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THE CRISIS OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT IN ALGERIA

Abstract

This paper is intended to analyse the crisis of development management in Algeria at various organizational levels from the top to the bottom, and provide guidelines within a comprehensive reform perspective. The analysis begins at the top, the political level, the level where economic decisions are made. It goes on to deal with the economic sectors which have been fully subjugated to the political will through respective ministries, and finally to the basic level of micro-economic units, which is characterized by managerial vacuum and indecision.

Reform requires that micro-economic decisions be taken at the basic level itself, essentially through private businesses and initiatives. At higher levels emphasis is to be placed on coordination, orientation, and supportive indirect intervention of the state. Political and institutional reforms are indispensable in order to accommodate managerial and economic reforms.

1. Introduction

The present paper investigates the causes of Algeria's failure in development, and tries to provide answers for questions such as: Why has the Algerian economic and social development scheme failed to achieve its main objectives? Why have the results failed to materialise in spite of massive 'investment'? Why is the productivity of human and material resources still very low? Where is the country heading? How can the required reform be activated and stepped up?

The paper is composed of three parts. The first part is an analysis of the Algerian experience of economic and social development over the last three decades. The second is intended to present the main lines of the required comprehensive reform, and the third is a conclusion which outlines the current problems and the future perspectives in the country.

2. 'Development' without Productivity

2.1. A Transitional Period (1963 ---- 1966)

The newly independent Algeria (1962) remained heavily dependent on France, its former coloniser. Dependence was most apparent at the financial, commercial, technical, and administrative levels (Brahimi 1991). The country suffered from an old-dated regional imbalance, associated with a high rate of rural unemployment and an accelerating population movement toward the relatively developed coastal regions in the north. The economy was dependent on exports of raw materials and agricultural products.

For a number of internal as well as external reasons, Algeria opted for 'socialist ideology'. The government set up rural transformation and industrialization as two main objectives, to shift the country from a colonial economy to an independent state economy (Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord 1965). The new state began gradually to nationalize the former French interests, and establish a new public sector (Temmar 1983). Modest means were at odds with ambitious objectives. The transitional period proved to be extremely difficult, and was characterized by social, political, and cultural upheaval. It was also characterized by improvising and adventurism due to a lack of clear and coherent vision.

The old colonial economic system was dismantled, without being replaced by an equally effective new system. The once prosperous modern agricultural sector disintegrated. Private industry and foreign investment were inhibited. Production as well as exports went down. Imports went up, and emigration to France increased. The new experience of self-management in agriculture and industry was soon liquidated and bureaucratized (Benissad 1982). Imprudent decisions led the country to destroy what could have been a technical nucleus of its future development, and to dispose of the best of what it inherited from the colonial era.

2.2. Uncontrolled Expansion (1967 — 1978): Failure of Development Strategies and Deterioration of Productivity

The authority of the new Algerian state had been established by the end of the transitional period. This authority seemed to have become an end in itself during the expansion phase of the 1970s, a period marked by the establishment of a strong state monopoly which controlled almost all aspects of economic, social, and cultural life of the new society. Industrialization had become the 'magic formula' for an all-inclusive development (De Bernis 1971). State control of the society and the economy was the basic strategy for achieving the intended development. This control was particularly exercised through:

— Centralization and central planning, in order to facilitate and assure the necessary coordination, and adherence to the strategic objectives as they were defined by the state, the sole economic actor.
— Extensive and rapid exploitation of natural wealth, namely oil and gas resources which were expected to be depleted by the turn of this century or a few years later (Brahimi 1991).
— Extensive use of foreign technical assistance, to make up for the lack of local expertise and permit acceleration of development.

State control, the basic strategy of development, soon became an established end in itself, which constituted the basis on which almost all subsequent bureaucratic deviations stood. Centralization and central planning were not effective in preserving the strategic objectives set up by the state. Rapid exploitation of natural wealth inflated development cost, leading to an enormous foreign debt in spite of the exceptionally favourable terms of trade during the 1970s (World Economic Survey

1991). Overreliance on foreign assistance and advanced technology resulted in a 'technology trap'.

In spite of an exceptionally favourable terms of trade, the high cost of both investment and production resulted in a chronic deficit in the country's balance of payments accounts (Int'l Financial Statistics Yearbook 1991,1992). The deficit was financed through foreign debt which went up to a record level in 1979. The total outstanding debt was equivalent to nearly 75% of Algeria's gross national product while its service amounted to more than one third of its exports value.

Economic growth in Algeria was mainly an expansion in public spending made possible by the availability of resources, resources which were not generated by the development system itself. During the period 1967 — 1978, investment increased at a rate three times faster than that of gross domestic production. In order to gain the production of one monetary unit worth in industry, the state had to 'invest' more than 11 monetary units (Résumé du bilan 1980).

Large public spending, expansion, and an importation boom brought about a significant improvement in employment, income and consumption, i.e. in the standard of living of the Algerian population (Synthèse du bilan 1980; Benachenhou 1982). On the other hand, the productivity of this population went down, mainly due to strong social and non-economic factors. Everybody had been pushing for his rights. Only very few were ready to remember their duties. The absence of efficient management reduced hard work to no more than a moral option.

In spite of an impressive quantitative achievement, the strategic sector of education was unable to produce a decisive effect in upgrading the underdeveloped social values, nor in preparing the society for the use of science and technology in development. Medical services were not sufficiently improved. Housing and transportation were almost completely neglected (Synthèse du bilan 1980; Benachenhou 1982).

The once prosperous agricultural sector had been destroyed by the state bureaucracy. The result was an alarming food dependence on the foreign market. Industry, the most favourite sector was most unproductive. Its capability to produce, create jobs, and cover the domestic demand of industrial as well as consumer products was very limited. The country remained strongly dependent on foreign market for industrial supply of raw materials, finished and semi-finished parts and products.

According to the national accounts, the secondary economic sectors, particularly trade and services, were responsible for most of the value added or the gross domestic production (excluding hydrocarbons). The net result of the private sector had been larger than that of the public sector including hydrocarbons (Comptes economiques 1982). The country had been thwarted between an unproductive public sector, and a mostly speculative private sector. The first added very little to production while the value added by the second was more fictive than real.

Although mostly unproductive in connection to development, speculation and rent-seeking have been lucrative 'businesses' in Algeria. Both grew and flourished in the course of 'economic development' by the state monopoly. They will continue to flourish until the monopoly is ended. Almost from the outset, speculation networks have been a mixture of underground public and private ties and connections.

2.3. Decline and Disintegration

By the late 1970s, the monopolistic system admitted the lack of productivity and efficiency, and the existence of important development imbalances (Synthèse du bilan 1980). During the 1980s, a series of 'reforms within continuity' were introduced, aiming at raising productivity and improving efficiency (El-Moudjahid 1983, 1984). The continuity of the same old style of monopolistic decision-making reduced all successive reforms to senseless attempts to combat inefficiency without raising material production of goods and services. These attempts showed the extreme vulnerability of an economic system which could offer nothing, apart from austerity, to reduce its dependence on oil and gas revenues.

In the first half of the 1980s, some initial economic success was registered due to less extravagance, moderate austerity, and better reorientation of investment (Brahimi 1991). The economic situation deteriorated rapidly in the second half, a period marked by a rapidly diminishing hydrocarbons revenues. The import cuts strategy hit the already weak productive sectors at hardest (Information statistiques 1989, 1990), and did not succeed in containing the external debt, in spite of a considerable surplus in the country's balance of trade (Int'l Financial Statistics Yearbook 1992; The Middle East Review 1992).

Investment decline resulted in a negative rate of economic growth, and an unprecedentedly high level of unemployment (Statistiques; The Middle East Review). Reorganization of the public sector did not lead to higher productivity, but to its gradual disintegration. Price liberalization encouraged speculation and pushed up inflation further.

Continuous failure to raise material production, coupled with persistent austerity have led to serious social riots and disturbances in October 1988 (Boukhobza 1991). The riots of October 1988 marked the end of 'reform with continuity'. The country entered a new period of unguided change, characterized by economic, political, and social disintegration, by turmoil and uncertainty. The monopolistic system had to confront an unprecedented multidimensional dilemma. It had to make real concession in order to survive. Since then, it has been manoeuvring on both external and home fronts to minimize its concessions and keep as much power as possible. Abundant gas reserves and rising oil prices in the early 1990s have been in its favour. Finally, the decision-makers seem to have opted for a Latin American solution to the Algerian crisis, insisting once again to subjugate economic decision to political survival (Pflücke 1992).

3. Toward Comprehensive Reform

3.1. From Ministerial Guardianship to Business Enterprises

Normalization of the Algerian public enterprises necessitates having them completely detached from the guardian ministries and established as full-fledged microeconomic decision centres. Their objectives have to be redefined. Non-economic goals which have been given priority over economic goals must be dropped. Their technical cores have to be rehabilitated and strengthened. The futile goal displacement should be replaced by a normal process of goal succession.

The following points are to be considered regarding goal setting: (1) Reliance on solid sales and production forecasts; (2) A distinction between strategic, and operational objectives; (3) Hierarchy, and verifiability of objectives; (4) Viewing objectives, plans, and programmes as integrated networks of desired results; and (5) Recycling objectives (Koontz 1988).

The organizational structure of the enterprise must be flexible enough to adapt to different environmental variables internal and external to it (Ford/Slocum 1977; Scott 1981; Hodgetts 1985). Internal variables include: (1) The size of organization, (2) The diversity of its operations, and (3) The characteristics of its personnel. The external variables include technology and uncertainty. Flexibility means that the main characteristics of the organizational structure, namely centralization, specialization (or professionalization), formalization (or rational bureaucratization), and differentiation are to be viewed as relative or variables.

The monopolistic system whose participants were always little affected by formal structure of official goals has to be dismantled. A market mechanism should be established and protected to eliminate price distortion of production factors. Whether the enterprises in question can survive the long journey from ministerial guardianship to business management is an open question. Many of them will certainly be privatized. Others will be liquidated, regrouped or restructured.

3.2. Managerial Reform

The managerial reform constitutes the basis for sustainable productivity-oriented economic development. Managerial functions in the Algerian enterprises are either largely distorted such as planning and decision-making, or almost absent such as control and motivation. They have to be normalized and fully enforced.

Planning conception needs to be corrected. Planning is pervasive not a specialized function of central organs. It is to be based on reasonable premises and assumptions regarding the enterprise and its environment, to precede all other managerial functions, and satisfy the commitment principle regarding cost recovery (Koontz/Weihrich 1988). Plans have to be flexible. Flexibility can be achieved by using variable budgets, alternative strategies (Weihrich 1982), periodic revision as well as by avoiding too much budgeting. Management by objectives and zero-base budgeting are frequently used to improve planning efficiency (Pringle et al. 1988; Lere 1991). The first technique provides for active participation of the subordinates in planning, and assures that they are fully informed and engaged in the plans. The second assures that the plans are justifiable, and not merely extended or extrapolated from one period to the next.

The concept of decision-making cannot be reduced to giving orders, and the process itself has to be rationalized. Strategic decisions have to be taken within a multiphase perspective. Repetitive and less important decision are to be delegated to lower organizational levels, especially the operational level. Management science and modern computer and information technologies provide basic means to improve the quality of decisions (Stevenson 1992; Lambert/Stock 1993). Availability of reliable information, open communication channels, and participation of different parties concerned by the decision are vital for effective use of modern management techniques (Park 1992). Detecting the limiting factor or the bottleneck which is preventing progress in a given situation, and encouraging creative thinking largely contribute to better quality of decisions (Summers/White 1976).

In addition to rigidity of structure, the Algerian enterprises suffer from narrow spans of control or too many organizational levels from the top to the bottom. Authority delegation and better selection and training of subordinates can be used to widen the span. Shorter chains of command are more efficient and generally associated with higher motivation and morale (Drucker 1974). Job descriptions are needed to minimize ambiguity about their contents.

The criteria used for selection of manpower have to be valid and reliable. Appropriate orientation and guidance of the new employees cannot be overlooked. Training and learning need to be relevant and incorporated into production. Their methods should allow for differences among trainees. The trainers themselves should be efficient and know their jobs very well.

Lack of coordination within and between units and work groups can be reduced by giving more authority to the specialists and professionals, as well as by effective use of committees which are extremely abused in the Algerian context. Coordination can also be improved through better job design which minimizes narrow specialization and encourages job enlargement and job enrichment.

Motivation in Algeria should centre on lower needs which are still far from being satisfied among the majority of population. On the other hand, the need for affiliation or belonging cannot be underestimated. The motivational mix has to address some higher needs on selective basis, such as the need for achievement among prospective innovators, and the need for socialized (not personalized) power among efficient managers.

Leadership style needs to be adapted to the situation and changed whenever necessary to respond to changing needs of the subordinates (Johnston 1981). The autocratic style is most appropriate to unskilled, dependent, or demotivated subordinates. The use of democratic or participative styles of leadership should be encouraged and extended, especially at middle organizational levels. The free-rein or 'laissez faire' style should be confined to special cases such as that of well-motivated groups of experts or researchers.

Conventional feedback control needs to be improved by minimizing the time lag between the occurrence of errors and their detection and correction. It has to be supplemented by feedforward control aimed at checking the inputs themselves to prevent errors beforehand. Standards of measurement have to be related to the outcome directly. Physical standards should be used extensively at the operational level. Cost, revenue, investment, and other financial standards are needed at all levels (Morse/Hartgraves 1991).

Checking actual performance against standards has to be done very frequently. Variable budgets and break-even analysis are valuable instruments for control at the operational level in particular. Ratio analysis has to be used especially at higher management levels. The return on investment can be used to assess the overall performance of the enterprise. Efficient budgeting and financial analysis need reliable and up-to-date cost accounting (Horngren/Foster 1991). Detected errors have to be corrected, which is often not the case in Algeria. Managers are to be held accountable for misuse of organizational power. Relevant, accurate, and updated information is indispensable for any meaningful managerial control.

3.3. Economic Reform

Agricultural development aims at accelerating the growth of farming production, particularly through technological and organizational changes, including price incentives (World Development Report 1986). Land exploitation has to be fully privatized and state farming ended. Many land exploitation systems are needed to compete for higher productivity.

Formerly collectivized land has to be reserved for large scale commercial farming, especially citrus groves, orchards and vegetable-growing areas. It has to be operated by a well-motivated professional class of tenant farmers. Small and medium-sized farmers in the interior regions have many opportunities to improve the quantity and the quality of their farming output. Because of an insufficient supply of water, they have to rely basically on dry-farming crops and techniques, incorporating animal husbandry with farming, gradually eliminating shifting cultivation, and using improved seeds and better techniques of land exploitation to raise their food and animal production (The World Bank, Cyprus 1987).

Taking into consideration demographic growth, continuous land erosion and desertification, saturation of the urbanized coastal strip, and the collapse of international migration as a major outlet for rural population, the Algerian decision-makers have to consider the development of the 'High Plateau' and the 'Sahara desert' very seriously. Otherwise, a forthcoming national and human disaster cannot be forestalled.

Without intervening directly in the agrarian business, the state still has an important role to play. It has to make provision for much more water supply; build irrigation, water desalinization, transport and storage infrastructures; and provide the necessary rural supportive services including education, technology, credit and marketing facilities to farmers without discrimination (Todaro 1989).

Raising industrial production requires economic and political stability which favours productive investment instead of rent-seeking activities. Privatization should not be confined to a mere transfer of ownership; rather it should be accompanied by creativity and innovation, which require, above all, freeing the Algerian economy.

Intellectual liberalization is indispensable in creating a climate favourable to the emergence of local entrepreneurial capabilities. Productive investment should not be penalized by overtaxation. Openness to the outside world has to be selective and pragmatic. Western style of consumption cannot be imitated. The country is in urgent need to the mental and organizational values of some Western, and South East Asian societies (Brusatti 1979; Alam 1989).

Small and medium-sized enterprises offer important advantages in the present Algerian context (Prokopenko 1987). A carefully selected core of import-substitution light industries have to be promoted in order to facilitate creating productive jobs, cope with chronic shortages of consumer products, and raise the chance of an indigenous technological break-through. In order to assure success for such experience, the country has to take full advantage of its past records, and learn a lot of the lessons derived from similar experiences in other Third World countries (Pflücke 1992; Allen/Thomas 1992).

Largely reduced and more efficient public sector still has a role to play in development (Bradford 1986). It should not be overprotected on the ground of being strategic. Among the most important points to be considered, regarding the public sector and the state role within a comprehensive reform perspective, are (1) effective control which requires the emergence of non-governmental professionals and independent bodies and associations to counterbalance the state executive power, (2) fair (but not welfare) income distribution policies, (3) adequate infrastructures and supportive services, (4) maximum privatization, and (5) liberalization of foreign trade and foreign exchange.

Innovation is often a neglected dimension of development and progress in Third World countries (Malecki 1991). Mastering modern technology while inhibiting and strangling local innovative and creative capabilities is simply impossible. State policies should not go in a direction opposite to that required to acquire an appropriate technology. Learning technology has to focus on effective imitation, implementation and absorption, rather than studying state-of-art technology as viewed for developed countries, and separating learning and engineering from production and industry (Otsuka et al. 1988). The present Algerian attitude to technology ('la fuite en avant' or running ahead) has to be replaced by a graduated and systematic method of learning technology, a method which proved very effective in Japan and, more recently, in the NICs in South East Asia (Robinson 1988).

Tourism is a highly labour-intensive industry. It is an important source of foreign currency which is badly needed to balance the Algerian account of services with the rest of the world. Algeria has the potential to develop international tourism. However, investment in this tourism at the present time of instability and uncertainty is a high risk.

3.4. Political and Social Reform

Comprehensive reform recognizes the necessity of viewing the problem of underdevelopment from an economic as well as a non-economic perspective. Economic, social, and institutional problems of development are highly interrelated. The success of development requires positive interaction between its various variables such as education, social values, farming methods, industrial technology, and political liberalization. The ultimate objective of reform is to raise productivity of human and material resources, as well as the standard of living of the population. The latter requires raising the long-term capacity to supply increasingly diverse economic goods and services to the local population. The Algerian state should not remain the unique reform agent. All other interested parties such as private entrepreneurs, trade unions, and independent professional and labour unions have to participate and fully play their respective roles (Singapore Productivity News 1985).

The basic conditions for political reform in the Algerian context are: (1) Demilitarization of politics, (2) Depoliticization of economic and productive activities, and (3) Separation of legislative and judicial branches from executive authority and using them to counterbalance (not to consolidate) this authority. Ending the monopoly of power, liberalization, and gradual democratization are no luxury but a development necessity. A strong (and rational) authority is needed to help the country in overcoming its deep crisis. However, dictatorship is no practical alternative to democracy as far as the long-term development is concerned.

Western experience with development, and the experience of the NICs in South East Asia show that development is not possible without a strong and well-disciplined civil society (Enos/Park 1968). Evidence derived from the Algerian (or Maghreb) history shows that in order to produce civilization, a nomadic society has to provide (1) a strong social cohesion, (2) an enlightened leadership, and (3) an inspiration (historically religious) to discipline destructive nomadic tendencies (Ibn Khaldun). These conditions have to be redefined and reconciled with modernization if they are to be workable and effective. Gradual democratization, liberalization, institutional stability, civil justice and equality, reconciliation between religion and modernization, and other factors can be expected to lead to the emergence of civil society and an enlightened elite.

The educational system plays a leading role in development either directly by creating the technical infrastructures needed for it, or indirectly by changing human behaviour and attitude towards it. Two sets of complementary measures are needed to remedy the educational situation within a comprehensive reform perspective: (1) Modifying the conditions of demand for and supply of educational opportunities, and (2) Increasing the effectiveness of the educational system by checking the 'educational inflation' in higher education, expanding technical education at lower levels (Otsuka et al. 1988), making the curricula much relevant, and reinforcing rigour and selectivity.

4. Development Management in Algeria: From the Past to the Future

There is no purely economic, financial, technical or political solution to the Algerian crisis of development and productivity. The partial approach to reform has failed so far and will certainly fail in the future, especially in the long run. Underdevelopment is a multidimensional problem of civilization, which cannot be resolved short of a mental revolution.

Irrational decision-making destroyed the very basis of productive management at various organizational levels, namely:

— Efficient personnel management to mobilize human resources (instead of neutralizing them).
— Efficient financial management to maximize the benefit from oil wealth (instead of wasting it).
— Efficient information management to accommodate modern technology and improve the quality of decision-making.

As a result, productivity went down as low as the availability of oil revenues permitted.

Taking into consideration the pervasiveness of the management crisis and development problems, the required reform has to be comprehensive and operate at all levels simultaneously in order to assure sustaining and positive interaction between various development variables. At the ground level production units have to be turned into full-fledged micro-economic decision centres. Their goals have to be redefined, with irrelevant ones dropped altogether. Their technical cores have to be reestablished and their structures made flexible to respond to their internal and external circumstances. Productive units should be governed only by pragmatic business management principles. All conventional managerial functions including planning, organizing, staffing, motivating, and controlling are to be activated and enforced.

Bureaucratic intervention and price distortion should be stopped to allow the market mechanism to be activated. The public sector is to be reduced to a minimum, reformed and controlled by management and economic principles. The so-called 'strategic sectors' should not be overprotected or used as a cover to pursue irrelevant personal goals as has been the case until now. Instead of direct intervention, the state has to play an important supportive role, providing the necessary infrastructures and economic incentives to stimulate agricultural and industrial production in particular.

At the political level, if the power monopoly is not ended, reform, liberalization, democratization, productivity and development will remain empty slogans as they have been since independence. Ending power monopoly will not be possible until the ruling elite is ready to accept competition, stepping down, and no longer insisting on power as a matter of life or death. Legislative and judicial branches are to be separated from the executive power and used, whenever necessary, to counterbalance state authority. Press and information have to be liberalized in order to perform their important function of control. The door should be wide open to free associations without discrimination. The lesson of the past has shown that the state should never remain the sole agent of reform. In many cases its agency constituted the sufficient condition to spoil the reform.

Only liberated and well-disciplined organizations and civil society can reduce the country's dependence on its natural resources, and break the law of subsistence by deterring destructive and wild nomadic forces and encouraging productive forces to turn out a surplus. This is the crucial point.

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