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French assimilation in Algeria: Between its logical aspects and the racism of colonialism

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Abstract---This study aims to examine the reality of French assimilation policy in Algeria—between its purportedly logical justifications and the inherent racism of colonialism. Through this research, we seek to address the main issues related to the attitudes of Muslim Algerians toward France, the extent to which they were influenced by its civilization, and their attachment to their own identity and Islamic civilization. We also aim to provide a clear picture of the assimilation policy and to show how it represented a major dilemma for the colonial authorities, whether in terms of its partial or total application, or whether it was merely an abstract concept devoid of any real political or legal implementation. The study further highlights the positions taken by the French Parliament regarding this policy. Methodologically, we rely on a historical-critical approach to analyze the gap between the assimilationist French discourse and the actual political and legal practices in Algeria, drawing on important French sources. The study reveals that the colonial authorities were not genuinely willing to implement an assimilationist policy toward the Muslim Algerian population, because their objective was not to produce a society similar to French society in language, religion, customs, traditions, or ways of thinking. Nor was their goal to create French citizens with the same rights enjoyed by native Frenchmen. Instead of true assimilation, the colonial administration pursued partial and limited forms of integration—such as the teaching of the Christian religion to undermine Islamic identity, recruitment into the colonial army, the employment of a small number of Algerians, mixed marriages, and migration to France. These measures aimed to produce a society stripped of inherited traditions, foundations, balance, and identity, in order to weaken its spirit of resistance. However, Algerians fully understood France's intentions in their country: to spread fear and death, dispossess them of their lands and property, and reduce them to servitude. Thus, they rejected French "civilization," being aware of its true meaning—namely, the eradication of their Islamic identity, to which they steadfastly clung. Ultimately, they demonstrated to France that its presence in Algeria was destined to come to an end.
Keywords---Algeria, assimilation, Muslim Algerians, French Parliament.

Introduction

The implementation of France's assimilation policy in Algeria represented a major dilemma. Applying its so-called logical principles would have required granting Algerians political and social rights—such as access to education, eligibility for public office, voting rights, parliamentary representation, and other entitlements guaranteed to French citizens under French law. Such outcomes, however, fundamentally contradicted the interests of the colonizer.

Within the French Senate, heated debates arose over the feasibility of implementing assimilation in Algeria, and the discussions revealed divergent and often contradictory views between supporters and opponents. Meanwhile, the attitudes of the Muslim Algerian population toward France and its policies were marked by awareness and

steadfastness; far from being impressed by the colonial project, Algerians clearly understood its objectives.

This raises several questions: How did assimilation become such a significant dilemma for the colonial authorities? Why did France refuse to apply its own "logical" principles and instead choose to enact exceptional laws?

Was the Algerian population willing to accept everything that was French, or were they firmly attached to their Islamic identity?

What positions did members of the French Senate take on the implementation of assimilation in Algeria ? did they regard it as feasible? And did they truly believe such a policy could ever be realized ?

1-the position of Algerians on assimilation :

Before delving into the assimilationist colonial policy, we thought to recall the attitude of Muslim Algerians towards the French in order to identify the extent to which they are ready to accept everything that is French, which is the position on which the success of the assimilationist policy depends, and what we found was that they did not have a sense of admiration, but they admired them, in their view, Roumi is crazy, he is a poor devil who lives from his work in the land .... He can only sleep in a large box, which in itself forms a whole edifice, and puts his clothes and many women's trinkets in boxes divided into parts...God knows why chairs and a table are arranged three times a day for eating and several dishes, coffee and alcoholic drinks, are served...What damned bastards they have done, so to be sentenced to such hard labor and without any compensation, they really arouse pity.[1]

This is in addition to their awareness of the French role in their country, which consists in torturing them and taking possession of their property, as the Tuareg of the Sahara stated to pauliat and masquevay : "we would rather die than be in the hands of France because we are sure not only of our own destruction, but we believe that we will die in severe torment because we know that in the entire desert area France is passing to crush Muslims, to satisfy its desire to turn them into slaves and take away all their lands on which they live.[2]

In addition, we find the statements of Algerians to the French that they do not look at them as liberators, as they claim, but they look at them as invaders who sowed fear and death in their country, and showed them their pride in their just social

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[1] Yvon Tiran, cultural confrontations in colonial Algeria, medical practices and religion 1830 - 1880, Mohamed Abdelkarim Ouargla, Algeria, Dar El Kasbah, 2007, p.307.

[2] J. R. A.C. N.Annee1891, senate-debate, february 26, 1891, P: 97

system and their Islamic character, to which they cling. It is impossible to coexist with the French, and their presence in Algeria will be the end of departure.

This is what Quesnoy wrote, quoting Leon Roche, about the opinion of Arab presidents such as Caliph Sayyid Ali Ould Sidi El-Khal, Ould Sidi Mubarak, who stated to him: "you say that your government is fair and merciful, but taking over a country other than your own, is it fair?" And is the devastation and death caused by your soldiers towards the innocent population, is that Mercy! "[3]

"You say that we lived in savagery before you came, this is a big mistake, we lived at all times according to our tastes and our social organization was fair and respectful, and we did not want another organization, our happiness is to live in humility," said Hakim Luqman.

"Can we respect cohabitation with the French, who are the Masters?" Should we submit to their customs and regulations No, it's easy to mix water with fire."

"Do not waste promises that you do not keep and do not seek to appreciate the fruit of the choices of civilization that we reject, because you yourselves have taught us that this word means the absorption of Muslims by Christians "... Muslims, when they feel that you are weak, will throw you into the sea that brought you."[4]

Quesnoy also wrote about the position of a Muslim dignitary in charge of judicial and religious functions: "you are here by the will of Allah, but your stay is limited to temporary because all those who passed before you from this land have left, look at the Romans, Vandals, Greeks, Spaniards and even Turks who profess our religion, leave and you will probably stay for a long time because your power is great, and that Allah wanted it, but you will leave like others."[5]

These are the conscious and steadfast Algerian positions, which are at the same time motives for the integrationist colonial policy, which in its entirety was embodied in the fear for its fate

In Algeria, he told Leroy Beaulieu that if France does not fuse the two elements, the day will come when the conquered (Algerian) nationalism will wake up like the awakening of the Irish and the Czechs.[6]

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[3] D. F. Quesnoy, Algeria, Paris, ed .Love And Love (S. A), P: 290.
[4] Ibid , P :291
[5] Ibid , P :2
[6] Abdelkader Hallouche, Ibid., p. 79

2-Assimilation of France's dilemma in Algeria:

Assimilation , according to the French concept, is the removal of points of difference and the production and creation of points of similarity

In language, religion, customs, traditions and way of thinking, which will be a manifestation of French civilization in Algeria, and therefore the French goal in Algeria, as defined by Pierre cur , is to search for ways to increase the similarities and minimize the differences between Muslims and Europeans[7] that is, the character of the victor over the vanquished. [8]

And it is the policy that the French authorities applied in all its old colonies, such as Martinique ,Guadeloupe, Guyana, Reunion and all of them were informants of the assimilationist Policy [9] because everything that France occupies becomes French territory based on the idea that the king who belongs to me is part of me and is an extension of myself in nature and thus will be established as an element of the French legacy outside France. [10]

But what we note is that this policy posed a big problem, which made colonialists cling in the history of the past to search for colonial examples that dominated peoples, that is, the search for a way to amputate another member of the same body. [11]

Therefore, the colonial administration took care of the tribal region and the desert region to achieve this .As for the means adopted by them, they are the teaching of

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[7] Pierre Cœur, The Assimilation of Muslim Indians , ,Paris,colonial printing Aguedon and Co., 1st edition, 1890, p:13 .

[8] Papa Ibrahim Seck, The cultural strategy of France in Africa,colonial education (1817-1960),Paris, Harmattan, 1993, P: 51.

[9] la Réunion reunion is located in the Indian Ocean in East Africa, 45 miles from Madagascar and close to Mauritius, it was discovered by the Arabs before the arrival of the Portuguese and did not settle there, then the Portuguese arrived and then occupied by France and is currently affiliated with it, its most important products are sugar cane, oil palm and Nigella, while Guyane French Guiana is one of the French overseas territories located on the northern coast of South America and has borders with the countries of Brazil and Suriname, controlled by the major empires are Portugal, France, French Guiana, Britain, the Netherlands, and eventually France, which had made Guyana its territory since 1763, had known French settlement since 1852 and In 1885, the French parliament passed a law stating that every French citizen sentenced to three punishments will be banished to French Guiana, that is, the reconstruction of the area with prisoners, as for the Guadeloupe Islands are located within the Lesser Antilles, which extend in the form of an arc from the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, subject to France, discovered during the second voyage of Christophe Columbus to America in 1493 he was the first European to set foot on Guadalupe and he named it Santa Maria de Guadalupe de Extremadura.Martinique Martinique is an island located in the eastern Caribbean Sea to the north of Trinidad and Tobago with an area of 1128 km2, a group of the Lesser Antilles and is one of the twenty-six constituent territories of the French territory.

[10] Denise Bouche,History of French colonization, ebb and flow, 1815-1962, T2,France, Fayard, 1994, P: 100 .

[11] Ibrahim Seck ,op cit , P : 51 – 52.

the Christian religion, Recruitment, Employment, intermarriage, immigration to France, the judiciary, and even the railway as a means of francization of Africa. [12]

Therefore, the logical result of this policy is to obtain French citizens who enjoy the French political rights that the French enjoy inside and outside their country by receiving the same education and pBut what happened is the opposite, where the assimilation policy was based on a contradiction, because real assimilation does not enter into the field of the interests of the colonizer, therefore it was a limited assimilation and without its logical cases [13] because the legislation imposed on Algerians was neither French legislation nor Islamic legislation, but it was an exceptional legislation contrary to integration and contrary to human rights because France's desire is to produce a society without an inherited tradition and without a base and balance.

The law of the people was the face of this contradiction, which proves the racism of the French colonialism and the civil order since 1871 and lasted more than fifty years[14] and on August 29, 1874, the administration issued a decree granting the value of labor workers the powers to prepare lists of violations that are punished and also stipulates that the judges are the ones who issue the penalties resulting from these violations, and also provided for granting this extraordinary judicial authority the right to issue prison sentences of up to six months and a fine of up to 500 francs, and also provided for doubling the penalty in case of repeated violation by the same person, as that the sentences issued are considered final sentences that are not subject to appeal, and these violations are shrinking and widening At the request of labor workers.[15]

In 1877, articles were added to it concerning land ownership and determining the security map, and since 1881 it was issued as a law, approved by the French parliament in both chambers and circulated to all military and civilian areas and in full-fledged and mixed municipalities and granted to the mayors the authority to take what they deem appropriate, as well as administrative actions in paramilitary areas, and this law And it decreased to twenty-one in 1891 to settle at twenty-three since 1904 [16]among the violations of this law, which are not considered violations:

- Moving without a license
- Non-participation in forced labor duties [17]

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[12] Pierre Cœur, Op. cit. , P : 48.

[13]Papa Ibrahim Seck , op. cit P :54-58.

14 Djamel guenan, issues and studies in the modern and contemporary history of Algeria, rouiba, National Company for communication, publishing and Publicity, 1997, pp. 126-127.

[15] Ibid., p. 127.

[16] Abu Al-Qasim Saadallah, national movement G1, Ibid., p. 455.

- Late payment of taxes
- Isolated housing outside the roundabout without a license and accommodation in forbidden places
- Meeting without a license for more than twenty people at Zarda events
Or visiting (Hajj and eating ....)
- Refusal or complacency in works or services
- Insulting employees of the French authority even if they are out of their jobs.
Then other offenses were added to it, such as :
- Non-compliance with the orders on the application of the law of July 26, 1873 and the law April 28, 1887 [18]
- Application of collective responsibility.

This law has had a significant impact on the population as shown in the following table:

Year	Number of punished	**The amount of outstanding offenses**	**Number of days in prison**
1882	26.081	208.406	70.386
1892	16.992	89.389	18.343

[19]

What we conclude is that this law was used as a weapon in peacetime, just as the confiscation of land was used in wartime, and it is a law that is far removed from the general French law in general and from assimilation in particular.

3-the position of the French parliament on integration:

Algeria has known parliamentary representation since October 1870 where it had the right to three deputies, one deputy for each territory then increased to six since 1885, and three senators. They are elected in universal suffrage by Europeans and Algerian Jews [20], most notably Eugene Etienne , deputy of Oran since 1881 to 1919 Gaston Thomson, deputy of Constantine from 1889 to 1932, and this parliamentary term is considered illegitimate, which equates to their great influence in Parliament

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[17] For example, if the governor-general moves to one of the regions, 7,000 or 8,000 Muslims are harnessed in four or five places where they are forced to work for two to five days without eating normally, and if anyone denounces the bad situation, he will be sentenced to five days in prison and 15 francs as a fine . Rev. J.O.R.F , Année 1891,op. cit, P : 100

[18] Andrey brenyan and others, op. cit., p. 374

[19] Jamal is an artist, issues and studies...:, Ibid., p. 127

[20] - Claude colas, 1871-1875, Isaac Adolph Cremieux 1872 – 1875 (Alger), Remy Jaques 1871 – 1885, Alexis Lambert 1872- 1877, Marcel Lucet, 1871-1876 , Benoit Vuillermoz , 1871-1872, August warnier1871-1875, François Gastu, 1876-1881 , Gaston Thomson, 1877-1932, Louis pessouliers, 1882-1885, Alexandre Mauguin 1881-1885, Alfred Letelier 1881-1893, Alcide Treille 1881-1889, Charle Bourlier 1885-1898, Camile Sabatier 1885-1889, Marcel Saint Germain 1889-1893, Paul Samary 1893-1898, Eduard drumiont 1898-1902, Emile Maurinaud 1898-1902, Fermin Faure 1898-1902. : Jacque lucet 1876-1883, Dominique Forcioli 1888-1883, Georges Lesueur 1888-1897, Alcide Treille 1897-1906, Ferdinand Le Livre 1876-1885, Alexandre Mauguin 1885-1894, Paul Gerante 1894-1912, Nicolas pomel 1876-1882, Rémy Jacque 1882-1900.

on the problem of Algeria [21]by preponderance of their views approving the point of view of the settlers, especially the great support they receive from French parliamentarians Republican-oriented and senior Republicans in the government.

In their view, assimilation was a means of resisting the imperial system, and it is also a source of privileges only where assimilation concerns institutions and not costs and duties[22] , that is, its application to sub-Algerian settlers.

Therefore, the fate of Algeria since 1871 became the prerogative of these deputies, but starting from 1891, the Senate witnessed sharp discussions about the general situation of Algeria and the doctrine of integration was fundamental in it, where different and contradictory opinions were recorded between supporters and opponents. And we have taken what some senators have stated as models such as Pulia, Dide, Terman, Moga, Koppen, Issac, Combe, Franck Chauveau.

Pauliat called for addressing the Algerian issue, particularly with regard to the political situation, and that all Algerian affairs should have been directed long ago, especially with the intensification of European competition for the African continent. He considered that the large colony of Algeria had political importance, and therefore a policy contrary to the policy implemented fifteen years ago must be employed to lift the injustice and unfairness imposed on Muslims on the other side of the Mediterranean. As he called for implementing a special policy for Muslims, where is the goal of enrolling them and using all means to assimilate them by changing their customs, subjecting them to French authority, and further weakening their spirit of resistance?

He saw the development, greatness and prosperity of the African colony as linked to the annexation and connection of its indigenous population with France, while emphasizing the difficulty of the task.[23]

As for the senator Dide, he stated that Muslims do not have any qualities to assimilate with France, while Pauliat saw the opposite, where he focused his theory on the tribal area, which makes up two-thirds of the Muslim population, and who will contribute a great deal to the integration [24]and this thought has been since the imperial era, but it had no result.

As for Terman, he stressed the difficulty of achieving assimilation work, and cited the Algerian officers in the French armies, who live a French life throughout their

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[21] Denise Bouche,History of French colonization, ebb and flow,(1815-1962),T2,France, fayard,1994,p:117 .
[22] Agron, the Muslim Algerians ...A1 previous reference P. O. :782
[23] J.O.R.F, Year 1891, session of February 26, 1891, op.cit, P:96.
[24] Ibid, P : 97

service, as there is no difference between them and the French, but once they are granted retirement, they all return to their Arab life after spending 15 or 20 years in service. Nevertheless, he did not call for a retreat from its application, but insisted on the possibility of achieving it related to the work of time, which is just as long, as he considered that thirty years was not enough, because, according to him, the French campaign ended only in 1857 with the control of the tribal area, so the work of assimilation will be the work of at least a century.[25] This is a proof of the strength and solidity of the Algerian society, which remained mysterious and steadfast for a long time in front of the French authorities.

However, we wonder here about the kind of assimilation intended by Terman, only what he stated is the extent to which Muslims agree with the colons and the extent to which the colons helped them during famine and poverty, as he cited the Famine of 1867 where, thanks to the generosity of the colons, many Algerians escaped death.[26]

So integration for him consists of usurping the property of Algerians, impoverishing them, starving them, and then helping them. Mauguin had the same approach, as he saw that assimilation was achieved by the Algerians accepting to work in the colon fields, but regarding the failure of this policy, he saw that sixty years was not enough, especially since the Moors occupied the Spaniards for 200 years without achieving their assimilation.

As for Cez Coubenne , he stated that assimilation is melting and fusion, and that it is impossible to achieve this between Algerians and Europeans due to the loss of an essential element, which is women. Without which assimilation is impossible, and it is the element that led to achieving dissolution in the old French colonies, such as America, India, Guadeloupe and Martinique, because the mother is the one who teaches her children to love the homeland! Therefore, they called for the emancipation and liberation of women because, in their opinion, Algerian women are imprisoned! [27]

Therefore, France's desire to educate Muslim girls emerged. At a time when there was [28] not the same enthusiasm in France for educating French girls, the goal of which, as Yvonne Terran mentioned, was to destroy society, because what was offered to them contradicted the role assigned to them by religious beliefs, morals, and Islamic family customs, which is the same role played by the employer, and by raising them in the European way, they became unfit for Arab life, but rather

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[25]Ibid, P :105

[26]Ibid, P :105.

[27] Ibid, session of February 27, 1891, P: 128.

[28] Formal education for girls began in France around 1850, there was no formal secondary education and French families were reluctant to entrust their daughters to school. Consider Yvonne Tiran, op. cit, p.272.

housewives for Europeans, and this leads to destructive results. Because the Muslim family rejects her, who does not want her and does not care about her .[29]

Since political rights are an aspect of integration, Si Koben demanded that voting rights be granted to Algerians, and at the same time he states that they do not demand them, but rather reject him and refuse to be French, and he supported his statement with what the Muslims stated in the Constantine province on the tongue of their nobles: "We do not want to be French." We will not give up our personal conditions, we prefer to remain Muslims, and we reject what you want to grant us" .[30]

What we notice is the dominance of imperialist policy over all solutions with its call not to implement assimilation completely, especially with regard to conscription, as it saw that it was dangerous to give weapons to 80 to 100 thousand Muslim men from a society that had not yet been confirmed .[31]

In 1893, even after the activity of the Senate Committee, whose investigations lasted 53 days, went into labor, after it failed to convince Parliament of its project, such that it was unable to unify the visions of its members regarding the issues that were studied [32], Algeria, in turn, did not experience any reforms or developments, so the doctrine of integration remained a subject of discussion in the parliamentary arena, where parliamentarians did not agree on what Algeria was to France!

Isaac , who agreed in his point of view with Combes , said that Algeria is an extension of France and therefore must be integrated with it, by administering it in the same way as the French region, which must be applied to all residents, without discrimination, especially since the Muslim issue is almost the Algerian issue, Thus, establishing a basis for a common life between the two elements is the solution to all Algerian problems [33] and this is done by experimenting with all means of integration to gradually change their customs and traditions by bringing them into European society and granting them all its benefits, in addition to fighting the system of oppression that works to push tribes towards other tribes, so that Algeria in all its parts becomes more and more French.

Isak also criticized the anti-integration republican system for establishing the civil system without lifting the guarantees of control and without changing the spirit of the constitutions, and that it only replaced the old officers of the Arab offices and granted the settlers all the constitutions of France, because the governor-general in

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[29] Ibid., p.: 279.
[30] J.O.R.F, 1891, session of February 27, 1891, op.cit, P: 128-129
[31] Ibid, P: 129.
[32] Agron, the Algerians..., C1, Ibid., p.: 861.
[33] J.O.R.F, Year 1893, senate- debate, sitting of May 26, 1893, P: 682.

Algeria is the governor of the colon, and that the integration that has been in place for twenty years was implemented outside the scope of the Algerians and even more so against them, as its procedures were accomplished in a way that put them in a real tragedy, especially with regard to the forest system, property laws, justice, And municipal law. [34]

Finally, he concluded that the merger had diverted from its true and necessary meaning. Only half of the idea was taken, which led to the deterioration of the situation in Algeria, as the general situation in Algeria was judged to be insufficient in terms of its social balance index. He called for considering the interest of France, which was not represented in the interest of a specific group of people, but in the interest of all the population living under the French flag . [35]With this position, he makes him completely different from Senator Franck Chauveau , who stated that integration is above all a matter of self-esteem for Europeans who want to be treated like the rest of the citizens of the mother country .[36]

As for Cambon, on May 30, 1893, he reassured the Europeans of Algeria about their fate, assuring them that the assimilation of all Algerians was impossible due to the impossibility of granting them the same political rights as the French and because Muslims insisted on preserving their personal status .[37]

What we conclude is that the Algerian issue in general and the issue of assimilation in particular were discussed warmly during the nineties by the French Parliament, but they did not lead to any results, and the Algerian issue did not witness any progress [38] and then this interest gradually began to fade in parallel with the collective joining of the idea of colonial expansion This made the task of Algerian MPs easier, especially since the majority of moderates in the Chamber of Deputies responded to their demands. The interest shown by parliamentarians in Algeria and the facts and criticism directed against some of them was due to the hostility between the Republican Union, the Left Republican Union, the Right Republican Union, and the government of the Republic.

Conclusion

We conclude from the above that the colonial authorities did not want to implement an assimilation policy towards the Algerian Muslim population because their goal was not to produce a society similar to French society in language, religion, customs, traditions and way of thinking, and their goal was not to form French citizens who

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[34] Ibid , P :683-684
[35] Ibid, P :684
[36] Agron, the Algerians..., C1, Ibid., p.: 831.
[37] Ibid., p.: 832.
[38] The same, P.: 861.

would enjoy all the rights enjoyed by the original Frenchman, because real integration in would pose a threat to their colonial interests It sought to implement partial and limited assimilation, such as teaching Christianity to eliminate Islamic identity, conscription, employing a small number of Algerians, mixed marriage, and assimilation to France. Its goal behind this was to produce a society without an inherited tradition, without a base and balance, and without an identity to weaken their spirit of resistance. France did not stop at not implementing assimilation in its logical cases, but rather imposed exceptional legislation on Algerians, such as the "People's Law," which demonstrated France's racism The argument of most parliamentarians in this regard was that the Algerian Muslim did not have the qualities to assimilate with France and could not assimilate into French life. Therefore, implementing assimilation in Algeria was a major dilemma for France, but the Algerians were aware of France's intentions in their country, which were to sow fear and death, and steal their property and lands, and turn them into slaves Therefore, they rejected its civilization because they were aware of its true meaning, which focused on eliminating the Islamic identity to which they clung, and they also proved to France that its presence in Algeria was doomed to disappear.

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