

Algeria promotes cooperation for security in the Maghreb

by Thierry Lalevée

When the International Energy Agency meets in Paris May 7, the Spanish energy minister will propose the study of a new gas pipeline linking Algeria to Morocco, then to Spain via the Straits of Gibraltar and ultimately to France. Regardless of whether the proposal is adopted, it bears witness to the changes in Northern Africa since the beginning of the year. For years there have been studies on creating a gas pipeline connection between Algeria and Spain, in addition to the Algerian-Italian connection via Sicily, which is to be made operational in the coming weeks and is being discussed now in Algiers by a visiting Italian delegation. But the studies led nowhere, because of the impossibility of directly connecting Algeria and Spain due to the depth of the Mediterranean.

That such ideas are being discussed again is the result of the process of reconciliation which is sweeping the entire Maghreb from Morocco to Tunisia. Key to that process was the meeting in mid-January between Morocco's King Hassan and Algerian President Chadli Benjedid—a historic meeting in light of years of cold war between the two countries, provoked by the Western Sahara crisis which began in the early 1970s. The first result was the re-opening of the borders of the two countries, allowing the reunification, for the first time in four years, of thousands of families working or living across the Moroccan-Algerian borders.

Unity of the Maghreb

Chadli went on to Tunisia to meet President Habib Bourguiba to re-establish cooperation between the two countries, ranging from banking and financial cooperation to military cooperation between the two armies in joint development projects at the borders. Hence the unity of the Maghreb is again at the top of the agenda for the three countries—an objective which has been talked about for the last 20 years, ever since independence. These were the issues discussed more concretely during the week ending April 30, when the main parties of the three countries, Algeria's FLN, Morocco's Istiqlal, and Tunisia's Destour met in Tangiers to discuss economic and political cooperation in the Maghreb.

The three countries are moving in the same direction, prompted by the same worries about economics and security. Negatively, the activities of Libya's fanatic leader, Muammar Qaddafi, have done much to foster such unity, with Libya

being totally shut out and, in the final instance, becoming the main loser in the situation. Libya's attempts to overthrow the Tunisian government two years ago; its manipulation of the Tunisian Islamic fundamentalist movement; its control over Algeria's southern nomadic tribes, the Touareg; its relationship with Algeria's exiled former president Ahmed Ben Bella, who is leading the opposition to Chadli's government; as well as the Libyan provocations against Morocco were all incentives for these three countries to join together in a de facto security pact.

Economic interdependence

But the economic issues have been crucial as well in forcing home the interdependence among the three economies. The Maghreb, like every other part of the world, has been hit by the world economic crisis, and the lowering of the prices of its main raw materials exports, oil and phosphates. These issues were addressed by the French and the Spanish governments in calling for a western Mediterranean conference of France, Spain, Italy, and the three countries of the Maghreb. Although the ill-defined proposal of the French Mitterrand government makes it unlikely such a conference will ever convene, it underlined that more than ever these countries on both banks of the sea are interdependent, in raw materials as well as in labor force.

The labor issue is especially acute in Algeria, which has some two million workers in France who are subjected, like French workers, to the threat of economic crisis and unemployment. For this reason, Algeria has been the prime mover in the operation of reconciliation. Faced with lower prices for its oil, more problems selling it, and an uncertain future for its workers in France, Algeria decided to reassess some of its policies to prevent economic pressures from turning into political problems.

In addition, the biggest threat to Algeria's domestic stability is returning workers who have been recruited to the Muslim Brotherhood while in France. Although the converts to Khomeini-style fanaticism are but a small percentage of the Algerians working abroad, their growing numbers pose a serious problem for the Algerian government.

President Chadli intends to win the Algerian FLN over to his policy of reconciliation with other regional nations at the party's June congress. Similarly, Chadli intends to pursue a policy of economic diversification, expanding economic

dealings with Europe and the United States, and move away from a too-close relationship with Algeria's old friend, the Soviet Union.

Such a policy does not mean that Algeria is renegeing on previous commitments, such as its support for the independence of Western Sahara. However, Algeria has clearly decided that the best strategy is to convince Morocco to come to the bargaining table, and to tone down military activities. Whether this has resulted in Algeria reducing its military support to the Polisario independence fighters is not known, but the psychological impact has been important enough for Qaddafi to claim he is now the only "true" friend of the Polisario, whose members he is training in Libya and deploying through the Touareg-run "Qaddafi road" along Algeria's southern border, north of Mali and Niger.

Such policies obviously do not make for unanimity among the old guard of the FLN, especially among the remaining members of the Oujda group, as the associates of the late president Houari Boumediene are known. This group includes both those who advocate a more pro-Soviet policy, such as the followers of former party secretary-general Col. Mohammed Salah Yahyaoui, and those—mostly outside of the party structure—who are tempted to support Ben Bella's brand of Islamic opportunism.

Chadli's development program

In Chadli's favor in dealing with these factions is the effort he has made through the last four years to promote the development of the entire nation. A key focus has been southern Algeria, mostly a desert with few people and many oil fields.

After completing the Transsaharan Road, which crosses the Sahara Desert to link northern Algeria to Black Africa, Chadli has inaugurated a series of electrical power plants, which has electrified 80 percent of the southern Algeria region for the first time. Coupled with this is the creation of new cities in the region and the development of the Green Dam, a belt of trees several thousand kilometers long which blocks the desert winds. Cities previously inhabited by nomads have become industrialized, and a process of slowly resolving the crucial cultural and economic gap between the northern and southern regions of the country has begun.

Algeria requires investment to complete this program. As Algerian economic newspapers noted recently, there is no question that Algeria could follow Egypt's "open door policy" (*infatih*) and invite the same consequences, re-admitting the financiers who used these nations as centers of off-shore banking, capital flight operations, and money-laundering facilities. The Maghreb nations fought for independence against just such financial and economic exploitation.

But despite the potential risks, the Chadli government is inviting foreign companies into Algeria, and more international cooperation is to be offered—a policy coherent with regional détente.

Networks and ideology spread throughout the

by Thierry Lalevée

Sufi networks and the ideology of Sufism, as well as the more traditional networks of the Muslim Brotherhood, are an ideological control structure and an inspiration for what is known today as integrism.

The oligarchy that deploys the integrist movements internationally—an oligarchy which itself actively participates in mystical practices—is currently using Sufism as an obscurantist ideology with the aim of manipulating populations to maintain political control over them. Sufism as practiced by its believers, especially at the level of the Muslim Brotherhood, is a political doctrine whose goal is to "re-Islamize" the entirety of Spain, the south of France, and Mediterranean islands such as Sicily, Sardinia, and Malta.

As an exact ideology, Sufism was defined by Al Ghazali in the 11th and 12th centuries as a mystical and obscurantist philosophy, violently opposed to the Islamic current of thought represented by the philosopher Ibn Sina (Avicenna) during previous decades. In his works on the "Necessary Being," Ibn Sina had interpreted Islam as a religion elevating man, whose "destiny" is to perfect the work of God. Man must increase his mastery of nature, materially and spiritually, said Avicenna, changing and developing it for the benefit of all mankind, attaining in this way a higher degree of knowledge and of reason.

In his book *The Destruction of Philosophy*, Al Ghazali presented a totally different concept of man not as the master of his own destiny, but as predestined. Reason is denounced there as "atheism." The alternative to reason is mysticism, which, in Sufi sects, is the search for a direct contact with God or his representatives, such as *Kezr* or *Kidr*, and takes the form of "illuminations" often brought about by drug consumption or an artificially induced state of semi-coma, as in the case of the whirling dervishes. Sufism very early became pantheistic, adoring "Sufi saints" who had been imbued with special powers transmitted by *Kidr*.

Sufi activity has taken two forms: a life of contemplation or meditation and a life of proselytizing, involving activities