

## Chapter 9

# The Postcolonial State: Problems of Development

It is now forty years or more since France formally relinquished the major part of her empire. In most cases, however, independence has not brought the new nations the rewards and results that were anticipated. The development of national liberation movements had given rise to a number of serious debates and problematic issues throughout the period of the national independence struggles. These were not resolved with the coming of independence to many of the French colonies at the beginning of the 1960s, although the debates in the ideological sphere necessarily took on a new shape in response to the changed circumstances. Nationalism on its own or when coupled with versions of socialist ideology has proved unable to deal with the problems besetting the former colonies, not least of which have been the economic difficulties and failure to achieve minimum standards of prosperity. The evolution of some of these unresolved issues was also framed by the tensions operating between the nation, on the one hand, and international forces and pressures, on the other.

This was a scenario that Fanon had already commented on in *Les Damnés de la terre*, where he wrote:

nationalism, this magnificent hymn which roused the masses to struggle against their oppressors, will collapse in the wake of independence. Nationalism is not a political doctrine, it is not a programme. If you really wish to avoid the country slipping backwards, stalling and falling apart, there has to be a rapid transition from national consciousness to political consciousness. The nation has no existence apart from through a programme drawn up by a revolutionary leadership and adopted with lucidity and enthusiasm by the masses. There is a constant need to situate the national effort within the general context of the underdeveloped countries. (Fanon (1961)/1987: 146)

Here, in a nutshell, are encapsulated some of the key post-independence issues: the difficulties and importance of economic development; the need to transcend nationalism as a political ideology; the need for a fundamental change in culture at the popular level for development to take place; the importance of the transnational or international perspective.

Debates in the first decades following independence focused on the choice of economic model and the consequent choice of alignment or non-alignment with the capitalist or the socialist camp. Once the first flush of optimism had begun to dissipate, much ink was also expended on political questions, which have ranged from the foundations of the legitimacy of the postcolonial state and the particular forms it should take, including the congruence between the state apparatus and the nation, along with its often problematic definition, to relations between the state and the military forces. The question of democracy or democratisation has also been a major preoccupation, often via external prompting. Furthermore, in terms of international relations, debates have begun on the future of the nation-state itself, with the emergence of concepts such as supranationalism and transnationalism. At the heart of all these debates is the key question of the relationship between the former colonies and the erstwhile metropolitan power and its redefinition. All of this is clouded and reconfigured by the changing figures of global power play and the involvement of new actors on the scene.

## **Economic Models**

The most important question facing the newly independent states was the choice of economic development model. Unsurprisingly, given the weak state of their economies, most of the former colonies opted for a voluntaristic policy of development, from top down, in which the intervention and control of the state was to have a role of paramount importance. How great the degree of state control was to be varied according to the circumstances and choices of individual countries. In some countries, the role of private enterprise initiatives was quite developed, often in collaboration with the former colonial power, whereas in others a more socialist-type approach was adopted, in which the state was to provide the primary economic impetus. Algeria, for instance, figured amongst the latter, with a Soviet-inspired model involving investment in state-run heavy industry and the nationalisation of agricultural land. The whole development was premised on developing industries that would provide a boost to further industrial development, the so-called ‘industrialising industries’ model (Perroux 1963; Adamson 2005).

Those countries, like Algeria, that followed this route, very quickly found themselves falling into the trap of escalating indebtedness, as a result of the cost of buying in the machinery and technology needed to equip this type of industrial development and the lack of sufficient self-generated finance capital. The problems were further compounded by the need to engage with international trade on terms that were inequitable and decided by other more powerful countries and interests. Thus, the processes governing the operation and development of the international

economy, both on a systemic macroeconomic level and on the level of particular economic, productive and commercial practices, most often led to divergence from and contradiction with the development policies of individual nation-states.

In the years following independence, it became clear to many that decolonisation had been restricted to the sometimes limited wresting of political control from the colonial national powers. The economic relations, which had assumed an intrinsically international dimension, were mostly left intact. In time, this led to the hypothesis that decolonisation was ultimately driven by the needs of the international economy, rather than by the political struggles of the colonised alone. Just as slavery outgrew its economic *raison d'être* and became unprofitable, so colonial relations and forms of management characteristic of imperialism in its heyday had become an expensive straitjacket, preventing further development of the international economy.

This hypothesis, that economic globalisation required decolonisation, contributes to an explanation of the failure, by and large, of the new nation-states to escape the domination of the most powerful forces in the international economy, but also the failure in terms of nation-building. The post-independence nation-state found itself unable to harness the economic resources of the country and its population for effective development. The forces that had created the success of the nation-state in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe (particularly its role in facilitating and protecting economic development) were no longer operative in the world of the multinational firm and international finance capital.

For the formerly colonised peoples, the problems resulting from the growth of global capitalism did not diminish with decolonisation and postcolonial independence. Moreover, these problems were compounded when the support systems provided by the former Soviet Union and its allies collapsed, along with the demise of the Soviet Union itself, following 1989. Thus, by 1999, the inequalities of wealth and living standards across the globe had grown in dramatic fashion, rather than diminishing. According to the United Nations' annual human development report, the combined wealth of the world's three richest families (those of Bill Gates, the Waltons of WalMart and the Sultan of Brunei), amounting to 135 billion dollars, was greater than the annual income of 600 million people in the least developed countries. Over the previous four years, the wealth of the world's 200 richest people doubled to more than one trillion dollars (\$1,000 billion). At the same time, 1.3 billion people were living on less than a dollar a day. Thirty years previously, the gap between the richest fifth of the world's people and the poorest fifth stood at 30:1. By 1990, it had widened to 60:1. By 1999, it had grown to 74:1. In terms of consumption, the richest fifth accounted for 86 per cent and the bottom fifth for 1 per cent. 75 per cent of the world's telephone lines and 88 per cent of Internet users were in the West, with just 17 per cent of population (*Guardian*, 12 July 1999).

The imposition of the drastic 'cures' prescribed by the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with the proclaimed intention of bringing the state-subsidised economies of the former colonies back to economic, free-market health, through combinations of ill-

prepared privatisations and the cutting back of basic public services, in fact further intensified the problems and plunged the peoples of these countries deeper into impoverishment, without any safety net. These 'structural adjustment programmes' were often the price to be paid for further funding to service the ongoing debt. Indeed, the final decades of the twentieth century saw the triumphalist rampaging of so-called free-market liberalism, with a vain trumpeting of the worldwide victory of capitalism, in a situation where the constraints (as well as the opportunities for capital) of the globalised economy, and in particular the globalisation of financial markets, had not been fully understood.

Much has been written about 'globalisation' over the last few decades. It was presented as a major new development in the economic, social and political organisation of the world. In fact, what was happening from the end of the 1980s represented a further phase in a process of expansion of global capitalism that had begun several centuries earlier. There were various attempts to analyse the novelty of the phenomenon of globalisation. Anthony Giddens, for instance, in his 1999 Reith Lectures, claimed that the quantitative development of world trade, combined with the loss of political sovereignty by nation-states and the full globalisation of financial markets, made possible through electronic transfer, amounted not just to a new development, but to a revolutionary transformation affecting the political, technological, cultural and economic spheres (*Observer*, 11 April 1999). Two factors that he cites as particularly responsible for this 'revolutionary' change were developments in the sphere of instantaneous communications and the move towards women's equality. Both seem inadequate explanations of any fundamental newness. The communications revolution and the creation of the global village had already been analysed by people like Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s (McLuhan 1964, McLuhan and Fiore 1967), even though further developments in new media and their potentialities have been realised since then. As for the 'revolutionary' change in women's position, this would come as a surprise to most women across the globe.

What was new, however, was the elimination of the ideological challenge to global capitalism as a result of the changes affecting the former Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc, on the one hand, and the overt conversion of the Chinese communists to the capitalist way, on the other. For a number of years, global capitalism has been able to portray itself as the only show in town.

While, in their initial euphoria, some commentators were able to portray this as the triumph of the West, most considered analyses, including that of Giddens, have highlighted the contradictory tendencies at work in the process of globalisation. On the one hand, it has meant a decrease in the power of nation-states to control their own economies, at the same time as it has led to the revival of local cultural identities as a response to globalising tendencies. The global spread of capitalism has not harmonised the situation of the world's peoples. On the contrary, as Giddens himself pointed out, in the first of his Reith Lectures, entitled 'New World Without End': 'The share of the poorest fifth of the world's population in global income has dropped from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent over the past ten years. The proportion taken by the richest fifth, on the other hand, has risen (*Observer*, 11 April 1999). These

discrepancies concern not merely the levels of income but also the working and living conditions, including differences in terms of safety and environmental standards and regulations, quality of housing, access to education, health care, pensions and social insurance provision, physical security, leisure and cultural opportunities.

The instant dissemination of information and opinion through the global media has certainly had a homogenising effect, on the one hand, at the same time as it has hampered ideological and cultural control. Most significantly, the very processes at work in globalisation themselves create the means, the media, the ideas and institutions for their own subversion. This is particularly true at the ideological level, where the inherent contradictions are readily discernible. Thus, the ideology of global economic liberalism can easily be revealed to be at odds with the realities of protectionism associated with powerful economic powers and trading blocs, as with the restrictions on the free movement of labour, the authoritarian forms of the political state in individual countries and the dirigisme of international institutions.

Increasingly and inextricably, the globalisation of capital creates its own global counterculture. Resistance movements have not only developed on the local level but have increasingly come together on the global plane to protest against and challenge the hegemony of the rich, industrial nations, at meetings of the G7/G8 or the World Trade Organisation, in Seattle in 1999, Genoa in 2001 or Evian and Geneva in 2003, as well as with the establishment of events such as the World Social Forum, which has been meeting since 2000 (*Guardian*, 28 January 2003, 23 January 2004, 26 January 2005).

In addition, global capital has had to contend with the competition from rising economic powers. Whereas developments such as the outsourcing of production to take advantage of cheap labour and the lack of regulation in terms of working conditions and safety standards represent nothing new, there have nonetheless been significant new trends. The inclusion of services in this outsourcing (in communications, health care, finance, tourism, etc.) represents one such development, as does the high level of technology becoming available in countries such as India, previously perceived as 'backward'. The cultural sphere is also no longer characterised by one-way traffic from the West. Increasingly, cultural imports from the former colonies are finding their way into the mainstream of American and European societies, extending beyond the confines of the communities resulting from large-scale migrations in previous years. The increasing Hispanic influence in the US, along with the productions of Chinese and Indian cinema, are just some of the examples one could quote here. Indeed, the rise of China, in particular, as a world economic power has been spectacular over the last decade. Its economy entered a qualitatively new phase with its direct investment in American and European economies, leading to the acquisition of major Western companies such as IBM's personal computer business and the interest in acquiring a stake in the British motor vehicle industry, through MG Rover (*Guardian*, 23 February 2005).

How have these developments been reflected in the francophone world?

Within the context of *Francophonie*, the focus has been to a very large extent on the domain of culture. Economic concerns have traditionally been relegated to a

secondary position, although, as we have seen, the theme of sustainable development, chosen for the *Francophone* Summit in Ougadougou in 2004, marked something of a new departure.

The pursuit of bilateral policies between France and Africa has meant that, in the relations between France and her former colonies, it has largely been business as usual. France has attempted to secure preferential terms for its former African colonies in association agreements with the European Union. In return, these countries remain within the franc zone and are happy to purchase French arms, in return for a degree of paternalistic protection, often for highly corrupt, authoritarian regimes (Chipman 1989; Andereggen 1994). Those who challenge this cosy arrangement quickly feel the sharp end of France's instruments of power. This was the case for Ahmed Sékou Touré when he chose independence, rather than autonomy, for Guinea in 1958 and de Gaulle responded by the immediate withdrawal of all French personnel, equipment and aid, wreaking havoc on the administrative and economic structures of the new state. The recent stand-off between France and the Gbagbo regime in the Ivory Coast has been largely influenced by the same mentality (*Libération*, 9 November 2004; *Le Monde*, 16 December 2004).

### **Problems of Nationalist Discourse**

While all of the former colonies have to come to grips with serious economic difficulties and a failure of development really to take off, the handful of former colonies that had eschewed the umbrella of French protectionism, under the impulse of a nationalist discourse of rupture, were also to face a crisis of confidence in the power of their dominant nationalist ideology to deliver development.

This is notably so in the case of Algeria, where the armed liberation struggle was launched in 1954 under the banner of nationalism and where nationalism remains the official ideology of the state (Stora 2001). In the presidential election campaign of 2004, nationalism remained a powerful rallying call for the candidates. The incumbent and successful candidate, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, fought his campaign on the need for national reconciliation. However, Louisa Hanoune, of the Parti des Travailleurs, also repeatedly stressed the need for national unity as well as the indivisibility of the nation (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 24 March 2004).

While the form of the nationalist discourse has remained fairly stable, there have nonetheless been significant changes in its content, some of which reflect the change in its role, from tool of the national liberation struggle to official ideology of the post-independence state. Moreover, some of the contradictions and debates that have been evident from the beginning continue to emerge from time to time and raise important questions for the future of the country, not least for the vital question of its economic and social development. Increasingly, the question is being raised of the effectiveness of the nation-state and the appropriateness of the nationalist discourse to deal with the real problems of inequality, domination and exploitation, the primary causes of which lie in global economic relations of production.

A number of factors came into play when the political structures of the newly independent countries were being shaped. On the one hand, the influence of the political culture of the metropolitan power remained highly significant at the same time as other influences and models, such as those of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, as well as those of other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. On the other hand, there was also a clear strand of thinking that sought to prioritise a more 'authentic', 'indigenous' form of political organisation, to construct forms of state power that would be specifically oriented to the historical and cultural traditions of the countries concerned.

The actual structures that came into being were, for the most part, a result of a variable mix of theoretical considerations and practical political contingencies. Among the most important determining factors were the immediate background to independence and the conditions in which that independence had been achieved. In particular, where this had been the result of a long and bitter armed struggle, as in the case of Algeria, the role that the Liberation Army had played in that struggle would be reflected in the relations that would henceforth prevail between the political structures and the armed forces.

Even where this had not been the case and independence had been achieved on a more consensual basis, the nationalism underpinning anticolonial movements in the colonies would be a key factor in defining the new states, one of whose prime tasks was seen as embodying the will of the nation. How far the states were able to express this will in any meaningful manner is a question to be explored. Where independence had been conceded by France without conflict, a particular kind of political class had emerged in the former colonies that owed its position in large part to French patronage and protection.

The influence of French Jacobin ideology must not be underestimated. The French Republic, expressing the sovereign will of the nation, proved a ready model for the new states, along with a well-embedded tradition of state dirigisme. Indeed, the new states had to look no further than France itself for a model of effective state power and strong presidential leadership, inspired by an ideal of the unanimity of the nation's citizens rallying to the one national voice articulated through the leader. De Gaulle had, at the time of his return to power in 1958, insisted on a new constitution forged along these lines, in which political differences were relegated to the sidelines as a factor of weakness in the unity of the nation.

In a very real sense, national unity and the construction of nationhood were undoubtedly seen as priorities. Where opposition to French rule had indeed proved a unifying factor, there were many other forces pulling the new nations apart. It was the exception, rather than the rule, that the new countries formed already existing, quasi-natural, real geographical, historical, cultural or ethnic entities in their own right. Often their boundaries had been created in an arbitrary, artificial manner, according to imperial rivalries and colonial administrative convenience and concerns. One of the overriding concerns was therefore to bring together an often diverse and diffuse population under the authority of a 'national' state.

Clearly, we are no longer living in the same political climate as in the heyday of the national liberation struggles. The certainties of the nationalist movements are a

thing of the past and no longer is it appropriate for identity to be defined in terms of a common enemy. Already in 1971, Nabile Farès felt the need to point out that this type of self-definition was passé. In *Un Passager de l'Occident*, he wrote: 'The one-time pretensions of Algeria (and the Algerians) to define itself in relation to its Other (France and the French) are now over. Algeria needs to identify with itself. And to achieve that, it does need not to go running after the country of which it was a colony at a given moment of its history' (Farès 1971: 70).

For an alternative, positive, national identity, the state that enjoyed sufficient authority and legitimacy could build upon a forward-looking national project of development. Where the state was in a position of weakness, the obvious recourse was to a model of the nation relying on ethnic and historical associations. In Algeria's case, the choice was to be for a compromise, in which a modernist political project was rationalised in terms of an identity – the Arab–Islamic identity, based on ethnic and religious ties. However, increasingly, as Hugh Roberts has pointed out, attempts by the state to promote support in the name of national unity and uniformity have been replaced by a political manipulation of opposition, in which different parties are allocated specific mobilising functions, in a sophisticated version of the politics of 'divide and rule':

As the state's economic policy had shifted to the right, the state's political strategy in relation to the society changed from the intermittent mobilisation of support to the continuous mobilisation of opposition. The advent of 'divide and rule' as the watchword in ruling circles signified the evaporation of the nationalist idea as the source of the state's orientation and *raison d'être*. (Roberts 2003: 355)

This was not a strategy that was limited to Algeria.

### **Legitimacy of the Postcolonial State**

In 1999, Mike Phillips raised some of these same issues in connection with the new Eastern European states that had emerged from the collapse of Soviet communism. He talked of an argument he had with a Czech professor who claimed that 'the rights of citizenship in the East would always be conditional on historical and ethnic associations'. Phillips claimed that Eastern Europeans could not understand the notion of a citizenship divorced from ethnicity. Given the weakness of the state in Eastern European countries, in terms of authority and legitimacy or 'prestige with their own citizens', 'their only mechanism for sustaining consent is a model of belonging and exclusion based on ethnicity'.

He contrasted these states with those of Western Europe, which had now achieved 'a high degree of cohesiveness and cultural self-confidence' and were used to obtaining consent through citizenship. The post-communist states, on the other hand, were 'just emerging from far-reaching isolation, have next to no experience of multi-lateral co-operation, and a memory of hierarchical soviet control'. In these circumstances, the post-communists 'view formal regulation as a starting point for



negotiation. In this world the political system turns on personal rather than institutional power. And part of the cultural capital in the East is a moralising, historicising language largely abandoned in the West' (*Guardian*, 10 April 1999).

Much of this could equally well apply to the former colonies, whose reliance on liberation struggle nationalist credentials for legitimising state power now looks increasingly threadbare.

In Algeria, not only did the key date of 1 November 1954 provide the myth for the founding of the nation. It also provided the basis for the legitimacy of the FLN as single party and ultimately for the state that came into being at independence. Indeed, the process went even further by giving sole historical legitimacy to the original core of founders, the '*chefs historiques*' ('historical leaders'), by dint of their having been the first to launch the insurrection. Indeed, this principle has proved astonishingly resilient, even after the collapse of the FLN state as such from the end of the 1980s.

The role of the war of independence in bestowing historical legitimacy on the political leadership also extended to the army, which, because of its war record, could also claim to provide the natural rulers of Algeria, either directly (as in the case of Colonel Houari Boumedienne – effective head of state from 1965 to 1978 – and General Liamine Zeroual – President from 1994 to 1998) or through endorsement of particular civilian politicians, including the current President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The fact that all presidential candidates in the election of 1999 had to have proven credentials in the liberation struggle, with all non-veterans disqualified, amply bears this out. Four qualifying candidates were in fact barred from these elections, including Mahfoud Nahnah of Hamas, who was barred from standing by the Constitutional Council, because he was not a proven *moudjahidin* during the war of independence. Louisa Hanoune and Noureddine Boukrouh were also barred (*Guardian*, 8 April 1999). The special role of the army has been recognised, even by opponents of the regime, such as Hocine Aït Ahmed of the FFS (Front des Forces Socialistes), who stated in an interview: 'We are not against the army; we need a strong army, but there has to be a progressive transfer of power to civilian institutions' (*Le Monde*, 19 February 1999).

The army had, of course, had a decisive role to play not only in providing political leadership but also in the cancellation of the second round of the elections in 1991, and the stalling of the move to multiparty democracy, in the face of a likely victory by the Islamists, leading to a decade of bloody violence and civil conflict. Some sections of the army nonetheless saw the need for the political rulers to have a legitimacy through the ballot box as a necessary precondition for the resolution of the political and economic problems of the country and in order to attract outside investment. The need for transparency in the electoral process thus became the declared position of the powerful army Chief of Staff, General Mohamed Lamari, at the time of the 1999 presidential elections (*Le Monde*, 19 February 1999). Since then, the relationship between the army and the civil power, under the leadership of President Bouteflika, has gradually evolved, with what appears to be a shift in the balance of power. The culmination of this process to date has been the 'retirement'

of Lamari and his replacement by General Gaïd Salah (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 4 August, 17 November 2004).

Other former French colonies in Africa have had similarly close relationships between the civil power and the military, although they have lacked the veneer of legitimacy bestowed upon the Algerian leadership by the war of liberation. This has often been with the overt support of France, which also provided significant support for the military dictator Colonel Mobutu in the former Belgian Congo, as it has for authoritarian civil regimes with little real basis for claiming legitimacy to govern.

There have, however, been a number of challenges to these cosy arrangements since the end of the 1980s.

### Challenges and Realignments

One of the most important challenges, particularly in the case of Algeria, has come from political movements and ideologies basing themselves on Islam (Addi 1992; Entelis 1997; Roy 2004). This is not an entirely new development. The roots of political Islam go way back into history. However, the forms that it is now taking have developed their own character and momentum. Its position in relation to the nation-state is one of its key defining features. Another is its concentration on questions of politics, ideology and culture and its comparative neglect of questions relating to economic and development issues. The basic realities of the world economy are not challenged in any way.

On the one hand, political Islam has links with the resistance to colonialism, which couched itself in religious terms in many instances. The writings of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani against British imperialism in the nineteenth century were particularly influential. Abdelkader's struggle against the French conquest of Algeria took inspiration from his own Sufi beliefs. The reforming, modernising religious movement around the Association of Algerian Ulama, founded by Abdelhamid Ben Badis in 1931, was a significant spur to growing anticolonial resistance in the early part of the twentieth century. It saw education and cultural activities as a vital part in the regeneration of society (Roberts 2003). Moreover, Islam was to figure as a key element in the framing of FLN ideology, although this was not widely appreciated outside Algeria, where contemporary knowledge of the Algerian struggle was to a large extent relayed through the writings of Fanon and other anticolonial activists, who stressed the modern, secular elements of the movement, rather than its religious content.

In more recent times, political Islam has reconfigured itself not just in opposition to the former colonial powers and, in more general terms, the 'West', but also in specific opposition to what it perceives as the secular nationalism of the anticolonial movements and post-independence states (Roy 1992; Carlier 1995; Roberts 2003). Its anti-modernist opposition to Western influence and defence of tradition and doctrinal purity have been able to achieve great resonance, given the evident failings of post-independence regimes, particularly the failure to deal with basic issues of poverty. As a vehicle of critique, with a discourse based on abstract notions, such as truth, freedom, equality and justice, it has proved extremely potent.

When it comes to presenting a positive programme for taking the nation forward, it has been less effective (Mernissi 1993; Roberts 2003).

Although Islamist political movements operate within the confines of the nation-state, as the arena for contesting power, they also represent, on the one hand, a retreat into the sub-national, with the family group, governed by religious practice, promoted to the basic unit of society. On the other, their perspective transcends the limits of the secularly determined nation-state, by an appeal to the supranational authority of the wider Muslim community, or *umma*.

Women who are perceived to have succumbed to Western influence have been particularly targeted by those who support a fundamentalist political Islam. A Western style of dress or knowledge, use or predilection for a European language has been sufficient to provoke murderous attacks. The legal position of women within the family and the more general question of women's rights have been determined in relation to the Islamist lobby for what is claimed to be a strict application of Shariah law. While many of these ideas have been contested by Muslims who put forward an alternative interpretation of the Koran and the role of women in Islam, there is no doubt that the dominant strand has so far been constituted by those who seek to curtail women's rights. As we shall see, the state in Algeria has trodden an ambiguous path on this matter (Gadant 1995).

It has to be said that this specific targeting of women for domination and oppression, in one form or another, is characteristic of many of the religious movements that have sprung up to articulate the frustrations of men in situations where they feel unjustly deprived of their right to power. The anti-women focus of the Hindutva movement in India, associated with the defence of Hinduism considered to be under siege from Islam, is a prime example here. There have been attempts to revive the glorification of the practice of widow-burning, or *suttee*, following the self-immolation of the teenage widow Roop Kanwar in Rajasthan in 1987 (Sen 2001). Important figures in Indian Hinduism, including the Shankaracharya, or chief priest, at Puri, one of the most important figures in Indian Hinduism, have spoken out in support of this practice. Since then, there have been other reported cases, one of the latest in 2002 in a village in Madhya Pradesh.

Tariq Ramadan has pointed out that repressive application of Shariah law, in terms of harsh punishments without due legal process, is particularly targeted against women: 'the application of the sharia today is used by repressive powers to abuse women, the poor and political opponents within a quasi-legal vacuum' (*Guardian*, 30 March 2005). He also points out that this 'strict and visible display of punishment' is often carried out in 'opposition to "the west"', on the 'basis of a simplistic reasoning that stipulates that "the less western, the more Islamic"' and that it is often the result of 'being obsessed by the formalistic application of severe punishments in the name of frustration or feelings of alienation perpetuated by the domination of the west' (*Guardian*, 30 March 2005).

Challenges to the relevance of the nation-state to the modern world have come from diverse quarters, although it is too soon to consign it to obsolescence, given the role it continues to play in ordering and controlling the real economic, social,

political, cultural forces and relations that impinge on people's lives. However, there is no doubt that realignments are taking place, with shifts in approach and new alliances stemming from a rethinking of possibilities and, in their turn, contributing to the creation of new scenarios.

In Algeria, it would appear that the challenge by political Islam has been seen off, at least for the time being. This has also entailed a reconfiguration, to some extent, of the dominant nationalist ideology.

A number of commentators, including Bachir Medjahed writing in the *Quotidien d'Oran* (4 August 2004), have described this process as 'a new national order' coming into being as a result of the presidential elections, which took place in April 2004. According to this analysis, one of the new elements is the emergence of a strong presidency, constructing a broad national unity, and, in effect, bringing all political forces under its wing, while taking over all the levers of power. In effect, the new presidential alliance is deemed to be taking over the erstwhile role of the single party, FLN, absorbing actual, as well as potential, sources of opposition, in terms of political parties and movements, trade unions, media, with a greater or lesser degree of willingness on their part. Increasingly, President Bouteflika, with his 85 per cent majority, is looking like a providential leader in the Gaullist mode, not only through his call for national unity in the name of national reconciliation, but also in his appreciation of the role of the different political forces in achieving this unity. In the campaign speech he gave at Bouira on 22 March 2004, he stressed (as de Gaulle had done in his famous speech at Bayeux in 1946 (de Gaulle 1970)) how the goal of national unity was above the particular interests and differences represented by individuals and political parties and could only be achieved through a reconfiguration of the political landscape. Significantly, this reconfiguration entailed the restoration of a special political role for the FLN, which, Bouteflika insisted, could not be considered as a party like any other but was a national political organ, representing the entire nation. As such, it could not be appropriated by any particular individual or faction. This did not mean, however, that he was proposing a return to the single-party system. Rather, political pluralism was not to be enacted in such a way as to promote division and dissension, but all organisations, political and social, provided that they saw themselves as part of the heritage of the national revolution, part of the 'revolutionary family', could be, and should be, brought together under the presidential banner. Thus, he proclaimed that he spoke to the nation 'in the name of the FLN, the RND, the HMS, in the name of all the mass organisations (peasants, workers, women), of civil society, of the victims of terrorism and the revolutionary family (*moudjahidin*, the families of *moudjahidin* and the children of *chouhada* (martyrs of the Revolution)' (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 23 March 2004).<sup>1</sup> Since then, the President has indeed accepted the invitation to become what he claims will be the 'Honorary' President of the FLN (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 2 February 2005), though it remains to be seen how far this reconfiguration of Algerian nationalism really marks a fundamentally new phase in Algerian politics.

Certainly, there has been no lack of sceptical political comment. Some have seen Bouteflika's huge majority as a reflection, on the one hand, of an over-reliance on the

'leader', not as the sign of a mature democracy. Others have pointed to the weariness of the population after over a decade of violence and unrest, seeing Bouteflika essentially as a balancing act, keeping the peace between the different parties, but incapable of taking the nation forward. Kamel Daoud, in an editorial just before the presidential election of 8 April, expressed this cynical view of a nation that has become stuck in an impasse:

In Algeria, the 8 April will merely be followed by the 9 April. There will still be the same torpor, which passes as our nationhood. There will still be the same land, where, in the guise of the strong nation, they try to plant new housing. There will still be the same self-doubt, about ourselves and our own, which binds us together in the guise of belonging to a community and a people. Bouteflika or somebody else, it doesn't matter. No one will be willing to wield the knife and carry out the drastic surgery needed to cut out the blockages which are condemning the country to a state of static equilibrium rather than the thrill of conquest ... in other words, this is a utilitarian nationalism. (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 24 March 2004)

There are others who hold a less sceptical view of the prospects of moving forward. In any event, what is clear is that in order to break out of the impasse, there will have to be serious changes, not least in the prevailing culture.

## **Development and Culture**

The importance of culture in relation to nationalism and nationhood has already been discussed in Chapter 6. Here, it is a question of its role in the development process, not as a superficial, optional 'extra' – the icing on the cake, as it were – but as a crucial primary element that has to be taken into account in planning to achieve development. In order to be able to determine the parameters of any future development plan, to assess the means and resources available and to understand the difficulties and obstacles that will present themselves, it is clearly essential to have a profound knowledge of the concrete socio-economic and political conditions operating in the current society, as well as the historical processes that have shaped this present reality. It is also clear that this knowledge needs to extend to the relevant cultural factors.

The successful implementation of any development plan will, of course, also rely on a vision of a better future, which will inevitably involve theoretical and political choices, in terms of both the goals chosen and the means selected to bring them to fruition. There may very well be a warranted degree of scepticism with regard to fine words and rhetoric. Yet, without the vision, largely expressed through the ideologies and discourses articulated by a political leadership, there will be no mobilisation of the human resources essential to the project. The rhetoric on its own will obviously not be enough. Equally necessary is a strategy to bring about the cultural development of the people involved, as appropriate to the particular development

model chosen. This will involve people signing up to the particular goals and methods for achieving them, which they cannot do unless they are convinced of their value and have a sense of ownership. It will also mean the transformation of behaviour, attitudes and ways of doing things in terms of the technology used, the knowledge acquired, management and labour practices, as well as professional, social and personal relations (Saad 2005). There will almost certainly be particular cultural obstacles to change. How they are identified and dealt with largely depends on the political choices adopted.

Where debates have focused on culture in the years following decolonisation, they have tended to articulate a number of oversimplified oppositions, such as Western versus non-Western, modernity versus tradition, universalism versus particularism. The choice is presented as one between two antagonistic cultural systems, rather than between different cultural practices. The opposing cultures are constituted by their opponents as a 'bloc' to be resisted. For the West, this has meant the construction of representations of 'other' cultures, in the guise of orientalism, communism and, most recently, Islam. Reciprocally, Western culture is often viewed as a monolithic bloc, moreover, one that has had pretensions to universality for the last three centuries or so, aided and abetted by its association with the development of modernity on the scientific, economic and technological planes.<sup>2</sup>

This association has sometimes led, and often inappropriately, to a displacement of resistance to the cultural plane. The defence of cultural diversity, not least through the organs and efforts of *La Francophonie*, has often been the main response to the process of globalisation, even though the latter is primarily and essentially an economic and financial development. While there is undoubtedly a legitimate place for efforts to safeguard different cultural practices and phenomena and ensure that they have the space to develop with a sufficient degree of autonomy, the proponents of cultural diversity have tended to assume an essentialist, static conception of culture, in which the cultures tend to become fixed in the past, with a tendency for tradition to become the keystone, leading to ossification and stultification.

This view of cultures as distinct from each other, homogeneous and closed has become incorporated into a certain brand of political discourse that highlights the existence of irreconcilable cultural differences. Not only are these differences set in stone, as part of monolithic cultural systems, with no meaningful interaction possible between each other, but also they are considered to lead inexorably to conflict, not just on the cultural plane, but in the sphere of politics (Huntington 1996). This approach not only discounts the dynamic aspects of cultural practices and the mutual influences that different cultural practices can have upon each other, the 'inter-cultural', it also – paradoxically, given the way it attributes political effects to cultural causes – ignores the actual cultural practices and processes that operate on the political plane, commonly defined as political culture.

One of the key aspects, indeed the most crucial aspect, defining a national political culture is the way in which the citizen relates or aspires to relate to the state. It assumes its whole significance in the context of plans for development, which aim to involve the whole nation in their formulation and implementation. Yet, in many

of the post-independence former colonies, the lack of such involvement has been a noticeable feature, linked to their exclusion in many cases from any active relation of citizenship with regard to the state.

The pressures on these regimes to 'democratise', characteristic of initiatives by so-called 'donor' states and international financial institutions in the 1990s, were usually rationalised in terms of simplistic analyses of the reasons for their lack of political accountability. The failings of the regimes were often presented in terms of personal lust for power or corruption. At the time when Tony Blair's Commission for Africa was delivering its report, the same discourse was apparent and corruption was presented as one of the major factors for lack of progress in development terms, even if the responsibility for stopping it was not limited to the Africans themselves (*Guardian*, 12 March 2005). Thus, in spite of the new subtleties, it comes from the same roots as the crude old racially inspired explanations of endemic laziness, criminality, violence and so on that were brought into play both during and after colonialism as such. Sometimes the political difficulties have been put down to the fundamental cultural 'Otherness' of the people concerned. However, rarely have the problems of post-independence political culture been subjected to serious analysis.

Structural factors on the level of the economy itself may have a part to play in facilitating or obstructing the participation of the population in political life in their capacity as citizens. Where conditions of general economic collapse or scarcity apply and people are excluded from participation in economic life, their involvement as citizens will also be affected. However, in countries such as Algeria, endowed with natural resources, such as oil and gas, producing vast revenues for the state with little requirement of labour, the autonomy resulting from the development of a rentier state, not dependent on taxation of its population, may also lead to a divorce between the state and its political institutions, on the one hand, and the citizens, who count for little in economic terms, on the other.

External economic factors also have their role to play. The lack of control by the post-independence states over their own economies because of the international systemic structures that predominate, their indebtedness and subjection to the grip of international financial institutions, the unfair terms of trade in world markets – all of these lead to a further depreciation of the political capital of these states.

Moreover, some of the difficulties have arisen as a result of the particular policies of post-independence governments. If the measure of women's emancipation is taken as a key measure of social progress, then it has to be said that much remains to be achieved on this score. If women are still not playing their full part as citizens in Algeria, for instance, this is largely due to the timidity of successive regimes, bowing to the pressures of religious and social conservatism to embody their subordinate, minor status in the legislative codes of the country, in spite of the formal assertion of the equality of men and women in the Constitution. Although the reform of the Family Code, instituted in 1984 and enshrining women's inferior status through their effective definition as minors, under the guardianship of a male family member (Lalami-Fatès 1996; Lloyd 2005), was promised by the successful candidate in the 2004 presidential election campaign (*Liberté*, 22 March 2004), there has still been

some reluctance to go too far too quickly and a desire not to rock the boat in the face of perceived or actual resistance. Attempts to have the Code revoked by the women's movement resulted in some modification and tinkering in 2005, but no radical repeal, under perceived pressure to placate the traditional Islamic lobby (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 12 January 2005; *Liberté*, 7 and 28 February 2005).

It has, though, proved increasingly difficult to justify the status quo. The past record of women's involvement in the war of liberation has been a powerful argument for full recognition of women's rights, in spite of the reluctance of the political establishment to take on the traditional conservatism upholding family values, as one of the factors of cohesion of the Algerian nation in their struggle against French colonialism (Touati 1996). Moreover, their present role in society is currently evolving rapidly. As a result of the education policies of successive regimes, tremendous progress has been made in female education at all levels of the system. As yet, however, the promotion of women employed in the formal sector, at any rate, is lagging far behind, though there are indications of some improvement. In 1989, fewer than one in twenty women in the active population had a job in Algeria. This was lower than comparable figures for the neighbouring Maghrebian countries, Morocco and Tunisia (Touati 1996; Lloyd 2005). By 2000, figures suggested that there were 13.9 per cent of employed women in the active population (Barka 2005), and Boutheina Cheriet, the minister in charge of the family and women's affairs, claimed in 2003 that women constituted 18 per cent of the labour force in the formal sector (*Liberté*, 29 April 2003).

The importance of this question lies not just in the area of justice and equal human rights; it also concerns the role that women have to play in the development process. There is now a considerable body of evidence that the significant involvement of women in a project of sustainable development is one of the main factors contributing to the likelihood of its success. On the general level, there is, of course, the scandalous waste of human resources, when women, who constitute more than half of the earth's population, are denied proper access to decent health care, education, training and employment and are refused equal rights and practically excluded from public life. More specifically, however, women play a vital role in certain fields of activity, for which they often bear full, or the main, responsibility: for instance, domestic, household work, the provision and management of food, fuel and water resources, childcare, agricultural and horticultural work.

It is now recognised that the three 'pillars' of sustainable development – the protection of the environment, economic well-being and social justice – can only be achieved if women's role is fully taken into account in any development strategy (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).

The protection of the environment requires in-depth understanding of the ways in which women make use of natural resources and the knowledge they already possess in this area. It also requires a specific awareness of the different ways in which the degradation of the environment affects men and women, as well as a recognition of their rights and specific responsibilities in planning and managing these matters (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).



The economic well-being of a society depends of making full use of all the available human resources, both male and female. At the present time, it has been estimated that women make up 70 per cent of the earth's population living in absolute poverty, in a world in which a majority of families rely on a single woman to head the household and provide for its members. Women are twice as likely to live in poverty as men (Department for International Development (UK) 2000).

It follows that, if the eradication of poverty is to be made a reality, there has to be a focus on improving the economic situation of women, through measures to improve the organisation of the labour market and ensure equality of wages, access to education, health care and credit facilities (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002). For instance, a study of the main Indian banks has shown that only 11 per cent of its clients taking out loans are women; in Zaire, the proportion is only 14 per cent (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002). Research by the World Bank in Kenya has estimated that, if girls had the same opportunities to attend school as boys, then there would be an increase in food production of the order of 9–22 per cent and this figure would rise to 25 per cent if there were universal primary education (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).

Moreover, the inequality and discrimination that exist on the legal and political planes constitute a major obstacle to the involvement of women in social and public spheres and have clear repercussions on the social conditions that are needed to ensure the success of any strategy of sustainable development (see Department for International Development (UK) 2000; UNIFEM 2000).

Any improvements in the position of women imply a voluntaristic policy on the part of the institutions of state. However, this alone is not enough; there also has to be a profound transformation of values and practices on the level of culture, which only occurs when there is movement from the grass roots, as well as from the top, and the two achieve some kind of positive symbiosis, as much in the formulation of objectives as in the choice of means to bring them to fruition. There is no need to sign up to an essentialist view of women's nature to believe that women's own role in cultural transformation is crucial. It may be convenient, and even refreshing, to indulge in some of the more benign conceptions of women's influence for the good of humanity, such as that expressed by Ali Mazrui here:

The fate of humanity may indeed depend upon creative communication and androgynization of the command structure. Those social movements which enhance contact and communication and those which seek to expand the role of women may turn out to be the most critical of them all. A greater role for women is needed in the struggle to tame the sovereign state, civilize capitalism, and humanize communication.

To the question 'what is civilization?' it may one day be possible to answer 'humane communication in a truly androgynized world. (Mazrui 1990: 63)

It is certainly better than a belief in women as essentially inferior, weak and subordinate, or even as the source of all evil. However, it is certainly not necessary, or even helpful, to subscribe to idealisations of women's feminine nature to understand the negative consequences for the development of society as a whole of women's inferiority and exclusion.

The 1979 United Nations Convention on discrimination against women requires governments that have signed up to it to institute full equality for women in constitutional and juridical terms. At the same time, it contains a clause (5a) according to which member states will modify the systems and models of socio-cultural behaviour of men and women in order to achieve the eradication of prejudice and customs, or any other type of practice, based on the supposed inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotypical roles for men and women.

This is the Convention to which Algeria became a signatory in 1997, subject to the proviso that Koranic law would have primacy if there were any conflict between the two. This was in line with the approach adopted since independence, which has consisted in finding a compromise, a middle way between improving women's status, on the one hand, and respecting traditional family and social structures and attitudes, on the other. The conclusion of the 1999 report of the Algerian government on the application of the Convention is still very much along these lines.

In spite of this, there has been significant progress in a number of areas. In August 2001, the number of women appointed to positions as *juges d'instruction* increased from fifteen to 137, out of a total of 404, and several women have been appointed as judges. Most major political parties now have a women's section. Family planning programmes have been implemented, leading to a fall in fertility rate (per woman) from 6.7 in 1980 to 3.5 in 1998, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) statistics. Moreover, the number of women active in the labour force has continued to grow, from 36 per cent in 1997 (United Nations 2000), although, as we have seen, they remain in a minority position as a proportion of the overall workforce in the formal sector.

In the political sector, there has been little progress. Women members of the legislative assembly accounted for only 3.8 per cent of seats in January 2000, as reported in the UNIFEM biennial report, *Progress of the World's Women 2000* (UNIFEM 2000), and there has only ever been a smattering of women in government. It is significant that, to counter reaction to the lack of real progress on the Family Code, President Bouteflika urged Algerian women to get involved in politics as the way forward (*Quotidien d'Oran*, 9 March 2005). It has to be said that there are few countries in the world that can lay claim to a much better record on women's participation in political life. In terms of equal opportunities and representation, politics appears to be the last area in which progress is made.<sup>3</sup>

Education is also a highly significant area for a country like Algeria. Since independence, the indicators show that enormous progress has been made in female education. The female illiteracy rate went down from 76 per cent in 1980 to 46 per cent in 2000 (United Nations 2000); in 2002, only 14 per cent of girls aged fifteen to twenty-four years old were illiterate (UNIFEM 2000). Yet, if the number of girls

attending secondary school is now higher than that of boys (in the ratio of 104 to 100), these figures only represented 60 per cent of girls in the same age group in 1999/2000 (UNIFEM 2000). Moreover, these particular figures do not tell the whole story. It is not just a question of the number of girls continuing their studies to university level, or even the number of women on the teaching staff, even though, here again, remarkable progress has been made. They need to be seen in the light of other statistics, such as those relating to failure and dropout rates in education, the distribution of men and women and the respective rates of promotion at all levels in the work sphere. There are also qualitative factors that need to be taken into account, particularly the content of the curriculum and how it addresses questions relating to differences between the sexes, teaching and research methods and the types of courses on offer. Equally important are the choice of career, the structures of the educational institutions and workplaces and the roles attributed to men and women in the relevant hierarchies. Last but by no means least, the sociocultural and ideological context has to be taken into account, along with such matters as the question of access to the organs of intellectual debate and the media of information and representation. The disparity that exists between the high level of schooling of Algerian girls and their subsequent lower level of participation in all levels of economic, social and public life raises the question of how the transition between education and the wider society is effected and how it can be improved.

Condorcet, Fourier and others have claimed that the stage of progress reached by a human society can be gauged by the manner in which women are treated. This is not just a measure of that development, however; cultural change in respect of women may also be seen as a necessary condition of that development taking place at all. The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, took this line in a statement on 5 June 2002, in which he said that 'there is no doubt that any society which does not put at its heart the full participation of women is doomed to failure' (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2002).

There have been indications of a willingness to face up to some of these problems. In Algeria, there have been attempts to sort out some of the issues relating to a deficit of citizenship. The diversity of the nation's population, in terms of ethnic and historical origins, is beginning to be recognised. Negotiations over the grievances of the Kabyle population are replacing confrontation and repression, and the Berber language, Tamazight, has been reluctantly recognised, although its precise status is still not yet determined and it is unlikely to achieve full official status as one of the nation's languages.

However, it is also acknowledged that the resolution of some of the issues requires initiatives and programmes transcending the national frontiers. Some of these issues will be dealt with in Chapter 11.

### Notes

1. FLN, Front de Libération nationale; RND, Rassemblement national démocratique; HMS, Harraket Moujtamaa es Silm.
2. There are a number of instances where countries such as nineteenth-century Egypt under Muhammad Ali or Japan, which opted for modernisation of its economy from 1868 while safeguarding Japanese culture, have attempted to have one without the other, the technology without the culture (Mazrui 1990: 4–5).
3. One notable exception is the National Assembly of Wales, where, since 2003, complete parity between men and women has been achieved and there is a majority of women in the executive. This has come about because of the specific voluntaristic measures adopted.