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The French Intifada: The Long War Between France and Its Arabs Andrew Hussey **A provocative rethinking of France's long relationship with the Arab world**

To fully understand both the social and political pressures wracking contemporary France—and, indeed, all of Europe—as well as major events from the Arab Spring in the Middle East to the tensions in Mali, Andrew Hussey believes that we have to look beyond the confines of domestic horizons. As much as unemployment, economic stagnation, and social deprivation exacerbate the ongoing turmoil in the *banlieues*, the root of the problem lies elsewhere: in the continuing fallout from Europe's colonial era.

Combining a fascinating and compulsively readable mix of history, literature, and politics with his years of personal experience visiting the *banlieues* and countries across the Arab world, especially Algeria, Hussey attempts to make sense of the present situation. In the course of teasing out the myriad interconnections between past and present in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Beirut, and Western Europe, *The French Intifada* shows that the defining conflict of the twenty-first century will not be between Islam and the West but between two dramatically different experiences of the world—the colonizers and the colonized.

The French Intifada: The Long War Between France and Its Arabs Details

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Diane says

This book looks at French North Africa and how the colonial legacy impacted it. It considers the current problems in the French suburbs among North African immigrants, and how French policy in its North African colonies led to friction between France and its former colonies. The book does a good job of describing the history of French involvement in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya, but isn't as strong on the present-day activities. It also contains a lot of foul language, which I thought was unnecessary for a history book.

Kristjan Lukk says

Andrew Hussey takes the reader on a path to the recent history of the Maghreb countries that is heavily influenced by French colonization. Events taking place in today's world are related to events that took place 6, 25, 65 or even 200 years ago.

Hussey's descriptions about uprisings in Algeria are appalling. Still, they are not very different from slaughter committed by French during the colonization and Hussey argues that the French Arabs are still affected by the psychological trauma.

Some of Hussey's arguments are too weak for generalizations, but the historical background will help every reader to make their own conclusions.

Mikey B. says

Page 291 (my book) George Orwell on Marrakesh in the late 1930's

"When you walk through a town like this – two hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom at least twenty thousand own literally nothing except the rags they stand up in – when you see how the people live, and still more how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe you are among human beings... All colonial empires are in reality founded upon that fact. How long can we keep on kidding these people? How long before they turn their guns in the other direction?"

The author provides us with descriptions of the banlieues (suburbs) of Paris (and other cities like Lyons) where large numbers of North Africans (or their descendants) live, along with immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Many feel ghettoized and disenfranchised – they feel removed from French society. They feel despised and rejected by France and in return they hate everything that France stands for. Mind you this is an over-simplification, but more on that later. Ominously some have turned to radical Islam for answers, finding a sense of belonging. We are provided with several examples. Many in this diaspora, of which there are an estimated 3 million in France, come from the former French colonies of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.

The author is at his best when recounting the history of the French North African colonization. As the quote

from George Orwell indicates this was a powder keg in the making. Algeria has erupted in extreme violence several times in the last one hundred years.

Algeria was settled, starting in the 1830's, by hundreds of thousands of colonists – who treated the native Arab population much like North America treated the native Indian population – they stole their land and when there was resistance the natives would be killed off. Later, in the early 20th century, Algeria came to resemble South Africa – with the colonialists wielding power and the Arab population pushed to the periphery in every sense of the word. They were denied the right to vote and denied an education.

There came to be a power struggle between three factions: the colonists who wanted to maintain their power, the Arab population who wanted their land and country back (some turned to mainland France for help), and France itself who played a game of trying to appease both the colonists and the Arab people – but this resulted only in both sides despising mainland France. Finally, in 1962, Algeria was granted independence. Over one million French colonists returned to mainland France.

France has continually had North African immigrants because of the poverty and lack of employment in these countries. France is seen, by some, as a beacon of opportunity – or maybe as a last resort of opportunity.

France continues to maintain strong military ties with all three of its former colonies and their rulers (basically despots). One reason is that France and the current rulers want to prevent an Islamist theocracy from taking over. This caused a brutal civil war in Algeria in the 1990's.

At the end there is a short chapter on France's prison population which is estimated by some to be 70% Muslim. It is said that many are being converted to radical Islam.

I learnt much from this book on France and North Africa.

I did feel a number of topics missing, more so on France. I would have liked more on the history of the Arab diaspora in France. As the author mentions there was a tremendous migration of colonists to France from Algeria during the early 1960's. How did they interact with the North African Arab immigrants who had already settled in France after the Second World War when employment opportunities were high – and then with those that came later? They were deadly enemies in Algeria. I would have liked more on how successful some immigrants have been – and how they have integrated. There must be conflict within the immigrant community – between Arabs from North Africa and those from sub-Saharan Africa.

It would appear that radical Islam is penetrating the French banlieue, and is starting to attract native French people, but yet the author states that the recent riots are more a product of disaffected youth being unemployed and marginalized...whither France?

Chrissy says

I found this book really enlightening, particularly on the modern history of Algeria. There were many things that I didn't know, and it was all very clearly explained.

I do have the following criticisms, however:

- 1) I don't think the book itself fits its title very well. I expected more about Jihadism in modern France than there was. The final chapter was really the only time we got into the contemporary world.
- 2) I found it a bit weird that Algeria was described in great detail (and very interesting it was), but then Morocco and Tunisia were a bit of an afterthought.
- 3) I would have liked the book to be a bit more artful. I'd have liked to feel the places being described, and to know the people a bit more.

On the whole though, I did feel I learned a lot and I would not have learned anywhere near as much had this been more of a travelogue (if point 3 of my criticisms had been considered important).

Chris Steeden says

Left-wing journalist / author Andrew Hussey takes us through French colonial and protectorate times in North Africa, namely Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia and it's fascinating. It's one of those where you can play the Bingo game on left-wing / Marxist words. At what page will hegemony first turn up? He doesn't disappoint but still it is a very insightful book and obviously well researched.

Hussey goes to each place so we see it from the modern point-of-view and then he takes us through the history from the time that the French took over. Don't be reading this if you want to read about any good things the French did. This is all connected to the suburbs in Paris and Lyons where there big contingents of immigrants from those North African countries now reside and the troubles that have flared-up.

We start in Algeria where the French invaded in June 1830 and on 5 July 1830 the Supreme Commander of the French Forces marched into Algiers. Of course there was resistance and in 1841 marshal Thomas-Robert Bugeaud executed a scorched-earth policy. The French had over 100000 troops in Algeria. The text goes on to detail the uprisings since then upto independence in 1962. This would go through the reign of Napoleon II in 1848 (nephew of Napoleon), the fall of France in 1940, famines, protests and the introduction of the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN). In 1954 they chose the Aures Massif mountain range on the north-eastern edge of Algeria as the principal revolutionary stronghold. They shot a young European married couple who were school teachers. The man died but the woman did survive. This was really the start of the Algerian War of Independence. There was a huge Muslim attack in Philpeville which was swiftly followed by a French military attack. Between 1947 and 1953 there were 740000 immigrants to Paris from Algeria. That is just the official figure for those times. In October 1956 a French airforce jet forced a plane to land that was carrying an FLN leader, Ahmed Ben Bella. The people on the plane were arrested so the FLN commanders decided to perform random attacks on Algiers and Casbah. This became the Battle of Algiers that was finally quashed in 1957 and followed by torture methods being employed by the French military. On 9 May 1958 the FLN assassinated three French soldiers. Civil war was close. De Gaulle travelled to Algeria and by this time the FLN were even attacking Paris.

More of the same happened in Morocco and Tunisia although not to quite the same extent as Algeria which is why the main part of the book is concerned with Algeria.

The only thing about the book, that I felt could be better handled was the connection back to the trouble in

the modern day suburbs of Paris and Lyons. Although the history is really good there did not seem to be a 'bringing together' chapter which really shows you the reason for the troubles. He does speak to some residents and you do get some idea from that though.

Margaret says

I wish I'd read this book whilst I was living in France. It's a most informative book, looking at the inhabitants of France who come from the former French territories of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Much of the book is devoted to France's possession of these nations, and to the troubles leading to their final independence. It's a horrifying and illuminating story, and one that does much to explain the disaffection of the Maghrebin population in France. In fact, if I have a criticism, it is that Hussey has done little but touch upon the history of those North Africans who chose to emigrate to France, though he examines the very recent past, looking at recent riots and at Muslims in the French prison system

Despite the seriousness of the subject matter, this well-written book is easy to read and complex issues are dealt with clearly. Hussey has handled the mass of material well and engagingly. A compelling and disturbing read.

Andrew says

The French Intifada: The Long War Between France and Its Arabs, by Andrew Hussey, is an interesting book on France's historical relationship with Arab populations in North Africa (particularly in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) and the parallels these relationships draw with modern race riots and terrorism which are present in modern France, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The book is part journalistic travelogue and reflections by the author, part history of French colonialism in the Maghreb and the revolutionary movements that violently threw them out, and part social commentary on unrest and social upheaval in French society.

Hussey first examines the race riots and terrorist acts (this is pre-2015, so the major attacks on Charlie Hebdo and Paris attacks) that shook France in the early 2000's. These riots are often performed by immigrant populations from former French colonies, some who are second or third generation French, who despise the ghettoization they perceive in the *banlieue* of major French cities. These people are often young, disenfranchised, poor, with little prospects in the future, and often the target of racism. Hussey then moves on to outline French colonial history in Algeria, its violent conquest, crackdown on civil rights, racist policies and finally its violent war to try and hold on to the colony, which almost led to a coup in France itself, saw the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in violent street conflicts between competing French and Algerian terrorist groups with complacency and support from the government. Hussey looks at Morocco and the slow French conquest of rights and privileges after proclaiming a protectorate. Morocco too suffered from violence from French settlers and those disenfranchised with French rule. Tunisia is examined as well, its conquest, upheaval, and independence under Ben Ali.

These form the backdrop of the conflicts emerging in mainland France to this day. France is intimately connected with its former colonies, with extensive business ties, migration, support for authoritarian regimes in Morocco and Algeria (and formerly, in Tunisia) and military and police cooperation. France seeks to this

day to protect its "sphere of influence" over this area of North Africa, and has participated closely in crackdowns and political change in the region, to promote French interests. This leads to anger and frustration in France's immigrant population, who suffer from poverty, marginalization and racism, feel the weight of historical wrongs on their shoulders, and wish to take it out on France. Popular riots are fairly common in French cities, and some *banlieues* are even no-go areas for police and Europeans. France is a society that is seething with anger, misunderstanding, racism and a history of violent colonialism and unrest. Hussey notes that France is beginning to suffer its own Intifada style violence, as those who grind out their lives in poverty and misery in the slums of Paris seethe with want for a better life, and revenge. The targets are often the rich, Jews and foreigners (tourists, Americans etc.).

Hussey's book is extremely opinionated, but offers a clear and concise argument on France's growing unrest and inability to interact with its immigrant communities. It chronicles French atrocities in North Africa, and details the crackdowns, naked imperialism and violent massacres that marked its colonial rule. It then chronicles the independence movements of the FLN in Algeria, and organizations in Tunisia and Morocco who struggled, often using extreme violence themselves, to remove the millions of *Pieds-Noirs*. Hussey's book was an excellent read. I did find the movement from travelogue to hard facts a bit tiresome. I personally would have preferred a more in depth look at French colonisation, however, over the personal accounts. These offer little to the book, and are thrown in willy-nilly for affect.

Even so, this book is a highly enjoyable account of the issue of French relations with the world of North Africa. Unrest and terrorism in France, the Arab Spring movement, and growing radicalism in the politically restive Middle East, all make this book a timely and introspective look at a conflict that many in the West see as a nuisance with little impact on their lives. The reality is, this conflict often began in the West, was instigated by policies of marginalization, and is being fought on the streets of major French cities. Many Westerners continue to disregard Islam and its more radical forms as completely barbaric, but when one reads the accounts of colonialism in this region (which only ended a mere 50 years ago) one begins to see why the conflict can be so bloody and violent. Hatred is deeply rooted in both parties, and may last yet for a long time. This is why the "French Intifada" is such an apt title. It is a struggle by groups who feel they have no home, no place in society, and yearn for something. Highly recommended for those who wish to read about decolonization, French and North African History, and social and cultural relations.

Simeon Gatev says

Andrew Hussey is professor of cultural history at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. His latest book, *The French Intifada*, seems to be an extension to his penultimate *Paris: The Secret History*. Unlike it, though, it is dressed in a more historically-political attire to reveal the relationship between "France and its Arabs" up to present day. Colonization and Arabization are key-terms in the book. Hussey's many visits to the Maghreb region, which is the core setting, allow him to present us with first-hand observations of the situation there, while his immense historical knowledge on this subject is expressed in a vividly sublime manner.

From 14 June 1830 onwards, which marks the French invasion of Algeria, the tense relationship between the settling colons and natives had created deeply hostile and rancorous environment. Colonialism, Anti-Semitism, Wahhabism are all catalysts in the formation of The French Intifada. The War of Independence from 1954 to 1962 and The Algerian Intifada in 1988 are the zenith points of brutalism and terrorism among many more alike there. Hussey's account and draws an uncompromisingly realistic and illustrative image of the violence played there during the clashes between the colonizers and the colonized. Most of us are aware of the atrocities that had taken place in Algeria, but the many instances the book tackles are often shocking in

their all-inclusive informativeness. France, it seems, suffers greatly in its attempt to control “the inferior races”. Lethal radicalism, then, becomes the sole weapon of decolonisation, which, as the book proves, in present years has also transferred and established itself firmly on European soil.

Andrew Hussey withdraws from Algeria only to translocate the story into Morocco and Tunisia. With its Spanish influence in the north and French protectorship in the south, Morocco is an even more dichotomized community than Algeria. After the Second World War, as Andrew Hussey discusses, the formation of extremist groups exacerbates the state of political and social affairs. Corruption, Hussey claims, has penetrated the government and pro-French sympathizers are represented as pawn in the hands of France. The account of Tunisia in the book follows similar trends. Tunis, with its amazing beaches and touristic amenities, in The French Intifada becomes a dark place where extremism plagues the streets and starvation contributes to the horror. The war here involves France greatly by showing its surreptitious attempts to subject the country, and Andrew Hussey extensively discusses the ‘Stealing of Tunisia’ and the mass emigration to France after 1970s it results in.

Andrew Hussey begins his book with the depiction of the Parisian communities, particularly, the life in the banlieues. “If you live here, if you speak with a banlieusard accent, you are condemned as an outsider in Paris and in fact in all French cities.” France is a residence to the largest Muslim population in Europe with approximately 5 million Muslims, most of which immigrated from Maghreb’s region to the banlieues in the past century. The “French Intifada” taking place in the French cities, is “is only the latest and most dramatic form of engagement with the enemy .“ Who is the enemy, though? Hussey does not provide a straightforward answer. Neither does he really judges. His meticulous evaluation leaves us to decide individually given the facts in their unconverted form. Nevertheless, Hussey implies, the present violence, the bombings, and the killings that fill the news on a daily basis are consequences of two centuries long sadism. The incessant wars between French and Arabs brought to the front in The French Intifada should serve not only as textbooks’ historical and political fillings, but also as a warning of current and upcoming worldly threats.

Murtaza says

An interesting look at France's fraught relationship with its former Arab colonies, as well as the Arabs (and Sub-Saharan Africans) who live in the disenfranchised banlieus surrounding most French cities.

I thought the book was going to be more about the latter, the lives of Arabs in France but in fact the overwhelming majority of it is in France's colonial history in North Africa, which more or less comes across as a long history of massacres and counter-massacres. The majority of the book focuses on Algeria, and the picture which is painted is one of a deracinated population similar to Native Americans and African-Americans who were violently dispossessed of their traditional societies and even at the end of their eventual emancipation were no longer the same people. The Moroccan and Tunisian sections were much shorter and while also enlightening seemed to have been almost included as an afterthought.

I really enjoyed this book and found myself breezing through it, I am interested in the subject matter (always wondered what those "car on fire" street signs meant in the Lyons suburbs) and this was a fascinating exploration of France and "its Arabs". The author is an engaging writer and despite my wariness of the Clash of Civilizations thesis and title this struck me as a fairly even-handed exploration of the subject matter. Despite this I still think he goes a bit overboard sometimes in his characterization of Islamist political parties ("Islamist demons"?!?) and paints them all with the same brush as one unrelenting force for evil. While I'm not expert in the region enough to wager an alternative opinion past history suggests an objective view

would've found a situation that is more nuanced. The Ennahdha people I've come across in Tunisia and who governed that country post-Ben Ali certainly didn't strike me as 'demonic'.

However much I valued the colonial sections though it would've been nice if the author had done a better job of tying it directly back to the situation in the French suburbs than he did. He posits that the unrest there is more than a normal, if regrettable, response to poverty and disenfranchisement, but he never actually makes the case in any detail. The loose ends of the book are never tied up, maybe for want of space, but it detracts from the thesis and makes this more of a colonial history than anything else. I'm not convinced of his argument that this is more about incompatible civilizations than economic and social marginalization.

The book starts off with a scene of riots at Gare du Nord and ends with a brief trip to a prison, but the intervening chapters only tangentially have anything to do with this. Nonetheless I really enjoyed this book, especially for the authors almost cinematic and never-dull style of writing. If he had been able to synthesize his arguments it would've been even better, and perhaps he'd even have been able to posit some solutions which unfortunately he throws his hands up and claims an incapacity for in a very brief riposte at the end.

Michelle says

Fascinating, but ultimately depressing. Makes you realise how the situation the world is facing now is not new at all, and the roots run very deep indeed. I found the material on contemporary France fascinating.

William Weir says

Excellent historical background to help understand the antagonism between North Africans and the state of France. The deep detail stops around 20 years ago, with modern events and society serving as bookends with only fleeting impressions. As such, not knowing the extent of problems in France I found this aspect of the book too rushed and it left me with little context of where we've ended up and where things might go.

Paul Aylott says

The recent attacks in France caused me to ask the question why France? This book answers that, a colonial past, the highest muslim population in Europe and the secular society they wish to achieve have lead to a breeding ground for terrorism. The writer takes you through the present day situation in France and then a detailed examination of the countries that once were part of the French Empire. Sadly people have been trying to cross the sea from North Africa to Europe long before the present exodus. A book of our time.

Domhnall says

Napoleon's occupation of Egypt sparked a fascination with the so called Orient and a lust for its wealth and resources but strangely no corresponding understanding or respect for the Islamic culture of the region. Still, the French gained no lasting legacy from the episode, so when they set about an unprovoked and entirely vicious invasion of Algeria in 1830, seeking a more lasting material acquisition, they brought with them the

policies of extreme violence, genocide, dispossession and colonisation which they learned from America's approach to their native Indians.

Over the following century, the dregs of Southern Europe were enabled by French arms to steal houses, land and businesses across a swathe of North Africa, reducing the native Muslim Arabs and Berbers to a wholly marginal and deprived status in countries where they were hardly even allowed to be citizens. The colonists themselves and the French authorities imposed their will through levels of barbarity that are still shocking, and this remained true through to modern times, provoking perfectly plausible comparison with the behaviour of the Nazis in WW2.

The French ran their empire for the benefit of their colonists and invested little in the education and improvement of the "native" peoples. The proud French tradition of "secularism" became and remains a valuable tool by which to make it very hard to participate in public life without abandoning the Muslim faith, something which was of course impossible without also sacrificing family and community. When even this monstrous empire lost its capacity to terrorise the people into continued submission, the French withdrew in a manner that left new regimes poorly equipped to govern, largely still amenable to military and other backing from the French, with economies that were wrecked and remained dependent on French business interests. The French, in other words, simply and cynically turned to neocolonial methods to sustain their strategic control, a process that persists to this day.

Huge numbers of North Africans found their way into France itself during and after the empire, and were required as relatively unskilled and pliable labour for French industry. However, their marginal status within France was reflected in effectively segregated housing on estates outside Paris and other cities or towns. The failure of France to accommodate them properly in French society has been responsible for a level of alienation and frank hostility which, today, represents a dangerous threat to social order. The response to French racism is not always a humble desire for integration in a secular and multi-cultural society, something that has never been offered or achievable, but rather a growing sense that the muslim people have their own culture which they prefer.

Of the millions of French Muslims, it is perfectly clear that most simply aspire to live decent lives and to make their own way in life. Racism makes that hard though. It is not surprising that alienated and disadvantaged Muslims turn to crime and violence. Some 70% of the population of French prisons are thought to be Muslims. It is also the case that a number of terrorist outrages have now been committed by Muslims in France, as well as other countries. The pornographic nature of some of the violence has seemingly shocked Europeans and Americans, as though it represents some inhuman perversion. This is nonsense of course, since the French have been responsible for orgies of obscene violence against "their Arabs" throughout the past century and unsurprisingly they have provoked orgies of obscene violence in retaliation. To some extent, this book suggests that the nature of the violence in recent terrorist acts is shaped by a desire of aggressive young men to impress their peers, in a way that has little to do with political, let alone religious ideology. But the reality is that violence has been prevalent across French territories in North Africa ever since the first invasion of Algeria and it is nothing new for either the French authorities, their colonists, or their enemies.

The writer effectively mocks efforts by "liberal" and "progressive" movements on the Left to empathise with the liberation struggles in various parts of the former empire. Typically they have been based on absolute ignorance of the real conditions. The North African, Muslim experience of Western values of Left or Right, of modernity, of democracy, of Liberal values, is entirely negative - in fact, it is associated with the most extreme forms of brutality and oppression. The idea that the liberated peoples of North Africa will now struggle to achieve a modern, open democratic society is probably unrealistic and even deluded. What Left

and Right in the West need to get to grips with is that the Islamic world has its own values and culture and will seek to develop in accordance with quite different principles.

Unfortunately, what those values and principles are to be is seriously contested, and a major threat to the region is the Saudi funded spread of the extremist, puritan Wahhabi version of Islam. To a large extent, its appeal is the complement to the challenges from Western values as these have been expressed in practice. What also needs to be more apparent is that the Western imperialist project is not yet defeated and has merely changed its style and approach, remaining very powerful and even in control of key institutions.

It really is time for Western citizens to discard their wide eyed innocence about the effects of empire and racism and about the continuing violence that is neocolonialism. The "liberal values" which the West takes such pride in are not benign, but poisonous and oppressive in the extreme. This is not to say that the ideals of democracy and tolerance lack value but that they are only ideals until people engage more seriously with the political and social transformation required to make them a possibility even in the West. As for Europe's [let alone France's] mission to civilise the world, it is time this was put to rest as the genocidal and racist project it always was.

This book stops at 2013 but does not suggest for a moment that history has ended there.

During this period the term 'mission civilisatrice' entered the French language and by the end of the Nineteenth Century it had passed into common usage as a justification for French military activity in Algeria. The background to this ideological development was an address to the French Parliament in 1882 by the republican politician and journalist Jules Ferry. He famously asserted: 'We must believe that Providence deigned to confer upon us a mission by making us masters of the earth, and this mission consists not of attempting an impossible fusion of races but of simply spreading or awakening among the other races the superior notions of which we are guardians.' [p112]

The rapper Abd al Malik has devoted a song on his latest album to Celine. 'Celine revolutionised literature because he was very close to real people, like us rappers today ... That's generally a good thing, but there's a danger about being so close to the people; you can start to embrace all the things that are wrong with society.' [P30]

The French were really only deluding themselves, as George Orwell had noted in his diary while convalescing in Marrakesh... 'When you walk through a town like this -- two hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom at least twenty thousand own literally nothing except the rags they stand up in - when you see how people live and still more how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe that you are walking among human beings. All colonial empires are in reality founded upon that fact... How long can we keep on kidding these people? How long before they turn their guns in the other direction?' [p291]

Jbondandrews says

Andrew Hussey's book The French Intifada was an amazing book. I had never knew just how ingrained the French were in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia or just how badly affected all three countries have been by French colonialism. I imagine that other French colonies suffer in the same way. France has a lot to answer for.

Rachel Allen says

So interesting, so well written, and such a nice overview of the history of France, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. I'm planning to use bits and pieces of this for a debate in AP Euro next year.
