

# Maghreb, from one Myth to Another

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In 1930, while France was celebrating with great pomp and revelry its Centenary — a century of its presence in Algeria — anti-colonial militants had named their first political organization 'l'ENA' (l'étoile nord-africaine — the North African Star), whereas the civil associations, which later developed in the same trail of this first nucleus, all situated their actions in the Maghreb,<sup>1</sup> be they trade unions or student associations. Who among the older generation has forgotten '115 - Boulevard Saint-Michel' hostel in Paris or Maghreb students hostel at the Garden-City in Cairo?<sup>2</sup> The fact is that this entire period, extending from the first world war to the independence era constituted for Maghreb nationalists a period deeply characterized by solidarity and a common 'regional' culture.

The post-colonial history of the Maghreb was to a large extent marked by the breaking up of this culture, the destruction of the myth, and the utopia<sup>3</sup> in which it lived. To this end, leadership elites who led the process of dismantling a project which provided the suitable conditions of feasibility, cultural homogeneity of the people as well as economic rationality of the

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- 1 This reflection is the summary of the deliberation at the workshop of Maghreb Forum. In attendance were: M. Hakim Ben Hamouda from Tunisia, Ali Abouhani from Morocco, Fayçal Yachir, Rabah Abdoun, Mahfoud Bennoune and Djabi Nasser from Algeria. We did not intend to fill our presentation with too many statistics and other data, bearing in mind that they can be found in abundance in the works of our colleagues.
- 2 The two buildings hosted student delegations of three Maghreb countries where they were received and assisted in integrating the community. These two independent establishments played a key role in the regional 'conscientization' of the students. Already two ideological 'currents' were formed: one was built on the European model and the other was pan Arab. Both currents were responsible for the division of political elites after independence.
- 3 Myth and utopia do not have any degrading connotation as in the case of a technocratic culture which established its superficial rationalism at the level of a true metaphysics.

objectives<sup>4</sup> fixed, to its end shared with the former colonial power the entire responsibility for this failure. Hegel once wrote: 'you cannot be ahead of your era, you will be much better living with your time'. It can be said that the latter had represented the 'worst' in this field and had not lived up to their time.

### **The Territorial-State Against Regional Dynamics**

Nearly half a century ago, precisely in February 1947, a meeting was held in Cairo which brought together nationalist leaders from the leading three countries from Maghreb — Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia — still colonized by France. This 'Maghreb Arab Congress' had been prepared over a long period by leaders of liberation movements with the aim of co-ordinating the anti-colonial struggles of the three countries and to reflect already on a joint development project after the liberation of their countries. It was not utopian or a vain determination of Maghrebian nationalists but rather a realistic approach towards resolving the issues faced by the three countries. The struggle strategy required taking joint actions against French colonialism by extending the resistance front-line and thus weakening French capacities for intervention and repression. On the other hand, the economies and societies of the Maghreb had been restructured at various levels by the same colonial power and with items common to the countries which demanded a joint action.<sup>5</sup> It is needless to say that the discussions at this level remained preliminary but the existence of reflection on a regional basis geared towards a common determination was remarkable at that time.

Apparently, the reactions of the colonial State rose to the 'expectations' of the Maghrebian ambitions. Efforts were quickly made to suppress the resistance movement and to forestall any moves towards regional alliance which could have constituted a difficult round for negotiations to be sustained by the French economy which was weakened by the world war.<sup>6</sup>

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4 It should be noted for memory that it was during this period— after the second world war — that 'regional' projects were first launched in Europe as well as Asia, notably with matters relating to preferential tariffs and economies of scale.

5 See, on this subject, the pioneering work of Amin (1966), which constitutes one of the first systematic reflections relating to the economy of Maghreb. See also Tiano (1967), written soon after but which already raised the question on the pertinence of the issue.

6 Apparently, this action of the French colonial State should be related to the one carried out at the Mashrek level, notably in Egypt of Nasser. It was absolutely necessary to suppress any move towards establishing alliance between the two areas of the Arab world and break up all actions tending towards unity, irrespective of their economic, political and strategic content. From this point of view, 'Bourguibism' and its deeply rooted animosity towards 'Nasserism' was intelligently utilized by the French socialists, who were then in power, to isolate the Maghreb nationalist movement from the pan Arab dynamics which was then spreading.

The anti colonial demands of the three countries were separately examined: Morocco and Tunisia attained independence in 1956 without having to fight a long war of liberation, which made it possible to both prevent the radicalization movement which could have ended up sooner or later in eliminating moderate nationalists<sup>7</sup> and to concentrate full intervention capacity on the repression of Algerian nationalists, given that the Algerian issue was considered strategic for the French colonial State. The three countries thus emerged from the colonial era not through a collective dynamics of struggle which could have consolidated the project of a regional alternative but rather through separate struggles which reinforced the nationalist logic of each country.<sup>8</sup> This logic functioned as expected, more so because the new leaders in the three countries faced, in various ways, an up-hill task in getting rid of their embarrassing popular allies of the anti-colonial period.

The Moroccan monarchy, which was weakened by the death of the charismatic sultan Mohamed V, had to fight against both the traditional and feudal elites who had followed Pacha El Glaoui<sup>9</sup> and the popular forces which had helped in establishing the monarchy and putting an end to the Protectorate system. It took more than ten years for the successor of Mohamed V, King Hassan II to re-establish the monarchy and to eliminate the left wing of the nationalist movement which nourished political ambitions, notably in the organization of the political system and participation in the government.<sup>10</sup>

- 7 The liberation army led by Abdelkrim in Morocco and the 'fellaghas' led by Salah Ben Youssef in Tunisia were ready to join forces with the Algerian FLN in a liberation war which would certainly have led to the formation of a radical and popular leadership on a regional basis rather than national and which would have eliminated the moderate political leaderships (Istiklal and Neo-Destour) and posed totally different problems to France, in particular after independence.
- 8 Naturally, solidarity links among these three countries had never been broken during the long and bloody Algerian war of independence. The Algerian fighters, besides, used retreat bases in Morocco (Oujda) and in Tunisia (Ghadimaoua) while the official headquarters of GPRA (Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria) was based in Tunis.
- 9 In the last moment of its presence, the French colonial power had tried to use Pacha El Glaoui and the civil and religious leaders who were its allies to oppose King Mohamed V and to replace him by the former. Their manoeuvre failed, mainly as a result of the reaction of the popular forces and the trade unions movement. The return of the king, supported by a powerful popular movement posed a major problem to his successor, Hassan II, which consisted of getting rid of these allies who have become embarrassing after the Protectorate era.
- 10 One of the most tragic episodes of this turbulent period in the history of Morocco after the attainment of independence, was the assassination in Paris of Mead Ben Barka, the famous leader of UNFP (National Union of Popular Forces), who became a symbol of the popular struggle and for that matter a possible alternative power that the

In Tunisia, the 'Neo-Destour' party led by the 'modernist Western oriented' Bourguiba had actively started eliminating pan-Arab supporters of Salah Ben Youssef, his famous rival in the nationalist movement. In that case also, it took several years to overcome this difficult wing of the anti-colonial struggle which intended to play a key role in the evolution of independent Tunisia and to this end relied on a powerful trade unions movement. An alliance with the left wing of the movement was necessary to weaken the opposition and to temporarily reconcile itself with the trade unions. This was how the Ben Salah government came into existence with the socialist adventure which ended in 1969 in an economic and social crisis that was beyond description. Socialism and populism finally lost face and Bourguiba again became the liberal whom he had never ceased to be and opened up Tunisia to foreign investment.

As usual, in Algeria, matters were clearer; the logic of the government and the balance of power were openly assessed. From the time of independence in July 1962, the 'Border Guards battalion' based in Ghardimaou in Tunisia broke up the internal organization of the resistance movement (the freedom fighters), established in Algiers a civilian government headed by Ben Bella and overthrew it three years later to rule directly with iron fists. Apparently, it was not possible to embark on a liberal political experiment in a country 'which did not have a bourgeois class'; what was at stake was rather the form of government than the type of political system that could be established.

Besides, this was the reason why the first experience of state trade unions controlled socialism launched through the trade unions and the labour movement quickly became well known and was replaced by a broadly established public sector which was rather organized within the logic of authoritative State capitalism.

Thus, in the first years after the attainment of independence, the leadership groups of the three countries were too preoccupied with resolving internal problems to rather show serious interest in a common regional

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Moroccan monarchy could hardly accept. Some years later, King Hassan II, once more, had to resort to the elimination of those elements in the army and the Police force who constituted a threat to the monarchy, in particular General Oufkir, who had helped and supported him in the first phase: they had acquired considerable importance which was dangerous for the balance of power established by the authority of the monarchy. It was not until the eruption of the conflict with the Polisario in 1975 with Algeria supporting Polisario that a general consensus was reached in support of the Monarchy. From that period, many leftist intellectuals and militants joined forces with the monarchy. After twenty years of independence, the nationalist tendency came to political lime-light and gave the Moroccan monarchy its legitimacy which the social issue 'nearly deprived it of'.

alternative. The balance of power with their internal forces, which were undergoing major restructuring, attracted all their efforts.

In each country, the major anti-colonial resistance movements had begun to take new political or social forms after the attainment of the objective which had brought them together: independence. With the support of the former colonial power, the most moderate groups started to get rid of the left and radical wing of the nationalist movement.

Slyness alternated with violence in a turbulent historical dynamics which characterized, in the three cases, this crucial moment for the birth of a next society.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the area under review, the final established order was in the favour of the feudal aristocratic class (in Morocco), the liberal bourgeois class (in Tunisia) and 'the techno-bureaucratic' class (in Algeria).

What could be any better for the new groups of leaders than to revive the old Moroccan, Tunisian or Algerian nationalist ideology, which Maghrebian anti-colonial nationalism had made possible to surpass or at least to modify. What could be any better than to use the old slogan of 'territory' to revive the latent feelings of chauvinism and thus channel the dynamics of political action onto issues relating to frontier, territorial integrity, etc. Consequently, the Territorial-State, with all its paranoid liturgy reaffirmed all its rights and ideological culture that the anti-colonial movement had helped to create.

It should, in fact, be well understood that it is the same movement which reconstituted 'the national blocks' in support of the new leaderships and led the latter to abandon the regional dynamics and to adopt limited nationalist action. Built up on staggering economic interests, placed in an essentially defensive position *vis-à-vis* the populist movement which anti-colonial struggle had stirred up for political demands, the new groups of leaders naturally fell in line with the logic of nationalist political action as a result of both strategic precaution towards the regional approach which was adopted by their destituted rivals and manipulating tactical calculation. The fact is that if the regional dynamics was in motion at the time of the anti-colonial struggle, it was surely because it was at that time in contact with the populist movement throughout Maghreb which had supported it. Maghrebian post-colonial nationalism supported by new political forces

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11 It is needless to emphasize it; the first post independence years were, if not more, at least as disastrous for the nationalist political elites in the three countries as the decades of struggle against French colonialism. Figure heads of the popular movement were assassinated or imprisoned while trade unions organisations which had strongly supported the nationalist struggles were broken up, much as student organizations and civil associations that supported the resistance army. It is necessary to recall that experience to better understand the political disarray of the Maghreb region at the end of the colonial period and how the course of its history was changed thereafter.

organized in new blocks did not attach any importance to this approach and its dynamics. 'The territorial Nation-State' sufficed largely in meeting the ambitions of the new leaders while further consolidating the legitimacy of their power.

As a result, the independence of Algeria became, for the contemporary history of Maghreb, a crucial movement which revealed both the end of the dream on the regional utopia and the emergence of new ambitions and for that matter the new nationalist logic.<sup>12</sup>

Right from the onset as an independent State, the first border conflicts between Algeria and its Tunisian and Moroccan neighbours erupted and led to a mini-war with Morocco in the desert. The Big Maghreb had taken off on the wrong footing. Some years later, a similar conflict on border demarcation in the southern part of Tunisia also led to the exchange of fire. For the new leaders, the unity of Maghreb constituted a form of general mobilization but also as an effective political and economic project that was placed well after 'the national interest' and each fully engaged the national forces in this direction. The borders became even more strictly guarded in all forms — political, social and economical — while inter-Maghreb transversal dynamics, which were expected to carry on the solidarity of the liberation period, gradually gave way to the former colonial logic; the 'face to face' of each country with its former 'colonial power' again became the normal diplomatic and commercial procedure which was used in orientating and organizing the policies of each country.

Nonetheless, the three countries came together after the border conflicts at a 'conference', a meeting or a seminar on Maghreb to define a joint approach in their relations with the EEC, cultural co-operation in the field of education, harmonization of customs duties, a unified regulation on the movement of persons, etc. Conferences were organized in 1963 in Rabat, in 1964 at Tangiers, in 1967 in Tunis, etc. However, it became evident that these meetings which were often well covered by the media and organized ceremoniously depicted an ideological practice more than an effective action in the launching of a regional project.

Undoubtedly, the regional approach accumulated over the anti-colonial struggle period had not totally disappeared and during the decade of 1960 sectorial attempts were made to harmonize the policies of the three countries. However, only marginal sectors such as sport, educational

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12 As observed by Brondino, 'The war of Algeria assumed the function of the last catalyst process of Maghrebism'... However, the independence of Algeria became a test for Maghrebism... Little disputes erupted all over the area and led to tensions and border wars, which reflected clearly the national political and ideological divergences.

programmes in subjects like history and geography, training programmes in administration, etc. were really taken up.

A permanent consultative body — CPCM — was set up and charged in 1967 at the Tunis conference with proposing a transitional global solution aimed at preparing towards Maghrebian integration. Its findings were presented at the ministerial conference the subsequent years until the meeting in Rabat in 1970 after which they were filed.

The regional dynamics inherited from the colonial period thus died a sad death with the general indifference of the leaders of the three countries who had set all their attention on legitimacy and the strengthening of their local power and could hardly accept an approach which made it difficult for them to attain their restricted political ambitions.

Meanwhile, the three countries, which were joined by Libya and Mauritania were markedly separated from one another in practically many areas, while new technocratic elites who were being used by the governments in preference to the militant trade unionists and politicians of the anti-colonial movement, considered themselves hardly concerned by the regional approach and dynamics.<sup>13</sup>

Soon after the colonial period, the political coalitions which inherited State power still paid considerable attention to the pressures of the populist movement, notably the trade unions which constituted, with students associations, the major forces for mobilizing the people and carrying out actions.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, the political systems which were established were all characterized by this populist vitality.

In Morocco, as early as 1958, the left wing of the national movement led the new government which defined a policy of self-centred growth based on

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13 The majority of the technical and economic officials in the Maghrebian countries were trained in French training institutions. They adopted the attitude of 'Jacobism' whereby they expressed lack of confidence in and even looked down upon the regional approach which was associated with ideology and verbalism. In this way, they contributed towards the formation of post-independence nationalist culture which was strongly opposed to the unity idea and committed unbelievable blunder in their analysis of the major evolutions of the world economy.

14 Workers trade unions and student unions played an important and often decisive role in the national liberation movements of the three countries. UMT in Morocco supported King Mohamed V against the machinations of the colonial administration and Pacha El Glaoui. UATA in Algeria organized important mass strikes in support of the army; UGTT in Tunisia participated in all forms of the struggle to obtain independence which was not freely granted. It should also be noted that when the great Tunisian trade unions leader F. Hached was assassinated, the workers of the three countries organized big demonstrations in the major cities, which ended up in riots such as in Casablanca.

widening the public sector and on industrial investment (Abouhani 1994). However, very rapidly — in 1960 — this policy was abandoned with the formation of a new government and the adoption of a liberal policy which led to the first interventions of IMF in 1964, with priority now accorded to export products, agriculture and tourism. A year later, bloody riots in Casablanca, the assassination of Mehdi Ben Barka, the institution of a state of emergency and the imprisonment of the key leaders of the trade unions concluded the first post-independence period in Morocco. The national populist block which had led the country to independence and oriented its first steps was defeated in a bloody confrontation. The new Moroccan government was extra liberal. However, it took a whole decade to reconstitute the legitimacy which it had lost by brutally getting rid of its populist allies.

After rejecting the populist economic and social alternative that its left wing alliance had proposed but which its 'Comprador' interest could not accommodate, all that remained was the utilization of Moroccan nationalism; 'the Eternal Morocco', 'the 'Great Morocco', etc. were the slogans firmly adopted. The right wing of the national movement, Istiqlal party, which had strong links with the powerful landed property owners who operated on feudal basis, provided the government with its organizational capacities and its historical system of reference to establish the new policy. It also facilitated contacts with the IMF with its recommendations and financial assistance as well as the Western banks with their capital to finance the installations for tourism and export oriented agriculture. By getting rid of its populist attachments, the new government thus liberated itself from its 'maghrebian' obligations by replacing them with 'territorial nationalism' which history seemed to have legitimized and which, in any case, suited better the monarchy which wanted to exert absolute power.<sup>15</sup> Legitimacy based on geographical reference is less onerous than legitimacy derived from an economic and social policy based on the consensus of management and organized labour organizations which are often in conflict.

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15 Beyond the economic interests underlying the border conflicts which opposed the Maghreb countries, one to the other, territorial conflict remained linked to government structure which defined its legitimacy and power by reference to geography rather than history, the 'country' (in terms of surface area) more than the people of the nation (in social or human terms). Right wing ideologies often associated legitimate political power more with the defence of the national territory than with the security and prosperity of the people living in the territory. This remark makes it possible to analyse with caution border conflicts in Africa and in particular, not to automatically relate them to economic interests, even if they also constitute elements of reference. We think that most of these conflicts are related to symbolic stakes which are in turn related to a culture of power which is associated with the head guardian of 'territorial integrity'.



Tunisia and Algeria did not experience the same situation as in Morocco. Tunisia and Algeria embarked, in different forms, on a 'socialist' and populist economic and social policy.

In Tunisia, the serious crisis at the beginning of the 1960s led the 'Neo-Destour' party of Bourguiba to become PSD (Parti socialiste destourien — Destourian Socialist Party) in 1964 and to form a socialist cabinet headed by Ahmed Ben Salah<sup>16</sup> who was charged with restructuring the populist coalition based on an economic and social project which the political crisis with the supporters of 'Youssef' had brought about. As can be observed at this juncture, the Tunisian response to the breaking up of the anti-colonial populist national block was very much different from that of Morocco. The Tunisian 'bourgeois class' was still too weak at the time to confront its past allies, whereas, more rightly so, the latter were still too strong to be completely eliminated from the political arena.<sup>17</sup> To this end, the 'Bensahalist' alternative appeared as a *modus vivendi*, a form of compromise among the political and social classes in the interest of the populist classes, which made it possible to have a transition without much difficulty. However, for the bourgeois class of the country, this alternative was a concession imposed by the conditions of the moment and which was later to be overcome.

It should, in fact be understood that it was to prevent any left wing alternative which would have marginalized it that the party of Bourguiba embarked on a policy of socialism which lasted ten years. 'The decennial development perspectives' defined a self-centred economic project, with strong state control and the setting up of an industrial sector to cover the needs of the national market, a radical agrarian reform leading to the creation of agricultural co-operatives, educational and public health policy with largely populist orientation. The riots which erupted in the Sahel in

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16 The landmarks of these turbulent years can be recalled as follows: July 1961: military intervention of France at Bizerte and it did not leave this port base until after the independence of Algeria. August 1961: assassination of Salah Ben Youssef, the popular rival of Bourguiba and whose revolutionary activism was considered as the cause of French intervention. December 1962: a plot of the supporters of Youssef against the government of Bourguiba was discovered which led to a very drastic repression of the left wing-Ban on the Tunisian communist party in January 1963 and the formation of the government headed by Ben Salah.

17 We should not forget that it was in the 1960s, a period in which socialism thrived in the third world, particularly in the Arab world: in Egypt and Algeria. 'Bourguibism' was then on the defensive outside the country but at the national level, it had to reach a compromise with a powerful trade unions movement, a populist opposition from the radical wing of the supporters of 'Youssef', political elite groups, intellectuals and students who were very much influenced by the experience in Cuba, China, USSR, etc.

1969 against land collectivization led to the removal from office of Ben Salah and the end of the socialist adventure in Tunisia. In 1972, the change in orientation became total with the government of Hedi Nouira which opened the country's economy to foreign investment.

During this period, Tunisia pursued, in general, a more regular regional approach than Morocco. The most serious proposals for co-operation and even sometimes regional integration came from Tunisia and Algeria. It should also be noted that the formation of post-colonial Nation-State linked to the implementation of a populist economic and social policy still remained largely opened to a maghrebien perspective. It was considered as the only solution to the difficult issue of building a national economy which was open without being dependent and for which the Maghrebien zone constituted the best means of facing the world economic trends.

In the case of Algeria, the situation was even clearer and the structure of the social forces in Tunisia was more established and pushed to their limits there. Remarkable weakness of the national bourgeois class or even the landed aristocracy that the French colonization had somehow 'scraped' their power as opposed to a populist movement which had largely participated in the decolonization struggle, all these groups right from the independence joined a very broad national coalition formed by the new government with the support of the army. This led to a popular or even populist economic and social policy which lasted more than two decades. As in the case of Tunisia but in a much more intensified form, political legitimacy in Algeria was based on the answers given to the exigencies and the ambitions of the large popular base which was still strongly involved in the historical dynamic.

The new Nation-State founded essentially on the liberation of the country acquired in this field 'an excess legitimacy' which it could no more valorize unless to 'defend achievements made' through the anti-colonial struggle. It imperatively had to 'outmatch' this moment of territorial legitimacy by a sustained policy of 'nationalizations', accompanied by development projects which increased gradually with the new financial possibilities emanating from the income accruing from petrol and gas sales. The social alternative, if not a new socialist policy, was not like in Tunisia, a 'tactical' concession which the leaders had to make while waiting for a change in the balance of social and political power. Supported by a populist coalition that was very strong and very broad-based, it appeared from the outset as a strategic<sup>18</sup> decision binding the country over a long period.

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18 After the military Coup d'état of June 1965 which overthrew the Ben Bella government and put an end to 'Self management', many observers saw in the new team led by Boumedienne the possibility of adopting a liberal system which would have put an end to the 'socialist' experience in Algeria. The calculations were wrong.

Consequently, while the 'Bensahalist' experience stagnated in Tunisia with the complicity of liberal groups including Bourguiba himself, the launching of the Algerian development project was echoed extensively and became a model for the other Third World countries, notably in Africa.

Meanwhile however, the development projects of the three countries, which were fairly similar at the time of independence, differed notably with the experience and changes in alliance which had occurred, sometimes, with violence. The 1960s decade was somehow a 'first round' of observation at the internal, regional and international levels. In Morocco and Tunisia, the popular alliance which had accompanied the anti-colonial resistance movement and launched the first popular development experiments was dismantled very rapidly in the former and about ten years after in the latter. In Algeria, the historical dynamics led the country into a national development experience which stabilized the initial national block based on 'fordian' type objectives till the 1990s.

The 1970s was a test period for the new alliances and new policies. It was a decade of the liberal system in Morocco and Tunisia whereby the economies were opened to foreign investment, in particular in the fields of food-agriculture, tourism and textile industry, while in Algeria it was a state-controlled economy in a socialist system. These new policies intensified the differences in the development models of the three countries which made any attempt at regional co-operation aimed at integration rather flimsy and superfluous.

Each country was self-centred in 'its' national policy which in turn locked it up in unbalanced relations with the Western powers, notably France. The horizontal logic which the Maghrebian dynamics entailed, was literally overrun by a vertical logic which locked up the countries in new forms of commercial, technological and financial dependence. The three countries negotiated separate association agreements with the EEC, such as conventions on migration with France... 90 per cent of the agreements were bilateral while the famous CPCM compiled Maghrebian co-operation and integration dossiers which nobody read. Besides, after the last meeting in July 1970 in Rabat, it was not until May 1975 in Algiers that another meeting was held and postponed sine die the implementation of the 'Maghrebian economic co-operation project' which was expected to lay the basis of Maghrebian economic integration.

The failure was irrevocable. Libya again turned towards Egypt but the first indicators of the conflict which opposed Morocco and Algeria on the

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for, much to the contrary, it was from this period that a coherent national development policy was defined, based on industrialization and State capitalism, which was launched and carried out steadily till the 1980s.

Western Sahara issue began to appear. During the big popular debate which preceded the adoption of the 1976 national charter, the Algerian government clearly declared that the time had come for 'a peoples Maghreb', which was a way to acknowledge the failure of the States which emanated from decolonization to achieve this unity.<sup>19</sup>

One year after the Western Sahara conflict broke out, a state of 'neither war nor peace' reigned over Morocco and Algeria. It lasted ten years during which the issue of the Maghreb was hardly mentioned.

Tunisia and Morocco then had their first experience of structural adjustment at the beginning of 1980s while Algeria locked itself up in a State development model which, with time, stagnated in bureaucracy, corruption and inefficiency.

At the beginning of 1980s, the three countries succeeded, through various means, in isolating themselves, one from the other and from the regional dynamics and thus weakened their political and organizational capacities in facing the world crisis which had hit the Western economies.

The 1980s decade proved that, irrespective of the 'development' model chosen, whether self-centred or open, liberal or State-controlled, it led ineluctably at one stage or another of its evolution to insurmountable commercial, financial, technological and social difficulties which accumulate and put it into a crisis. Faced with the universalization of the economy, the national environments could no longer assume their function as in the traditional model of growth; regionalization has become a necessity. While the leaders of the Maghreb nation-States often referred to it as a simple tactic of political manipulation (with the aim to mobilize the masses) or partial economic adjustment (with the intention of investing the extra goods not sold elsewhere), it has become obligatory on them as the final objective of national development. Do they have the 'organic' capacities to live up to the level of this new rationality? There is no certainty and the present procrastination unfortunately justifies our point of view.

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19 The radicalization of the Algerian experience was then at its height when Morocco and to a lesser degree Tunisia became disillusioned over their liberal system. In the Algerian charter, it was thus written 'Beyond the interest of the States, it is necessary to build Maghreb of the peoples ...'. Such a conception rejected any approach of unity in favour of a privileged minority group which would seize the opportunity to increase its profit to the detriment of workers... To this end, the economic integration of Maghreb could not be achieved in the region as long as economic and social conceptions and structures based not on the interest of the masses but on that of international capitalism and a few exploiters persisted.

### **The Region to the Rescue of the States**

All data and work of researchers of the Third World Forum show clearly, with regard to Maghreb countries, that the 1980s decade had particularly negative effects on the economies of the region, which led to a series of social and political consequences with the risk of destabilizing the entire sub-continent.

Nonetheless, when at the beginning of the decade (1982 for Morocco and 1986 for Tunisia) the first SAPs entered into practice, many 'scientific' observers and politicians foresaw with certainty and optimism the beginning of a new growth cycle which would enable the countries to overcome their structural crisis. In the case of these two countries, the liberal policies launched in the 1970s turned out to be a failure economically and socially and the big social uprisings ended up in bloody riots in Casablanca and Tunis respectively in 1982 and 1984 (A. Abouhani and H. Hamouda) which showed the level of the situation of stalemate in which they were.

The liberalism of the 1970s was considered insufficient and for that matter it was necessary to go beyond that level by opening up the national economies to the world market and to adopt the trend of the 'disengagement' of the State from the production sector. Regulation as per market values and solely market values became the dogma of the new doctrine proposed by the IMF and other institutions of Bretton Woods and 'structural adjustment' became the new 'cut-to-wear' policy for Third World countries whose economies hardly recorded any growth.

In reality, 'structural adjustment' with its objectives of the disengagement of the State, cutting down on budgetary expenditure (including reducing social, health and educational expenditure considered as not cost-effective), increasing productivity (by making employment precarious and cutting down on salaries), and raising interest rates (by increasing investment cost) appeared as a major revolution in the values and attitudes of Third World countries.

However, given that this new 'money philosophy' was imposed from outside, it came at the right time to 'exonerate' the governments from the failure of the past management and at the same time making them 'not responsible' for the future consequences. They could then say to their fellow countrymen that: 'you see, we were not responsible for our situation but rather those who dominated the world have imposed this restructuring on us'. The limited 'keynesianism' and 'fordism', in Algeria in particular, which justified the need for a strong central state, paternalist and authoritative and often dictatorial in the first phase of the independence era had become obsolete.

Consequently, it can be affirmed that beyond the technical, financial and monetary aspects, SAP inaugurated a new cycle in the post-colonial history

of these countries. It, in fact, consisted of a complete economic, political and social restructuring, with an in-depth reformulating of the role of the State vis-à-vis the society and the nation, as well as all those concerned with the new programmes.

At that time, the governments and their comprador clients welcomed with a sigh of relief this international 'contract' with new orientation which relieved them of part of their State responsibilities and enabled them to describe the damages caused by the new policies as 'external necessities'.

Faced with the grievances of the trade unions which demanded that staff retrenchment be stopped, workers' demand for higher salaries, riots of the unemployed who had increased and were hoping to find jobs, the complaints of local entrepreneurs against the increase in taxes and interest rates, the political leaders now had the opportunity to answer all these social groups: 'It is not our wish to have this situation but it has been brought about by the IMF, the World Bank, GATT, etc.' Strange answers which researchers have not sufficiently reflected on in our opinion and which, however, constituted a prelude to a radical change of political and economic values and culture accumulated throughout the post-colonial history of the Third World countries.

The 'Bandoung spirit' and the issue of the development of the Third World forged a politico-economic fabric for channelling the experience. In this fabric, the State was both the principal agent and the driving force, a sort of Leviathan but 'Keynesian', charged with defending the interests of the 'nation' (all classes included) against those who were often opposed to international capitalism and the Western powers which were the 'brain' behind it. In this perspective, the 'comprador states' were considered as disloyal governments, accused of having betrayed their countries and fought by the popular movements, the parties and the trade unions.

With 'Structural adjustment' and its quasi universalization, values had changed and the governments started adopting it one by one. However with the disgrace over, they presented this lining up as a sign of their wisdom when in fact, it was the proof of their failure and the State and its national interests being placed under a sort of 'special surveillance'.

For the Maghreb countries, including Algeria which adopted the SAP a few years later (1994) under dramatic conditions, the new policy adopted with the international monetary institutions led, among other things, to two series of consequences which should be analyzed.

#### **At the Internal Level**

As observed by Ben Hamouda and Abouhani in the cases of Tunisia and Morocco, the social effects were quite considerable. The rate of unemployment continued to increase in both countries (about 20 per cent and 25 per cent) and affected younger generations of school leavers, while

with the phenomena of job precariousness (part time work, breach of work contracts and the attending guarantees, frequent utilization of temporary employment), mass dismissals and lock-outs became more frequent on the one hand. On the other hand, the informal sector recorded a rapid growth, involving half of the working population in Morocco (Alami 1994).<sup>20</sup> For some time, there was effectively a transfer of workers from the institutional sectors which had been 'streamlined' through structural adjustment, to the informal sector. However, for how long will the latter be able to absorb the 'redundancies' thus created?

Whatever the case may be, this 'transformation' of the national labour market with the attending decrease in job opportunities led to an in-depth restructuring of the society and its class balance. There was a downward trend class movement affecting, in particular, members of the lower middle classes, while the precariousness of work and living conditions 'marginalized' an ever increasing percentage of the population. The poverty line calculated by UNDP (in its 1994 annual report) came up to almost 20 per cent of the population. Marginalization and social exclusion thus merged in a new dynamics of pauperization which is the direct consequence of the 'decrease in global demand' as recommended by IMF technocrats. Besides, while prices of goods remained the same, the average income decreased<sup>21</sup> everywhere whereas the budgetary allocations made for social welfare were drastically reduced during the decade (Chadli Ayari 1992).

A considerable percentage of the population was thus neglected by the new adjustment policies and the phenomena of rapid mass poverty generated. However, the social classes which were victims of the situation were totally different from the 'poor' of the colonial period. Urban<sup>22</sup> rather than rural, the youthful spirit of its members was remarkable while their feeling of revolt marked a clear departure from the former culture of submission and fatalism by which the 'former poor' were identified.

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20 The author noted that for some time, the informal sector played the role of economic security mainstay by recruiting workers dismissed from the other sectors as well as the unemployed. However, after ten years of SAP, the regulatory role of the informal sector tended to reduce and thus affecting the community solidarity system:

21 Chadli Ayari indicated that in terms of real growth, the GIP per inhabitant decreased in all Maghreb countries by 7.5 per cent from 1980 to 1990.

22 More precisely, they were suburban or peri-urban. They were in fact, packed up in and around cities such as Casablanca (5 million inhabitants) Algiers (3 million inhabitants) and Tunis (1 million) in disgusting suburbs built in any old way and neglected by the social welfare services as well as under-equipped. Even the police service dared not enter these suburbs.

It was so in the case of Algeria, in particular, which, in spite of the late acceptance of SAP experienced a deep crisis (El Kenz ed. 1990), right from the first drop in the price of petrol. It should be noted that more than in Morocco and Tunisia, the Algerian society developed in foredooms, even if it remained on the touch line. Used to an omnipotent 'Social welfare' State for which the society had 'forfeited' its political rights for its security and social welfare, it rapidly revolted against the State's 'disengagement' from sectors which mainly covered work and living conditions: 'social welfare, free medical care, employment, education, subsidy for the prices of products commonly utilised, etc., right from the beginning of 1980s'.<sup>23</sup>

In 1988, major riots dealt a decisive blow to the authoritarian and repressive structures of the State. The opening created was thus filled by a movement with a new orientation, islamism, which ended up destroying the state and bureaucratic organization of the former government. Only the military nucleus still resisted the thrusts of a populist movement which found in the fundamentalist interpretation of the Islamic religion the adequate form for its 'anarchical and populist'<sup>24</sup> structure.

However, the evolution of the social and political movement in Algeria should not be considered as anachronic and exceptional. It only revealed, on a broad basis and in the most tragic manner, what is still latent in the other Maghreb countries. It somehow pushed to their limits, contradictions accumulated through the new policy and which, besides, were suppressed for various historical and social reasons; but till when?

It can now be affirmed, as a result of several similar experiences, that structural adjustment left to operate on its own dynamics disintegrated the

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23 Besides, we noted the paradoxical nature of the Algerian situation which, without the implementation of the programme, was already experiencing all forms of effects: 'the fact is that, the process of exclusion began in Algeria since the 1980s with the petroleum crisis which adversely affected the society which had developed with the values of equality based on the Algerian populist model and which suddenly turned against it and abandoned the social rights of this model provided by the State. The change of values became stale: a society organized for and by the State and with reduced autonomous political resources. The meeting of this movement of rejection with islamism still constitutes for many observers of the Algerian political scene a mystery.

24 We have intentionally used this neologism to compare it to anarchic trade unions movements which operated in Europe, in particular in France and Italy (end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century). In this case, the radical questioning of the role of the State, as a bureaucracy that was necessary for collective organization was noted in a strong criticism of the relationship between capitalist production and exploitation and their organic links with the State. For the Maghrebian societies, the revolting social classes were outside the production system and could relate their action to the latter. They therefore developed a demand for 'identity' which made the economic and social demands somehow 'sublime'.



fragile nucleus of the society, including the oldest forms of 'community solidarity'. The masses of socially excluded thus became an important force which the centripetal dynamics of adjustment dropped out from the social system. It thus developed an ideology of total rejection by mixing democracy and modernity with all values that seemed to be those of the 'integrated' and 'rich people', including those of the former trade unions and political associations which pretended to be defending them.<sup>25</sup> The social movements became erratic and lost all forms of their 'traditional' organization. They thus became informal also and challenged the very stability of the entire system.

### **At the External Level**

Apparently, the effects of the structural adjustment at the social level (even if in the case of Algeria they were unpredictable) could be foreseen but it was hoped they would be compensated by positive economic results.

It can indeed be considered, within a 'lasting development' perspective that these negative social effects were, in the end, the price to be paid for a conclusive revival of growth and the elimination of structural imbalance which impeded development. This first phase, which was very difficult to carry out, was followed logically by a positive period of take-off and restriction. At least, it was in this way that the initiations of these policies in the international financial institutions had justified their programmes.

Unfortunately, as was revealed through the deliberations of our workshop, the strictly economic and financial results evolved only slightly if they did not worsen, whereas the negative social effects ended up in unprecedented and uncontrollable social movements...

External debt, balance of trade, budget deficit, work productivity and bank interest rates remained surprisingly negative in their respective evolutions. Worse still, heavy disinvestment in the industrial sector, a low growth rate in agricultural production were noted and trade became more and more difficult with the European partners irrespective of the several agreements signed with them in the past. What was even more serious was the fact that the latter were gradually closing their doors to Maghrebian products, in particular: citrus fruits, vegetable oil and textile for which preferential agreements had been signed. In line with GATT conditions, the competition of Asian products could not be avoided in the final analysis.

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25 A. Abouhani very well showed the way the strike in Morocco was transformed from organized social demand into a 'riot' which mobilized 'merged forces' of young unemployed people and the informal forces sector and which rapidly recuperated the 'scope' of the organized social demand.

What was even more dramatic, the emigration agreements by which Maghreb countries could 'invest' their excess labour in Europe were denounced by the European partners who had turned their attention more to the East. Considering that Morocco draws two thirds of its foreign currency earnings from its emigrated labour, a little less in the case of Tunisia for which it constitutes the third source of income after tourism and agriculture, the issue of emigrated labour thus constitutes a 'crucial matter' in the negotiations of the Maghrebian countries with Europe.

In addition to all these slightly discouraging elements, it should be noted that the forth-coming negotiations on the Marrakech agreements on free trade will seriously aggravate the position of the Maghrebian countries, which have individual approaches in their negotiations with regional groupings which are becoming more powerful.

### **Revival of the Regional Dynamics**

Double failure at the internal and external levels, accumulation of social crisis which cannot be compensated by the consistent success recorded at the economic level<sup>26</sup> seem, in our opinion, to be the perspective offered by structural adjustment policy. Consequently, the governments turn towards the regional perspective which they had under-estimated with regard to its role and which they had sacrificed for limited interests and short-term objectives. Moreover, post-independence political legitimacies, be they liberal or State-controlled, were locked up in nationalist logic that were quickly overtaken by universalization process, not only as a result of economic flow but also through cultural and social movements as well as information and communication systems.

As noted by Ben Hamouda (1994): 'it was in this context of extreme economic crisis and political isolation that the governments of the Maghrebian countries tried to revive the Maghrebian idea right from the middle of 1980s. The various attempts made led to the creation of the Union of Arab Maghreb (UMA) by five heads of States and defining the political structure of the Union.

It seems, however, that this revival of the old Maghrebian project resulted more from tactical interests than a real change of heart of the group of leaders in favour of the regional approach. Already, the first discussions revealed the misunderstandings and ambiguities surrounding the regional

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26 Except perhaps in the case of Tunisia which benefits from 'the effect of the situation' comparable to an income but which remains uncertain and fragile. The effects of the embargo on Libya much as the destabilization of Egypt and Algeria resulted in re-orienting some economic and financial activities into Tunisia which shows signs of stability in a region that is considerably shaken by turbulence.

concept (Brondino 1990). Each gave it the significance which best suited his needs at that time and they were all hoping that it would provide temporary and partial solution to their specific problems: a market for their excess products, a common security approach to control islamist movements, a first phase for the unity of the Arab world.

Besides, the project very quickly fell through and as in the past, only some technical commissions continued to work on dossiers which were later kept in the archives.

The abortion of the second regional project was confirmed by the last conflict between Morocco and its neighbour Algeria on the 'handling' of islamist movements, in August 1994 and led to the 'closing down again' of the Algerian-Moroccan border.<sup>27</sup> It became particularly clear, with the organization of the Casablanca Conference on development in 'North Africa',<sup>28</sup> that for most of the Maghrebian leaders, the Maghrebian regional approach was basically subject to national interests, in the most restricted sense of the term.

Indeed, it would have been naive on our part to believe that groups of leaders who were imbued with the culture of 'Territorial-Nation-State' would be able to easily change their hearts to adopt the virtues of 'regionalization'.

Even when goaded on by the imperative necessity of adapting themselves to the logic of universalization, it is difficult if not impossible for them to abandon their old schemes of operating as a government and to build up new political legitimacies.

Taking into consideration the new forms of organization and production in the world, transnational and multinational groupings which very much relate to political systems and economic institutions, production process and technologies, it is surprising to note the relative cultural and behavioural rigidity of the Maghrebian leaders. What is even more surprising is their

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27 The attack at Marrakech, which was the cause of this conflict, showed that distrust still persisted at the level of each Maghreb State, one for the other, in particular, in the 'handling' of islamist movements. So far, although it became evident that these movements are 'transnational', each State in the region continued to consider them as a national issue to be dealt with, each as a 'sovereign nation'.

28 The conference was organized by Morocco in co-operation with Israel and the United States. Its objective was to assess the possibilities of co-operation among the countries in the region and Israel, with the technical and financial support of the Western powers. This 'new regional economic space' which suddenly appeared on the Arab public scene was clandestinely prepared by its organizers. Theatrical and media show or was it to find an outlet to 'North Africa', considering the difficulties encountered in the Middle East? The fact still remains that the conference once more revealed that the Maghrebian space continues to be considered by most of the leaders in the region purely as an instrument.

unbelievable unawareness and passivity when faced with major trends which are presently restructuring the world economy and system and which radically question the modalities of their actions which have become obsolete and the limited models which are still at the basis of their analysis and strategies.

Apparently B. Founou-Tchuigoua (1994) is right to note that 'sub-regionalization with democracy is necessary for Africa... and that it is the only form of organization that is capable of resisting the disastrous effects of universalization through the market system...' Unfortunately however, it seems generally accepted that the leaders of our countries, notably those of the Maghreb do not have the intellectual and organizational capacities to meet this 'challenge' and to get rid of their tight cloaks of 'small nationalism' of their territories which they had borrowed for a specific duration from their former colonial masters. Indeed, it would have been naive to have hoped that these elites who were profoundly perverse by 'neo patrimonialism', corruption and totalitarianism would be transformed all of a sudden into a democratic political class 'void of provincial sentiments'.

However, our questioning about the lack of a political and social culture linked to a democratic project which at the same time opens up to the outside world after forty years of a bad experience of totalitarian administration and short-sighted nationalist development problems concerns less these groups which are worn out by the exercise of power than their collective 'alter ego' which we are now seeing emerging from the society. It is this disquieting sinking of Maghrebian societies into anonymity, coupled with a contradictory movement with anarchical and populist effervescence which only leads to repression and chaos which, today, constitute a challenge for us and reminds us of this nice statement made by Marx: 'Humanity is never confronted with issues that it cannot resolve'.

Does the Maghreb of today have the capacity to question itself on its future by examining the right questions relating to issues that it can resolve?

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