

CHAPTER SEVEN

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Conclusions

Algeria's foreign policy in post-independence throughout three decades (1962-1992) had been known to have several trends, but when one traces these thirty-years one can easily illustrate three different systems in which three regimes framed each period.

Ahmed Ben Bella was the first president of Algeria in which his presidency lasted for three years 1962-1965. Algerian foreign policy under his regime, as we have seen above, was more revolutionary particularly in Africa as many politicians and observers referred this policy to Ben Bella, because he felt that Algeria had the right to talk on behalf of African nations on the right of self-determination and this right was wrested after seven and a half-years of bloody years with France that ended 132 years of the French colonial rule. However, Ben Bella was more interested in African issues (for example the Congo crisis). He left the middle-East conflict to Gamel- Abdel-Nasser who was closer to him than any other president. In international forum, he was well known for his outspoken policy. He visited the oval house in October 1963, and after that Cuba in Cuban missiles crisis, in which he severed the relations with the United States.

“Ben Bella turned to concepts of communism, but like so many in the Third World, he failed to learn the lesson so well understood by Stalin: that you first consolidate your domestic front and then, and only then, expand to foreign countries. The Marxists who wielded the greatest influence in Algeria were Trotskyites, and the regime’s enthusiasm for the exporting of revolution as quickly as possible was certainly not unrelated to their influence.”¹

Furthermore, Algerian foreign policy under Ben Bella, “was an ideologically aggressive state and one that aligned itself in spirit, at least, with states and movement that are ‘anti-Western’ and opposed to colonialism and ‘neo-colonialism’”²

However, his policy was more international than internal. He was interested in international issues in which internal problems became to raise by the times. He wanted to be Ben Bella’s Africa more than Ben Bella’s Algeria, so, this policy did not work and he was thrown in a bloodless coup on June 19, 1965 by his Defense Minister, Hourri Boumedienne.

Hourri Boumedienne was a military man and was totally different from Ben Bella. The first thing that one can detect from his policy was he shifted Ben Bella’s policy from Africa to Arab World, for many reasons. Firstly, he was Arabism-educated; secondly, the Arab-Israel Conflict had played an essential role towards this shift. The foreign policy of Boumedienne’s regime over the post-coup period was consistent on the whole with Bouteflika’s statement on June 20, 1965: “the era of noisy speeches, of Vulgar catchwords and impulsive frenzy is over.”

¹ Arslan Humbaraci, Algeria: A Revolution that Failed, p. 153, first published 1966, by Pall Mall Press LTD., 77-79Charlotte Street, London W1

² David C. Gordon, The Passing of French Algeria, p. 223 first publication in 1966, by Oxford University Press., New York, Toronto

He underlined his foreign affair when he took over the presidency in June 19, 1965 in which Radio Algiers broadcast the following ‘proclamation of the Council of the Revolution’:

“In foreign field, now more than ever, our country will make a point of loyally honouring any agreement undertaken to date. In future, our actions will no longer be dictated by subjectivism. They will be the external projection of our internal policies, directed to the erection of a stable state and a prosperous economy. Considerations of personal prestige will no longer make us forget the essential, which is to strengthen our national independence and developed our economy that we may first help the disinherited.

In accordance with the fundamental philosophy of the FLN, our diplomacy will be efficient and realistic and will draw its inspiration from the principles laid down in the Tripoli Programme and the Charter of Algiers.”³

Boumedienne was unlike Ben Bella in dealing with international issues. He had his own policy over the conflicts. When the Thirds Arab-Israeli war in 1967 ended in favor to Israel, he was furious with Nasser over the agreement with Israel, he wanted the war to go on until the victory.

One of the specialists on Algerian foreign policy underlined the frame work of internal development and external Orientation in late 1960s and the 1970s under Boumedienne’s regime:

“More than many other countries, Algeria has perceived its development as integrally linked to international politics. During its prolonged struggle for national independence (1954-1962), Algeria developed a radical outlook in which Third World solidarity and militant anti-imperialism were closely allied. For the Algerians, political independence was but a first victory in a longer term struggle against the prevailing international economic structures that reproduced much the same dependence that the Third World has known under colonial rule. Algeria has needed the diplomatic solidarity of others to achieve

³ Arslan Humbaraci, Algeria: A Revolution that Failed. p.222

independence, and saw Third World political solidarity necessary to break the post-colonial system of structural dependence”⁴

However, Boumedienne did not want to be a leader of Africa, or Arab countries as Nasser wanted. His policy toward other countries was to show them how to manage international issues from internal policy: for instance the impact of Israel-Arab war on Algeria guided Boumedienne to Nationalize all foreign companies that work in oil and gas fields in Algeria due to the backing that Israel got it from the Western countries. On this, Boumedienne wanted to demonstrate to other nations how to manage their own house and not to disturb developed countries.

Algeria’s foreign policy under Boumedienne’s regime had played a grand role throughout international organizations, particularly under the flag of non-alignment movement, O.U.A, and U.N. He had a great influence between its states members especially in the conflicts that rooted for long times as Palestine conflict, in which Algeria gave under Boumedienne regime more than any other countries in the Middle East, materially, morally. As a whole, Boumedienne was a revolutionary man not only internally but also externally particularly in dealing with fragile issues. He took his decisions in the right times without fearing others’ responses. He was a decisive man and illustrated his personality, throughout 13 years as president.

However, when Chadli Benjedid took over the presidency in early 1979, Algerian foreign policy was altered once again. Under his regime, it became regionalism due to

⁴ Robert A. Mortimer, “Global Economy and African Foreign Policy: the Algerian Model,” African Studies Review 27, no. 1 (March), p. 19.

some international altering; however, Chadli was more interested in building a grand Maghrib as E.U in order to face other grouping. That way he was the first to call for the unity of the Maghrib M.A.U. in which his idea was given light in 1988 in the Marrakech summit.

Nevertheless, Algeria diplomats under Chadli had invented a novel way of resolving conflicts with their neighbour:

“Let’s make peace and establish friendly relations, even if we have not sorted out our differences’. It was during this period that Algerian diplomacy faded from the scene, having known its days of glory in the 1970s, in particular through its activity in the Group of Non-Aligned States, which carried significant weight in the UN bodies. While Boumedienne had had a model to export, Chadli reduced the conflict with Morocco to an illegitimate claim on territory.”⁵

Chadli was also more open over the west especially with France and United States for various reasons, such as what Algeria needed for economic aid especially after the collapse of Soviet Union and the fall of oil prices on the international market. All these changes had a very big impact on Algeria’s foreign policy in the end of the Cold War.

⁵ <http://mondedipo.com/1999/12/06algm>