

Poor old Algerians. They are being served the same old pap from their cruel government. In 1997, the Pouvoir announced a "final victory" over their vicious Islamist enemies. On at least three occasions, I reported – not, of course, without appropriate cynicism – that the Algerian authorities believed their enemies were finally beaten because the "terrorists" were so desperate that they were beheading every man, woman and child in the villages they captured in the mountains around Algiers and Oran.

And now they're at it again. After a ferocious resurgence of car bombing by their newly merged "al-Qa'ida in the Maghreb" antagonists, the decrepit old FLN government in Algiers has announced the "terminal phase" in its battle against armed Islamists.

As the Algerian journalist Hocine Belaffoufi said with consummate wit the other day, "According to this political discourse ... the increase in attacks represents undeniable proof of the defeat of terrorism. The more terrorism collapsed, the more the attacks increased ... so the stronger (terrorism) becomes, the fewer attacks there will be."

We, of course, have been peddling this crackpot nonsense for years in south-west Asia. First of all, back in 2001, we won the war in Afghanistan by overthrowing the Taliban. Then we marched off to win the war in Iraq. Now – with at least one suicide bombing a day and the nation carved up into mutually antagonistic sectarian enclaves – we have won the war in Iraq and are heading back to re-win the war in Afghanistan where the Taliban, so thoroughly trounced by our chaps seven years ago, have proved their moral and political bankruptcy by recapturing half the country.

It seems an age since Donald "Stuff Happens" Rumsfeld declared, "A government has been put in place (in Afghanistan), and the Islamists are no more the law in Kabul. Of course, from time to time a hand grenade, a mortar explodes – but in New York and in San Francisco, victims also fall. As for me, I'm full of hope."

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