

Migration and Algerian–French Relations: A Shared Responsibility

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Despite and beyond the demarcations and successive changes of borders which date centuries if not millenniums ago, the phenomenon of migration has historically been one of the most powerful factors of development. Moreover, contrary to the belief prevailing in the North of the Mediterranean, it is for the South that migration has been of vital importance, long before the people of the North perceived migration as a threat to their way of life. The issue of emigration remains closely linked to the global development of our region and therefore to the sub-regional integration processes. It is coincidental that in the case of migration, it is the negative connotations that prevail, as governments favour a reductive, security-focused approach. These two trends follow the same logic, and the persistence of this logic does not facilitate the long-term management of the phenomenon. [When I talk about shared responsibility, I refer to the failures of a very diminished action and mainly to the inaction both of the part that fails and the part of the huge task that remains.]

In the North, the political classes – including the extreme right and left – believe that the long-term solution to the migration problem resides with the development of the countries of emigration. However, in developed countries, it is always the security angle that is highlighted, especially when elections are imminent. In 1995, the Barcelona Declaration marked the starting-point of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, a wide framework of political, economic and social relations between the member states of the EU and their partners in the southern Mediterranean countries. However, this partnership remains inadequate: the positive aspects of free exchanges and police cooperation are counterbalanced by, for example, the erection of anti-immigrant ‘walls’, and the deportation of illegal immigrants. The issue of terrorism is handled with the same incoherent and hypocritical approach. The roots of evil are widely accepted to be of Islamist origin, without accepting the role of the West in being in league with those Arab regimes that comply with western interests to the detriment of their own citizens. The subsequent

lack of legitimacy, as well as bad governance and bad feeling in profoundly frustrated populations, are also forgotten.

By a tacit connivance between the imperial superpower on the one hand, and the repressive governments and advocates of violence in the Arab-Muslim world on the other, the 'inexorable' progress of extremism is thus enshrined in Huntington's so-called 'clash of civilizations'. Huntington's theory is widely used to explain the destructive effects of 11 September 2001 and the extreme exploitation thereof by the US Administration. The weight of historical assumptions burdening the relations between the West and Islam, the development of different trends of Islamophobic thinking and a distorted perception of Islam have nourished confusion and misconceived ideas. The thesis of the 'clash of civilizations' prevails today in the media with its corollary, the tantamount importance of security issues when dealing with global issues in general, and the so-called inter-Mediterranean partnership in particular.

The implicit effect of this objective 'agreement of interests', which is at the basis of the unspoken connivance between the respective centres of influence, is this: each party intentionally uses the other's religious issues for its own purposes; first, to sway public perception and to justify the monopolizing of the wealth of others by war, second, to demarcate an 'imperial legitimacy' of their power, third, to appear as the sole power who will defend their populations from those who dare to threaten them.

Adjacent to this political situation lies the fact that the Mediterranean Partnership project suffered from the absence of a utopian vision like that which led to the unification of Europe. There is also the institutional distance between the parties to the North and the South of the Mediterranean: established democracies to the North, and to the South, countries which have not quite resolved the differences between the demands of the functions of the state, and those of justice. The gap grows wider still, since neither party to the partnership plays the game as prescribed by the project's rules, in particular, Section 2, which calls for the respect of human rights and the rule of democracy. Indeed, the founding premise of Barcelona was rooted in the idea that security is linked to development and that only the State of Law could guarantee both, through good governance, both in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. There is an absence of vision therefore, but also of coherence between the different applications of Barcelona as regards the sense of the partnership. 'Short-termism', in the sense of those exceptions and aberrations sought by politicians in democracies every two or three years, is contrary to any partnership project worthy of its name.

Since ancient times and in different situations, Algeria and France have been brought more than once to the world's attention by certain characteristics of the Franco-Algerian case. Because of an extended shared

Algerian–French history and the inadequacies of the Algerian media to comment, international observers continued to blame, as regards their perception of Algeria, the public and private media in France. Forty-five years after independence, France and Algeria's shared colonial past still continues to weigh heavily on the relations between the two countries; the relationship between these two countries and their peoples very often remain marked by a number of traumas and psychological, political and other disputes which date to that period. Certainly, Algeria was the essential link of the French colonial empire; and of course periodically, insurrections have had an enormous human cost over a century: some 15 per cent of the population were lost in the seven-and-a-half years of war during the first confrontation. However, the Algerians want to have good relations with France. The Algerian 'anti-France' trend and its French counterpart of 'anti-Algeria' are marginal factions that some people manage and exploit on behalf of the one side or the other for the purposes of internal politics. The human dimension of the bilateral relations between Algeria and France has no equivalent in the world. If we add together the numbers of Algerian citizens in France, the French citizens of Algerian origin and the French who formerly lived in Algeria (the *pieds-noirs*), there are more than six million people living in France who are connected with Algeria in one way or another and who feel that whatever is happening there concerns them. And I am not including here the generations who were politically marked by the French adventure in Algeria; or those who remain deeply involved in French–Algerian developments, who represent nearly one-fifth of the French population.

However, despite the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, France has not produced a policy on Algerians in France, and we cannot talk of a French policy on Algeria. De Gaulle thought of Algeria as 'a narrow door through which passed the entire French policy on Africa'. His successors, and in particular Valéry Giscard D'Estaing had trouble thinking of Algeria as an independent state, rather than a continuation of the old colonial empire. It was customary in diplomatic circles to speak of Algeria as France's back yard or private game park. The exchanges that the Evian agreements favoured soon became common in the key sectors, if not degraded, and the Algerians thought that the French partnership tended to abuse its dominant position in these sectors. For example, in 1972, Algerian vineyards were dismantled, when Algerian wine exports plummeted to less than 4 per cent of their 1962 level; land assets, mines and housing were nationalized, as was the banking sector. After a wave of violence against Algerian citizens in France from 1970 to 1973, Algeria stopped sending new emigrants.

The 1990s were marked by a renewed deterioration in the relations between Algeria and France. While difficulty was already being experienced in maintaining good relations between the two countries; a new sense of

mutual suspicion arose to complicate relations and to confuse people's minds, to the extent that it affected the internal consistency of the positions presented by both the media observers and the political decision-makers of each country. There was a reluctance to face up to a phenomenon as fundamental as terrorist obscurantism, which many people in France considered to be a defensible cause in the 1990s. The fact that for years France refused to condemn the terrorist barbarism was a means by which to cover it up and ultimately to legitimise it. It is no small paradox and a scandal that this misrepresentation of Algerian reality abroad should occur mainly in countries whose officials, media and civil society both claimed to be friends of Algeria and also resolute enemies of international terrorism.

Today, there is a pressing need to focus on the southern shores of the Mediterranean; the approach to the problematics posed by the issues of freedom, democracy and development must be refined, particularly, as a result of geopolitical factors such as the eruption of fundamentalist violence, the issue of emigration, the Middle East's descent into the hell of war and, finally, the growing status of our region as a 'future major holder of oil reserves'. This factor has been a development that has been taking shape for nearly for a decade and one which may lead to the region 'politely' expelling the European from their 'back yard' in the Mediterranean. To quote historian Joseph Rovani: the Maghreb 'is not only the business of the French but that of Germans and all Europeans, in the same way that Poland cannot be the business of the Germans only but that of France and of all Europe'. Only if it ceases from comparing North Africa to the Middle and Near East, can the European Union join the countries of the South of the Mediterranean in an original process of democratization, long-term development and credible unification.

Nothing seems more hated than the formula used by some people that 'we are condemned to unite' or 'condemned to cooperate', as if said cooperation is to be viewed as a worst-case scenario, instead of a situation that is in all our national interests. The profession of faith in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperative effort is contained in our readiness to make a zone of peace and prosperity in our common area. Peace and prosperity, development and security, good business and friendship: each term cannot be realized without the other, each supplements the other. We must come out of the past, and look to the future: prosperity will increase with the increase of cooperative exchanges.

But the Maghreb countries negotiated partnership agreements with the EU with the most diminished contractual capacity; the negotiations were conducted in an uncoordinated and dispersed manner, with some countries weakened by internal strife. The Arab Maghreb Union was in disrepair and the level of inter-Maghrebi exchanges of goods and services practically non-existent, never mind that the Maghrebi negotiators did not factor in the re-

evaluation of their assets regarding elementary security data (that is, the transformation of the region according to its oil potential) in their strategies. But it is by achieving a minimal level of institutional development and decisively registering in a process of good governance, democratization and respect of private freedoms that our region will manage to give the new Euro-Mediterranean relations a perspective of maximum benefit and high potential.

European assistance must live up to this potential within the context of a more long-term vision

The basis of our partnership with Europe must be one of successful transaction, in other words a lasting win-win one. Each partner here measures their interests against those of the other, within a context of mutual self-respect. Neither partner should attempt to impose their will on the other: it is in both their self-interests to agree to a single course of action for both parties.

The laws of economy do not constitute a science so precise as to enable one partner to conclude on a way of functioning that he would impose on the other. Free enterprise is based on a free arbitrator and the ultimate conviction of the businessman. There is nothing more anti-economical and anti-social than the so-called reforms that would prevail over the conviction of the sovereign States concerned. In this context of imposing 'reforms' from outside, yesterday's ideology of nationalization has become today's ideology of privatization. The worst privatization is the one that believes privatization to be a goal in itself or the one that we suffer as a way of thinking imposed by the International Monetary Fund. The only good reform is the one that we put into practice out of conviction, not one that is imposed. The region will benefit from Euro-Mediterranean integration only to the extent that they have this belief. The Europeans must bear the consequences regarding the redeployment of agreed investment, in view of this integration, and also support the conditions for the establishment of good governance and more generally, in regard to the long-term projection of their vision for the future.

In the same manner that the market economy and the processes that lead to it cannot be simplified down to a mathematical formula, the edification of the State of law and fundamental freedoms cannot be imposed from outside. Partners must openly communicate to reinforce their partnership but they must also carefully distinguish between generous support from a loyal partner and unwelcome interference from an overbearing one.

However, the clauses on the respect of democratic freedoms and on good governance in general must not appear in Euro-Mediterranean partnership agreements merely for form's sake. The complacency of partners who do not

comply with these clauses is as disturbing as the interference in the internal affairs of another State.

The sharing of universal values between partners must go in both directions: respect for what is received, on the one hand, and the rejection without ambiguity of inadmissible clauses, on the other. This has not been the case, for example, as regards certain ambiguous positions here and there in Europe as far as fundamentalist violence is concerned: when such barbarism is unleashed, the absence of condemnation is equivalent to the legitimization of the barbarians' cause, which human conscience cannot accept. Has September 11 made the West conscious of the reality of the terrorist phenomenon, its real dimensions and the conditions which are necessary to eradicate it? Maybe not, as the West's response to terrorist violence is even more violence, presented at best as a legitimate defence which will not, however, produce lasting solutions. Military supremacy will never overcome the terrorist phenomenon. In the end, terrorism will be overcome by the establishment of good governance, personal and public freedoms, and development. These are the conditions necessary to overcome the foundations of terrorism.

Let's come to today – to the challenge linked to the perspectives of a profound development on the geopolitical level, regarding security. The history of the Middle East in the second half of the last century forms a precedent in terms of the dangers linked to such a development. The United States proclaims its 'supreme' interest in the region because it contains at least the two-thirds of the world's proven oil reserves: a proportion that increases to nearly three-quarters with the inclusion of the Arab Maghreb. This increase is due mainly because of the potential discovered in the Algerian Grand Erg Oriental. Algeria, which was for a long time classified as a natural gas-supplying country only, should soon see itself as one of the major holders of oil reserves. Given that the reserves of non-OPEC countries have increased at a rate six or seven times less than global demand, it is likely that 80 per cent of new demand will depend on reserves located in all Mediterranean and Arab-Persian countries. Even without mentioning the important position of the Middle East as far as crucial East–West naval and air routes are concerned, the region is of vital interest from a commercial and military point of view for the United States' position throughout the world. The Strait of Gibraltar, the Sicilian Channel and the Suez Canal are the Mediterranean counterparts to the strategic straits of Bab el-Mandeb and Hormuz, the pressure points for all security forces centred on the Middle East. The countries adjacent to these pressure points are therefore prone to experiencing 'interference' in their security. This situation has two implications for the southern Mediterranean:

- The increasing interest of the United States in the region could bring about a possible increase of the contractual power to the benefit of our countries.

- The increasing interest of the United States in the region could also foster an increasing concern about the possibility of new threats.

The evolution of the European Union fascinated the Maghrebis because it was not constructed by brute force, but by common will, the force of law and democracy providing a precious point of reference to unitary aspirations in North Africa.

The Maghrebis must use this process as a catalyst and a source of inspiration for their own project. The European should also help to make successful the Maghrebi project, for the benefit of the inhabitants of both shores of the Mediterranean. It depends on the Maghrebis to compensate for their delays (institutional, financial, technological, cultural and social) by using the capital of a complex and venerable history, with a territorial and ethnic, linguistic and cultural continuity. Following the cruel war that left Europe in pieces, the founding fathers of the CEE rose to the challenge of bringing together peoples who had ended up regarding each other as 'biological' enemies. Nothing like that happened in the case of the Maghrebi nations; the Maghrebi idea is anchored in a common culture, while leading at the same time to historical nationalism. Our most evil crises or tensions did not break the unity of our peoples. At worst, together with the multiple, futile attempts of unions, a Maghrebi pessimism has been aggravated, which is more attributable to the disputes and fractures between generations, with all resulting disaffection against States, politics and public issues in general.

As in Europe, so too the Maghreb. The high road to integration passes through the modernization of institutions; tidying one's own house; achieving an acceptable level as regards the State of law, democracy and the respect for individuals; marching towards the practice of good governance. Implementing these measures will best release creative energy in a way to form the foundation of a credible Union, in compliance with the aspirations of the peoples as well as the requirements of times. Whether it plays on specific fields or on a global scale, single leadership without cooperation is incapable of producing the safe and peaceful world to which everybody aspires. The superpower, for all its supposed good intentions, exposes itself and exposes us to acts derivative of totalitarianism. The Gulf wars, the tragic failure of Palestine, the conception of an 'axis of evil' and the deviation of the anti-terrorist struggle are enough to show how dangerous is the imperial choice that prevails today.

Until China, Russia, or India manage to claim a more significant role, only Europe might be the necessary counterbalance towards equilibrium and an increasing security in the world. Europe cannot escape from a triple challenge: unite the conditions of political Europe, accompany the countries of the southern Mediterranean in the restoration of the State of Law and the course

of real democracy, and contribute to the management of the real risks of North Africa becoming like the Middle East. Prosperity will come along with our exchanges, which while still below the potential of the region, amount to some 50 billion; assistance and cooperation will give us the means to make this sum five times larger. Isn't that a stake that deserves to be considered?

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