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Algeria as the pivotal Third World state: trends and role limits

L'Algerie Comme Etat Pivot du Tiers Monde: tendances et limites des roles

الجزائر كدولة محورية في العالم الثالث: الإتجاهات وحدود الدور

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Abstract:

Much of the literature and research in international relations approaches has been concerned with analyzing and studying the nature of the matrix and the ladder of forces in international politics and the regional trends most influencing the global environment. This is in addition to criteria and indicators through which the role's trends are based or judged "Leadership", "The Central Actor" at many levels: global and regional.

The topic of this article, which is based on a basic approach (the role approach), falls within the framework of the importance and centrality of the Algerian role in the Third World. As the political and historical interactions of this world (the third world) are often linked to the way in which Algeria has managed its affairs and attention to what is taking place in terms of power and interest interactions at this level of worlds through which the Algerian state has tried to maximize its national interests through leaderships projects and the pivotal power that are being used to achieve those interests.

Key words: Algeria, Axial Force, Third world, Afro-Asian, Non-Aligned.

Résumé:

Une grande partie de la littérature et de la recherche sur les approches des relations internationales s'est intéressée à l'analyse et à l'étude de la nature de la matrice et de l'échelle des forces dans la politique internationale et des tendances régionales influençant le plus l'environnement mondial. Cela s'ajoute aux critères et indicateurs sur lesquels les tendances du rôle sont fondées ou jugées «Commandement», «L'Acteur Central» à plusieurs niveaux: global et régional.

Le sujet de cet article, qui repose sur une approche de base (l'approche du rôle), fait partie de l'importance et de la centralité du rôle de l'Algérie dans le tiers monde, car les interactions politiques et historiques de ce monde (le tiers monde) sont souvent liées à la manière dont l'Algérie a géré ses affaires et à l'attention à ce qui se passe en termes d'interactions de la force et d'intérêts à ce niveau de mondes à travers lesquels l'Etat algérien a tenté de maximiser ses intérêts nationaux grâce à des projets de leadership et de puissance pivot qui est utilisé pour réaliser ces intérêts.

Mots clés: Algérie, Force axiale, Le Tiers Monde, Afro-asiatique, Non aligné.

الملخص:

اهتمت الكثير من الأدبيات والأبحاث في مقاربات العلاقات الدولية بتحليل ودراسة طبيعة مصفوفة وسلم القوى في السياسة الدولية والإتجاهات الإقليمية الأكثر تأثيراً على البيئة العالمية، هذا بالإضافة إلى معايير ومؤشرات يتم من خلالها بناء أو الحكم على اتجاهات "الدور"، "القيادة"، "الفاعل المحوري" على مستويات عديدة: عالمية وإقليمية. ويدخل موضوع هذا المقال المستند إلى مقارنة أساسية (مقاربة الدور) في إطار أهمية ومحورية الدور الجزائري في العالم الثالث، إذ كثيراً ما ترتبط التفاعلات السياسية والتاريخية لهذا العالم (العالم الثالث) بالطريقة التي أدارت الجزائر من خلالها شؤونها والإهتمام بما يجري من تفاعلات القوة والمصلحة في هذا المستوى من العوالم التي حاولت الدولة الجزائرية من خلاله تعظيم مصالحها القومية وذلك من خلال مشاريع "القيادة" و"القوة المحورية" التي يجري استخدامها للوصول إلى تحقيق تلك المصالح.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجزائر، القوة المحورية، العالم الثالث، الأفروآسيوية، عدم الإنحياز.

## . INTRODUCTION

June 1965 was a turning point in the histories of both Algeria and the Third World. Following the coup in Algiers, the leading Afro- Asian governments initially agreed to postpone Bandung 2 until November, but their continued disagreements eventually led to the conference's indefinite postponement, effectively its cancellation. Thus, ten years after the original Bandung Conference had made such a vital contribution to the FLN's survival and eventual victory, Algiers became the place where "Afro- Asianism" died as a relevant organizing theme in international affairs. That said, neither the Algerian nationalist project nor the wider Third World internationalist project died with it. On the contrary, their fates still intertwined, both enterprises went on to enjoy what many observers considered to be their respective golden ages in the early 1970s. With surging oil and gas revenues granting Algerian socialism an impressive luster, President Boumediene presided over the September 1973 summit of an enlarged, more confident, and more powerful Non-

Aligned Movement that championed the notion of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), a revolutionary plan to reshape the global economy for the benefit of poor countries. It was in this latter period that the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński memorably hailed Algeria as "the pivotal Third World state haven for the struggling and oppressed of the world ... [and an] example for the non- European continents, a model, bright and entrancing."<sup>1</sup> Yet, even if Algeria's and the Third World's best days were still to come, something was lost in June 1965. The coup and Bandung 2's collapse confirmed the end of decolonization's most idealistic and optimistic phase.

**In order to analyze this research the following problematic is being raised:**

**"To what extent has the independence of Algeria affected the relative weight of the third world countries in international relations?"**

**To answer this problematic we discuss the following axis:**

**1. The political preceptor of the third world countries of the game of political**

**balances in Algeria.**

**2. Algerian diplomatic maneuvers and the battle to gain recognition.**

**3. Algeria and the building of the Africa – Asia axis.**

**4. Lessons from the Algerian experience in leading the third world.**

**5. Algeria and the revolution against the global economic system.**

**2. The political preceptor of the third world countries of the game of political balances in Algeria:**

Out of the diversity of political imaginings and spirit of limitless possibility that had brightened the twilight of empire, a surprisingly homogeneous, constrictive, and even conservative postcolonial order had emerged.

In that respect, the Algerian coup demonstrated the primordial power of diplomacy in shaping the process of decolonization and its structural outcomes. Because traditional, formalized interstate relations had become the most important source of political legitimacy to the Third World's new elites, outweighing even the influence of their own populations, the Afro-Asian conference was the proximate cause of the coup. Bouteflika admitted afterward that the plotters were determined to preempt Ben Bella's attempt to use the conference to empower himself against them- and then to proceed with the conference themselves in order to acquire the Third World's imprimatur for their takeover. Unfortunately, he said, they had misjudged

the ideal moment and given their opponents enough time to prevent the meeting from taking place, although given that several dignitaries had already arrived in Algiers and many more were en route, it is hard to see how Bouteflika and his accomplices could have delayed much longer.<sup>2</sup> Their action on 19 June obliged an inbound flight of Chinese diplomats to turn around and return to Cairo, where they engaged in intense discussions with representatives of the Egyptian, Pakistani, and Indonesian governments about whether the conference should go ahead. The foreign ministers of twenty- five countries gathered in Algiers on 23 June to determine the conference's fate.<sup>3</sup> Many of Algeria's allies in the radical wing of Third World politics, including Egypt, feared that they were witnessing a right-wing military putsch and a realignment with Western interests, so they were eager not to bestow the Afro- Asian movement's imprimatur on the usurpers. Fidel Castro and Ahmed Sékou Touré, for example, both openly denounced the coup and declared their opposition to Boumedienne's Revolutionary Council hosting the summit.<sup>4</sup> Others, such as the Indian and Nigerian governments, were understandably wary that the situation in Algiers was unpredictable and liable to tarnish the conference's image; after all, it would be hard to deliver high-minded rhetoric with any credibility while, beyond the walls of the Club des Pins complex, agents of the new regime continued to quell protests and round up its enemies.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the detonation of a bomb inside the conference venue on 25 June settled the matter- all agreed that the meeting should be postponed until later in the year.

Although the bomb's origins are uncertain and subject to numerous competing rumors,

the choice of target was telling. Most likely, Ben Bella loyalists placed it in order to deny Boumedienne and his associates the legitimacy that would come from hosting Bandung 2. While there is speculation that the Egyptian intelligence services could also have been involved, individuals with some familiarity with the events believe that the amateurish design of the device makes this unlikely.<sup>6</sup> An alternative theory posits that the new Algerian authorities planted the bomb themselves because they feared that Ben Bella's many friends abroad could turn the conference against them, denouncing the Revolutionary Council from the podium.<sup>7</sup> Whichever interpretation is closer to the truth, it is clear that both the regime and its enemies attached great importance to the approval of the Third World community.

Moreover, it was most likely a concern for international opinion that spared Ben Bella's life- a decision that, in turn, eased the new regime's acceptance by the Third World. Nasser immediately dispatched Marshal Amer to Algiers to request that the deposed leader be allowed to live in exile in Egypt, though Boumedienne and Bouteflika professed to being insulted by the very idea.<sup>8</sup> Guinea and Mali recalled their ambassadors from Algiers and coordinated with Ghana, Congo- Brazzaville, and Tanzania to demand an investigation into Ben Bella's fate and to prevent Algiers from hosting the Afro- Asian conference in November as well.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, concern for his life transcended Africa's ideological divisions. On the one hand, Yugoslavia officials noted, "Africa has a deep aversion to the political and physical liquidation of heads of state,"

while on the other, there was widespread appreciation for Ben Bella's status as a nationalist and anticolonial figurehead.<sup>10</sup> On

4 July, Haile Selassie assured the continent that Boumedienne had confirmed that Ben Bella was still alive.<sup>11</sup> In Nigeria, a country whose leaders were very opposed to Algeria's radical policies, there was nevertheless widespread agreement that, despite his flaws, Ben Bella was a nationalist hero and a leader of his people whose life must be spared.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, while there was certainly a great deal of genuine concern for the fallen Algerian president, postcolonial elites also feared the wider ramifications if such a celebrated member of their order were publicly humiliated or eliminated. The Algerian situation was a setback for the radical wing of Third World politics, but it also suggested that no country's leaders could be certain of their position. "We hope that Ben Bella is treated with dignity, not dragged through the mud," one Egyptian diplomat opined, "because throughout recent times, he has been seen as an Arab Leader, not just an Algerian one... [T]he change that has occurred does not only affect Algerians."<sup>13</sup> Castro concurred.

"The events in Algeria affect us all," he warned. The coup's instigators "have harmed the revolutionary movement in Africa and in all the world, and the unfortunate introduction of a military coup d'état has caused distrust in other parts of Africa."<sup>14</sup> Fearing that Algiers had now become, in effect, a Mecca of counterrevolution, some of its closest allies began to cut ties between their ruling parties, trade unions, and so on - all in an effort to quarantine a country with a proven ability to export its political ideals.

Ben Bella's fall was, in fact, one of the first manifestations of a systemic convulsion

across the Third World. There is evidence to suggest that the Indonesian Community Party leader, Dipa Nusantara Aidit, was at least partly inspired by Boumedienne's coup when he decided to ally himself with certain factions of the national army in order to take power in Jakarta. He thereby helped precipitate Indonesia's political crisis on 30 September 1965, Suharto's seizure of power, Sukarno's marginalization (and subsequent dismissal), and his own death in the brutal anticommunist purges that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.<sup>15</sup> Toward the end of the year, Sékou Touré foiled an attempted coup in Guinea, whose orchestrators he accused of trying to imitate "the assassination of Lumumba, [former Togolese President Sylvanus] Olympio and Ben Bella in which they rejoice," and of inciting the army to depose the government "as Ben Bella was deposed."<sup>16</sup> Just two months later, in February 1966, the Ghanaian military took advantage of Kwame Nkrumah's trip to China and North Vietnam to successfully depose him in absentia. Therefore, taking into consideration Nehru's death in 1964, the Third World movement lost many of its key figures in quick succession, some of them to right-wing counterrevolutionary forces.

The diminution of Nasser in 1967, following Egypt's disastrous performance in the Six Day War with Israel, further contributed to the sense that an era of militancy was ending and that the radicals were on the defensive. Furthermore, Ben Bella's overthrow was but one of a rash of military seizures of power across Africa: Joseph- Desiré Mobutu (Mobutu Sese Seko) took control in Congo- Léopoldville in November 1965, and the new year brought coups to the Central African Republic,

Uganda, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Burundi (twice).

### **3. Algerian diplomatic maneuvers and the battle to gain recognition:**

All told, the diplomacy of the coup d'état was suddenly a pressing concern for international relations in the Southern Hemisphere. In a March 1966 conversation with the Algerian ambassador, Chen Yi pointed to these recent upheavals and joked that perhaps there might be a coup d'état in China one day that would oblige him to seek asylum in Algiers. When he asked his Algerian guest what he thought of coups himself, the latter replied that it was necessary to refrain from hasty or subjective interpretations; some coups were necessary, he said, legitimate responses to internal problems, as opposed to those that were the consequence of foreign, neo- imperial interference.<sup>17</sup> While insisting that their coup was of the legitimate variety- indeed, with a boldness that many a public relations consultant would surely admire, the Revolutionary Council promptly declared 19 June a national holiday- the new Algerian authorities did not shy away from criticizing other countries' own abrupt political transitions. Ghanaian diplomats were indignant that the Algerians denounced Nkrumah's overthrow as a neocolonial conspiracy. "They've been through it themselves," one of them harrumphed. "You would think they would understand our position better than anyone else."<sup>18</sup> The reality was that, alarming as coups d'état were to postcolonial elites, they were becoming too common to ostracize those government that came to power in that fashion; otherwise, Third Worldist conferences would become increasingly poorly attended events.

Although it would take Algeria some time to convince all its established allies that it was still committed to the same radical anticolonial policies that Ben Bella had personified- visiting Guinea in 1972, for example, Boumedienne was still justifying the coup to Sékou Touré- the new government was quickly accepted by the Third World diplomatic community.<sup>19</sup> Algeria did not participate in the Tricontinental Conference that the Cuban government organized in January 1966, with the goal of connecting Latin America to the Afro- Asian scene, but that was the only noteworthy exclusion. The final cancellation of the delayed Bandung 2, in November 1965, was primarily the result of tensions between China, India, and the Soviet Union, rather than widespread objections to the Algerian hosts. Moreover, Algeria participated in the OAU summit in Accra that October, despite the disquiet of Sékou Touré and Modibo Keita, who saw the situation as similar to the radical countries' efforts to exclude Tshombe from the previous year's summit.<sup>20</sup> The next OAU summit, in November 1966, then recommended that all member states accept the Algerian government's invitation to a conference on trade and development, under the aegis of the G77 movement, which took place in Algiers in October 1967.<sup>21</sup> That meeting proved to be a major step toward effectively mobilizing the majority of developing countries behind a single economic agenda, encapsulated in the so-called Algiers Charter. With more than seventy states participating, the G77 meeting also confirmed not only that Algeria was a still a member in good standing of the Third World project but that the Maghribi country had already regained the pivotal role that it had seemed to squander in June 1965.<sup>22</sup>

In this fashion the Third World order imposed itself, with sovereignty and national authority valued above all other considerations. Its conferences increasingly resembled assemblies of despots who loudly insisted on the principle of noninterference in one another's internal affairs. At the third NAM summit, which took place in Lusaka, Zambia, in September 1970, the participants declared that they "attached special importance" to the rights of "peoples," in the plural, to independence and self-determination, as well as to "the right of all States to equality and active participation in international affairs; the right of all sovereign nations to determine, in full freedom, the paths of their internal political, economic, social, and cultural development."<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the reinforcement of state sovereignty and state authority was the starting point for all policy decisions, whether foreign or domestic, political or economic.

"Friends, we must create this State," Bouteflika told Algeria's senior diplomatic personnel. The future belonged to the state, he said, not to high- minded rhetoric. "Yesterday the revolution and its authority guided us, today the principles of a State must enlighten us and guide us in our task."<sup>24</sup>

In other words, the state had become not only the sole legitimate manifestation of national liberation or "freedom" but also the irreplaceable instrument of humanity's aspirations, for the wretched of the earth at least.

In other words, Third World internationalism was no longer the subversive phenomenon it had been in the late- colonial period, when anticolonial

activists used transnational manifestations of “civil society,” such as student groups, labor unions, and religious organizations, to evade and undermine state authority. Like others throughout Africa and Asia in that era, Algerians had celebrated opportunities to escape the prison of colonialism through travel and interactions with the outside world, and the FLN’s militants continued to show the same exultation as they traversed the world in search of support, even of the purely symbolic kind such as they found at the Bandung Conference.<sup>25</sup>

#### **4. Algeria and the building of the Africa – Asia axis:**

The influential Algerian intellectual Malek Bennabi (who was not a member of the FLN) enthused after the first Afro-Asian conference that they were witnessing the beginning of “an entirely new era in the evolution of international sociology and civilization... a real transfiguration of international relations by the slow, but progressive passage from a ‘closed’ society of states to an ‘open’ international society.”<sup>26</sup> His exuberance epitomized the feeling of liberation and possibility, of a world opening up, that came with the demise of the colonial police state. Celebrating the diversity of thought represented at Bandung, he spent the next decade trying to formulate a collective philosophy for independent Algeria that reconciled Islam, Marxism, and French republicanism.

But Bennabi’s prediction of an open society proved false, since Algeria and most other newly independent countries instead created a society of states that was possibly even more “closed” than the colonial system it replaced. With a mind to preventing exactly the sort of transnational connections

that had undermined the colonial order, postcolonial states sought to mediate and manage all interactions between the domestic space and the outside world. In that sense, the profusion of Third Worldist-themed events such as Afro-Asian writers’ conferences and Pan-African music festivals reflected a desire to filter every kind of cross-border contact through official international channels, whereas transnational activities that the authorities did not supervise were treated as inherently suspicious. For example, one of the ways that the postcoup Algerian regime tried to win Sékou Touré’s favor was to block a conference of North African and West African Islamic leaders, since the Guinean leader shared Algiers’s wariness toward regional religious networks “inspired by retrograde forces.”<sup>27</sup> By that time, Bennabi himself had grown frustrated with the constrictions of the new reality and became a prominent exponent of Islamic critiques of the predominantly nationalist and socialist rationales for the postcolonial state.

Responding to such criticisms, Algeria was one of several countries that grew increasingly wary of the communist bloc’s and the Western bloc’s competing efforts to create an “international society” through organizations that brought together trade unions, journalists, youths, and others. By the late 1960s, many Third World regimes were heavily stressing the theme of indigenous authenticity. In much of sub-Saharan Africa, propaganda campaigns oriented around Africanness were accompanied by violence and expropriation against Chinese, Indian, and other minority communities, while religion became a prominent dimension of anticolonial nationalism in places as diverse as Libya, Iran, India, and Israel.<sup>28</sup> However, the

discourse of difference and national individuality did not impede the continued expansion of Third Worldist cooperation in the international sphere, which had retained its resolutely programmatic character since the demise of the Afro-Asian movement in 1965.

The national liberation movement phenomenon would seem to contradict this model of a nation-state-centric Third World order, but that is not the case. First, the staunchly anticolonial countries that most actively assisted such movements argued persuasively that the rules of sovereignty simply did not apply to the Portuguese colonies, apartheid South Africa, Rhodesia, or (for some) Israel, largely winning a consensus on this point, at least within the Southern Hemisphere. On the other hand, supporting subversive movements in countries that were already independent, as many radical African states did in the cases of Congo- Léopoldville and Zanzibar, was a more ambiguous and certainly more contentious policy. However, it was, more or less, accepted practice to support movements that aspired to national rule, but a serious contravention of the Third World's norms to support movements with separatist or nonnationalist aims because they rejected the sanctity of postcolonial borders. For this reason, Africa's political boundaries proved stable throughout the second half of the twentieth century, in spite of their seemingly fragile and arbitrary nature, even as the continent became synonymous with proxy wars, violent political transitions, and insurgencies. By and large, the Third World's rebels crossed borders without seeking to redraw them. Finally, there were always tensions between the liberation and revolutionary movements, which were inherently transnational in the

operational sense, and the Southern Hemisphere's weak sovereign states, even when the latter were supportive of the former. The Algerian FLN had bristled at India's preference for excluding groups such as theirs from conferences of sovereign states, and the more radical countries made a point of blurring the distinctions between the sovereign and nonstate realms, for approved movements. In the same vein, by late 1965, many African liberation movements were complaining about what they saw as the conservative states' efforts to constrain their activities through the OAU Liberation Committee's heavy-handed oversight.<sup>29</sup> It was always a challenge for such movements to avoid simply degenerating into a tool of another country's foreign policy.

The nature of decolonization and that of the postcolonial order complicate the common narrative that state sovereignty weakened in the post-World War II era. While there is merit to this narrative in the northern, rich world context- though perhaps only so far as Western Europe is concerned- it does not hold true for the majority of the world's population that lived in the developing South.

Certainly the processes of globalization and the proliferation of nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, and multinational corporations were real phenomena everywhere. Even when the neoliberal assault on Third World sovereignty in the final decades of the twentieth century is considered, the net outcome was a significant increase in state power and state authority in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

In that respect, the Third World's revolutionaries proved to be as conservative

in their conception of international relations and political legitimacy as they typically were in their social and cultural policies. This conservatism derived, in turn, from an obsession with order and organization. The Algerian FLN exemplified a pattern by which anticolonial activists identified the supposedly “disordered” or underorganized nature of their societies as the fundamental source of their weakness and subjugation. Their liberation struggle was, therefore, not so much a war to expel a foreign invader as it was akin to a nation and state- building process that would render the French presence anachronistic and unsustainable. As was true elsewhere, even in countries that achieved sovereignty in peaceful fashion, this nation- state building process continued after independence.

The Third World and perhaps the twentieth- century world as a whole were less the product of ideologies than of methodologies. Strikingly consistent methods of political mobilization and social organization shaped the Southern Hemisphere’s hierarchies and rationales of power. This uniformity of praxis therefore accounts for the relative homogeneity of the postcolonial world’s political structures, in comparison to its diversity of cultural, social, and historical contexts. The late- colonial order had also been much more heterogeneous, where reassuring swaths of British pink and French blue actually concealed a variety of improvised and muddled systems of control. As one of the key thinkers in the Algerian foreign ministry, Abdelmalek Benhabyles, noted in 1965:

The presidential regime is spreading even among the member states of the [British] Commonwealth. The single party is

replacing dual- party or multiparty [systems], in practice if not in law... [T] he idea of the single party is linked to that of a socialist ideology... Everyone has declared themselves socialist: Nyerere and Léopold Senghor, Hassan II and Massemba Débat. Even his Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie.<sup>30</sup> While Benhabyles was discussing Africa specifically, this pattern was also generally true of Asia and the Middle East.

In the twenty- first century, the close relationship between Third World internationalism and the legitimacy of postcolonial national elites is still evident. In March 2011, with the major Western powers resorting to military intervention to ensure the success of Muammar Qaddafi’s internal opposition, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni came to defense of his Libyan counterpart. “Qaddafi, whatever his faults,” he argued, “is a true nationalist” who had “built Libya.” Even his criticisms of Qaddafi hit on the same theme, citing “his involvement with cultural leaders of black Africa - kings, chiefs, etc... Qaddafi, incredibly, thought that he could bypass [the political leaders of Africa] and work with these kings to implement his wishes.”<sup>31</sup> The African Union, successor to the OAU, proposed a ceasefire that would leave Qaddafi in power. The Algerian government, whose president was a septuagenarian Abdelaziz Bouteflika, sheltered some surviving members of Qaddafi’s family. Whatever its veracity, the Western governments’ justification for their intervention- preventing the slaughter and oppression of a regional minority- was precisely the type of action that postcolonial leaders had openly feared in the early 1960s, when Ben Bella treated Kabylia as a potential Katanga.<sup>32</sup>

### **5. Lessons from the Algerian experience in leading the third world:**

The Algerian experience also shows that, even as the Cold War shaped decolonization and the postcolonial order, decolonization also changed the nature of the Cold War. Most obviously, while the European and Northeast Asian regions where the Cold War began became frozen in geopolitical terms, with unprecedented military power accumulating, unused, across static front lines, places like Congo and Vietnam became the zones of direct conflict. As the focus of the Soviet- American rivalry shifted from the world's most important industrial regions to places that were, relatively speaking, economically and strategically irrelevant, the Cold War therefore became a more unambiguously ideological affair (with the atypically nonideological nature of the Cold War in the oil- rich Middle East being the exception that proves this rule). At the same time, the Cold War became more multipolar.

After all, middle- ranked powers France and China could compete quite effectively against the superpowers in the realms of ideas and economics, given the poverty and weakness of most Third World countries. Thus, although the Sino- Soviet split did not originate in the Third World, these nations' rivalry intensified through competition for influence in Africa and Asia. It is notable that the animosity between those two neighboring countries came closest to escalating into a fullblown military conflict only after their rivalry in the Third World had declined in importance, in the late 1960s. The suspicion is that the Cold War remained "cold" for nearly half a century- at least so far as the northern industrialized countries were concerned- precisely because

the Southern Hemisphere provided a comfortably distant arena in which they could express their animosity.

However, if the overwhelming majority of the Cold War's victims lived in the Third World, their leaders were wholly complicit in the expansion and replication of the great powers' rivalries within their own societies and regions.

Indeed, contrary to the pacifistic public rhetoric of nonalignment and the original Bandung Conference, the leaders of countries like Algeria feared the abatement of great power tensions. After all, history had taught non- Western peoples that the major Western powers frequently brokered peace by agreeing to divide up Africa, Asia, and Latin America between them. Therefore, in the postcolonial context, the Algerians and their Third World allies dreaded that detente would entail a "spheres of influence" agreement, in the fashion of the 1945 Yalta Conference, that would take away small countries' room to maneuver and their ability to induce the Soviet Union and the United States to compete for influence by offering aid or supporting anticolonial causes. On more than one occasion, Ben Bella expressed concern that the "hotline" installed between the White House and the Kremlin after the Cuban Missile Crisis augured a new era of Soviet- American consultation- to the detriment of the Third World. "For us the bullets that are striking our Angolan and South African brothers are no less murderous today when relations between the great powers seem to be improving," Algeria's first president averred.<sup>33</sup>

### **6. Algeria and the revolution against the global economic system:**

In that light, the global history of the 1970s and 1980s is ripe for reinterpretation. It is worth considering, for example, whether the Third World movement's apex in the early 1970s was not so much enabled by superpower detente and a sense of economic crisis in the West, but was instead a reaction against detente and what looked like the communist countries' gradual integration into the Western economic sphere. That is, elites in many developing countries feared that the economic dimensions of detente, which saw the Eastern bloc intensify trade and borrow money from the West, represented the final stage in the construction of a wall of treaties (including GATT and the EEC) that would permanently exclude the Southern Hemisphere from the prosperity enjoyed in the North. In his opening address to the Algiers summit of nonaligned leaders, in September 1973, Boumedienne described detente as a superpower "pretension to reign over the world," while the participant's final declaration complained that detente "has only had limited effects on international co-operation in favor of development" and that the developed countries were "consolidating their economic groupings... neglecting the major interests of developing countries."<sup>34</sup>

Thus, while the NIEO project was an explicit attempt to reconfigure the global economy, theoretically benefiting poor countries, the likes of Algeria also saw the economic warfare of OPEC as a means to reignite a sense of competition and rivalry among the industrialized powers, within the blocs as much as between them. After a decade of attempting to do so, Algiers finally induced the United States to compete openly with France for a stake in Algeria's oil and gas sector. Meanwhile, in the realm of geopolitics, revolutionary movements in

places like Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan compensated for detente by convincing Soviet policymakers that they were proper Marxist- Leninists, thereby creating the conditions for some of the Cold War's costliest and most tragic crises. In short, there are grounds to argue that Third World actors successfully undermined detente and reintensified the Cold War for their own purposes.

That said, the consequences were disastrous for many developing countries. Like many other countries, Algeria's efforts to nationalize its natural resources and jump-start industrialization had necessitated massive investments made possible by heavy borrowing in Western capital markets.<sup>35</sup> Debt rendered these countries vulnerable to the "counterrevolution" in development economics that began in the late 1970s and really gathered pace in the 1980s, when neoliberal economists championing the inviolability of free markets took control of the IMF and the World Bank, in order to wage war on the NIEO, commodities cartels, and Third World socialism.<sup>36</sup> Officials from those two institutions demanded "structural adjustments" as a condition of new loans, obliging scores of poor countries to drastically pare back the state's involvement in the economy as well as social expenditures such as on health care and education.<sup>37</sup> Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, a long-standing ally of Algeria's revolutionary nationalists, decried a Western conspiracy. "When did the IMF become an international Ministry of Finance? When did nations agree to surrender to it their powers of decision making?" he asked. "[The IMF] has an ideology of economic and social development which it is trying to impose on

poor countries irrespective of our own clearly stated policies.”<sup>38</sup>

In 1992, Angolan novelist and former MPLA militant Artur Carlos Maurício Pestana dos Santos captured the post– Cold War mood in (The generation of utopia). This semifictional chronicle followed a group of young revolutionaries from the enthusiasm and danger of 1960s and 1970s through to a dispiriting decade of postcolonial corruption, complacency, and rampant globalization- the “most savage capitalism seen on Earth”- that the author believed threatened the very fabric of the Angolan nation.<sup>39</sup>

At independence, as Algeria’s leaders faced the twentieth century’s defining dilemma of material and social progress, they opened the doors of their institutions of state to like- minded foreigners who leaped at the opportunity to put their ideas into practice. Fellow travelers like Michel Raptis played a pivotal role in elaborating and implementing *autogestion*, which other foreigners cheered loudest. “In France in June 1935, we were at the threshold of self-management. We had only to take one more step. We did not dare,” wrote the French anarchist, Daniel Guérin. “[But] here, in Algeria, the threshold has been crossed... Self- management will survive ... because it has one advantage: it follows the course of history.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, the Cold War did not allow much leeway for such experimentation, and Ben Bella and his colleagues struggled to develop their “own special brand of socialism” in an environment that saddled economic policies with burdensome diplomatic ramifications. Eventually, these pressures and continued disappointments stoked resentment between locals and outsiders.

But if economic matters produced the clearest failure of Algerian internationalism, autogestion struck a chord with all those people around the world who desperately wanted to believe in the possibility of a viable Marxism untainted by Stalinism. The fact that Boumedienne threw out most of the *pieds rouges* after his coup allowed for the myth of a corrupted revolution to flourish (which suits the Trotskyite character) and inspired a substantial literature of disillusionment to supplement their colonial predecessors’ nostalgic reminiscences.<sup>41</sup> Given autogestion’s failure, the collapse of the Afro- Asian movement, and the practical limitations of nonalignment that the Algerians encountered even before the end of the Cold War, it might be tempting to look at revolutionary Algeria as a fleeting space for utopianism, to be admired as George Orwell admired Republican Catalonia perhaps, but recognizing that its sudden demise likely averted inevitable disappointment and disillusionment. However, this period’s legacies were substantial for international politics as well as for Algeria. First, there were the thousands of would- be revolutionaries who followed the Algerian example. Some, like Yasir Arafat’s Fateh, aspired to directly repeat the FLN’s precedent (although apparently missing the Algerians’ and Mao’s central instruction never to cease the armed struggle before victory is achieved). Many more passed through the ANP’s camps, making connections and accepting the Third Worldist message to varying degrees, as their Algerian instructors learned from the Chinese and Vietnamese before them. In addition to this ideological impact, over time the groups that most impressed the Algerians with their revolutionary heart (such as MPLA or the Zimbabwe African

National Union) tended to prevail over their less-favored rivals, suggesting that Algeria's intermediary role between these movements and great power benefactors could be decisive in picking winners and losers.

Algerian diplomacy also exemplified how the nebulous aspirations and internationalism of "the Global South" could be translated into a practicable foreign policy. In fact, an updated version of the Algerian strategy shows signs of thriving in the early twenty-first century, with the likes of China, Brazil, India, and Iran often cooperating to exert some say on matters of global trade and the management of international society. Crucially, although the Cold War has vanished as a useful source of leverage, these countries are proving more successful than the Algerians could be in convincing the West that the dichotomy between North and South is the defining characteristic of world affairs. When queried on his country's support for Iran's nuclear program in late 2009, for example, the Brazilian foreign minister accounted for the difference between Washington's and Brasilia's perspectives on global affairs with the simple observation that "we are in different latitudes."<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, another notable implication of the Algerian story is what it suggests about the nature of revolutionary movements in general, namely, that revolutionary practices can precede revolutionary ideologies, and that revolution can be disseminated as a skill rather than as an idea. Thousands of FLN militants and even larger numbers of youths in Algiers's slums joined the revolution because it told them what to do, not what to think, and "revolutionaries" from different Third

World countries typically recognized one other by a shared manner and lifestyle, much less so through debate or sloganeering. As the established order ceased to make sense in the twilight of empire, revolution's vague call placed an appealing emphasis on the how and the what instead of the why- and the FLN's founders explicitly decided not to wait to figure out the last part before setting their struggle in motion.

These facts suggest that the internationalist Islamist movement today is not so different from the preceding Marxist-nationalist hybrids it so frequently abhors, and that those denouncing the "deluded" or "nihilistic" tenets of the Islamist worldview should instead focus on the appeal of rigid instructions on how to dress and how to behave, and what its members should be doing *right now* to effect change. Strategic adjustments can lead to new objectives in addition to resulting from them, since the Algerian precedent also indicates that ideologies and ideas can make surprising jumps into quite alien contexts as different revolutionary movements imitate one another's techniques.

## 7. Conclusion:

Finally, the consequences of the FLN's radicalization for Algeria itself were profound. Within just a few years Boumedienne was beginning to replicate all of his predecessor's policies.<sup>43</sup> Having denounced Ben Bella's "cult of personality" and thirst for personal power, Boumedienne began eliminating his opponents and accepting a more overt leadership role for himself. After capitalizing on local resentment of the cosmopolitan leftist atmosphere that reigned in Ben Bellist Algeria, he moved to ban the Islamist

movement, Al- Qiyam, and to reestablish the FLN's relationship with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Most striking of all, having accused Ben Bella of neglecting Algeria's domestic concerns in the pursuit of international acclaim, in 1967 the famously reclusive Boumedienne suddenly seized the limelight, profiting from Nasser's humiliating defeat by Israel to declare that Algeria alone would stand by the Palestinians.

This dramatic change of course- or resumption of the original course- was a consequence of the inescapable logic of revolution, for in reality Ben Bella and Boumedienne were both products of the FLN's original prioritization of action over reflection, and the ideological insecurity that came from putting practice before theory. In the end, the Algerian nationalist project had become so intertwined with the ideology of Third Worldism that the country's new leaders perhaps secretly feared that without the revolution, there *was* no nation.

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