

ABSTRACTS

Algeria: Historical Struggles and Imagined Utopias Conference

Thursday 28 – Friday 29 May 2026
London School of Economics and Political Science

Panel 1A: Honouring Hugh Roberts – and his scholarship on a diverse Algeria

Latefa Guemar, University of East London

Beyond separatism: Kabyle identity, political participation and the scholarly legacy of Hugh Roberts

This presentation honours the life and scholarship of Hugh Roberts (1945–2025), whose research fundamentally reshaped the understanding of Algerian society and of Kabilyia in particular. Roberts demonstrated that Kabyle communities historically exercised a sophisticated system of local governance and civic engagement within the broader Algerian and Maghrebi contexts, thus challenging both colonial-era misrepresentations and contemporary claims of separatism (Roberts, 2014). His work complemented Pierre Bourdieu's sociological analysis, which highlights the role of familial networks, education and symbolic capital in structuring Kabyle social cohesion and political participation (Bourdieu, 1964; 2004). Taken together, their work underscores that Kabyle identity is linguistic, cultural and civic, rather than inherently political or separatist. Contemporary developments have reinforced this perspective. Kabyle-rooted parties, including the Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (RCD) and Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS), have committed to participating in the 2026 legislative and local elections, reflecting their active engagement in national institutions and rejection of diaspora-driven separatist claims (LexPress Quotidien, 2025; RCD-Algerie.net, 2025). This presentation therefore situates Roberts' scholarship within both historical and current contexts, showing how autonomy, cultural specificity and political integration coexist, providing a robust evidence-based counter to separatist narratives and affirming the enduring relevance of his work to an understanding of Algeria's complex social and political landscape.

Patrick Crowley, University of Galway

Future Algerias: The collective publication of J'ai rêvé l'Algérie

The publication *J'ai rêvé l'Algérie* is a collective work initiated and financed by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Algeria and published by Éditions Barzakh in Algiers in 2020. The project was conceived during the Hirak movement and the initial idea was to encourage young people to imagine and write about their vision for Algeria through writing workshops organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, physical meetings were replaced by online conversations, and the project was reshaped in collaboration with Éditions Barzakh. *J'ai rêvé l'Algérie* features 14 texts by various contributors, including journalists, writers, architects, psychologists, students, doctors, only a few of which were professional writers. The central question asked of the contributors was: 'De quelle Algérie rêvez-vous, et pourquoi?'. The book provides a series of fictions, testimonies, and reflections on what might be a better Algeria, or not and how we might imagine it. This paper examines the contributions of those born since 1988 offering an analysis of the different texts and a synthesis that tries to identify the horizon of expectation as viewed by some of those involved in the heady moment of the Hirak.

Panel 1B: Historical Resistances

Claire Eldridge, University of Leeds

"I am a soldier like you": Resistance, solidarity, and agency among Algerians in the French army (1914-1918)

Archives held at the Service historique de la défense in Vincennes conserve records of c.140,000 cases of soldiers brought before a military tribunal during the First World War. The 'crimes' these men were accused of committing ranged from the relatively minor, such as 'causing a scandal' while drunk, to more serious offences such as insubordination, desertion, and murder. Focusing on units containing high proportions of the 173,000 colonial subjects from Algeria who served in Europe between 1914 and 1918, this paper uses military justice archives to reconstruct and analyse the interactions and relationships that shaped daily life within the multi-ethnic French army. As one of the few places we find the voices of colonised Algerian soldiers, interrogating these archival materials deepens our understanding of how discrimination and inequality functioned within the supposedly egalitarian structures of the French military. Centring the voices and perspectives of accused Algerians demonstrates that they found ways to protest, to resist, to show solidarity and thus to exercise agency despite the many constraints imposed by military structures and the wider war. Documenting these different strategies challenges the perception of military justice as something that was simply enacted upon soldiers and instead conceives of it as a space of encounter and negotiation in which combatants sought to influence judicial procedures and thus exert some degree of control over their lives.

Philip Dine, University of Galway

Reading and remembering the Emir Abdelkader: Holy warrior, horseman, humanitarian

Amir 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jasiri (1808-1883) – or the Emir Abdelkader, as he is typically known in France – first came to international attention as the leader of a remarkable campaign of indigenous resistance to the invasion of Algeria between 1830 and 1847. Following his honourable surrender to the French army, the way was open not only for civilian settlement of the territory, but also for its annexation in 1848 as three departments of the 'one and indivisible' Republic. France's subsequent defence of the myth and the reality of Algérie française was to culminate in the war of national liberation, 1954-1962. As the foundational event of the independent Algerian state, this conflict also contained the seeds of the civil war that devastated the country between 1991 and 2002. Throughout this period, and beyond, the contested memory and ambiguous symbolism of Abdelkader would be mobilized for a surprisingly wide range of audiences – in France, Algeria, and further afield – through a rich variety of textual and visual representations. A sample of these depictions is considered here, including their reflection, and inflection, in terms of the Emir's remarkable equestrian skills. The paper thus explores Abdelkader's still evolving persona: alternately religious fanatic and 'friend of France'; nationalist hero and colonial collaborator; and, most recently, 'apostle of fraternity' and 'just Arab leader' – and as such a putative model for improved relations between the West and the Arab-Islamic world in our own troubled times.

James House, University of Leeds

Beyond the Casbah: Mobilising for Independence in the Algiers shantytowns - the Cité Mahieddine and beyond, 1945-1962

Drawing on an extensive range of archival sources and oral history, and foregrounding spatial analysis, this paper focuses on the social and political history of the Cité Mahieddine, the largest central Algiers shantytown, from the mid-1940s until independence. The discussion situates Mahieddine within the wider urban context of Algiers (both central and suburban), showing how this shantytown was embedded into a range of economic, social and cultural ties across the city, in addition to the links maintained between Mahieddine and the regions from where its inhabitants had often internally migrated. More specifically, the paper examines the relationship between two interlinked processes: firstly, the 'nationalisation' of Algerian society that was arguably accelerated by the trans-regional 'melting pot' within the shantytown setting, bringing new social and political identifications and solidarities; secondly, the processes by which the shantytown was incorporated into the struggle for independence, both through open political campaigning and more 'indirect' means such as the scouts movement. In this regard, the role of nearby Belcourt / Belouizdad is given particular attention, given this district's key role as nationalist 'hub' with its dense activist networks. This presentation also examines how and why, in Mahieddine, we see the presence of the MNA (alongside the FLN) in the shantytown well beyond 1956, just as it considers the range of strategies used by the shantytown population to subvert colonial control. Finally, this presentation will consider what wider conclusions might be drawn from the Mahieddine case study regarding political socialization and the contribution of the urban poor to the struggle for independence.

Panel 2A: Maghrebi brothers, North African borders and solidarities**Yu Lan, University of Exeter**

Discord between 'Maghrebi brothers': Algeria-Morocco interstate and intrastate conflicts, 1962-1964

This article assesses the origins, causes, and consequences of the deteriorating relations between Algeria and Morocco in the early 1960s. It begins by examining the role of the colonial legacy and decolonisation processes, which laid the foundation for two ideologically contrasting regimes: Algeria's FLN government and Morocco's Alaouite Dynasty. While the FLN leader, Ben Bella, exported his revolutionary rhetoric and sought leftist partners globally, Moroccan King Hassan II pursued closer ties with Western countries, particularly the United States and France. As ideological divergences widened, both countries faced prominent domestic opponents and accused the other of supporting them. These elements, alongside Saharan border disputes and the Moroccan irredentist claims inspired by the idea of "Greater Morocco," sparked a military conflict known as the "Sand War" between Algeria and Morocco in 1963. The article then analyses the war's process, external interventions, and intrastate significance for the two states. In conclusion, the Algeria-Morocco conflict was not merely a border dispute but a systematic ideological and power contention. The Moroccan King, albeit diplomatically disadvantaged, successfully seized the opportunity to consolidate his power at home, outshining Ben Bella's overthrow by Houari Boumédiène's military coup.

Farah Otozbeer, SOAS

Spaces of possibility in Cairo: The early formations of Algerian-Egyptian solidarity networks, 1945-1952

This paper explores the arrival of Algerian nationalists in Cairo during the 1940s and 1950s, before the Algerian Revolution, and their efforts to establish solidarity networks with Egyptian politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals. It shows how the presence of Algerians in Cairo shaped new forms of political solidarity with the Mashreq rooted in a shared anti-colonial imaginary. The paper studies two sites in Cairo, namely the Arab League and the Office of the Arab Maghreb, as “spaces of possibility”, borrowing from Doreen Massey’s term to describe “the unpredictability, the variety, and the creativity that can sometimes be sparked,” which render these spaces “for those who join them, spaces of possibility”. The paper situates those institutions, and the networks that ensued from them, within the context of British domination in Egypt, highlighting the possibilities and limits of solidarity under a decolonisation context. The paper aims to recover the understudied history of Algerian-Egyptian solidarity in the 1940s and 1950s, prior to Abdel-Nasser’s rise, revealing the deep roots and formative structures of a solidarity network that would endure the Algerian Revolution.

Martin Evans, University of Sussex

Algeria and Morocco 1954 - 64: The transformation from resistance solidarities to geo-political rivalries

This paper will explore the changing nature of resistance solidarities between Moroccans (Morocco having achieved independence in March 1956) and the FLN between 1954 and 1964, analysing how and why this relationship was transformed from one of unambiguous support to something much more complex; one that reflected the connections between internal political divisions within Morocco and international choices encapsulated in the Cold War and revolutionary Third Worldism. As such the paper will explore why by 1964 anti-Algerian sentiments had become a pillar of Hassan II’s new emergent system, a geo-political rivalry by which the Moroccan left was stigmatised as an ant-Moroccan internal enemy working on behalf of Algiers.

Vilen Mnatsakanyan, Russian-Armenian University

Trade, security, and geopolitics in the Maghreb - greater Middle East interface: Algeria's strategic choices in a fragmenting global order

This paper examines Algeria’s evolving strategic choices at the intersection of the Maghreb and the Greater Middle East (GME) amid an increasingly fragmented global order. As international competition deepens, Algeria seeks to redefine its geopolitical and economic role not only within the Arab and Mediterranean regions, but also as an intermediary between the rapidly growing markets of Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. Its geographic position, expanding infrastructure, and energy potential strengthen Algeria’s capacity to act as a bridge connecting these economic spaces. The study focuses on three core dimensions. First, Algeria’s trade strategy aims to diversify partnerships and improve connectivity with African markets through new logistics corridors, investment initiatives, and regional integration formats, while maintaining essential energy and commercial ties with Europe. Second, its security doctrine, centred on sovereignty and stability, increasingly responds to evolving North African, Sahelian, and GME dynamics. Third, the paper assesses Algeria’s geopolitical positioning, showing how engagement with GME states, African institutions, and European partners forms a multilayered strategic approach adapted to global uncertainty. The research argues that Algeria’s pursuit of strategic autonomy is closely linked to its emerging role as a connector between Africa and Europe, influencing new geoeconomic configurations across the Maghreb–GME interface.

Panel 2B: Imagined futures: Justice, democracy and collective memory

Hicham Baali, University of Laghouat

Another Algeria is possible: Youth perceptions of struggle, justice, and utopia in post-Hirak Algeria

This paper examines how Algerian university students interpret their country's historical struggles and articulate utopian visions for its future in the aftermath of the Hirak movement. While international discourse often portrays Algerian youth through the lenses of apathy, radicalization, or emigration, far less is known about how they themselves connect memories of past conflicts to their imagined futures. Drawing on a mixed-methods field study, the research combines a questionnaire administered to approximately 200–250 students at two Algerian universities with 20–25 semi-structured interviews. The survey explores perceptions of key historical moments (the anti-colonial war, the “Black Decade”, October 1988, and the Hirak), levels of political trust, and aspirations concerning justice, democracy, and social dignity. Interviews probe more deeply into personal and family narratives, interpretations of emblematic slogans such as “Another Algeria is possible”, and concrete images of a just and liveable society. Preliminary analysis suggests a complex coexistence of disillusionment with institutions and a persistent, though fragile, utopian horizon expressed in demands for accountability, rights, and meaningful participation. The paper argues that Algerian youth imaginatively rework inherited struggles into new political and ethical projects, offering a crucial vantage point for understanding post-Hirak Algeria and contemporary utopian thinking.

Camyla Lakehal-Ayat, LSE

From liberation to reconciliation: Analysing violence and the legal construction of the “enemy within” in postcolonial Algeria (1962–2005)

This dissertation examines how postcolonial Algeria has used law to confront or contain the memory of violence, drawing on archival legal documents, press discourse, and scholarly literature. Through a comparative analysis of two pivotal legal moments, the Évian Accords of 1962 and the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation of 2005, it interrogates how the state's legal choices have shaped collective memory, accountability, and the meaning of peace. Rather than assessing success or failure, this research explores why these distinct legal paths were chosen. By contrasting the post-independence silencing of the Harkis with the post-civil war reintegration of former Islamist combatants, this study interrogates the moral and institutional logics underpinning amnesty and punishment. It explores how law mediates between justice, oblivion, and collective memory, and how postcolonial legal frameworks continue to negotiate the legacies of resistance and repression. In tracing Algeria's journey from liberation to reconciliation, this dissertation considers the interplay between past conflicts and the visions of a society seeking to define its future. Ultimately, it asks how a nation born from resistance continues to shape and be shaped by the promises of justice and the enduring challenges of memory.

Elhadj Moussa BenMoussa, University of East London

Narrating the Republic that was promised: Literary resistance, state memory, and the politics of hope in post-Hirak Algeria

This paper examines how contemporary Algerian writers are re-imagining national identity and political possibility in the aftermath of the Hirak movement, positioning literature as a site of civic struggle and democratic imagination. While Algeria's revolutionary legacy remains central to its state narrative, a persistent gap exists between the mythologised nation inherited from the war of liberation and the lived reality of post-colonial governance, marked by political opacity, generational frustration, and contested memory (Evans & Phillips 2007; Hachemaoui 2020). Through critical readings of recent Algerian novels, essays and diasporic literary works written between 2019 and 2025, this research explores how authors articulate the unfinished project of independence and reclaim narrative agency against historical amnesia and bureaucratic nationalism. Drawing on decolonial thought (Fanon 1963; Mbembe 2017) and the politics of cultural memory (Assmann 2011), the study argues that Algerian literature today is not simply responding to political crisis; it is shaping a counter-archive where silenced social questions re-emerge: youth disenchantment, gendered citizenship, corruption, language politics, ecological anxiety, and the unresolved trauma of the civil war (Amara 2022; Sanchez-Palencia 2021). The paper introduces the term utopian pragmatism to describe new literary tendencies that move beyond resignation and nostalgia toward grounded imaginaries of dignity, accountability and collective belonging, echoing global discussions on hope and public imagination (Appadurai 2013; Berlant 2011). By foregrounding fiction and life-writing as instruments of critique and hope-making, the paper argues that contemporary Algerian literature offers not only cultural insight but also a civic framework. These works push readers to re-engage with the promise of the republic, revealing a nation still actively imagining its future.

Yahia Benyamina, CRASC Research Centre, Oran & University of Helsinki

Everyday engagement and civic capacity building among Algerian youth

The purpose of this presentation is to show how young people in Algeria develop the ability to act as citizens and take part in community affairs. Using qualitative data from interviews with youth engaged in community initiatives and associations, this presentation looks at civic participation as it usually occurs on the grassroots level through everyday activities such as coordination of volunteers or events and by continuing to carry out local activities. There are three mechanisms related to civic capacity building that are explored here; (1) experiential learning, (2) development of relational infrastructure, and (3) collaborative prefigurative forms of action. As a result of doing things together over a period of time, youth who participate in these activities create their own organizational, relational, and practical skill bases and simultaneously develop networks based on trust and routinized behaviours. The findings illustrate that through using these three incremental processes, youth develop transferable civic competencies which allow them to navigate and develop flexible and adaptive forms of collective action.

Panel 2C: Cross colonial comparisons: Understanding Algeria through the lens of Ireland

Mairéad Ní Bhriain, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Bodies of resistance: Cultural nationalism and embodied oral traditions in Ireland and Algeria

This paper explores how embodied oral traditions—particularly dance, music, and song—have served as sites of cultural recovery, resistance, and nation-building in postcolonial Ireland and Algeria. Adopting a reflexive and comparative lens, it begins with the story of Scoil Rince Uí Ruairc, an Irish dancing school founded in the late 1920s, within the first decade of Irish independence. At this historical juncture, dance was not merely an aesthetic or recreational pursuit, but a disciplinary, social, and symbolic practice—one that embodied the young nation’s aspirations toward linguistic revival and cultural sovereignty. Dance and song became performative archives of memory and belonging, reclaiming rhythms and narratives that had been suppressed or reconfigured under British colonial rule, while simultaneously constructing imagined narratives of a “new” Ireland through a romanticised lens of a precolonial past. Placing this Irish experience in dialogue with post-independence Algeria of the 1960s, the paper examines parallel movements of cultural recuperation, where oral and performative traditions were mobilised as acts of decolonial imagination and reconstruction. In Algeria, the revival and reevaluation of folk dance, song, and musical traditions represented both an assertion of cultural continuity and a mode of resistance. Across both contexts, the body emerges as an archive of decolonial memory, preserving forms of knowledge and identity that transcend the written word. By situating these two postcolonial moments side by side, the paper argues that embodied practices offer crucial insight into how nations imagine, heal, and reconstitute themselves after the trauma of colonial domination.

Kamel Salmi, Sorbonne Nouvelle University

Immigration through the lens of national archives: Comparing the Irish in England and the Algerians in France after Independence

This presentation offers a comparison of how the Irish in England and the Algerians in France were represented in national archives during the post-independence era, revealing how race, empire, and political violence shaped archival visibility. As Arlette Farge notes in *Le Goût de l’archive* “In a way, [archives] reveal an untold story, [...] where the important thing for the administration is to know who are the responsible and how to punish them.” This study examines immigration flows during a pivotal era marked by political upheaval and labour demand in the metropolises, focusing less on push-pull factors than on the historical entanglements of empire and postcolonial transition. Both groups (Irish and Algerians) faced political ambiguity regarding their political status, neither fully citizens nor colonial subjects. Between 1921 and 1937, the status of the Irish in England shifted from “subjects of the empire” to citizens of an independent state (Irish Free State), prompting new legal and administrative approaches to Irish immigration. Across this period, British archival representations of the Irish evolved through three phases: from social and political labels such as “paupers” and “workers,” to national designations like “natives of the Irish Free State,” and eventually to the more formalized language of “immigration from Ireland,” mirroring the island’s political separation and Britain’s continued reliance on Irish labour. A parallel shift occurred in France between 1954 and 1974, in which Algerians were successively categorized as Français musulmans d’Algérie, éléments nord-africains, travailleurs algériens, and immigrés musulmans, reflecting the French state’s transition from colonial labour recruitment to postcolonial surveillance and control. Overall, this comparative study shows how the post-independence period played a pivotal role in the development and enactment of immigration legislation and policies. Keywords: Irish immigration, Algerian immigration, national archives, England, France, post-independence era, political status, citizens, imperial subjects, surveillance.

Slimane Hargas, Paris Nanterre University

'Il ne faut pas faire de l'Algérie une nouvelle Irlande': A historical inquiry into an oft-repeated 19th-century slogan

The decades-long conquest of Algeria by France and its disastrous effects gave way to numerous parallels and analogies with the Irish situation. Their recurrence prompted French historian Charles Robert Ageron to assert that warnings not to transform Algeria into another Ireland had been an important feature of 19th-century colonial discourse on North Africa. At the root of such a phenomenon was the fact that the latter conquest coincided with a period in which Ireland not only went through a deadly famine, which took the lives of an estimated one million people and forced at least as many into exile, but also witnessed nationalist mobilisation and agitation. It was in that context that Ireland's woes were often referred to in relation to Algerian issues within political circles in both France and Algeria. Such analogies were politically harnessed by opposing groups: the advocates of French withdrawal from Algeria, the defenders of the indigenous population, and the French colons who settled in the North African colony as well as their supporters in Paris. Among them, there was a consensual interpretative grid whereby England was deemed responsible for having created in Ireland the breeding ground for economic, political and constitutional instability. But as this paper will show, they availed of analogies between Algeria and Ireland in a variety of ways that chimed with their respective political agendas. Dark prophecies about the future of Algeria by way of the Irish precedent had so powerful an impact that they became a political motto. The latter was used by French political elites often out of step with reality, as the North African colony was not necessarily in a less alarming situation than that of Ireland, with hundreds of thousands of people dying on the battlefield or from famine and epidemics in the mid-19th century. The understatement of the Algerian situation went hand in hand with the overstatement of the Irish one, with many politicians going so far as to use such words as extermination and massacre to depict what was happening in Ireland. What this paper will seek to demonstrate is that all those analogical devices point to an absence of a sense of scale, on account of the geographies of empathy and the racial hierarchies of the time.

Dónal Hassett, Maynooth University

"The example of valiant little Ireland": The Irish Revolution in Algerian nationalist thought

Throughout the twentieth century, a variety of Algerian activists would evoke the Irish Revolution. Figures as diverse as Ahmad Tawfiq Al-Madani, Hocine Aït Ahmed, a Larbi Ben M'hidi, and Redha Malek, all evoked Ireland in their writings. For them and many of their comrades, Irish history served, above all, as a means of negotiating and reinventing their own relationships—strategic, political, and emotional—with anticolonial struggle. As this paper will show, while the Irish Revolution was a source of inspiration for Algerian nationalists, its primary role was not as a playbook that could be directly replicated in the very different coercive and racially discriminatory context of colonial Algeria. Algerians may have occasionally sought to reproduce the tactics deployed by Irish nationalists, but this was never the principal space occupied by Ireland in their revolutionary imaginary. Instead, Ireland stood out as a beacon of hope, the example of a settler colony that had defeated a mighty empire and secured a form, however limited, of freedom. In its story, or at least in the versions of its story that reached North Africa, Algerian nationalists saw the prospect that their sacrifices, both personal and collective, might one day be rewarded, that their country might one day be freed. Moreover, the complex blend of political and military strategies that underpinned Irish nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries allowed Algerian activists to evoke the elements of the Irish story that most closely aligned with the evolving political logics of anticolonial action in their country. In doing so they refracted and reimagined Ireland's history through the prism of Algeria's struggle for liberation, underlining how the politics of comparison and solidarity is often a politics of reinterpretation and reimagination.

Panel 3A: Economic histories: Socialist utopias, ideology and development

Will Cochrane-Dyet, University of Oxford

Sayyid Qutb, al-Qiyam and Mouloud Qassim: Reconsidering discourses of Islamic Socialism in the 1960s & 1970s

The discourse of Islamic socialism, or social justice, under the Boumediene-regime in the 1970s is widely seen in scholarship as a shallow effort by the state to cover up foreign doctrines, that is to say, to paint over them in Islamic colours. However, this paper argues that this discourse, as articulated by Mouloud Qassim (Minister of Original Education and Religious Affairs, 1970-1977), was closely aligned with the socio-economic discourses of Sayyid Qutb. It argues that rather than being a symbolic concession to conservative pressure, Islamic socialism was a radical discourse in itself, recapitulating Qutbian ideas and speaking directly to socioeconomic preferences among some Islamists in the 1960s. In addition, this paper considers the limitations of this discourse, especially around the issue of industrialisation, whereby Qassim's efforts to reconcile Qutbian ideals and state economic policies became muddled, even contradictory. Finally, it considers how the state's appropriation of Islamic socialism shaped the development – or arrested development – of socioeconomic ideas of Algerian Islamists into the 1980s and 1990s. The research of this paper is drawn from debates about Islamic socialism in al-Qiyam's publication, *tahdhīb al-islamī*, a selection of Mouloud Qassim's speeches reprinted in *al-aṣāla* (among other publications), and the early writings of Sayyid Qutb.

Leila Hammouche, Independent Researcher

Technical assistance programs in post-Independence Algeria and diplomatic interaction with Swiss development policies in the early 1960s

Building on the research conducted for my dissertation, this proposed paper aims to explore the negotiation of technical assistance between Switzerland and the Algerian government following Algeria's independence. It will examine how aid programs were designed and the political context of development during the era of decolonization and the Cold War. The paper will focus on how Algeria, as a newly independent state, approached and imagined technical assistance programs, including student exchanges and personnel training in the pharmaceutical sector. Additionally, the paper will explore Switzerland's role as a "neutral" country in its diplomatic relations and development cooperation programs with Algeria, particularly during a period characterized by decolonization, Cold War dynamics, and discussions of neo-colonialism. To investigate these themes, the paper will draw on sources such as reports produced by the Secretariat Social d'Alger, such as "La Coopération pour le Développement," published by Editions du 5, Rue Horace Vernet, Alger, published in 1965. It will also incorporate documents and correspondence from Swiss diplomats and ministries responsible for administering the assistance programs. This research aims to provide an understanding of how technical assistance was approached in Algeria and how Algerian officials envisioned development cooperation beyond the conventional frameworks of the global Cold War, where various states competed to offer development aid. Ultimately, the paper seeks to uncover the foundations upon which the technical assistance programs between Switzerland and Algeria were negotiated. It hopes to reveal insights into how the history of science and technical development since decolonization can inform contemporary understandings of development politics and projects. And hopes to add to the scholarly discussion on the insights that can be gained by examining the history of South-South cooperation rather than solely focusing on how aid was imagined and administered by the global North.

Abdallah Zouache, Sciences Po Lille*Seventy years after Independence: What growth regime for Algeria?*

Seventy years after independence, a central question persists: has Algeria succeeded in establishing a genuine model of economic growth, or does it remain confined to a rent-based pattern of accumulation inherited from its long history? This article addresses this issue through a political-economy perspective, emphasizing the institutional continuities that have shaped the country's developmental trajectory. Our analysis reveals a striking persistence of economic structures: colonial monopolistic production, state-socialist planning, and subsequently a state-regulated market economy represents less a rupture with the past than successive reconfigurations of a single model grounded in the primacy of the state and reliance on a dominant resource. The post-1990 period further confirms this dynamic: growth has been driven primarily by public investment funded through hydrocarbon revenues, generating extensive accumulation with limited productivity gains. The enduring expansion of informal employment, the structural weakness of the financial sector, and the prevalence of crony capitalism reinforce this inertia. Consequently, the question of Algeria's growth regime cannot be dissociated from that of the rentier social contract that governs relations between the state, the private sector, and society at large. The Hirak movement constituted a pivotal moment in reassessing this architecture: did it open the possibility for a "high-growth" regime based on economic diversification, institutional trust, and governance reform? Or do deeply entrenched historical structures condemn Algeria to perpetuate a low-growth regime *ad vitam aeternam*? This article ultimately invites reflection on growth not as an isolated economic outcome, but as the expression of a political and social system whose foundations, seventy years after independence, remain in need of profound reconfiguration.

Panel 3B: Arts, trauma, cultural heritage and resistance**Lina Ounissi, University of Basel***Music as utopia: Listening to Algerian Mâlûf and the interrupted future of harmony*

Is history solely a discipline engaging with so-called written traces of the past? Can we not feel history? In this sense, one could argue that sound is history – a form of history that can be experienced and inhabited. Past events can never be relieved, yet an authentic recorded sound is a fragment of the past that travels through time, reaches us in the present, and persists in the future. Music in particular, becomes a powerful testament to what was, what could have been, and what is no longer. This is particularly true for Mâlûf – a refined musical tradition of Constantine rooted in Arabo-Andalusian heritage – whose sonic traces allow us to hear not only a musical past, but also the interrupted future, imagined solidarities and fragile utopias that once shaped Constantinois social life. This research examines the contrasting historical roles of two Algerian musical traditions – Mâlûf and Chaâbi – in colonial Algeria. While Chaâbi emerges as "the voice of the people", responding to social upheavals and anti-colonial struggles, Mâlûf appears more hermetic and insulated from political events. Yet, Mâlûf melodies carry centuries of resilience, echoing the exile from Al-Andalus and reverberating through the fractures within Algerian society marked by the assassination of Cheikh Raymond. Mâlûf stands as a silent – yet resounding – witness of the past. Music can thus articulate different temporalities, modes of engagement and experiences of collective memory. When we replay these voices today, what do we truly hear?

Tamara Turner, Colorado State University

Restorative responses to trauma: Music and ritual in Algeria

Algerian diwan (literally, “assembly”) of Sidi Bilal is a Sufi-inspired music ritual tradition that originated, coalesced, and developed out of the trans-Saharan slave trade through the segregation of displaced sub-Saharan populations in Algeria, primarily Hausa and Songhay ethnolinguistic groups. Under three centuries of Ottoman rule, these communities were heavily influenced by the local, popular religious practices and socio-political organization of Sufi lineages. Consequently, diwan developed into a ritual practice predicated on many of the same structures of other musical traditions within popular Islam in North Africa: saint veneration, musically precipitated trance, and ritual healing. Diwan rituals function as means for engaging with suffering, from the intergenerational trauma of the slave trade to anti-Black racism, to diwan communities’ ongoing ostracisation from other forms of Algerian cultural heritage. In this presentation, I will examine how diwan rituals function as ecologies of support by privileging embodied expression of suffering while nurturing right relationship with the Divine, loved ones, and community.

Panel 3C: Fanonian perspectives and decolonial feminisms**Haodong Bai, University of Cambridge**

Women without faces: A comparative reading of L’Algérie se dévoile and La battaglia di Algeri

Frantz Fanon’s *L’Algérie se dévoile* [Algeria Unveiled] constitutes his primary discussion of Algerian women. A close reading of his writings reveals that women are trapped in perpetual “nervous conditions,” their bodies serving as a site of contestation between French colonialism and Algerian nationalism. The veil, marked by hypervisibility, not only delineates the boundary between colonised and uncolonised but also functions as a second skin, signifying a woman’s decision over whom to dedicate her loyalty and chastity to. When French colonial power viewed women as potential agents of infiltration, Algerian nationalists, conversely, saw them as subjects to be controlled. Fanon’s reading of unveiling as acquiescence to European sexual violation reinforces this binary logic, reducing women to a binary choice between veiling and unveiling. This decision must be made immediately, to demonstrate to the French whether they are democratisable subjects or incurable victims, while simultaneously signalling to Algerian nationalists whether they are patriotic heroines or traitorous collaborators. Although Gillo Pontecorvo’s *La battaglia di Algeri* [The Battle of Algiers], is a pseudo-documentary, it rearticulates the screened contributions of women in anti-colonial history. By portraying female fighters who wear, unveil, or shift fluidly between these states, and who speak Arabic, French, or alternate between them, the film subverts Fanon’s dichotomy. It further enacts Derridean citationality and Butlerian resignification, turning patriarchal symbols into tools of feminist subversion. Finally, Saadi Yacef’s participation further blurs the boundary between fiction and reality, reshaping the very contours of historical representation and contributing, in turn, to the rewriting of herstory.

Khaoula Belghit, University of Brighton

Towards an Algerian historical decolonial Feminism: Core concepts for a contextualised theoretical framework

While feminist scholarship on Algeria addresses anti-colonial resistance, post-independence nation-building and religious conservatism (Fanon 1965; Lazreg 1990, 1994, 2020; Smail Salhi 2010), there remains no unified theoretical articulation of what a distinctly Algerian decolonial feminist framework entails. In this presentation, I will talk about how the Algerian context, shaped by the complex interplay of colonial violence, revolutionary mobilisation, post-independence state patriarchy and later religious pressures, requires its own grounded formulation of decolonial feminism rather than the adoption of external frameworks. Drawing on Algeria's historical and sociopolitical specificities, I will identify three core concepts that can serve as the fundamental elements of an Algerian historical decolonial feminist approach. The first is anti-colonial memory as feminist epistemology. The revolution's gendered histories and the contributions of women constitute a crucial site for understanding liberation beyond Euro-American feminist paradigms. The second is anti-imperialism, understood as resistance to colonial and neocolonial structures, including their economic manifestations through global capitalism and their cultural expressions through Americanisation (El Saadawi 2006). The third is critical resistance to patriarchal religious fundamentalism, which highlights how gendered power is reproduced through selective and politicised mobilisations of religion in the Black Decade era. By bringing these core concepts together, I will offer a focused theoretical intervention that recentres Algerian decolonial feminist thought within its own historical and epistemic traditions. I will advocate for a historical decolonial feminist framework that is rooted in Algeria's specific trajectories while capable of informing future feminist praxis and imaginaries.

Imen Boudekhana, University of Bechar, Tahri Mohamed

Rewriting colonial afterlives: Intergenerational trauma in The Meursault Investigation and What the Days Owes the Night

This paper examines how intergenerational trauma continues to influence Algerian society as a result of French colonialism. Though many studies have examined political and historical aspects of Algerian postcolonial memory, little scholarship has explored how trauma is reproduced across generations through literary, linguistic, and cultural mechanisms. To address this gap, this paper introduces the concept of "inherited colonial wound", a model that explains how emotional and symbolic effects of colonialism continue to influence later generations. Grounded in decolonial theory, especially the views of Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, Marnia Lazreg and Karima Lazali, the study departs from Euro-American trauma frameworks by analysing how contemporary Algerian fiction represents intergenerational wounds. Through a close reading of Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation* and Yasmina Khadra's *What the Days Owes the Night*, the analysis identifies three interrelated mechanisms through which the inherited wounds operate. First, linguistic hierarchy, shown in the unequal status of Arabic and French, reflects the continuing influence of colonial power and affects feelings of identity, belonging, and social value. Second, narrative silence, where families avoid or fragment their accounts of colonial violence, creates emotional uncertainty and incomplete understanding for younger generations. Third, ritualized memory, expressed through school lessons and informal storytelling, passes on both strength and unprocessed emotional pain. Methodologically, this article treats these novels as cultural texts that reveal how trauma circulates through silence, language and memory. Ultimately, by emphasizing the emotional and linguistic dynamics, the study offers a decolonial perspective on post-empire trauma in Algeria and the MENA region by arguing that the "inherited colonial wound" challenges narrow psychological models by showing that the effects of violence continue through ordinary social life, and thereby complicating triumphalist narratives of national resilience.

Salma-Kaouthar Letaief, University of Bern*Towards the poetics of contemporary Algerian diasporic literature*

This project investigates memory and colonial legacy in the writing of prominent Algerian diasporic writers, namely Alice Zeniter's *The Art of Losing* (2021), and Faiza Guene's *Discretion* (2020). These writers are recognized for speaking out against various forms of oppression imposed upon immigrants in general and those of Algerian origin in particular. This research focuses on the collective trauma resulting from the Algerian Revolution against French colonialism and the subsequent consequences, both within Algeria and overseas. The novels trace historical events from before the eruption of the Algerian revolution up to the present day, chronicling experiences of displacement, memory, identity crisis, alienation, racism, and in-betweenness. The focus is on the experiences of both first-generation immigrants and their second/third-generation descendants. Characters, particularly the second generation, struggle with societal expectations, discrimination, and the complexities of belonging to a country that is both home and a site of persistent otherness. The narratives highlight layers of generational trauma, shedding light on the psychoanalytical complexities for being caught between cultural heritage and societal marginalization. This research will explore how characters navigate systemic inequalities, cultural clashes, and the enduring consequences of colonialism. Theories of Postcolonial trauma, Fanonian notions of internal oppression, in association with memory and aging, will be used to analyse these novels. Ultimately, this research endeavours to bridge the gap between diasporic literature and postcolonial trauma theory, providing an interdisciplinary comprehensive analysis of the Algerian diasporic condition and its representation in contemporary literature. It aims to decolonize Algerian history and enrich discourse on diaspora, multiculturalism, and identity, offering new insights into migration, cultural hybridity, and transnationalism in the context of North African diaspora.

Panel 4A: Digital activism, identity and belonging**Adel Chiheb, University of Jijel***Digital citizenship, socio-political aspirations, and the contested utopias of Algeria's post-Independence generation*

The profound historical legacies of Algeria's independence struggle continue to shape the socio-political imagination of post-Independence generations. This paper investigates the hypothesis that the rapid expansion of digital media has established a critical arena for the articulation of new socio-political aspirations, effectively serving as an 'imagined utopia' for a revitalised civil and public sphere. Specifically, the ubiquity of platforms like Facebook and new communication applications allows for the instantaneous formation of public opinion and collective identity. Employing an intersectional sociological and media studies approach, the study analyses the ambivalent role of new media in shaping youth engagement and the negotiation of traditional power structures. The analysis examines how the digital space facilitates new forms of digital citizenship that challenge entrenched governance and inherited social norms regarding gender, and public participation. This examination draws on theoretical frameworks concerning the changing dynamics of the public sphere and the erosion of social capital in modern urban settings. The paper distinguishes between the rhetorical potential of digital platforms and their efficacy in overcoming persistent structural and economic struggles, particularly those related to limited economic opportunity among the younger population. The research ultimately scrutinizes how this modern, virtual utopia is constantly contested by persistent structural and economic struggles, such as high youth unemployment, endemic corruption, and generational gaps in political voice. This friction highlights a critical moment of value transition in modern Algerian society. By analysing the gap between digital expectation and material reality, the paper reveals the complex friction between inherited social structures and emerging youth aspirations, offering new insights into the trajectory of contemporary Algerian society and the future of social change.

Farah Djabi, University of Catania*Digital suppression and legal structures in Algeria: The impact of chilling effect law on the digital sphere*

How does digital media transform the legislative process in Algeria, and how can pluralistic public discourse be encouraged amid the current challenges? Digital media have become crucial for contesting state narratives and sustaining engagement following the 2019 Hirak, despite constraints such as internet shutdowns, regulatory controls, and legal amendments. This study examines the challenges associated with expressing dissenting opinions within Algeria's digital sphere, focusing on the new Law n°23-19 of December 2, 2023, pertaining to the written and electronic press. This study presents and analyses measures such as the freedom of the written and electronic press ensured through constitutional guarantees and language flexibility, while also examining restrictive measures. These include limiting media ownership to Algerian citizens and imposing penalties that may be perceived as curbing press freedom, potentially creating a chilling effect. From a fundamental rights perspective, the analyses focus on how laws regulate freedom of expression and information. Evaluating whether restrictions justified by public order, security, or morality are proportional and consider procedural safeguards for media actors. Overall, it aims to shed light on the regulatory framework and discuss the alignment of current media dynamics with Algeria's aspirational ideals of democratic expression.

Youcef Hadjazi, Newcastle University*Staging the ordinary: Masculine performativities and café sociality in postcolonial Algiers*

This paper explores the quotidian performance of masculinity in Algiers' male-exclusive cafés (el kahwa) as a socially choreographed praxis shaped by postcolonial memory, spatial relations, and embodied codes of belonging. Drawing on preliminary reflections and early methodological development in the first year of my PhD, I consider the Algerian kahwa not simply as a mundane site of gathering, but as a stage where masculine comportment, gesture, and sociability are rehearsed and enacted within a wider postcolonial continuum. Rather than subsuming masculinity into broad socio-historical narratives of 'Algerianity,' I re-situate it within a performance-based analytical framework that decodes the contexts behind these gendered performativities through artistic practice-as-research. Inspired by my wider body of work on embodiment, spatial choreographies, and postcolonial materiality, I reflect on how el kahwa's rhythms - habitual silences, choreographed gazes, and gendered architectures - produce a form of latent dramaturgy. This dramaturgy, I argue, carries the afterlives of colonial restructuring, nationalist imaginaries, and the lingering question of auto-definition within the contemporary urban fabric. Although formal fieldwork begins later in my PhD, recurring time in Algiers has already revealed how el kahwa becomes a micro-arena of social formation: a place where hierarchies are enacted, intimacies disciplined, and cultural narratives embodied at the level of gesture.

Rachid Sekkai, University of Portsmouth

Reclaiming a marginalised past: Third-generation Harki digital activism, memory, and belonging in contemporary France

This practice-based research examines how third-generation descendants of the Harkis – Algerian auxiliaries who fought for France during the War of Independence – use digital media to understand their past, express who they are, and challenge the stigma long attached to the “Harki” epithet in contemporary France and in Algeria, where they are still labelled as “traitors.” The project emerged from a BBC Arabic documentary the author produced on first- and second-generation Harkis, which revealed unresolved trauma, conflicting narratives, and deep silences within families, and also brought to light the unheard voices of the latest generation to inherit this complex history. This study explores how young Harkis behave online about their history (their digital identity); how they use social media to reclaim their identity; and why they are doing so now, at a moment when discrimination, racism, citizenship and belonging have become central themes in French politics. This generation is crucial because they live between multiple identities – French, Algerian and Harki – while belonging fully to none. Using documentary film as visual ethnography, the research follows young Harkis for six months in youth centres in Marseille, observing how they engage on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube and X. The study investigates whether their aim is to gain recognition, reclaim their identity, break the silence, or affirm their integration. Early indications suggest that many feel they have moved beyond the earlier stigma and consider themselves as French as other Algerian-origin or Black French youth, which may explain their limited digital visibility. This research contributes to debates on post-war memory, citizenship and belonging.

Panel 4B: Economics and global perspectives**Rabah Arezki, French National Center for Scientific Research**

(De)colonisation and globalisation

The paper explores the persistence of violent decolonization episodes on today’s degree of openness to global trade. To do so, we use a worldwide sample of decolonization episodes classified as either violent vs. non violent forms coupled with trade series over two centuries long. Results from difference-in-differences method provide statistical and economic large and persistent from violent decolonization on today’s trade patterns. Our results suggest that globalization or lack thereof is intrinsically linked to persistent distrust rooted in the nature of (de)colonization.

Francis Ghiles

A blueprint for bold reforms

The sharp decline in the price of oil in 1985 had a huge negative impact of Algeria's economy. It forced senior members of the Algerian leadership, including the army, to revisit the statist economic model which Algeria had adopted after independence. In great secrecy a group of about 30 economists worked at the presidency to produce a blueprint for reform. They had access to all information and had, by 1988 produced a sober report entitled *Les Cahiers de la Reforme*. When these reforms were presented to President Chadli Bendjedid in 1988, the head of state well understood they represented a “revolution”. The riots of 1988 which that autumn seriously jolted the regime encouraged the head of state to launch these reforms, alongside the political opening which allowed a free vote for the first time since 1962.

Elias Boukrami, Regent's University London & Issam Malki, University of Westminster
Algerian agricultural economy and food security: Effectiveness vs efficiency?

This article examines how sustainable agriculture can reinforce food security in Algeria amid demographic pressures, climate challenges, and structural limitations. Since the early 2000s, Algerian agriculture has undergone a gradual yet significant transformation. Once marginalized, the sector has emerged as a key pillar of the national economy, contributing approximately 16% of GDP—equivalent to around \$42 billion in 2025. This represents a substantial improvement compared to the 1990s, when agriculture contributed barely 8% of the country's GDP. Despite this progress, Algerian agriculture—like much of the national economy—remains among the most heavily subsidized in the world. This article explores the strategic choices and policy decisions that have shaped the sector, while also assessing the real cost and opportunity cost of pursuing a state-defined model of “food security.”

Panel 4C: Decolonising education: Postcolonial reforms and imagined utopias

Hanane Benmokhtar, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales
English as utopia? Reimagining Algeria's linguistic order

This paper investigates the emergence of English as a locus of utopian imagination in contemporary Algeria, a context marked by the enduring weight of colonial memory and the renewed politicization of language since the late 2010s. The shift initiated in 2019, when government officials announced a strategic enhancement of English in both higher education and primary schooling (2022), triggered intense public debate and reopened long-standing ideological surrounding French, Arabic, and the future of the Algerian linguistic order. To analyse this moment of ideological reconfiguration, the study focuses on the circulation and reception of the highly mediatized sound bite “French leads nowhere”, which transformed into a discursive event shaping public interpretations of linguistic futures. The corpus combines a qualitative sample of articles from major Algerian news outlets and over a thousand online comments produced on social media and discussion forums in reaction to this event. This multi-layered dataset makes it possible to examine both top-down framings in the press and bottom-up appropriations, contestations, and resignifications in digital spaces. Methodologically, the analysis draws on critical sociolinguistics, mobilizing indexicality, ideological recontextualization, and chronotypes to trace how social actors situate English within broader temporal and political imaginaries. The paper argues that English circulates as a symbolically overloaded resource that simultaneously indexes global modernity, promises of scientific progress, claims to decolonial rupture, and anxieties about national cohesion. The originality of this work lies in its holistic design, bridging political discourse, media discourse and everyday discourse to document the full ideological circulation surrounding the promotion of English. It also addresses a significant gap in Algerian sociolinguistic research by foregrounding English as a politically and ideologically salient object, rather than a merely pedagogical or instrumental language, thereby offering a novel lens on contemporary sociopolitical transformation.

Sarra Boukhari, University of Swansea

Children of the Revolution: Educator improvisation and children's moral imagination in Algeria's refugee-hosting schools

Since independence in 1962, Algerian schooling has carried the symbolic weight of anticolonial struggle and national reconstruction. In the present context, national schools that educate Arab and Sub-Saharan refugee children became important sites where this unfinished revolutionary project is reworked in everyday practice. This paper draws on insights from a doctoral study involving 8 educators in 2 state schools, together with postdoctoral participatory workshops with 60 children across different age groups. Using thematic analysis of interviews and creative materials generated by children, including drawings and collages, the study examines how participants imagine coexistence, navigate racial and linguistic hierarchies and articulate aspirations for community life. The paper is grounded in Paulo Freire's vision of education as a practice of freedom and Malek Bennabi's reflections on colonised consciousness, ethical renewal and the conditions for social transformation. Bringing these perspectives together frames refugee classrooms as sites where liberationist pedagogical traditions meet contemporary challenges of migration, inequality and cultural diversity. Findings show that educators engage in pedagogical improvisation to navigate bureaucratic constraints in the absence of any formal training for refugee inclusion. Children's creative work and discussions reveal emerging moral frameworks shaped by friendship and faith while also exposing tensions linked to colonial memory and racialised perceptions of difference. The paper argues that these practices of improvised inclusion constitute everyday utopian gestures that reinterpret ideals associated with Algeria's revolutionary heritage. By placing educators' affective labour alongside children's imaginative visions, the study offers insight into how historical struggle informs ethical horizons in Algerian society.

Nesrine Maouche, Conservatoire national des arts et métiers

Imagining reform, encountering history: The structural depth of higher education transformation in Algeria

Higher education occupies a central yet often overlooked position in Algeria's contemporary political and social transformations. As a sector shaped by the legacies of state-building and national development, it offers a revealing lens for examining the tensions between historical continuities and imagined futures. Over the past two decades, Algerian higher education has launched multiple reform initiatives in quality enhancement, digital transformation, curriculum professionalisation and entrepreneurship promotion. These efforts demonstrate a clear intention to modernise the system and to align it with evolving academic and socio-economic expectations. Yet their effects remain partial, uneven and largely additive. While concrete actions have been implemented, they often produce fragmented progress without generating the structural transformation required to reshape academic practices or institutional behaviours. This paper argues that these limits stem not from insufficient reform activity but from the persistence of deeper institutional logics inherited from the post-independence period: centralised governance, administrative cultures of conformity, risk-averse organisational behaviours, and the reproduction of organisational patterns rooted in the state-building era. These embedded logics shape how innovations are interpreted, enacted, and often quietly diluted. As long as these structural logics remain unaddressed. Reform efforts, even when well-intentioned and operationalised, struggle to produce lasting or comprehensive effects. This challenge is reinforced by relationships in which policies are designed for actors rather than with them. In this context, the imagined utopia of a genuinely transformative higher education system grounded in renewed institutional trust, active actor engagement, co-construction with the economic sector, and strengthened student agency remains challenging to realise.