

Feminism and Muslim Fundamentalism: The Tunisian and Algerian Cases¹

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Résumé: *Cet article porte sur l'impact des rapports entre les structures sociales, le processus de développement économique et la politique sur le fondamentalisme et le statut de la femme en Algérie et en Tunisie. Il étudie les similitudes et les différences dans les deux pays et montre que la politique, la nature de l'organisation de la société civile et l'évolution des systèmes juridiques sont des dimensions importantes des espaces en question au sein desquels opère le fondamentalisme islamique par rapport à la femme et aux droits de la femme.*

The Usurpation of the 'Feminine' by the 'Masculine' in the Arab Hemisphere

Strange as it may seem, and throughout the complete and varied social structures in the Arab world, it is as hard to articulate feminism to socialism (Algerian case) as to economic liberalism.

Paradoxically, women who have largely contributed to the nationalist liberation movement have been, once the Nation State was built up, relegated to political back scenes and inferior economic sectors, thus invalidating the optimistic hypotheses of Frantz Fanon for the Algerian case, for example. So, in spite of a great disparity in many respects, the Arab hemisphere seems to draw its homogeneity and its common cultural background from its superstructures, one of whose most outstanding markers is a static ahistorical view of women.

In social practice, resistance to change in the situation of women is expressed in a markedly unequal struggle between the sexes where women are denied — no matter what their abilities — access to power, prime responsibility, and decision-making.

The infantilization of women and the denial of their maturity generate scorn, and further gender contradictions.

Africa Development Vol. XIX, No. 2, 1994, pp5-20

1 This paper was presented at the United Nations University Round Table at Helsinki, in 1990. It is being published in Moghadam (1994).

The conflicts, the disorders and even the violence entailed in human relationships, very damaging to the family and society alike, have been examined in a multitude of surveys.

How are we to interpret patriarchy's exasperating watchfulness² and the resulting 'confinement' of the Arab women³ in spite of an 'alter' and sometimes alien historical reality and a subdued past?

The reason may be a refusal to divide power among two different sex categories, but further than that, there is the unconscious desire in the Arab society to preserve its identity in quasi-obsessional modes in the face of a reality it fails to comprehend and with which it hardly identifies.

Indeed, these noble and conquering civilizations whose very identity has been mitigated by the trials of history and the hazards of colonialism have determined to desperately safeguard the last signposts and bastions of their collective ego. The female as the ultimate reference matrix bears within its deepest being those very notions through which societies identify and by which they name themselves.

The most aggressive speeches and acts (I refer here to the recent waves of relentless violence against Arab women (daily reported by newspapers and courts) unveil the gripping fear that 'women too, might join in the flight' notwithstanding the alienation and the state of absolute dependence of Arab societies, induced by their insertion in the international division of labour. Everything echoes with 'if they slip out of our hands' ... who else will acknowledge us? ... Let us subdue them'. Arab women play the role of a life-buoy to which one holds in an infuriated ocean.

In fact, the life-buoy is far from being satisfactory. The desire to confine Arab women in the position of a guardian of a lost identity is a blind attitude of negation in the face of an estranged, ungraspable social reality that might devastate us if we do not foster our creative spirit. Freedom would then surge not only from the abysses of ourselves, but also from the real and actual needs of those societies where the 'masculine' in various respects blocks off and usurpates the 'feminine' (Berque 1965).

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- 2 In this sense, in 1975, Juliette Minces talks of an activist masculinity for the Algerian case.
 - 3 Jacques Berque (1965) in a reinterpretation of René Habachi, defines women in Islam as an integral essence and a broken existence 'doomed to a clandestine life, as formidable taboos cripple their self-accomplishment from one generation to the next, their life reverts back to a standstill'.

Preliminary Remarks to the Study of the Strategies Used in the Repetitive Unequal Sexual Order and its Aggravation in Time of Social Upheavals

Historical Perspective of the Oppression of Women

Throughout human history, and notwithstanding the mode of production and the stage of evolution of any given society, the position of women is distinguished with very rare exceptions by social inequality in comparison with men's. The ubiquity of such a state of subjection remains the most striking fundamental constant in the development of humanity. Engels observed that the oppression of women was the first of all forms of oppression and that:

it marked, along with slavery and private property, the beginnings of that very era continuing to our present times in which each stage of progress is a relative regressive step, as the well-being and the development of some are achieved through the misery and the repression of others.

Of all these human phenomena, inequality between the sexes is observed consistently, and its obsessional perpetuation is sustained and reproduced throughout successive generations as one of the most complex and interesting issues. Likewise, it is in our view, one of the most paradoxical and aberrant inequalities, as this subordination is initiated by men against the beings that are closest to them and to whom they relate through blood and quasi-organic ties: mothers, sisters, wives ... etc.

Such inequality, secreted most irrationally by human history, carries along its tragedies to the daily lives of peoples and orchestrates their pathologies and reactionary behaviour. It is, indeed, in these very existential daily realities of women, their subjection and subordination by the male category and their devastating implications, that any humanist reflection should be grounded. The highly male-saturated field of social sciences does not seem to have any concern in the psycho-social importance of women's subjection in terms of social pathology for both sex categories as well as in terms of basic social injustices that our precociously manipulated subconsciousness fails to consider as the most urgent human issue to examine and the most abhorrent to duly abolish.

Today, totalling half the population of the earth, and due:

... to mere genetic chance upon which a tremendously humiliating superstructure has built up, women perform two-thirds of the work done in the world in utter exploitation and oppression, get one tenth of the income and own less than one hundredth of the planet's riches (United Nations Survey 1985).

We must, then, urgently examine the mechanisms that have been set up to perpetuate the ancient subjection of women and the alarming female poverty throughout the globe, in order to denounce the strategies contrived to perpetuate such injustices: injustice dressed in insidious modes, whether symbolic or ideological. That is why modern feminist movements, launched against a six-thousand-year male order, bear the seeds of the greatest cultural revolution to come, a revolution that does not aim to supplant an exclusive female order for an exclusive male one, but one that will substitute culture emanating from humanity as a whole, with its female as well as male components for a culture and social structures, and a culture which has been dominated for thousands of years by the male half of humanity (Garaudy 1981).

Social Crisis and Reductionist Ideology: Theoretical Framework

The rise of ideologies militating against the liberation of women is not specific to Islam as it manifests itself today in some parts of the world (Iran, Pakistan, Algeria, etc...) and it is not a novel phenomenon in the history of humanity.

In Europe, for example, it is easy to establish a tight relationship between social and economic upheavals and the resurgence of reactionary anti-feminist ideologies. The same applies to the perverse effects of the thirties' depression and the succeeding fascist movements — German Nazism: with its notorious slogan about women 'Kinder, Kirche, Küche'; fascism in Italy; sexism in Belgium, the reactionary movements in USSR under Stalin. All have attempted and sometimes contrived successfully to set laws destined to whittle down the freedom gained by women, to maintain the *status quo* and confine them to the home.

In this perspective, their procreative role was emphasized to the detriment of their political and civil rights.

The fundamental principles of this reactionary anti-feminist view insist as follows that:

- Housework is more suitable for women than any other profession;
- Depression and mortality are higher among working women than among housewives;
- Juvenile delinquency originates in disrupted families and a family is disrupted when women work outside the home;
- Female employment induces male unemployment;
- Working women's morality is dubious. Laws were drafted in the thirties by the Belgian Christian Democrats that only the employers' greed for cheap female labour was able to discourage (see H, Peemans in Macchiochi 1976). Moreover, an actual return to the fertility and maternity cult, drawing on a mystical and mythological

conception of women with no hold in social mutations and realities served to reinforce the pseudo-scientific procreative trend professing that 'Doctors know that four to six child bearings are necessary for normal women to avoid disorders. They know that these must be complete, in that they must comprise both child delivery and breast-feeding...' The Belgian Rexist movement went further in the sense as it advocated capital punishment for women who would practice abortion.

This anti-feminist campaign was made all the more dangerous because the left offered no alternative initiative, and women were exposed to the danger of adhering to the fascist movement. In Belgium, women were not allowed to vote as late as 1948.

The European fascist vision helped to displace social conflicts by depriving women of their historical gains and served in manipulating the social actors by giving them the illusion that evil has been identified and that difficulties had been smoothed out.

In the light of such developments, we may gather that the present revival of custom and religion and its negative implications on women is not a novelty in the history of humanity.

In a lecture delivered in Nairobi, the Nigerian sociologist, Ayesha Imam (1985), pointed out that:

...with the wave of religious fundamentalism that has been sweeping the world recently, new religious groups and organizations have been springing up all over Africa...These ideologies both traditionalist and religious, support regimes by identifying a concern and reassuring people that something is being done. At the same time, they focus attention away from general question of exploitation or maldistribution of resources as well as from the specific issues of women oppression. Not only do they rationalize it, but they legitimize measures to reinforce it. Thus, for example, the bill to ban wife-beating was deflated because Kenyan Members of Parliament's regard it as a traditional right of men to beat their wives... The Family Code is restructured in such a way that women would lose the right to divorce and become legal minors needing men to represent them...

Similarly, in Nigeria, unmarried women were evicted by their landlords and denied access to public housing estates on the ground that this would promote immorality.

In fact, such ideologies are aiming at giving more legitimacy to the authority of men over wives and sisters. They inculcate a sense of guilt in women who end up feeling they are responsible for the ills of society and at the same time flatter men's archaic narcissistic... and pre-genital tendencies (see

in this respect, the works of Freudo-marxist Reich, especially his work *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*).

Such ideologies legitimate all forms of constraints and violence exercised on women, such as the:

...destruction of market women's stall and beatings in Ghana 1989, or in Zimbabwe in 1983 with the arrest of prostitutes and single women, or in Sokoto, Nigeria, when prostitutes were arrested and released only if men paid fines and married them...(Imam 1985).

The fundamentalist ideology under discussion here, is one of the most dangerous secretions as it contrives to enslave symbolically and physically half of humanity, especially in the African and Arabo-Islamic regions. At this level, we shall endeavour to point out the permanence of such ideology along with its specific features through the complex relationship of State-Women and Society focussing on two countries that share the same cultural background and the same colonial past: Tunisia and Algeria.

Islam, Women and Societies, Differences and Similarities in Tunisia and Algeria

Fundamentalist Islam in Tunisia and in Algeria: Similarities

Islam has always been a force of mobilization in the Islamic world (as the case was for anti-colonial struggles). The orientalist Bernard Lewis rightly observed that Moslem opposition movements have always drawn on the theological register in the same spontaneous fashion as Europeans drew on the register of ideology.

Today, there is a patent dichotomy between a more or less reformed official and modernized Islam (as is the case for Tunisia under Bourguiba's government, Egypt where Kamel Ataturk's secular model had been adopted) and another more popular and less scholastic Islam, which espouses more radical activist pan Islamic forms. Often backed by financial aid (local or foreign), such movements are set against secular societies and the West which, it is believed, has a harmful and debasing influence. Today, the woman question is at the very centre of the conflict between secularization and Westernization on the one hand, and fundamentalist Islam on the other.

Fundamentalist Islam claims to purge, regenerate, and return to the sources (such notions are, in fact, ambiguous and ill-defined when it comes to relating them to social actors and to everyday life). They aim to drive the Islamic nation back to the right path by practicing an authentic Islam whose benefits they will enjoy. This fundamentalist Islam has witnessed two spectacularly successful events during the last decade: the seizure of the State and the massive popularity of Khomeiny in Iran; and the assassination of President Sadat in Egypt.

Yet, a study of the social programme embedded in this Islam, in spite of its being popular among certain social groups, reveals that it rests on a theoretical bricolage rather than on a systematic analysis of social issues. This form of activist Islam is not a lucid adaptation to modern times, as it fails to comprehend that the autonomy of a civil society is a fundamental feature in a modern society based on the separation of political and economic life, regulated by laws that are independent and extrinsic to men's intents, as the enlightened Ibn Khaldoun advocated as early as the XIVth century in his Arab Maghreb Social theory.

Secularization is a direct consequence of the autonomy of a civil society and the desire to satisfy religious and metaphysical thought should remain a personal matter.

Today, this return to the mythical Islam golden age movement is an equivocation, in the sense that it is both: 'the expression of a project aiming at transforming a reality felt to be unbearable and at the same time a passive dead-lock used in the guise of a transformation of that reality'.

Nevertheless, such a call unveils the total absence of an alternative discourse which prohibits any understanding of this unbearable reality. As a result, injustices remain the same, the Arab-Islamic thought is trapped in the vicious circle of a moralizing discourse... a pathetic form of thinking...(Amin 1987)

The revival of Islam in Algeria and in Tunisia will have to be examined in the light of the following three substantial factors:

- the national system of government;
- the cultural duality of the elite;
- the inconclusive policy of 'modernization' in this part of the world, and the resultant economic depression with its negative social and cultural consequences.

The national state in Algeria and in Tunisia is characterized by a one-party system which leaves little space for other forms of political expression or association; an authoritarian and an anti-democratic state based on clientelism. Such Maghrebi regimes draw their legitimacy from anti-colonial liberation movements (FLN in Algeria, Bourguiba and the Neo-Destour in Tunisia) and have prevailed since the independence of their countries dating back to the sixties.

One generation later, these regimes find themselves with half of their population made up of youth aged under twenty who are confronted with vital obstructions to their future: a high cost of living, unemployment, for example.

Moreover, these youth search for a 'social program' that will attempt to solve their daily problems. Conversely, the bourgeoisie, an important fraction without the homogeneity of a social class, exercises a political

domination over the national State. This class has never elaborated a social program that would involve social actors who find themselves marginalized and excluded from the mainstream of development even though they constitute large sections of the society: peasants, youths, women and workers, locals and immigrants. This bourgeois fraction is also characterized by a cultural dualism that serves their own interests:

...it benefits from a modern culture it assimilates to its native tongue in order to consolidate its economic power in the same way it benefits from an attachment to traditional culture as it legitimizes its authority. The educational policy seems to reinforce such dualism by training a bureaucratic elite cut off the population (Laroui 1973).

The modern culture sustained by the bourgeoisie remains subordinated to a traditional culture established as an intangible value, and Laroui further adds that no one would want to see any modern rationalization go beyond the limits of the factory and the office to reach the socio-political domain or the household.

The inability of the political elite to impose the pattern of a society based on a modern rationale and the enduring of traditional thought are but ways and alleys for the irrational and the mythical which become a form of social organization and management. In the meantime, any liberal or secular thought appears as a Western trick, especially in the Islamic fundamentalist milieu.

The failure of development policies, the position of the Maghreb in the international division of labour and its increasing dependence vis-à-vis overseas markets, have led to serious strains in the region. Tunisia and Morocco were mostly threatened by the enlargement of the European Economic Community (EEC) and its protectionist stance as it was increased to 12 members with the participation of Spain and Portugal. This market absorbed up to 50% of the Moroccan exports and up to 70% of Tunisian exports. Hence, the danger of a greater economic and political instability with the closing up of the European market. In Algeria, the decade following independence was one of triumph and optimism as it was attested by 'the Algerian Model and the national chart of development'. But, from the 1980s on, the economic slump stirred up a profound political and economic depression. The unheard of October 1988 upheaval was but one example of this.

The indebtedness of both countries is enormous: in 1984, the Tunisian debt amounted to \$3.707 million. Today, it is \$7.700 million.

As for Algeria, debts reached \$22.2 million in 1988. These facts induced the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and of the World Bank (WB) who suggested a policy of structural adjustment.

Unfortunately, these organizations apply the same remedy to all countries without any discrimination, this consists of:

- A massive deflation of the currency;
- The cut-down of the state budget;
- The decrease of salaries;
- The suppression of subsidies for basic products and goods;
- The liberalization of trade and external payments.

As was the case for Egypt in 1977, Sudan, Zambia and Morocco in 1984, the Ivory Coast in 1990, such measures had a serious impact on the social situation. It is this that led to bread riots in Tunisia in 1984, and street riots in Algeria in 1988. The measures that were meant to settle the balance of payments proved not only politically inconclusive, but also economically damaging (*Africa Development*, Volume X, 1985).

The response of external sectors to such measures has been marginal. Aggravated inflation and unemployment, the crash of the system of production as well as widening gaps between incomes have become an alarming reality. The situation of crisis can thus be described: a weakening and lack of credibility of the government, the monopoly of the economic and political sphere by a rather alienated and dependent 'petit bourgeois' elite, the insertion of these societies in the world market as well as the failure of development policies. All this has had negative effects which:

... precipitate Islamic revival and reactive patriarchal laws and sentiments...the crisis intensifies dependency on Islamic symbols; given the centrality of women and family (the private sphere) to the Muslim identity structure, increased constraints on female mobility are a common result of a religious resurgence (Marshall 1984).

Without entering into details on the position of the Koran and the 'Hadith' regarding the respective vision of women, we can only say that a feminist vein seems to run through the Koranic text. However, the most hostile passages to women were selected and interpreted in a very misogynistic way by the Shari'a. It is in this way that the male supremacy has been imposed (Saadawi 1982; Mernissi 1987).

Islam in Algeria and in Tunisia: The Dissimilarities

The reactivation of religion in its totalitarian and pro-fascist aspects in both societies in this time of crisis, ensures the shifting of social conflicts. It is important to emphasize that this is done by depriving women, who are

strategic social actors⁴ of a substantial part of their social rights. The remainder of the social actors, faced with the absence of social alternatives, are easily manipulated since they have nothing to lose and believe that the problems are almost solved.

Fundamentalist Islam: Women and the National State in Tunisia

It seems that we may qualify fundamentalist Islam in Tunisia as 'sloping', and submissive to a strong and resistant National State as well as to other different authorities representing it in the civil society. This situation of control and of resistance to Islam is backed up by a whole brace of legal and secular associative life. It counterposes the Islam of those who are fanatics: women associations created recently, the very active role of the National Union of Tunisian Women which is close to the Party (the power in office) and whose positions are genuinely feminist.

We should also note the strong support of the League of Human Rights as well as its section on women's rights.

Despite their fragmentary and sometimes competitive aspect, which gives an impression of dispersion and waste of energies, all these associations militate in the same direction: the safeguarding of the women acquired rights, the way they were bequeathed by President Bourguiba's visionary project, and whose political speech is daily justified at the local as well as the international level.

The Personal Status Code (1956) is unique in the Muslim region since it lays on a very modernistic vision of Islam (laying on the notion of 'Ijtihad' and a very daring interpretation of the traditional 'Shari'a' in a feminist way (like in Egypt, the reform of Kamal Attaturk has served as a model to Tunisia during the mandate of President Bourguiba). In order to understand the difficulties met by the Tunisian Islam at the level of the State and of the civil society, let us look more thoroughly at the reforms that have been to some extent favourable to women.

The Impact of the Legislator

The present role of women in Tunisian society, their inclusion in the production circuit as well as their various implications must be enlightened by the determined action of a deeply feminist legislator, who was right after the national independence at 'counter-current' as to the women social law in practice in that area.

4 We should not forget that we are dealing with societies where the rate of immigration is high and where, as a consequence, the number of women heads of families is also very high...Some surveys reveal that in certain areas, 4 heads of families out of 7 are women.

The promulgation, in 1956, of the Personal Status Code, very favorable to women, immediately put an end to the intervention of the Koranic law in one inegalitarian interpretation, of the 'double moral standard' (what is good for men is not for women...), of women's rights.

Despite the opposition of the conservative and traditional trend, these considerable legislative acquisitions, which are of prime importance to the social future of these regions, protected women from male arbitration and assured them of dignity, respect and equality of rights, mainly in the following fields:

- **Marriage:** Freedom to choose a husband and abolition of polygamy;
- **Divorce:** No longer the sole initiative of men;
- **Children:** Women have the right of custody and, since 1981, in case of the father's death, a woman automatically has the guardianship of the children;
- **Right to Education and Work:** This new mode, supported by a policy, favouring birth limitation, allowed women to have access to a so far banned sector of the social reality. This sector concerns the 'outside,' in other words, the sector of the street, the school, the office, the factory.

The State Birth Limitation Policy

Just like most countries belonging to the Third World, Tunisia is characterized by a 'run away increase in population' (about 2.6% annual increase) and by a young population, 45% of its population are under 15 and are, consequently, non productive.

To the reproduction rate, we must add a higher life expectancy rate for women and a lower infant mortality rate (9% in 1978; 16% in 1960). All these elements contribute to double the total population in the year 2000 and reach about 12 million people. The effort of the programme and actions of family planning are within the same framework as 'the reproduction limitation' codified by the legislation, such as delaying the age at marriage (20 for men and 18 for women), restricting the family allowances (only the first 4 children can benefit from them) and the legal sale at the chemist's of products destined to prevent pregnancies...

The results of such a policy appear in a clear rise of the median age of marriage (26 for men, 20 for women in 1977). But, as for the effects of the family planning on 'avoided births', they remain weak (300.000 avoided births during a 10-year period) especially in rural areas. This trend appears to be justified by the recent introduction of the family planning institution, but also to a mentality still attached to large families (in certain rural areas such as the region of Kairouan, the protection rate of women having reached the age of procreation, amounts hardly to 4% of the whole country).

Nonetheless, despite its deficiencies, the policy of family planning is rich in positive repercussions in the new vision of the woman concerning the control of her body.

The Role of Women's Associations in Tunisia

They try to make sure that the application of the Code is respected. The judiciary is mainly made up of men who try to modify the law and orient it towards an inegalitarian and patriarchal sense. These associations try to focus on the strict application of the international conventions ratified by Tunisia but which are, unfortunately, not always respected. Women's associations are in most of the cases composed of educated women, who are members of the professional network. Their task is to document the blatant injustices that women daily go through in the Muslim countries. They also record the physical and symbolical aggressions of which they are victims. So it is that many Tunisian magazines and dailies reveal and inform about the non-human treatment and situation of nearby Algerian women.

Fundamentalist Islam is forbidden in Tunisia. It is illegal since it has not been able to get a visa so far. The official reason for that is that Islam is a religion which belongs to all Tunisians. No one can monopolize it as a party or an association. It cannot be articulated or defined by a totalitarian party which decreeds who is a good Muslim and who is not. In this spirit, the political and intellectual classes tend to think that the law is neither a believer nor an atheist one, and for the good of everybody, it must be secular. Multipartism and democracy are thought to be the best shield against fanaticism and irrationality.

Fundamentalist Islam, Women and the Algerian National State

The 1989 law authorizing multipartism in Algeria was one of a series of events culminating in the runaway of the Algerian fundamentalist Islam in the last elections. This victory was variously described in the popular press, some seeing it as a 'political seismo', a catastrophe, and even as a phenomenon just like AIDS, devoid of antidote. This victory is justified by the abstentionism of the other political parties opposing the FLN, as well as the existence of a single party in most Third World countries which discourages and destroys any initiative which does not emanate from this very party. Going back to the roots remains the sole way capable of crystallizing energies. Some studies claim that the rich oil-producing countries such as Iran, Libya and Algeria, went through the most extremist resurgence of Islam because they had to yield to a too rapid and profound change (Marshall 1984). This may be true if it does not explain the case of Pakistan, or Sudan, which, even though they are not oil-producing countries, have undergone the same extremist revival of Islam. As regards the present impact on women's situation in a country like Algeria, we must find a corollary to the essential factors: economy, the nature of the State, and the

position of women in the production network. Neither its advanced technology (industrializing industries), nor the 'Green Revolution' could solve the problem of unemployment in Algeria. Moreover, the rate of women's employment is one of the lowest in the world (5% in 1989). This fact has contributed to the oppression of women and its perpetuation as a reference model. Thus, access to work and all the outside sectors of social life which liberate women was neglected by the Algerian development model. This contrasts to the situation in Tunisia, a non oil-producing country, but where women's labour is relatively important.

The Algerian National State and Women

Despite her contribution in the national liberation struggle, Algerian women were expelled from the political, social and employment milieu right after Independence. This situation is ratified by one of the most reactionary family codes in existence. This electoral code, for instance, authorizes a man to vote by proxy for three women. The Algerian Socialist State did not do much in order to improve women's status. Just like many Third World countries, the State has a great power. It can either contribute to emancipation of the social actors, or it can oppress and marginalize them:

... the evenness of development and the weakness of class structure and consciousness explain the centrality of the State in the Third World. Decisive historical action has not laid in the hands of a bourgeoisie, a proletariat, or landowners, but rather in the State (Tourraine 1976).

Women's inequality is presented as an inequality of rights in which, an Algerian militant woman said, '...to find a job is to fight'. Under the FLN, it is common to refuse accommodation to women living alone. Moreover, the Iranian revolution had great impact on the Algerian mass media: Khomeiny becoming a model of reference for the youngsters (see Nadia Chellig's work on Islam and the young Algerian Lyceens, 1979). The situation is utterly different in the Tunisian mass media which never adhered to the Iranian cause. The Tunisian Embassy in Iran was closed during the first months of 1980. Khomeiny was not glorified, but rather ignored. It is worth noticing that the Tunisian audience is faithful to two foreign television channels: the Italian (RAI UNO) and the French (France Deux) which counter the magical and irrational spirit that a population that is not always educated and easily manipulated could carry along. These TV channels broadcast very interesting programmes on the objective, the rational, and the universal.

Thus, it is in a productivist Algerian society with a technological economic model disturbing the social order, but not creating new jobs where women labour is not believed necessary since the National State is deeply patriarchal and male-oriented, that the Algerian Muslim movement could move along. The resistance to fundamentalist Islam at the level of the society was badly organized and is quite recent. In their programme, women

are their first target. Despite the reassuring declarations of the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut), it seems that this movement applies the policy of the 'stick and the carrot'. The carrot with the poor and the marginals to whom they provide a philanthropic support (during the last earthquake, the FIS was on the spot, trying to assist the victims). The policy of the stick with the secular and women. A sort of 'morality brigade' in charge of intimidating women in order to secure their virtue. Numerous cases, such as that of a widow who got her flat burnt down with her baby in it just because a man visited her; or female students who were beaten up because they stayed up late out of campus. The FIS movement seems to be digging its own grave because of its fanaticism, intolerance, and its 'adventure Islam'. For the time being, the FIS's inconsistent social project with its obsessional misogyny, compel the civil society to reorganize in a more conscious way.

Although this article was written in 1990, its analysis remains valid. The countries of the Arab Maghreb are still undergoing the aftermath of the economic slump and find it very difficult to construct an endogenous modernity. In the case of Algeria, the situation has become even worse as the country is daily delivered to the logic of violence (1.350 people were killed between February 1992 and July 1993), intellectuals being the main target.

Today, the situation is such that the country, once so dear to progressives throughout the world and which was the Third World's lighthouse and hope, is running counter what it used to aspire to.⁵

The FIS's temporary victory will have the effect of a benefactory strike destined to mobilize the lucid energies of the Algerian Nation's fight for democracy, freedom, and the safeguarding of universal ideals. Already, the Algerian upsurge is channelled into a protest front against inquisition and intolerance.

Conclusion

The failure of the model of development of high technology for Algeria and of a free economy for Tunisia overthrow dramatically the primordial forms of traditional solidarities and creates cleavages in the society. Meanwhile, since there is no creation of new jobs, unemployment increases and the situation of international crisis whose repercussions are very acute, lead to a state of social tension and of psychological insecurity, and women are the main victims of this. The result of this model of development modifies the beliefs, the attitudes and the behaviour which define culture as a population existence model and entails a crisis of identity. This crisis of identity is dual

5 *Bulletin de Liaison du Comité International de Soutien aux Intellectuels Algériens* (Liaison Bulletin of the International Committee of Support to Algerian Intellectuals), No. 1, 1993.

because it has led to a cleavage of the society as far as the social actors are concerned:

- a) Alienation and cultural dependence of the elite due to the consumption model, channelled by the modern sector of the society.
- b) Breakdown of the values and a resulting return to the past that we observe in the resurgence of tradition and religion.

The resurgence of tradition is the sign of the incompetence of the government in attaining to propel, right after Independence, a social 'project guide', capable of crystallizing the poorest social actors. The weight of frustrations and alienation that it brought about, as well as the big inequalities between the privileged elite and the underprivileged masses gave rise to alternative ideologies feeding themselves on tradition and Muslim identity. This reference to identity would be legitimate, if it did not put into question the social acquisitions of secularization, offspring of the popular struggle. But it is not managing the life of the people and of the communities according to passive laws adaptable to an outdated social dynamic. This seemingly magical passive speech crystallizes around itself many energies and attracts many people, men and women, young and old, educated and illiterate, on a sacro-mythical mode. Not being necessarily rhetorical or symbolic, Fundamentalist Islam calls upon the entire reality, exercising a pressure on the institutions and intimidating the civil society. In Tunisia, legislators tackle the body of laws about women's rights by trying not to implement the international conventions even though they had been ratified: the judiciary tends to interpret in the sense of the traditional laws or Shari'a. In any case, the revival and the vitality of the Muslim movement feeds itself with diseases from which the Maghreb Muslim society suffer corruption, totalitarianism, lack of democracy, social problems and blatant injustice such as an ostentatious wealth of a minority and a shocking Westernization. For this reason, fundamentalist Islam is a symptom of a crisis and not a credible and efficient response to it.

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