

## Transcript

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Our second speaker is Professor Michael Wins.

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Thanks very much, Antonina. Thanks so much to Rayhan for inviting me to participate in this workshop. And it's a whole set of interesting themes and I think it's something that needs to be.

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Looked at in.

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Way I'm going to talk about the case of Algeria.

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As many of you know, it's a country that I work on. I didn't.

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My PhD thesis in the first book I wrote on the Islamist movement and my last book, I returned in the 2010s to report the case again. But interesting enough, it's an Islamist movement that really hasn't received much academic attention generally.

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And therefore I thought it might be interesting to talk a little bit about the Algerian experience that hasn't really been covered now. In one sense, it's rather surprising that the Algerian experience hasn't been covered because for a period in the mid 1990s it was rein it was recognised as probably the most powerful and influential easing this movement.

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The region.

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As many of you know, in 1990 to 1991.

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An Islamist?

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Party the Islamic Salvation Front or front Islamic you said you usually known by its sakran's, FIS, FIS swept the board in local national.

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And legislative elections emerging not just as the clear winner, but with roughly half of all the votes cast in every election it counted at its height, 5 million people are.

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For it in Algeria.

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As I'm sure you know, when when these elections at the national level were precipitably abandoned halfway through and cancelled, and the feast was banned.

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Armed is the misleading insurgency against the Algerian regime that lasted much of the 1990s and cost 10s of thousands. By some estimates, hundreds of thousands of lives. At one point, it was thought that this insurgency would leave to the establishment the overthrow of the Algerian regime and the establishment of an Islamic State.

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Of a Mediterranean.

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However, this didn't happen.

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And the insurgency subsequently faded away. So not only this, but Islamism of broader movement and phenomenon appear to rapidly recede from Algerian political life, where after now, although the feat had been banned and dissolved in 1992, there were other political parties.

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Other Islamist principal parties but were allowed to continue to operate in Condesa elections. Yet none of these were really able to to continue and have the same sort of support. But the cease had done at its height in the early 1990s, where, as I said, they were sweeping the border.

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Half of.

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Counted millions of votes.

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As an indication of this, of these other political Islamist political parties in the way, the elections that took place across the region in the aftermath of the uprising.

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World in 2011 to 22, Algeria was the only country in North Africa.

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Africa that did not witness a significant surge in support for the Islamist parties and candidates, as we've heard Meesgi, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, all saw substantial advances in the Islamist. This completely bypassed Algeria.

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Indeed, the electoral alliance. But the Islamist parties in Algeria put together the elections in 2012 to take advantage of. This was credited receiving a grand total of 6% of the votes cast.

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The figures for the action are a little bit unreliable, but there's not really any dispute, but they did not perform well and certainly well below what happened across.

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Rest of North Africa.

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Be armed and jihadist groups elements of Islamism fared really little better during this period. Not only did the sort of violence that had been associated with the civil conflict of the 1990s.

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Fall away rapidly after the turn of the new Millennium, but Algerians presence in international armed and jihadi groups declined steeply and I think 1 striking indicator of.

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Was the Algerian presence amongst N Africans leading to join Islamic State or dash?

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In Iraq and and Syria in the mid twenty 10s.

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By 2016, by 1 in estimate of using the actual Crisis Group, 6000 Tunisians had gone, gone to Syria and Iraq to fight with Daesh.

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The number of Moroccans was about 1600.

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The number of Algerians was estimated to be fewer than 100 and this is just two decades after an enormous armed jihadi insurgency in Algeria. These are remarkable things. So we see both of the party, political and the armed jihadi tendency with with.

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A collapsed away.

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So how do we?

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Really explain this precipitous fall off this is behind my the title of my take. Whatever happened to Algeria and Islam?

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None.

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And what lessons might it provide, if any, for our sort of understanding of Islamism as a phenomenon?

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Now on one level, the answer to the question, whatever happened to our duanism is sort of quite straight forward as often the case there's sort of bitter and bloody civil conflict in the 1990s change public perceptions and thus levels of support for his limits. And there's a movement in ideology.

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However, I think the story is more complex and interesting and nuanced. I think it from from it's all sorts of interesting things can come out and this is what I some of the things you know the short time.

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Got here. I'd like to talk about.

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To begin with, I think it's probably worth putting it down a couple of caveats about support for ISM is in the 19.

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Support for the feast was already declining at the elections it was contesting in the early 1990s.

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It had dropped it by.

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National legislative elections, and similarly, when we look at the armed insurgency, only a fraction of the three million voters who voted back the thessim in the 1991 legislative elections clearly lent their active support to the armed groups.

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That launched their campaign, the resist and reverse the cancellation of the elections and the banning of atheists in 1992.

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It was certainly true, but large numbers of individuals did join these groups, perhaps totaling below 10s of thousands, at their absolute height. Now, that's an awful lot of people, and that's enough to support a substantial insurgency.

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But it fell well short of what the feast and the armed groups were hoping for, and they had really wanted to reproduce the sort of national insurgency that the FLN had mounted against the French back in the 50s. This.

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That we used this didn't happen. It didn't mobilise the population.

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As a result, the campaign of the armed groups in the 1990s never really threatened the overthrow of the state. No major city or urban city was captured, no or urban centre was captured by the insurgents, and no major defections from the army into the insurgency.

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Significantly, most of the predictions about the fall of the government in Algiers, which were particularly current in about.

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Were made by Western newspapers and news outlets, alarmed by the rise in violence and by possible parallels with the Iranian Revolution. This became a particular concern in Western newspapers. Nevertheless, the insurrection caused significant bloodshed, costing perhaps as many as 30,000 lives in 1994 alone.

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So if this is a dispatch insurrection.

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Now the ultimate failure of what became known as the Algerian jihad was fundamentally attributable to the lack of mass support amongst ordinary Algerians. It's declined from the end of the 1990s, is attributed to a complex combination of factors. These include divisions within the armed groups ideologically and geographically.

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A successful counterinsurgency by the regime helped with the.

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Deal with the IMF and this culminated in the ceasefire and amnesty for significant part of of the members of the armed group these.

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Contributed to.

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Now rehabilitation of the feasts, the originalism this party would have been prevented from victory in 1990.

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Had been a key issue of the negotiations with the armed groups for the ceasefire in 1997, but this ultimately never occurred. The cease was never re legalised, despite this being on the table.

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Indeed, the party, the feasts that are the featured at the centre of a political debate throughout the 1990s.

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Progressively faded through the 2000s.

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As as the decade progressed, so this was the centre, it just favoured away.

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And.

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I think this was sort of this reality of the feast no longer being at the centre of anything. It was sort of symbolised.

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In December 2011, when the Algerian parliament actually in pass the law but it more or less explicitly banned the feasts from ever being reconstituted.

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And the symbolism was that the former deputy leader of a peace Ali bin Haj, he went and mounted a solo protest on his own outside the parliament against it on his own sitting there. And he cuts a rather lonely figure. Now, if you know anything about the thess in the 1990s.

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In Algeria.

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Ali Belhaj was able to attract.

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Thousands just to his sermons on Fridays in.

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My elcanimal skin. Bablu, Ed. And at the feast rallies of hundreds of thousands. He was the star performer. Here is a guy sitting at the parliament saying please can you re legalise my party. So this is sort of it's symbolic sort of fall from grace.

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Now, while the thieves remain banned, the other is for miss parties were permitted to continue and operate. As I mentioned earlier, but with much limited impact. Some were even Co opted into government but wielded little power.

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Awarded Minor ministries and governments dominated by parties loyal to the president, who constitutionally dominated the political scene.

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This Co OPTATION clearly designed to, was clearly designed to erode the original support for the feasts, serve to undermine these parties credibility as opposition voices, a process reinforced by their progressive implication in government corruption scandals.

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Accusations of corruption and venality also, instead members of the armed groups who had accepted the ceasefire in the amnesty deals offered by the state.

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The fact that large numbers of these former fighters were able to launch successful businesses once they had laid down their weapons was attributed by many Algerians to both financial help from the government as well as investment of money accrued through racketeering during the conflict.

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In this way, both Islamist politicians and former jihadis came to be widely associated in the public mind, with corruption and personal greed.

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You'll find that often if you raise the subject.

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Amongst ordinary Algerians about what they think of this one, it's they say it's not about religion. This is what it's all about. This is what they're this is a very common thing. You mentioned Islamists and the fingers would start going, you know, at this perception. Yes, this is what they're this is what they're in, they're interested in is far more interested than that, which is a very interesting phenomenon. It's very widespread.

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So.

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But this is interesting. This is in stark contrast to the condemnation of official corruption. There have been a major plank of the the success, and indeed is a major plank of a lot of these families, movements, campaigns, I think. So you didn't in your free.

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Thanks.

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Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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Now, not all of vs been as parties who entered into government.

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Not all meant to government. Several remained outside and were as harshly critical of the government as the feast had. However, these parties were no more successful, attracting significant parts of a former support base of the feasts. This suggests that sort of other factors were at work. Indeed, we need to look at changing views towards Islamist movements and Algerian society over this period.

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To understand what was occurring now, particularly instructive in this regard.

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Was the work of a.

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Student who was on the M Phil and modern males and studies.

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Quite a while ago later Nadia Jones, who wrote a a fascinating thesis who tracked the views of in the mid 2000s in two strongly Islamist fee supporting areas and have been involved in the violence.

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She found there mounting disillusionment with an opposition to the armed Islamist groups campaign against her regime, even amongst former supporters of the fees.

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This was not solely the result of unhappiness with the use of violence, but also what was seen as the increasingly exclusively political and personal, rather than religious nature of the armed struggle. This was what was unhappiness. Now it's interesting.

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That that the critique of the armed groups by ordinary Algerians was framed in religious.

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Terms.

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And I think Nadia Jones's study was actually prompted by the apparent paradox that she had wanted to explore, that she'd noticed, I think, some of the best research has done. When people spot a paradox and try and explain, it was that the decline in support for armed groups in the Islamist political parties in the 2000?

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Was was accompanied by a rise in evident religious practise and observance in those areas.

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This went against the widespread expectation that the upheaval and violence of the 1990s would lead not only to a decline in support for his missed ideas, but an expansion in securities, ideas and practises.

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Dear Jones's respondents accounted for this apparent paradox by explaining that while the feasts and Islamist ideas more generally had prompted large parts of the population to support the application of Islamic values in politics and society.

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Behaviour of many Islamists in the 1990s.

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That created dissolution that.

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However, this disillusion with Islamists did not lead to disillusionment with Islam. In fact, many respondents pointed out that Islamism and had effectively reintroduced many Algerians to Islam, leading them to explore religious texts and ideas for themselves.

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This renewed engagement with Islam, moreover, took a more individualistic.

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Focusing on personal piety and behaviour, rather than seeking the sort of collective approaches to the transformation of society advocated by most middle easternist movements, again, this is something that occurs elsewhere.

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Studying in Egypt, for example, looks at this. This is rainbow again, the piety movement is very similar phenomenon indeed. Nadia Jones argued that this engagement with religious ideas and texts and a more personalised approach to religion has created, as you wrote, a current climate in which people are far more wary and able to challenge those using.

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Hi.

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Dockma to accumulate.

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Power, which is that which she regarded as she described as a body blow to political Islam. But if people are actually have things to give them, to speak back.

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The Islamists.

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I could give talk a little bit more.

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How am I doing for time?

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5:00 so I can talk a little bit more about that, about the depoliticization of religion and the withdrawal of politics from religion, and all from religion, from politics, has occurred.

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There's broader things in politics, but with 5 minutes, I just want to go to some sort of concluding thoughts to try and sort of bring this together.

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So So what can we really conclude from from algier's experience and from all of its, we see a country that's had an intense experience of Islamism, but has resulted in a society that is now overwhelmingly rejected and left behind the formal party, political and jihadi expressions of Islamism with their ambitions to take control of the leaders of the state and.

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Yet throughout this religious belief and practise have not diminished and the scene has expanded in many ways. And but in ways that are such much more personalised and deeply sized in this way does Algeria represent a case of a state in society that has definitively rejected Islamism as a movement and an ideology?

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What?

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Now my my great friend and academic mentor, the late George Joshi.

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He was at the view that forms of Islamism always likely to reappear because of the important and explicit things Islam has to say on subjects such as injustice that were inherently political. In other words, it's going to emerge because these issues de politicisation can't work. Islam has political.

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To say.

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So what? What?

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Can we see more generally for me algebra?

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This panel was really about the international transnational implications of of it, and I think these are really surprisingly everybody likes to say what they study has great international implications. I think in my.

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I don't think.

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It has as many as it is like.

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Journalism was a surprisingly nationally focused and with surprising little outside influence on it. That's not said there wasn't, and surprisingly, corresponding little effects beyond its borders. Quite a national story that possibly explains why it hasn't been studied as much.

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What played out from 2011 in first Egypt and then Syria and Syria had remarkable similarities with what had happened in Algeria early on. If you look at the feast experience is similar to Egypt, then the Civil War, it has remarkable similarities.

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With what happened in 1990s in Syria, but beyond some advice that the Algerian authorities offered the Syrian government, they I don't think that was really clear.

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Directing.

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This is partly due to how much more insulated Algeria has been from external trends through its particular history and nature of its economy, but also, it should be said, to a large degree through matter of choice, which sounds a rather strange thing to say those.

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You who know.

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Are familiar with Algeria? Will know. Algerians are fiercely resistant to the idea that they are following external trends and influences, hence the nearly universally held view in Algeria that the uprisings of 2011 to 12 elsewhere in the Arab world were late.

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Following a trend that Algeria had experienced itself in 1988, Algeria believes everybody else was late to the party.

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Very upturned.

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This then explains the how the lack of unrest in upheaval in Algeria in 2011 to 2012. However, I'd like to close with one observation of a phenomenon I have observed in Algeria, and I would be interested to see what other research there is on on this and what other people who work on other movements.

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Have come across.

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As he talks, spoken a lot about post Islamism, which is a thing, and it's interesting, but I'm more interested in. I got intrigued by what I call post Islamist.

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In other words, what happens to the former Islamist activists once movements fade from prominence?

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Most of us are aware of the phenomenon particularly prevalent in the 1970s and 80s of individuals moving from other ideological trends into Islamism, most prominently from movements of a political left, however, has much.

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Research being done on traffic in the opposite direction.

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Of activists leaving Islamist movements for other organisation and ideological trends during my field work, most recently in Algeria.

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I was intrigued to counter a number of individuals who I subsequently discovered had previously been Islamist activists but were clearly no longer part of Islamist trends. I particularly remember a long, long haired, chain smoking theatre critic who a mutual friend of ours later told me Oh yeah, back in the day he had this Salafi.

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Amis is sharing a lot more about what going down in Marad you know campaigning. This is the same guy. Oh yes. And this happened several times. What happens to these people? Where do they go? I used to ask where did, where did, where will we use them is. Where did all the feasible.

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And ordinary Algiers would say either all dead, or they're all living with you in London.

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Which I thought was an interesting response. I was able to respond to that. It just prompted me.

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It prompted you to wonder what happened to the rest of the hundreds and thousands of people who attended fixed rallies and listened to Ali Belhaj's fiery, incendiary sermons. Although sermons always go, where are they now, and what do they think of a whole period?

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I have my own ideas and thoughts, but I'll be very interested to know what other people think about where are all the posters from this now? Thank you very much.

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I.