because the logistical support networks in Europe were often tangled and composed of militants ready to aid various other radical organizations.<sup>9</sup> These ties were able to develop in Jalalabad (Afghanistan) in the 1990s, when Maghrebian *jihadists* were concentrated in close quarters. This certainly contributes to strengthen its "regionalization" and its development strategy, whether it is labelled as "Al Qaeda" or not. In the past, the GSPC has deepened its relationship with many groups:

- The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group or *Groupe islamique Combattant Marocain* (GICM). Four of its members have been condemned in 2007 in Belgium, a country with a prominent Moroccan community, to long jail sentences for the provision of logistical support and "others activities in process" to GSPC ("Maaseik-cell"). Several of the Madrid attack perpetrators, maybe connected to this cell,<sup>10</sup> have been linked to the GICM by Spanish authorities. For the GSPC, the link with this organization does not imply the end of the "competition" for becoming the most influential organization in Maghreb.<sup>11</sup> The Algerian terrorist organizations have regularly served under the Moroccan Jihad candidate model, in particular to attempt to create sanctuaries in mountainous regions.<sup>12</sup> The Moroccan regime

punctually repressed some radical circles and was faced with many connections between national *jihadi*-salafis and GSPC.<sup>13</sup>

- The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (*Al-Jama' a al-Islamiyya al-Muqatilah fil-Libya*), led by Abu Abdallah Al-Sadek. This organization, very weakly structured and without a real operational military command, has supporters in Europe, mostly in the United Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> Some of its militants have spent time in Tunisia—where some have been arrested—to be trained by Algerian *jihadi*.<sup>15</sup>
- Tunisian salafi-*jihadi* networks (for instance, the Tunisian Fighting Group/*Groupe Combattant Tunisien*, directed by Tarouk Maroufi) or, potentially, the nebulous *Jeunesse de l'Unification et du Jihad—Tawhid wal-Jihad*: an armed group situated close to Tunisia, composed of Tunisians, entered Tunisian territory through Algeria between the 23 December 2006 and 3 January 2007. Their leader, presumed Lassaad Sassa, had previously passed through Italy where he had led a cell in Milan in order to recruit militias to fight in Algeria, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq.<sup>16</sup> In Tunisia, police forces recently dismantled this terrorist cell of 27 individuals, mostly Tunisians, with middle-class origins.<sup>17</sup> The GSPC role seemed obvious in many ways (training, support, infiltration), and operational militants had military weapons, such as rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikovs. Their target was apparently the U.S. and British Embassy in Tunis.

GSPC's recent announcement of a new name<sup>18</sup> was just the last potential international action made by this group. Since the end of the 1990s, successive GSPC emirs have made numerous public references to Al Qaeda.<sup>19</sup> This change of name has nevertheless diverse and immediate implications. By virtue of its propaganda interest, it can be expected that this growing local labelling of “Al Qaeda” could spread further afield.<sup>20</sup> The label “Al Qaeda” has always had a strong attraction to the media, and a dramatizing effect. In Algeria, this linking seems to have raised internal debates and strong opposition inside the GSPC. Some of historical members (coming from the *Al-Jabha Al-Islamiya li' l-Inqadh* or *Front islamique du salut* (FIS)) could have been more focused on their “Algerian-ness.” On the one hand, a split could be effective between former and new members, who would be inclined to change the actual national emir, Abdelmalek Droukdel (aka Abu Musaab Abdelouadoud), into a local version of “Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi.” In July 2007, Benmessaoud Abdelkader, aka Abou Moussab, was arrested and described by Algerian security services as the emir of the GSPC for the south. He has been released but remains under intense scrutiny. His subsequent public statements, critical of the new directions of GSPC, show the dissent within the group.<sup>21</sup>

This evolution of the GSPC is particularly interesting, especially concerning the interweaving of *jihadist* organizations between the local reality and the more international solidarities. The current literature on terrorist groups has neglected to analyze this phenomenon of the coexistence of internationalization and local roots. GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb is a good example of this dual nature. This article argues that beyond recent events and the global semantic of the “Al Qaeda” label, trends and specificities of Algerian *jihadi* networks can be analyzed, (1) by referring to the Algerian history of violence, North- African societies (local) and diasporas (local/global), and (2) by evaluating their operational evolution (more linked to the global level), to understand the security stakes (“glocal”). The GSPC can thus supply a useful example for the comprehension of the double status of equivalent organizations throughout the world, between localism and international solidarity, that is, violent “glocal” organizations.

### The Day After: When “National Reconciliation” Equals “Return to Violence”

The actual enlargement of GSPC’s activities is paradoxically a direct consequence of the Algerian national reconciliation program. The September 2005 referendum, on the adoption of a Peace Charter (“*Charte pour la paix et la réconciliation nationale*”<sup>22</sup>), has not avoided the reoccurrence of terrorism in this country.<sup>23</sup> It is true that terrorism is an old problem in this country. The Algerian civil war was opposed the Algerian government and diverse Islamist organizations as of December 1991, when the government canceled elections after the results of the first round had been produced, anticipating an Islamic Salvation Front victory. After the banning of that party, and the arrests of numerous militants, Islamic guerilla groups began to appear, some created by Algerian *mujahiddin* coming back from Afghanistan, and others by FIS militants who remained at large. In October 1988, widespread demonstrations abruptly revealed the popularity of the burgeoning Islamism. The brutal military repression that followed showed how threateningly it was perceived by the political power. This signaled the end of the short-lived multiparty system in Algeria.

As in the independence war, the fighters regrouped principally in the mountains and forests in the north. This left the south of the country, the location of the majority of the oil and gas, in relative peace. In the middle of the 1990s, the government multiplied the militia for the protection of the citizens, while armed groups became more radicalized in their violence toward the Algerian people and foreigners alike, having them exported in particular to France (1995 bomb attacks campaign, one high jacking in December 1994). The decline of the GIA, its parceling into smaller groups and its massacres of civilian populations engendered the birth and development of the GSPC in September 1998.

At this point, many released individuals have *de facto* joined GSPC ranks again, but this actual reconciliation attempt is not the first. In 1995, the “Law of Forgiveness” (*Rahma*) tried to “de-radicalize” terrorists who had not committed murder; the 1999 referendum on “Civil Concord,”<sup>24</sup> the presidential amnesty of 10 January 2000, and the punctual presidential amnesties of Presidents Zéroual and Bouteflika all also failed to sustain peace, due to both the conditions they placed on the terrorists and the radicalization and number of terrorists. Moreover, many citizens and civil groups (for instance, the well-known “Committee of Disappeared People’s Families”) have regularly expressed concerns about the amnesties, in particular as some assassins remain unpunished or the families of the victims have not received remuneration. In the same way, the authoritarian character of the process, in which victims’ families are often advised to keep silent, has come under criticism.<sup>25</sup> For its part, the GSPC has always refused to give up armed fighting, even when President Bouteflika called for it in his speech before national executives on 26 December 2006.<sup>26</sup> To the contrary, this group has attracted and recruited many former prisoners. Algerian intelligence is reputed to have intercepted an interesting GSPC document that could indicate that Droukdel, the present national emir, has appointed the emir of a new brigade named “Al-Horra” (*Abdelhamid Sadaoui*, aka *Abou Al Haïtam*). This brigade would act between Boumerdès and Algiers to recruit among the newly released and most radical salafis. If this is confirmed, it signifies that the GSPC has made a particular utilitarian and rational reading of amnesty and that it has gone through a methodic process of recruitment. In this way, three other similar units would be active in eastern, central, and western Algeria.<sup>27</sup> In fact, at least one of the attacks that have struck Algeria since 2007 was the act of an individual (much older than the average Algerian operational militant) who had received amnesty. Algerian authorities consequently remained rather discrete on this aspect.

This added strength coincides with international dissemination of the GSPC, as observed outside Algeria for years. In 2005, for reasons of difficulties and losses in the

country, the GSPC seemed unable to continue to act as a guerrilla group and to keep areas under its control.<sup>28</sup> Two equal reasons should be given consideration.

There are several explanations for this tendency: The efficiency of Algerian and European counterterrorist services contributed to push the GSPC away to the Sahara, Darfur or Iraq. That is, an obvious "balloon effect" pushed the group to move to new areas in response to local eradication campaigns. The effective influence of the general emir (Droukdel), who has gained a strong authority and who retook the movement in hand, and who could play to improve internal divisions of work around geographical areas of activity (Northern, Center, West, and the South-Sahara) is undoubtedly another reason. The *Maghribi* salafi-jihadi networks have seemed, correlatively, more concerned with making *jihad* across the world. This trend was the consequence of both counterterrorism successes and the polarization of the Arab world since 9–11. It must be remembered that two "Dar al-Islam"—Afghanistan and Iraq—were "invaded" by Western troops. In the most radical minds, that is certainly a good incentive to become a martyr or a *mujahiddin*. As a matter of fact, the GSPC is active in Iraq, where Algerians perpetrate many terror attacks, including martyrdom operations.<sup>29</sup> In June 2006, the U.S. military announced that approximately 20 percent of suicide bombers there are Algerian. Another 5 percent are Moroccan and Tunisian, and arrests in Algeria in the summer 2006 suggest that the GSPC may be helping to funnel some of these North Africans into Iraq. In August 2006, Algeria extradited six Moroccans who allegedly travelled to Algeria to join the GSPC network and whom police believe are linked to an Algerian operative until recently based in Syria. Ten Tunisians were arrested in Algeria on the same charges in 2004.<sup>30</sup> According to some European sources, the group is also observable in Darfur,<sup>31</sup> even though its strength there is probably less impressive than in Iraq, and is reputed to have acted in Sub-Saharan Africa for years.

The issue of GSPC "new members" is a very serious source of concern, as is their eventual entrance into Europe. In the EU, this group, and its affiliated networks, has been considered for a long time as having obvious and troublesome operational capacities. According to the French media, Algerian authorities have lately communicated to Paris, presumably at the end of 2006, a list of recently amnestied, and released, salafi-jihadi individuals (a supposed "complete list" shows "about 2,500 individuals").<sup>32</sup> This action could be the result of a bilateral deal on the French ordinary visas regime. Such a list is always useful, but can potentially be "oriented," here or there, to help Algerian interests. Most worrying, it is not sure that such a list permits the precise identification of an individual's provenance.

*Jihadi* infiltration into the EU could be accomplished by several different methods: GSPC or former GIA militants, with European citizenship, or dual nationality, would not have any difficulty to enter Europe, especially if they are unknown to European intelligence services. Non-European GSPC members would have more problems to enter the EU. They possibly would need to use illegal immigration or support networks. This option raises concern about the GSPC's logistical capabilities and support in Europe. An infiltration by GSPC militants in Europe cannot be excluded either. However, according to an assessment by European intelligence services, there is much less concern about GSPC infiltration in 2007 than was estimated in 2006.<sup>33</sup>

In this way, the Peace Charter may actually increase the *jihadi* "human capital." As the Madrid attacks or 9–11 showed, it takes only a few individuals to perpetrate a massive terrorist attack or to facilitate determined recruitment. Entry into Europe does not necessarily imply immediate action. Many militants would be satisfied if they were simply able to recruit or to begin creation of a sleeper cell. In any case, detection throughout Europe

is a great challenge, and simply having a list of names is not sufficient for localizing every suspect.

It seems, then, that GSPC dissemination, and its actual renewal, is observable, although not new both locally and internationally. The group uses specific forms of violence: some of them are already known, classic, or even cultural; others have recently been imported from *global* transnational *jihadi* networks, which is without doubt the most innovative aspect, while the *local* geography is still a determining factor.

### Techniques of Terrorism: Old and New-Fashioned Trends

The GSPC seems to choose between two tactics, depending on the geography: Confrontation or harassment. If the ground conditions permit mobility and dispersion, confrontation is the preferred method. In Algeria, the ground has always determined operational conditions. In the 1990s, GIA and the *Armée islamique du Salut*—Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), GSPCs' ancestors, were competing for controlling parts of Algerian territory.<sup>34</sup> Whereas AIS controlled West Algeria, the GIA controlled Mitidja (the Blidéen Atlas and Kabylie—a mountainous area where the FLN was active 40 years before against the French army.<sup>35</sup> The GIA was able to regularly raid the strategic *La Corniche* road, near Jijel (called the “*shar’ia* express”). Then, in 1994, in the midst of the civil war, this group succeeded in taking control of the road from Algiers to Lakdharie, 70 km at the east of Algiers, and attempted to spread over its influence in the west, around Miliana, Aïn Defla, and Chlef. In GIA propaganda, this zone was termed “freed,” whereas the Algerians nicknamed it the “triangle of death.” As GIA’s leading successor, the GSPC is very active in Kabylie, and notably in its eastern part, around Tébessa. Its first national emir, Hassan Hattab, was the former GIA emir in Boumerdès (also in Kabylie). In the recent years, in Algeria, due to many arrests and broad anti-guerrilla operations, the GSPC was not really able to control such large areas as in the past. The arrival of newly released salafi-*jihadi* militants could strengthen the group’s potential for guerrilla war on the Algerian mainland. Likewise in the Sahara, the terrain also permits “confrontation”: mobility and dispersion are made and necessary by the desert. This is very similar to the traditional Arab-Muslim concept of war: the raid or *razzia* (from the Arabic *ghazzia*). This traditional Arab way to make war mixes “offensive and surprise” (*Kar oual-ffar*), and combines a sudden attack with a rapid disappearance. Such tactics had been used from the earliest days of Islam, when Muslims were numerically inferior.

In other areas, the GSPC uses harassment tactics (e.g., terrorism). The main reason for this is that the GSPC/AI Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb’s has lost the ability to control mountainous areas, as safe haven, for any sustained period of time, as Algerian *jihadi* groups did in the past. Another reason is terrorism’s usual interest in creating fear and tension. In that sense, the new use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) in repeated attacks, in the well-known global AI Qaeda style, is both imported and spectacular (see later). But by tradition, the GSPC continues mainly to attack Algerian public actors, such as security services, gendarmeries, commissariats, or city halls. Such attacks are reactions to GIA violence against civilians in the 1990s, after their emir, Antar Zouabri, claimed anathema (*takfir*) against the whole Algerian population.<sup>36</sup>

These tactics are alternatively or complementarily used, in different theaters of operations. Beyond Iraq (where *modus operandi* are broadly determined by Iraqi local groups) or Darfur (where the GSPC has a minimum presence), the Sahara is given top priority. The group facilitates local recruitment to Iraq. Its militants are sometimes arrested

in the area.<sup>37</sup> In the past, it has kidnapped German tourists and regularly acted against the Paris-Dakar rally, an international event that traditionally runs from Europe to Sub-Saharan states. The GSPC attacked a Mauritanian army base (Lemghiti<sup>38</sup>) and considered this action very effective. One of their two emirs, Mokhtar Belmokhtar (aka “*Le Borgne*” (One-eyed), aka Khaled Abou Al Abbas, born in 1972, Ghardaïa, Algeria and sent by Droukdel to control the local forces in the South)<sup>39</sup> claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>40</sup> He revealed, on a radical website,<sup>41</sup> that the perpetrators were mostly Algerians. He explained the way he organized and led the attack, named *ghazouat Badr* (Badr raid), by referring to the first victory of Muhammad against the Meccans, in 624. Like the Badr battle, the GSPC attack was a *ghazzia*, a traditional Arab-Islamic attack. He justified this action by reason of the presence of U.S. military bases throughout the Sahara desert, joint military exercises in Lemghiti area two years earlier, and Israeli supports to Ould Tayaâ Mauritanian regime. According to him, the attack used three assault groups and two mobile support groups. The assault began at 6:30 AM with “heavy weapons” fire used to destroy military radio equipment, and disrupting communications links. Then the main assault came, lasting some 15 minutes. The GSPC militants claimed to have taken a “SPG-9 mortar, a light anti-aircraft artillery, 58 Kalashnikovs, 2 RPG-7, around 50 000 cartridges, and 7 Toyota.”<sup>42</sup> The group admitted to having lost six men.

According to various European and African sources, their forces seemed to be increasing, but by relatively low amounts: from 40 to 50 people in 2006(?), to 130 to 150 people at maximum today, of which includes individuals coming from French-speaking Black Africa, Libya or Nigeria.

It appears that their zone of essential activity is in the North of Mali and at the Mauritania–Algeria border. Mali seems to be rather a zone for refilling (for the non-Arabic population) and of logistical support where they can obtain it, in particular near the local tribes of the North, and of contraband (like gasoline for their SUV or ammunition issuing from the black market of sub-Saharan Africa) useful to their action. The zone, moreover, has for centuries traditionally been an intense zone of passage and of informal or illegal economic exchanges. One will also note that a strong pragmatism appears to influence their operational practices: the use of GPS for geolocalization, the use of the telephone of the Thuraya type, the use of rather rudimentary means of encoding, the burial here or there of the materials such as ammunition, medicine, or food, all allows them an extreme mobility that is the condition of even their survival. Moreover this practice of the burying corresponds to traffickers of any kind (in particular cigarettes) for decades, even centuries. The other condition of their survival seems to be the need to not face the traditional local structures frontally.

In North Africa, the group has also modified its tactics, sometimes by importing spectacular operational practices or choosing new targets. There is therefore inevitably not an increase in the number of the operations, but rather a spectacular increase on their side of the number of victims (10 suicide-attacks in 2007 according to our estimate): the GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb attack against a bus (10 December 2006, one dead, many wounded, including some British and one American, in Bouchaoui, Algeria),<sup>43</sup> was a turning point in many ways: First and foremost, the terrorists targeted employees of BRC, a subcontractor for Halliburton, a well-known company very active in Iraq. Second, Algerian *jihadi* never attacked U.S. interests in the country during the 1990s civil war, when they took hold of civilian populations and foreigners. Third, a video of the attack has been shown on radical websites, with Zawahiri giving a typical introductory speech. The entire planning of the attack is then shown; beginning by showing a *jihadi* “casing” the attack site using

and high-quality Digital Globe satellite imagery. The making of the bomb itself is shown: a white powder base—possibly ammonium nitrate—and halogen lamplight as detonator. By perpetrating this terrorist attack, the GSPC selected a new target, a company connected to the energy sector, something they had not done before. This diffusion of Web videos is a media practice imported from the transnational *jihadi* networks. A statement released by the group qualified the operation as a first step toward the “conquest” of Bouchaoui. Given the high police/military presence in the area, this could mean further attacks. The responsibility is not easy to establish. GSPC could have used its *katibates* (operational units) from Boumerdès and Bouira; or independent “Algiers cells,” as GSPC asserted, could be responsible for the attack. According to the local press, the terrorist attack in Bouchaoui could have been perpetrated by elements from Bourmerdès and GSPC cells responsible, in Algiers, for sending militants in Iraq.<sup>44</sup> The attack of a car convoy, carrying 21 Russian specialists back from their work site to their camp, on 4 March 2007, confirms this tendency to “internationalize” targets.

Duplicate and quasi-simultaneous bomb attacks in *wilayates* (districts) of Tizi Ouzou and Boumerdès, on the night of 12 February 2007, represented a qualitative jump in GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb terrorism acumen. This new trend was dramatically confirmed by the “historical” suicide car bomb attacks that rocked the Algerian capital, on 11 April, killing 33 people and injuring more than 200.<sup>45</sup> These blasts were the first in the center of the Mediterranean port city in more than a decade. The targets were security infrastructure—namely, police stations and the Prime Minister’s office. At least in the February attacks, cell-phones seemed to have been used to remotely detonate vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices—a technique that was, and still is, popular in Iraq. As early as the end of October 2006, VBIEDs had already exploded near police buildings. This technique could have been transferred from transnational-*jihadi* networks, and could have also been the subject of some pragmatic research: students living in Montpellier, France, were arrested in 2005 in this town and in Maghreb, for terrorist support activities. Their facilitator, Liamine Liassine, organized a network to collect support and know-how for the Algerian *jihadi*.<sup>46</sup> In Algeria, an engineering student was arrested and could have transmitted to the GSPC an upgraded design system using regular cell-phones as detonator.<sup>47</sup>

The suicide attack of 11 July 2007 against an Algerian military barracks in Lakhdaria, was a supplementary step, both technologically and in terms of violence. The number of deceased was officially two, which has been denied by the group in one of their communiquéés:

In the morning of the July 11, 2007, around six o’clock in the morning, the shahid Soheyb Abou Malih drove a truck charged with no less than a ton of explosives into the barracks of the special forces of the heathen army of Lakhdaria [...] as these renegades were preparing their usual morning gathering. Allah allowed our brother to push into the heart of the barracks, into its courtyard, then activate the explosion which lead to major destruction in the barracks, causing the death of no less than seventy renegades and injuring several others in their places. It also lead to the destruction of eight military vehicles.<sup>48</sup>

The practice of kidnapping is not on the other hand new. The kidnapping of two Austrian tourists in the South of Tunisia on 22 February 2008 appears primarily a random opportunity insofar as it seems, Austria had never been perceived by the organization as an enemy in the same order as the United States or France. This kidnapping has precedents

that are somewhat well known: the kidnapping of German and Dutch tourists in 2003, the regular kidnapping of Algerians with an aim of obtaining a ransom.

In Europe, “as usual,” the dismantling of often-poorly structured networks is numerous and regular,<sup>49</sup> preventing numerous terrorist attacks. In 2006, for instance, after a long police investigation, the Swiss, Spanish, and French police dismantled a funding network. Robberies, muggings, and fraud were perpetrated for funding AQIM activity in Algeria. The network also offered safe haven to *mujahiddin* coming back from Afghanistan, and in transit in Europe. According to open sources, the recipient of the money was a AQIM/GSPC structure based in the Sahara.<sup>50</sup> Here too one can speak of the reciprocation of possibilities.

More globally, how may one define the GSPC’s activities in Europe? First, GSPC networks did not appear spontaneously. They were created by the GIA in the 1990s. They were very structured at the beginning: GIA had a strong relationship with its sympathizers and militants. *A de facto* division of work existed: Belgium was used for the making of fake identity documents. Italy, by reason of its proximity to the former Yugoslavia, and its direct maritime routes to North Africa, harbored illegal arms traffic. Germany, the United Kingdom, or Belgium suffered illegal micro-funding activities, such as credit card fraud. France was faced with almost all kind of illegal activities. Around 1998, GSPC networks were weakened by counterterrorism success in many ways, both in Algeria and in Europe. According to European intelligence sources, the top-down hierarchy of the GSPC was more or less “decapitated.”<sup>51</sup> The “body” in Europe acted alone. Observers note reorganization now: GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb attracts and organizes sympathizers’ efforts throughout the European Union. Since 2002–2003, support and funding networks have been restructured. GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb tends to be the main North-African *jihadi* group in North Africa, and consequently in Europe, by association.

### Conclusion: For a “Glocal” Approach

GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb now claims to be a pragmatic (and self-proclaimed) umbrella organization on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea, providing resources and, possibly, an identity to smaller groups, a better pool of expertise, shared know-how, “economies of scale,” and an increased sense of support. The label “Al Qaeda” itself can also potentially induce an increased “public” awareness. The GSPC has progressively and openly adopted broader goals, from “regionalization” to solidarity and cooperation with transnational *jihadi* networks. While the group and its affiliates have recently imitated other forms of *jihadi* violence across the world, connection with this global violence is nevertheless not new. Its own use of violence is based on traditional historical, geographical, and cultural reasons. But mixing old (networks in Europe) and new (targeting, satellite imagery), local (classic Arab conception of war, tactical use of mountainous areas, Saharan informal economy) and global (VBIEDs, “Al Qaeda branding”), the group is certainly at a turning point. For these reasons, it may be considered as a “glocal” group, a hybrid structure that weds both the local specifics and goals—to create a Maghrebian caliphate, and global operational methods.

This is challenging, and worrying, both for European countries (and especially for France, considered by the group the same as the United States as one of the principal enemies) and for Algeria. Paradoxically, Algeria is, once again and like in the 1990s, in a position to receive support from foreign countries, concerned by its uncertain security situation. Both the GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb and the Algerian authorities seem interested in gaining international support and media attention.<sup>52</sup> The recent announcement

by the Algerian authorities that the “number two” of GSPC/Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb, Samir Saioud aka Samir Mousaab, was killed, has been denied by the group in a statement posted on a radical website at the end of April 2007.<sup>53</sup> True or not, this news is indicative, for both camps, of a proactive media campaign.

In the point of view of the comprehension of *jihadi* groups, this approach of both local and global has in all cases numerous advantages: this permits one to avoid the syndrome of labeling what are often local and specific attacks as simply “Al Qaeda.” On the other hand, it also refocuses on the specificity of local violence and individuals—far from being “de-territorialized,” as some has said, but to the contrary very “territorialized” and dependant on local cultural variables. This glocal approach may deserve to examine other *jihadi* groups.

## Notes

1. *Glocalization* as a term, although originating in the 1980s from within Japanese business practices, was popularized in the English-speaking world by the British sociologist Roland Robertson (*Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London: Sage, 1992) in the 1990s, and later developed further by Zygmunt Bauman, “On Glocalization: or Globalization for some, Localization for some Others,” *Thesis Eleven*, 54(1) (1998), 37–49.

2. For instance the *New York Times*, “North Africa Feared as Staging Ground for Terror,” 20 February 2007; and the *Washington Post* “Algeria Hit by Bombings, Six Dead,” 13 February 2007.

3. See J.-L. Marret (ed.), *Les fabriques du jihad* (Paris: PUF, 2005), *passim*.

4. On the emir’s daily duties, see for instance ‘Abdallah b. Al-Mubarak, *Al-Kitab al-Jihad*, probably the first book ever written on *jihad*.

5. Available at (<http://www.shura.gov.sa/ArabicSite/AIndex.htm>). The Qur’an formally adopted consultation as the approved mode of governance, although Muslims came to Muhammad for important decisions (See: J. Cranfill Matejka, *Political Participation in the Arab world: The Majlis Mechanism* [Austin: University of Texas, Austin, December 1983]).

6. Available at ([http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/analyse/benchenouf\\_trabendo.htm](http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/analyse/benchenouf_trabendo.htm)).

7. Available at ([http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/erc/economics/trade\\_reports/1994/Algeria.html](http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/erc/economics/trade_reports/1994/Algeria.html)).

8. A. Philippon, *L’islamisme des banlieues: entre prédication et trafics* (MCC-Paris 2, December 2002).

9. K. Haahr, “Emerging Terrorist trends in Spain’s Moroccan Communities,” *Terrorism Monitor*, IV(9), 4 May 2006.

10. *De Volkskrant*, “België rolt netwerk van jihad-ronselaars op,” 25 January 2006.

11. Available at (<http://www.presse-dz.com/fr/article-presse-algerie-1729.html>).

12. Available at ([http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/20060831.WWW00000413\\_terrorisme\\_la\\_fin\\_de\\_lexception\\_marocaine.html](http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/20060831.WWW00000413_terrorisme_la_fin_de_lexception_marocaine.html)).

13. Two cells affiliated to GSPC and linked to Belgium and Syria would have been dismantled in February 2006, available at ([www.aujourd’hui.ma/couverture-details52399.html](http://www.aujourd’hui.ma/couverture-details52399.html)).

14. Alison Pargeter, “Political Islam in Libya,” *Terrorism Monitor*, 3(6), 24 March 2005.

15. Interview with an Algerian police officer, 12 January 2007. Available at: <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369478>.

16. *Jeune Afrique*, 14 January 2007.

17. Available at (<http://www.realites.com.tn/>).

18. For instance on 11 September 2006.

19. It was already the case in 2003. More recently, the actual national emir pressed Abu Mussab Al-Zarqawi to take French hostages in Iraq.

20. In Iraq, *Qa’idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn*/The Base of Jihad in the Land of the two Rivers.

21. Available at (<http://www.temoust.org/>), 1 August 2007.

22. Available at ([http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/ammistie/projet\\_charte.htm](http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/ammistie/projet_charte.htm)).
23. Some GSPC militants have been amnestied and released. Under certain conditions, they are living under scrutiny.
24. I.C.G., “The Civil Concord: A Peace Initiative Wasted,” *Africa Report*, no. 31, 9 July 2001.
25. *Le Monde*, 4 March 2005. See also: ([http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/\break\\_ammistie/verite\\_paix\\_conciliation.htm](http://www.algeria-watch.org/fr/article/pol/\break_ammistie/verite_paix_conciliation.htm)); ([http://www.algerie-tpp.org/tpp/presse/tpp\\_algerie.htm](http://www.algerie-tpp.org/tpp/presse/tpp_algerie.htm)).
26. Available at (<http://www.algerie-dz.com/article7710.html>).
27. Available at ([www.maghrebin.net/news-article.storyid-4007.htm](http://www.maghrebin.net/news-article.storyid-4007.htm)).
28. It seems that life in areas controlled by the GSPC seems both insecure and uncomfortable. Many women and their children went back in towns to stop clandestine life; see ([http://www.elwatan.com/spip.php?page=article&id\\_article=38849](http://www.elwatan.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=38849)).
29. The GSPC recruits in different parts of Algeria. In the town of El-Oued, the group has already recruited young men, sometimes already salafi (profile: between 20 and 24 years; farmers or unemployed). Some of them have committed suicide-bombings in Iraq (for instance Khelf Allah Ouahid, 24 years old). The GSPC presses to act both against the U.S. troops and the shi’a and assist “sunni brothers.”
30. Available at (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2379>).
31. Interviews in Europe, May 2007.
32. *Le Figaro*, “Algiers Provides France with Terrorism Blacklist,” 16 January 2007.
33. Personal source of the author.
34. On Algerian *jihadi*/salafi groups’ history, see *International Crisis Group*, “Islamisme, violence et réformes en Algérie: Tourner la page,” Issue no. 29, 30 July 2004.
35. Cahier de la recherche doctrinale, “L’emploi des forces terrestres dans les missions de stabilisation en Algérie,” Ministère de la défense, June 2006, available at ([www.cdef.terre.defense.gouv.fr](http://www.cdef.terre.defense.gouv.fr)).
36. The GSPC and Ayman Al-Zawahiri have, on that point, similar views. Zawahiri, Egyptian, sees *takfir* (historically reappeared in contemporary Egypt) as disproportionate in many of these books (see: *Knights under the Prophet’s Banner—Fursan That Rayah Al-Nabi*). In his book *Al-Firaq wa’l-jama al-Islamiyya al-Mu’asira wa Judhuruha al-T’arikiyya* (“Contemporary Islamic sects and Groups and their Historical Roots”), n.c., Dar Uhud, 2000, p. 214, Sa’d al-Din Sayyed Saleh describes the concept of *takfir* as one of the most dangerous.
37. For instance, three Mauritians in Nouakchott, in January 2007.
38. Available at ([http://www.elwatan.com/spip.php?page=article&id\\_article=50014](http://www.elwatan.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=50014)).
39. He reportedly trained in Afghanistan in the 1990s (In Khalden and Jihadwal Al-Qaeda camps). He came back into Algeria in 1992 and joined GIA emir Mossaâb Khatir. He then went back to the town where he was born, where he created the first nucleus of GSPC *katiba Achahada*. He became the GIA emir for Sahara in the middle of the 1990s, just before dissensions appeared in this group. He then contributed to creating the GSPC. He claimed to have contacted Al Qaeda and bin Laden, in Sudan, at the end of 1994.
40. Since July 2007, the GSPC would have a new emir in the area—Djaoudi Yahia, aka Abou Amr. Available at ([www.lopinion.ma/spip.php?article16238](http://www.lopinion.ma/spip.php?article16238)).
- 41.
42. It should be noted that SPG-9 “Kopye” (Spear) is a Russian tripod-mounted man-portable, 73-mm recoilless gun developed by the Soviet Union, whereas a mortar, relatively simple to operate, is a muzzle-loading indirect weapon that fires shells at low velocities, short-ranges, and high-arc ballistic trajectories.
43. J. L. Marret, “The GSPC/Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A Mix of Low and High-Tech Capabilities,” *Working Paper*, 25 April 2007, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University.
44. Available at ([http://www.elwatan.com/spip.php?page=article&id\\_article=38848](http://www.elwatan.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=38848)).
45. According to a count based on local newspaper reports.
46. *LA Times*, “Bringing Jihad Home to Europe,” 23 September 2005.
47. *Le Parisien*, 12 December 2006.

48. GSPC-Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb, "L'expédition du martyr Soheib," 26 Jumada Al Akhira 1428, 11 July 2007.
49. In Spain, Italy, or France, but also in Belgium and in Germany in 2005 and 2006, and so on.
50. *Le Parisien*, 8 June 2006.
51. Personal source of the author.
52. B. Clifford, "Merchants of Morality," *Foreign Policy*, 129 (March/April 2002), pp. 36–45.
53. *International Herald Tribune*, 26 April 2007.