MULTICULTURALISM, NATION-STATE AND BERBER MOVEMENT IN ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

After decolonisation process, many African and Asian multicultural states designed their countries based on the nation-state model after their independence. One of the countries established based on the nation-state model was Algeria. Algeria was designed in accordance with the nation-state model due to its multicultural nature. In addition to the nation-state model, Algeria's official state ideology was determined as socialism based on Arab nationalism. The aim of the official ideology was to Arabize Barbers and other cultures and ethnicities in Algeria. The Algerian regime ignored the Berber language and identity. This led to problems between the regime and the Berbers in Algeria. Because the Algerian new regime forced Berber community to adopt the Arab identity. The identity and ethnicity problems between the regime and the Berbers in Algeria still continue today.

Keywords: Algeria, Berber movement, Nation-state, Multiculturalism, Algerian Army, Algerian Regime

INTRODUCTION

French and American revolutions in the 18th century led to the establishment of modern nation-states. All men born in the territory of the country, especially after the French Revolution, were automatically considered citizens with the land law, which is also called as "jus soli". These citizens were united in one community. As a result, the notion of freedom and equality and the deep tension between the rich and the poor disappeared (STRÅTH 2017, 230).

In the notion of nation-state concept, territory and blood were common criteria for citizenship. Other criteria such as religion, language, history and geography

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disappeared (STRÅTH 2017, 232). This concept brought together many different people and formed an organized state model.

However, in some multicultural societies, the nation-state model had faced with some problems such as discrimination and injustice. The reason for this was that multicultural societies did not always share the same ideas, unlike culturally homogenous societies (Parekh 2002, 18). These people have different ideas about values, human activities and relationships (Parekh 2002, 17).

However, acknowledge to the logic of democracy, multicultural societies participate in common political institutions, they form alliances with other culture inside country (Parekh 2002, 20). It mobilizes different cultures with political and ideological rather than ethnic and cultural lines. This abolishes the differences of different cultures and makes different cultures a nation (RESNICK 2005, 44).

This political activity makes the national identity more stronger (NORMAN 2005, 79). In this way, minority cultures do not feel themselves like second class citizen. Thanks to democratic participation, second class citizenship is precluded (NORMAN 2005, 79).

After decolonisation process, many African and Asian multicultural states designed their countries based on the nation-state model after their independence. One of the countries established based on the nation-state model was Algeria. Algeria gained her independence in 1962. In Algeria there are many different cultures after colonialism. Algeria was designed in accordance with the nation-state model due to its multicultural nature (Tulga 2017, 43). In addition to the nation-state model, Algeria's official state ideology was determined as socialism based on Arab nationalism (Tulga 2017, 13). The aim of the official ideology was to Arabize Berbers and other cultures and ethnicities in Algeria. This led to problems between the regime and the Berbers in Algeria. Because the Algerian new regime forced Berber community to adopt the Arab identity. The identity and ethnicity problems between the regime and the Berbers in Algeria still continue today. This paper reveals that the Berber movement in Algeria is struggling against the nation-state model based on the Arab-Islamic identity and for the recognition of the Berber identity and language. In this study, the identity struggle of the Berber movement in Algeria is examined and suggestions are tried to find about the solution of this Berber issue.

EXISTING LITERATURE

Berber people is one of the oldest community of the region. It is known that they lived before the Arabs in the region. During the expand of Islam, the Arab armies occupied Algeria and islamized the Berber society. The Berber community was an old community, so they could not integrate with the Arabs. The Ottoman and French administrations gave autonomy to the Berber society. Especially during the French colonial period, the French administration had separated the Berber community from the Arab community. Berbers were not included in Islamic law and given some autonomy to the Berber society. This policy, which was implemented in the French colonial period, made the integration of the two communities difficult.

However, these two communities fought together in the war of independence against France. After independence, the new Algeria government adopted the nation-state model. The Arab-Islamic identity was put at the center of this nation-state model. Regime ignored Berber identity and banned Berber language. This caused the Berber movement to begin its struggle with the regime.

Algeria is an important regional laboratory for nation-state and ethnic minority relations and issues. However, Algeria has taken slow but important steps, like recognition of Berber identity, on ethnic issues in the region. However, some scholars indicate that Algeria is insufficient in ethnic matters and that the Berber movement is faced with injustices. Hugh Roberts, Paul Silverstein and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman are examples of these Western scholars.

Hugh Roberts prepared an interdisciplinary study about the Berber movement's history in Algeria. In this study, the author describes the traditions, institutions, jurisprudence and history of the Berbers (Roberts 2014, 26). The author suggests that the Berber history should be understood in order to solve the Berber problem (Roberts 2014, 285). However, according to Roberts (2014, 150), the Berber history has not been sufficiently studied. Hugh Roberts mentions in general the importance of the freedom for Berber movement and the fact that most empire in history had difficulty in controlling the region (Roberts 2014, 50). Nowadays, this difficult situation continues and the Algerian government does not fully control the region. The author argues that autonomy should be given to the people of the region in the present like in the history.

Paul Silverstein argues that the Algerian regime could not control Berber movement with a simple declaration of national unity (Silverstein 1996, 14). The Algerian government needs to take a great step to formally recognize the Berber culture and language in order to solve the Berber problem (Silverstein 1996, 15).

According to Bruce maddy-Weitzman (2012, 109), the Berber culture was ignored by the regime that adopted the concepts of Islam-Arabism. The Berber movement therefore struggles to be fully recognized by the regime (Weitzman 2012, 135). According to the author (2012, p. 135), the solution is "re-contracting" between the regime and the Berber movement.

Cleo Jay states that the first Arab-barber distinction began during the French colonial period (Jay 2015, 332). The French divided the two ethnic elements under the "divide-conquer" policy. French government gave special rights to Berbers and were not included in Islamic law unlike Arabs (Jay 2015, 333). In the independence war against France, these two ethnic groups fought together against the French. However, in 1962, the newly established nation-state was founded based on the Arab identity (Tulga 2017, 12). This nation-state ignored the Berber identity and banned the Berber language (Jay 2015, 335). The Berber movement was marginalised by Algerian new regime and Berbers became the "other" in Algeria (Jay 2015, 336). As a result, the Berber movement's struggle against the regime began. Today, the struggle between the regime and Berber movement increasingly continues. The purpose of the Berber movement is recognition, equality and freedom. Autonomy and independence are also discussed inside the Berber movement in recent years (Jay 2015, 349). These demands of the Berbers reach many people with the popularity of social media.

Mohamed Benrabah argues that the Arabization policy initiated by the Algerian government to strengthen the nation-state model causes radical Islamist views in the country (Benrabah 2013, 105). Benrabah thinks that the language policy in Algeria is "top-down". He argues that "top-down" language policy is an anti-democratic policy and ignores the feelings of the people (Benrabah 2013, 170). According to Benrabah (2013, 205), the Algerian government should accept the "multilingual" structure. For this reason, the Berber identity should be fully recognized by Algerian government. People's Communication Charter, published in 1995, argues that language is one of the most important keys in culture and

personal identity (People's Communication Charter 1995; 2). Strengholt is agree with this charter. According to Strengholt (2008, 23), Berbers should be able to speak their language freely. According to the author (Strengholt 2008, 24), recognizing the language is equal to recognizing the cultural identity.

The common hypothesis of most of the sholars is that the regime completely rejects the Berber culture. Selected scholars think that Algerian regime has to take a big step about Berber identity, culture and language. Scholars do not find the Berber policies of the Algerian regime sufficient and think that these policies are claptrap.

However, these scholars fail to account the post structural/postmodern discussions in human rights discourse and its possible application on berber identity in Algeria. I think that the Algerian regime has taken important steps regarding the Berber problem. My alternative hypothesis is that Algeria should not be evaluated based on the western human rights and justice view. It should be considered that the country was governed by a single-party regime for many years and faced with a bloody civil war between 1992-2002. Therefore Algeria is not suitable for the Western human rights perspective. In addition to this, the nation-state model based on Arab-Islamic identity should be renewed and redesigned in accordance with the multicultural structure of Algeria.
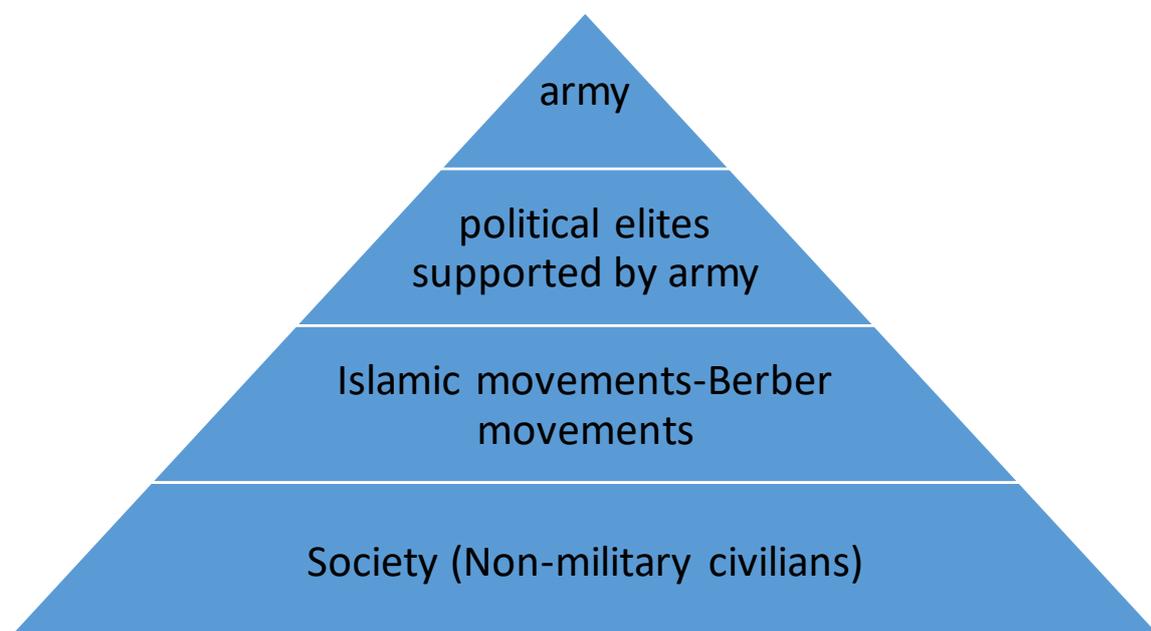
POLITICS IN ALGERIA AND BERBER CRISIS

Figure 1: Political structure in Algeria

As seen above, politics in Algeria is usually under the control of the army. For this reason, the army is the first institution to be mentioned in Algerian politics. There is military tutelage in algarian politics. Thus, it would be crucial to analyze the military's perspective in Berber identity.

Algerian politics is dominated by the military. Political elites are politicians supported by the army. These political elites depend on the army. It is possible to describe these political elites as the visible face of the army in politics. The Berber movement and the Islamic movement, which are opposed to the power of the army, are other components of Algerian politics. Especially the Islamic movement was the most important alternative of the regime until the civil war started in 1992. However, the civil war that continued until 2002 removed the Islamic movement from politics and weakened it (Tulga 2017, 50).

Today, the strongest opposition against the regime is the Berber movement. The fundamental struggle of the Berber movement is the official recognition of the Berber language, Berber identity and culture. The army and the regime do not fully recognize the Berber identity. This situation causes a great injustice for the Berber movement. This situation leads to the Berber crisis, which has been going on for many years in Algeria.

-Army:

Most of the scholars studying on the Middle East argue that the regional armies played an active role in the modernization and democratization of the Middle East countries from the early 1950s to the end of the 1970s (Bendix 1977, 70). Middle Eastern armies were the ideal tool to manage the formation of modern society in their countries. Because armies had more institutional capacity and national sensitivity than other institutions (Finer 1962, 74). The armies of the region saw themselves as "high modernist "and as the main owner of the country (Cook 2007, 55). The Middle Eastern armies argued that the power should be used by them and considered themselves to be the pioneers of society for the modernization of their country (Cook 2007, 55). For these reasons, the armies were directly or indirectly involved in politics, creating political systems in favor of themselves rather than the rest of society and becoming the protector of the system they created (Cook 2007, 58).

The Algerian army also have these characteristics, which Middle Eastern experts described. The Algerian army has caused pressure on governments since independence. The army changed power in the country by making a military coup twice, the first one in 1965 and the second in 1992. In Algeria, directly or indirectly, all power is always in the hands of the army (reporters without borders 2005, 140). After the intervention of the Algerian army, it tries to establish civil governments but these governments based on the dominance of the officers. After the interventions to avoid the reaction of the public does not interfere directly in politics (Cook 2007, 60). The army preferred to control politics behind the scenes rather than directly. When the officers perceived the threat in their political order, they directly intervened in politics[2].

Briefly, army is the country and Algeria is the army's state. The army plays a key role in many human rights violations and the Berber crisis in Algeria (Souadia 2001, 80).

- *Berber Movement and Berber crisis in Algeria*

The Berber community in Algeria, who have a unique culture, language and ethnic identity, actively supported the war of independence against France. In return for this support, the Berber's expectations were to recognition of the Berber identity of the new independent Algerian state. But the first president of Algeria, Bin Bella, stated at every turn that Algeria and all Algerians were Arabs. In particular, the Algerian administration adopted the top-down, central and authoritarian-nation-state structure (Tulga 2017, 50).

In this direction, first of all, it was aimed to unite the people under the roof of Arab ethnicity in order to make the people a single nation (Tulga 2017, 50). The Arabization movement, which started under the leadership of Bin Bella, gained momentum in the Bumedyen period after Bin Bella. The aim of this policy was to assimilate whole of the people and create a single national Algerian.

Within the scope of this policy, education became fully Arabic. Berber and French languages were banned by Algerian regime. However, the single-national Arab nation policy and the assimilation policies faced with the Berbers opposition (Novak 2012, 5).

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[2] For example, 1965 and 1992 coup d'etats

In 1976 the Algerian nation was defined as an Arab and Muslim nation in the National Charter. This led to a deepening of the Berber identity crisis in Algeria. Berber culture and political organizations began to fight against the policies of the government. In the direction of this struggle, in 1980 the great protests and uprisings, called Berber's Spring, are initiated by the Berber organizations (Tulga 2017, 80).

Most experts think that the 1980 uprisings, called the Berber Spring, were the most revolutionary movement in Algeria since independence in 1962 against the French. It was one of the turning points for the Berber's identity and Berbers community in Algeria.

After the constitutional change in 1989, the Berber movement also began to establish political parties and associations. The most important reason for the the Berber movement into politics was to enable the Berber's identity and language to be recognized by the regime. In this respect, the Union for Democracy and Culture (RCD) and the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) parties were established (Tulga 2017, 76).

In December 1991, the first multiparty elections took place in Algeria. The Socialist Forces Front(FFS) rose to the second-largest party in the December 1991 general elections after the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). However, the 1991 general elections were canceled by the military coup in January 1992 and the army seized government again. After this coup d'etat, Algerian civil war started. During the Algerian civil war between 1992 and 2002, the Modern Berber movement became an alternative to the regime and radical Islamists (Weitzman 2012, 120). During the civil war, the Berber movement was divided into two. The first view in the Berber movement was to participate in the peace talks between the Islamist movement and the government and to prevent more bloodshed in this war. The second opinion consisted of those who advocated the government against the Islamist movement (Tulga 2017, 70).

During the civil war, the members of the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) organized attacks against the supporters of the Berber movement, the FFS (Socialist Forces Front) and RCD (Union for Democracy and Culture) parties. On these rising attacks against Berbers, the secretary-general of the Union for Democracy and Culture (RCD) called for armament against increased Islamic radicalism. This call of

the secretary-general was supported by the Berber movement, and in the Berber villages the public arms were deployed and armed village committees were established. These village committees, founded with the support of the RCD, fought against the Islamist movement alongside the government and with the support of the government (Güzel 1997, 70).

During the civil war (1992-2002), in 1994, the Berbers first began to boycott in the schools, followed by a series of rallies and thousands of Berbers started 48-hour general strike. These actions were followed carefully by the government and they had to indicate that they began to work on the acceptance of the Berber language at the official language level (Güzel 1997, 78). In 1994, the regime established the Haut Commissariat a L' Amazighité and it means that regime recognized Berber identity officially for the first time (Weitzman 2012, 121).

In 1995, the Algerian constitution was renewed and the Berber identity was included in the new constitution (Weitzman 2012, 121). In 2002, the Berber language was recognized as a national language. However, the regime did not include the Berber language as an official language (Weitzman 2012, 122).

Today, the Berber movement struggles for more social equality, ethnic discrimination and the Berber language as the official language. Some radical Barbers fight for independence.

FINDINGS

As seen above, there are problems in Algerian political structure. Normally, the army should not be the most important element of the political structure. However, in Algeria, the army is the most important element of politics and politics is under the control of the army. This importance of the military is the most important obstacle to democratization in Algeria. For the advancement of democracy in Algeria, the army must be removed from politics.

The Algerian army is the most important actor in country politics. Most of the policies in the country are decided by Algerian army. Army is an absolute power in Algerian politics. In the democratic transition of the country, the army must be removed from politics. Similarly, the position of the army in solving the Berber problem is very important. In the resolution of the problem needs to be contracted

between civilian power and Berber movement. The army should not be a part of peace negotiations.

The presence of the army in the region is one of the problems between the Berber movement and the regime. The presence of the army in the region should be gradually reduced.

Compare to other examples in North Africa and the Middle East, it is seen that Algeria has improved her policy about ethnicity and rights to ethnic identities. However, this progress continues slowly and faces with some obstacles.

In 2002, Berber language became the national language, and after 2002, Berber language began to be taught in schools (Weitzman 2012, 123). However, Berber language education is very limited. In many places, Berber language education classes are closed with pretexts. At the same time, the content of the courses and the participants are investigated deeply by the regime (Weitzman 2012, 123). This situation must definitely be improved.

Similarly, Berber's radio and television channels are under strict control of the regime. These channels face with many censors. For this reason, there are no a lot of followers of these channels. The censorship on these channels should be reduced slightly.

The roads in the Berber area are still damaged and old. There is still no road in some districts. There is not much investment in the region by the regime (Watan 2011). In the winter of 2012, when there was snowfall, many Berber cities were not helped (Plantade 2012). Investment to the berber region needs to be increased. The trade relations between the Berber region and the rest of Algeria need to be improved.

Finally, there are armed conflicts between Arabs and Barbers in many regions in Algeria (Mesdoua 2014, 4). These conflicts have been going on for a long time. From time to time, the regime is not sufficient to intervene in armed conflicts between Arabs and Berbers. The regime should compose between these two ethnic elements. Before the eventsarmed conflicts spread to the rest of the country, a peace agreement should be made between the two ethnic elements. On the other hand, The Arab Spring period in Algeria was peaceful compared to other North African countries. There were some peaceful protests in Algeria during this period. The protests brought Arab and Berber youth together. During the protests the Arab

and Berber youths hand in hand gave voice to the their demands of the ideal democracy, freedom and multiculturalism (Jay 2015, 341). This unification of the young generation gives hope for the solution of the Berber problem. Today, Arab and Berber youth have started to act together on many social issues.

Algeria is a multicultural country and established based on the nation-state model. Normally, in the notion of nation-state concept, territory and blood were common criteria for citizenship (STRÅTH 2017, 232). However, Algerian regime put Arab and Islam identity in the center of nation-state model. This caused the crisis between the regime and the Berber movement. Today, it is discussed whether the political aims of the Berbers are autonomy or independence. According to researches such as Arab Daily news and BBC, the majority of the Berber movement in Algeria does not want independence. However, the large Berber population supports the autonomy of the region (Toumi 2017, 7).

This situation threatens the nation-state structure of Algeria. The Algerian regime therefore rejects the autonomy of the Berber region. Against this situation, the Algerian government should continue reforms in the Berber region such as recognition Berber identity. In addition, there should be found a compromise between the Algerian regime and the Berber movement. The most effective policy is the integration of the Berbers and the rest of the society plays an important role in the peace of Algeria. Therefore, the regime should focus on integration policies.

CONCLUSION

Berbers are one of the oldest community in Algeria. It is known that they lived before the Arabs in the region. During the expand of Islam, the Arab armies invaded Algeria and islamized Berbers. Although Berbers accepted Islam, the two communities could not integrate with each other because of their different languages and identities. In particular, the French colonial period made the integration of these two communities difficult. However, the Berber people, who had a unique culture, language and ethnic identity, actively supported the Algerian war of independence against France.

The Berber's expectation was an independent Algeria with a system suitable for the multicultural structure of this new independence and multicultural state. However, the first Algerian president, Bin Bella, stated that Algeria is an Arab

state and Algeria adopted the central and authoritarian nation-state model. This nation-state put Arab-Islamic identity in the center of country and this model rejected the multicultural structure of Algeria. In order to make the people a single nation first, it was aimed to unite the people under the Arab identity and therefore the Arabization movement started. Under this policy, education became completely in Arabic and banned Berber and French language. The regime's prohibition of the Berber language and identity caused the Berber movement to begin its struggle with the regime.

The struggle between the regime and Berber movement still continues today. In order to solve this problem, the Algerian government officially recognized the Berber identity and later the Berber language was recognized as a national language. The main purpose of the Berber movement today is the recognition of the Berber language as the official language, the end of ethnic discrimination and the increase of investments in the region.

Today, there are groups in the Berber movement who want independence and autonomy. Also in the literature, the number of scholars supporting the independence of the Berber movement has increased. Scholars like Cleo Jay think that the Berber movement fought for independence and autonomy (jay, 2015; 340). According to Paul Silverstein (2014; 15), the Algerian regime needs to take a big step on identity and language in solving the Berber problem.

In particular, the majority of Western scholars argue that the Algerian regime has violated human rights and justice over the Berber movement. However, as I mentioned in the alternative hypothesis, the concept of human rights and justice should not always be considered in western standards in countries such as Algeria. Therefore, when evaluating Algeria's relationship with ethnic minorities, it needs to be considered country's past ethnic minority policies and country's location. When considered regionally, the Algerian regime has taken many positive steps, like recognition of Berber identity and recognition of Berber language, regarding the Berber problem since 2000s.

The Algerian regime has begun to reduce many injustices faced by the Berber movement. Barber identity was officially recognized by the regime in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, the regime recognized the Berber language as a national language. Also, since 1989, the Berber movement has been represented by political

parties. These steps about minority rights are very important compared to other countries in the region.

In conclusion, Algeria should renew the nation-state model based on the Arab-Islamic identity in solving the Berber problem. The Algerian regime should prepare a constitution in accordance with the multicultural structure of the country and integrate Arab and Berber societies.

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