

Common concerns: "Al-Said" visit to "Algeria" between Tunisian desires and Algerian priorities

The President of the Tunisian Government “Habib Al-Said” visited “Algeria” in 16 May for two days, he was accompanied by economic and security delegation. The visit is the first foreign one since his “Al-Said” hold the presidency of the Government, and it came after a visit of the President of the Republic “Al-Sabsi” to “Algeria” in last February.

Positive results:

The visit results was an agreement to increase military and security coordination in the border areas, to confront extremist groups that are active in those areas. As well as, the agreement on the adoption of a joint project to withdraw fuel distribution from private institutions in border provinces, and form a public company to produce and distribute fuel in border areas. So that they could deal with smuggling fuel operations across the border between “Tunisia”, “Algeria” and “Libya” which caused fuel crises in the Algerian southern provinces, and the loss of 100 million dollars annually.

They also agreed on coordinating efforts to maintain “Libya” security and political stability, and finding a political solution to the crisis through the support of United Nations-sponsored dialog to form a national unity government between the crisis sides. In addition to the agreement on the activation of joint committees of the traditional industries in the areas of

tourism and trade, to hold its first meeting in June, and the activation of the protocol of cooperation between the two countries signed in 2003, in the area of traditional industries.

Considering Tourism concerns, the two countries discussed: A) the possibility of establishing a sea touring route between the two countries. B) Expanding the size of the flow of tourists in both directions. C) Promoting cooperation between tourism agencies. D) Stimulating investment in the field of tourism. E) Finally, establishing a joint commission to consider the problems raised at the level of trade between the two countries.

At the same time, they agreed on convening the 20th session of the Algerian- Tunisian Supreme Joint Cooperation Commission by the end of this year, and follow-up to the completion of the sectorial commissions' work, to promote bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, energy, tourism and industry.

Tunisian motives to visit Algeria:

The visit reveals the importance of cooperation between the two countries political, security and economic issues. "Tunisia" hoped to obtain the Algerian security and military support, particularly in the area of arming and training, so it could A) Face the increasing activities of extremist groups inside "Tunisia" especially after the "Bardo museum" terrorist attack in March 2015, B) neutralize terrorists in "Al-Shaanbi" mountain.

As well as, increase security coordination and cooperation with “Algeria” to control the borders and combating terrorism in “Al-Sahel” and “Morocco”, where the two countries face increasing security challenges and threats in North Africa and “Al-Sahel”, because of extremists activities and the collapse of the security system in a number of countries in the region, particularly in “Libya” and “Mali”. Also, to coordinate at both political and security level with “Algeria” on “Libyan crisis” which represent a nightmare for both countries, as the two countries share a common border with “Libya”, that are used to transfer weapons and fighters, which support the capacity of terrorist groups on both sides.

In addition to obtaining the Algerian economic support, and a number of joint projects so that “Tunisia” could overcome the economic difficulties, especially with the rise of protests in south Tunisia against poverty and unemployment.

Algerian priorities:

Algeria seek to support “Tunisia” and establish a strong relations with it for several reasons, perhaps the most important are: A) to help Tunisia to achieve political and economic and security stability, so as not to add a new tension to an already tense borders in the south (Mali, Niger) and with “Libya”. B) To ensure that Tunisia adopt the same Algerian policy toward Libyan crisis, based on the rejection of military intervention and support dialog between all parties without exception. C) Algeria's desire

to strengthen its influence in “Tunisia” at the expense of “Morocco” that have tense relations with “Algeria” because of the issue of “Western Sahara”.

Concluding observations:

At the end, we can say that the visit and the consequent agreements reflect that the two countries were keen to increase bilateral cooperation in various fields and coordinate positions on Libyan crisis. It seems that the economic crisis of Algeria because of the decline in the world oil prices will affect the economic support to Tunisia.

The Tunisian and Algerian Rapprochement may lead to increased complexity in Algerian Tunisian relations at various levels in the coming period, which will reflect positively on the interests of both countries and foreign policy toward a number of regional issues such as “Western Sahara” and “Libyan crisis.

It is likely the security concerns would be highlighted, through the increased security coordination between all of “Tunisia” and “Algeria” in the coming period to deal with the state of security instability and increasing activities of terrorist groups in the area.