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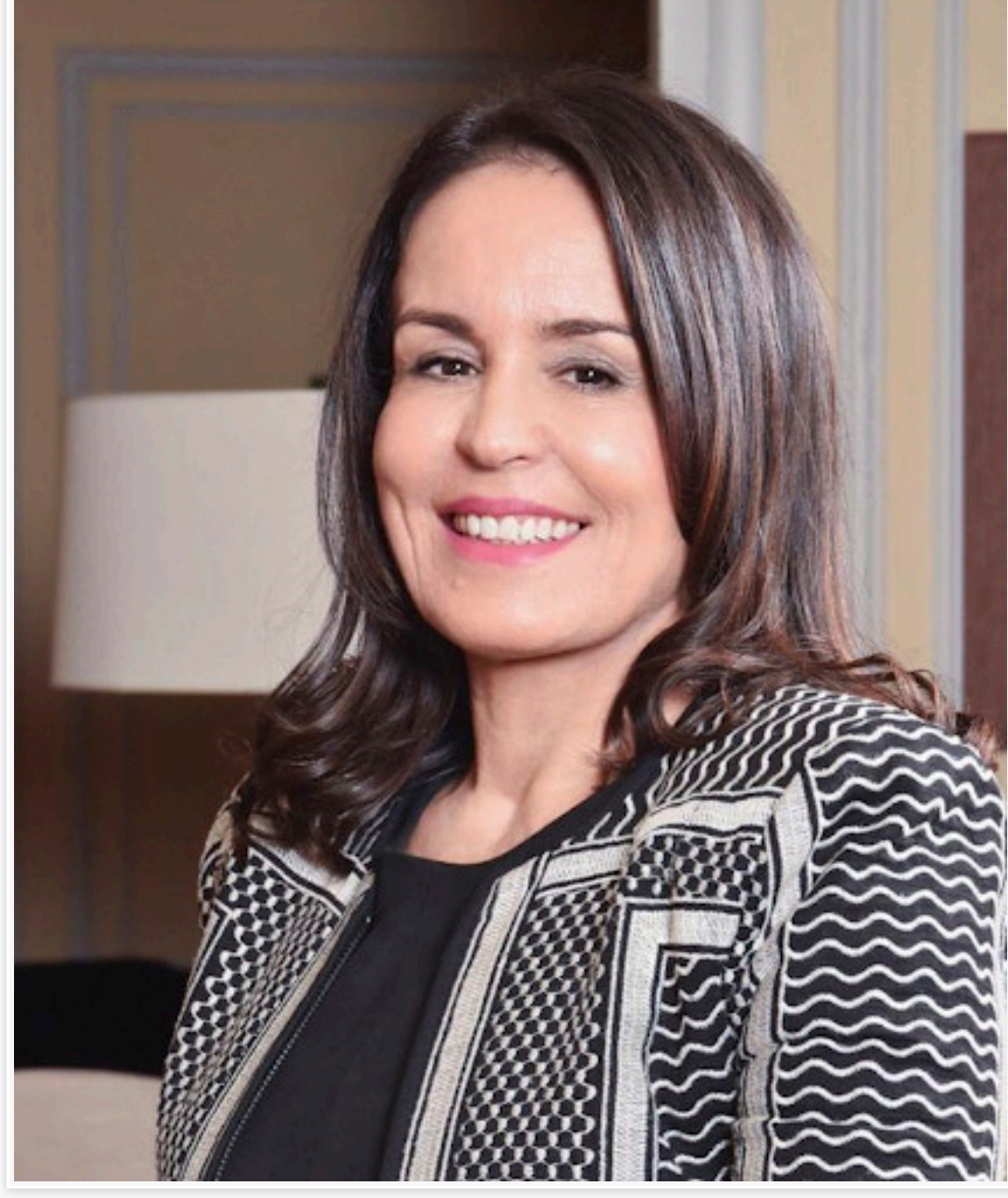
PEOPLE

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From "free and democratic Algeria" to "civil and non-military state"

By Razika Adnani, philosopher and specialist in issues related to Islam, member of the Orientation Council of the Fondation de l'Islam de France, of the Scientific Council of the CEFR and of the analysis group JFC Conseil



When the Algerian people came out in February 2019 to demand political and social change for their country, they wanted a 'free and democratic Algeria'. This was their slogan, which made many women and men thirsty for freedom, dignity and modernity in Algeria, but also in the world, dream. However, this beautiful slogan was quickly eclipsed by another one demanding a 'civil and not military state' that women and men adopted during the weekly marches. It means that power should not be in the hands of the military, but should return to civilians, which is why many saw it as fulfilling their desire for democracy.

A civilian state is not synonymous with a democratic or modern state. In most totalitarian and tyrannical systems, power is also civilian. This is why there are many questions about this 'civilian, non-military state': what should this civilian state be like? What are its political positions? What is its vision for education, work, the citizen? What will its economic and foreign policies be? What place will it give to freedoms, to equality between all citizens and especially between

men and women? What does it have in store for young people to enable them to prosper and flourish in their country? A slogan is not enough to answer these questions, which calls for a serious analysis of the concept of the 'civil and non-military state'.

This calls for a serious analysis of the concept of "civil and non-military state". The concept of "civil state" originates from the concept of "civil state" forged by Islamists, such as the preacher Mohamed El Ghazali, and claimed by Islamist movements in Algeria, but also in all Muslim countries, and particularly in Egypt, where the power is in the hands of the military. Thus, the majority of the Algerian popular movement chants an Islamist slogan, given that those who still demand a free and democratic Algeria are no longer numerous in the popular marches or that their voice is less heard.

A non-theocratic state?

The Islamists define this civil state they call for as a state that is neither military nor theocratic and add that it is a state that will have Islamic references. They explain that a non-theocratic state means that the ruler is not the representative of God on earth. This is an anachronistic claim - the word "theocracy" is considered a dirty word today - since this system has been out of use for centuries, at least in Algeria and Egypt. Although the state is not perfect, Algeria has been a republic since 1962. The idea of a head of state who represents God on earth has not existed in the Algerian conception of the state since the French period and even more so after the abolition of the caliphal system in 1924.

The Islamists claim to propose a new system that would even be modern according to some sociologists and journalists. They say that the state they are campaigning for is not theocratic and therefore not religious, but only has Islamic references. But an Islamic state is a religious state, because it is administered by religion. The concept of a 'civil and non-military state', claimed by many Algerians, is therefore the equivalent or synonymous of an 'Islamic state'. In this Islamic system, if the person who governs does not represent God on earth, it is the clerics, who claim to hold the divine truth and speak in the name of God, who represent him. An Islamic state is thus a theocratic state. With Sharia laws, which are considered divine laws, forming part of the Algerian legislative system, the Islamists' 'civil and not military state' wants to send Algeria back centuries.

The people and the state under theocratic rule

The demand for non-theocratic rule has distant origins. It goes back to the time of the caliphs who were God's representatives on earth. Historians tell us that the caliphs, in order to get rid of the interference of the clerics in political affairs, made a compromise with the clerics that the clerics would not interfere in the affairs of the caliphs and in return the caliphs would hand over society to them. Many Muslim thinkers, such as the Moroccan al-Jabiri, saw this compromise as a separation of politics and religion, and thus as secularisation. This position reveals a misunderstanding of the meaning of the term secularisation, where society is governed by rules derived from reason and not from religion, because in this compromise religion continues to deal with the affairs of the city which are political in nature. There is therefore no separation between politics and religion, but between the interests of the caliphs and the religious. Any separation is therefore not secularisation or laicisation. It is important to clarify what is being separated.

This compromise between the caliphs and the jurists, or fougahas, gave the latter absolute power over society and individuals. They ended up blocking society in all areas, which is logical since the laws of religion do not change or have difficulty changing. The religious do not want them to change, because their power depends on it. For this reason, they have opposed all new and creative thinking and have thus caused the decline of Muslim civilisation. Thus, the Islamists want a system where the population is left to the clerics, as in the time of the caliphs. But unlike the caliphs, the ruler, who is not God's representative on earth, is no longer sacred. As a result, he himself will be under the power of those who represent God on earth, i.e. the clerics. The slogan of the 'civil and not military state' claimed by the Islamists therefore aims to establish a theocratic system that hands over not only the people, but also the state to the power of the fougahas. Thus, the political system is Islamist and theocratic but revisited, in other words, it is a theocracy where the divine and absolute power does not belong to the leader but to the clerics.

An Islamic state is not the solution

It is therefore absurd to believe that the Islamists claiming a "civil and not military state" carry a modern project as some think; on the contrary, the analysis of their words shows that they are at the antipodes of modernity. They use the terminology of modernity such as equality, freedom and democracy but they do not believe in them. Modernity, like democracy, is not just a word, but a word that has meaning and carries values and beliefs. The use of this terminology by the Islamists is only meant to influence as many people as possible to come to power. In 2011, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood chanted "The people are the source of power", but this does not mean that they were democrats. A people who do not have a democratic culture, who do not believe in freedom and equality as values, become tyrants themselves when they have power, especially when they are convinced that they are God's representative on earth.

An Algerian journalist states, in an article she wrote to defend the concept of a 'civil, not military state', that an Islamic state is a state of justice. However, Sharia laws, both in the Koranic texts and in the law books, are based on inequality between men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims, masters and slaves. And any inequality on the grounds of gender, religion or social rank is discrimination that modern laws condemn. This is further proof that it is not enough to call oneself a democrat or a proponent of justice in order to really be one. It is not surprising that in Algeria, a woman, in the name of Islam, defends rules that discriminate against her and presents them as just. This phenomenon is even widespread, even though it is unnatural. It is human nature to reject injustice. If he tends to dominate others, if he can be unjust to them, he hates that he himself is a victim of injustice.

Not replacing one dictatorship with another

For Hannah Arendt, this is part of the criteria of totalitarian systems where the people, the masses in her discourse, accept the injustices inflicted on them as long as they remain part of the movement. However, in Muslim societies this system has its own particularities. It subjects the individual from an early age to a set of ideas that are presented to him as divine truths that he is not allowed to criticise. These ideas then act on his thinking and his whole being like dogmas. "In Islam, men and women are equal before God" is one such idea that allows many women to accept legal and social inequalities, while taking comfort in the idea of metaphysical equality in the hereafter.

In order to promote the Islamic state she defends, this journalist explained how to cut off the hands of thieves without being unjust. All the political projects carried by the Islamists are limited to a few moral issues that are no longer adapted to our moral values and remain silent on those that are primordial and truly political. The objective of the Islamists who want to establish an Islamic state is to subject Algerian society to the laws of Islam that are designed for the Arab culture of the seventh century. To do this, they deny the history and particularities of the people and society, in other words, the reality, which is the only way to impose them. For centuries, Algerians, like all Muslims, while the world was advancing, only looked back to the 7th century. They lived in decadence, but they were convinced that happiness, wealth and glory would come after death. When they found themselves under the domination of the great powers, they said that they were unjust and domineering. However, peoples who prefer to go backwards instead of forwards are always prey to those with domineering tendencies.

In conclusion, Algerians will not get out of this situation by replacing one dictatorship with another. They will not advance with a system that will accentuate their social, political, cultural and human misery. They will not build a peaceful Algeria by trampling on the suffering that Algerians endured during the dark years and that they still carry deep within themselves. If Algerians want a new Algeria, they are obliged to think about a political and social system in which Algeria and Algerians prosper and not about a system that leaves them with no solution other than to console themselves by dreaming of happiness in the afterlife in order to support their misery in this world.

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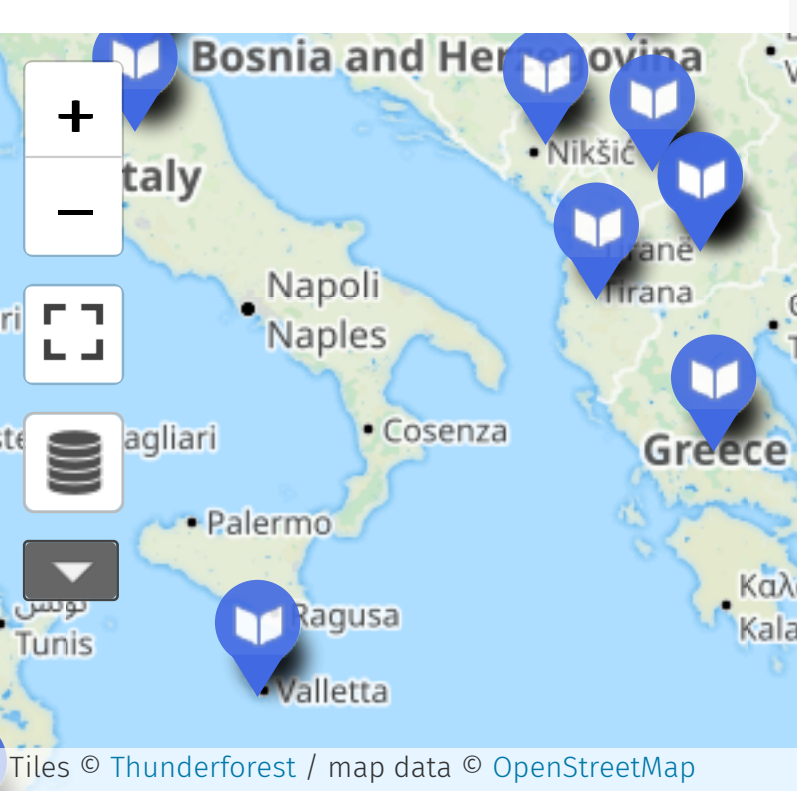


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