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The case of Algeria: decolonization, post-colonial nation-building and the economic disintegration of the periphery

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INTRODUCTION

"It's hard to start a revolution. Even harder to continue it. And hardest of all to win it. But, it's only afterwards, when we have won, that the true difficulties begin. In short, Ali, there's still much to do." The Battle of Algiers, Gillo Pontecorvo, scene of Ben M'Hidi talking to Ali La Pointe from a roof of the Casbah

"One has to live tragedy, rather than staging it" Jean Genet

"When the frontier separating the past from the future, a social system from the other, is only made of police violence (in a literal as well metaphorical sense) serving the needs of Capital, it means that the dying system has already relinquished its role, capitulating vis a vis the future." N+1, *Lo Stato nell'era della Globalizzazione: Ipertrofia del controllo e collasso dei rapporti nella società civile*

Facing the void

The world is currently at a turning point. Natural resources are being exhausted, the human species has endured a global pandemic, a widespread economic crisis is unfolding, and no amount of political engineering can replace the sense of disruption and disintegration that the world is witnessing over the course of the past two years. It is almost as if the image that Marx evoked in the Communist Manifesto, of a capitalist society akin to a sorcerer "who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells" is being unveiled in front of the bewildered crowd of the society itself.

This perspective might be doubly true for the so-called "periphery". What is the periphery? The geographical definition of periphery can be debatable, although it mostly encompasses the vast majority of the post-colonial states, and most South American and central Asian countries. Its boundaries are fuzzy. Is China, for instance, a part of the periphery? Is the Middle Kingdom posed to become the next global superpower or will it loom under the weight of the American military order, until the next global collapse?

An analyst and political theorist cannot look at the present turmoil in each context without reckoning its "secular trends" and structural roots. This essay is about decolonization. It is about decolonization in Algeria as a case study of how one of the most successful, bloody, and inspiring

anti-colonial revolutions of the XXth century could not prevent a post-colonial society from being engulfed in the same contradictions it helped to overcome. It is about the weight of the "dead generations" on the living and the tragedy of incomplete social change, that like a tragic play by Aeschylus condemns those struggling in the present to repeat the same destiny of their forebearers.

More than depicting a history unfolding in a progressive and linear run but stopped by the irrationality of its actors and playwriters, this essay will argue for a tragic, non-linear, and catastrophic interpretation of past and present history, as a conceptual key that opens the door to a bifurcation where everything that is momentarily buried remerges again, and all the secular trends collide to produce a new vision of the human species and its life. The case of Algeria will be seen as a synecdoche of its symbolic and material meaning.

The literature of decolonization and decolonial/post-colonial studies, as vast and conceptually diverse as it is, has grasped the problem merely from its cultural and phenomenological standpoint. As a sector of studies in the academic world, its rise has signaled a distinct interest for the phenomenon of post-colonial reality and gave voice to "the subaltern", but without ever tacking the root causes of the contemporary strife it comments upon. This theoretical weakness could also be viewed as its palatability vis a vis the academic world, or as a new reductionism where everything significant of the history of the colonial and post-colonial world is subsumed under the headings of culture and (intersectional) discourse, or under what we might call as "point of view epistemology"[1].

Trying to go to the root of the problem is by no means an easy task. All theoretical results that are to be reached in the process are by no means certain or already established. Many nomothetic economists and cultural theorists dealing with the nature of post-colonialism are trapped in an endless separation in a way that might recall what C.P. Snow once termed the "two cultures"[2].

But it is worthwhile to begin and take the risk. To narrate the descent into hell that we are living worldwide through the perspective of the periphery, and the middle east and Algeria, and to analyze

[1] For instance, among those who criticized post-colonial and cultural studies, Loren Goldner, in "Vanguard of Retrogression", makes the well-known case that the Derridean and deconstructionist roots of many of its representatives betray a desire to abandon the tenets of Marxist critique by replacing it "discourse", text and identity issues. While this might be true for some, the insistence on a supposed antinomy between classist vs. cultural critique can be as reductionist as the "point of view epistemology" it criticizes. Cfr. Loren Goldner, *Vanguard of Retrogression*, Queequeg Publications, 2001, pp. 174-217

[2] Immanuel Wallerstein, for example, argued that this split between cultures was partly a product and a cause of the birth of the modern university in Europe in the XIXth century, and in that context, the study of history was included in the realm of the social sciences without ever emancipating itself from the distinction between "nomothetic" and "idiographic" disciplines, between "hard" and "soft" science. Cfr. Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis, An Introduction*, Duke University Press, 2004, pp. 2-5

it through the idea of the possible rather than the fixed and certain, can be a way to gain a clearer understanding of ourselves in the process and a better political outlook for the future.

A Theoretical Overview of the question

To understand both the problem in its generality and in the specific case of Algeria, we should start from a systemic point of view. This calls into question the much-discussed problem of the historical origins of the current dominant mode of production: capitalism. Regardless of how it is conceptualized, some elements of the present economy are visible and commonly understood: its global character, its rapid and destructive pace of change, and the effects it had on some of the most vulnerable societies around the world. Yet these elements per se, which taken separately can only engender the rather trivial idea that some measures can be taken within the current institutions to "tackle the problem", cannot bring to a proper understanding of the root of the question.

The question of the origins of capitalism, of postcolonial countries and specifically of Algeria, can be looked from different dimensions. The first to be discussed from the perspective of the present essay would be the one formulated by Immanuel Wallerstein in his several publications, the so-called theory of the "world-system". What is a world-system? According to Wallerstein, a World-System is a geographical relation between countries that eschews the legal boundaries of regions and states and creates an economic and cultural dimension that binds different units into an enlarged process of production. For Wallerstein, the modern world-system is specifically capitalist, unlike the case of the ancient world-empires.[3]

Wallerstein, in analyzing the specific differences existing between a world-economy in the modern world-system and world-empires, resorts to the history of the expansion and retreat of different empires compared to the emergence of modern nation-states. Nation states, in his account, are both the product and the producers of the capitalist world-system, an analysis akin to some extent to a

[3] This distinction is a peculiar one but nonetheless it is based on an account of the breakdown of European feudalism compared to the rest of the world and was notably inspired by Braudel's account on the Mediterranean "world-economy", expanding its theoretical scope. This analysis, despite its apparent soundness, hides many contradictions. Cfr. Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis, an Introduction*, pp. 23-42, and especially Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I, Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, University of California Press, 2011, chapters 4-6.

Marxian description of the origins of capitalism. Since nations are the agents of the world-economy, a unified empire would only stifle the development of capitalism.[4]

However, and unlike Marx, his description of the origins of capitalism can be said to fall short of one fundamental question: its relations of production. While he states the importance of understanding the development of the world-system as a relation between "core", "peripheral" and "semi-peripheral" countries, with their different chains of determination in the economy and culture, and he underlines the importance that colonialism and overseas conquest played in the process of accumulation, he constantly evades to provide a clear explanation of the element reproducing the capitalist economic relation: labor. His theoretical confusion about the reproduction of capitalism is motivated both politically and philosophically: politically, his critique was aimed at the alleged blindness of traditional Marxists towards the role of non-waged labor in the birth of capitalism, and philosophically it was premised upon an understanding of the economy as a space where market forces and commercial expansion determine the division of labor between "core" and "peripheral" countries, where multiple types of labor processes can coexist at the same time.[5]

If these premises are to be accepted, then prominence in the analysis of the "periphery" should be given to a scheme of world trade where allocation of resources and means of production are produced by sheer political force, supply-demand dynamics and what he and his disciples would call "the development of underdevelopment" through a worldwide "surplus transfer". This scheme, in the critical viewpoint of this essay, is arguably only scratching the surface of the problem. Robert Brenner, in his lengthy critique of Wallerstein, accused his theory of merely being a reedition of Adam Smith's account in "The Wealth of the Nations", especially in the role of world trade, only with a reversed political meaning. According to Brenner, Wallerstein completely ignores the "class formation" dynamics that led certain countries to position themselves at the core of the global economy[6].

We might delve further in Brenner's critique of Wallerstein. His main critical points – the absence of a class formation analysis in the process of the origins of capitalism, and the quantitative approach Wallerstein employs in describing the rise of capitalism as a process of geographical

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[4] *En passant*, if we overlook the cultural aspect to it, this is precisely the point of the so-called "Needham question": China and India lost terrain in technology against the new western economies because their political order did not encourage accumulation, overseas expansion, and monetization of the society.

[5] His main piece of evidence for this, apart from the slave-labor plantation economy of North America, is the history of Poland and eastern Europe during the long inflation cycle of the XVIth and early XVIIth century and the relation between their "cash-crop" economy of serf labor and the demand for cheap grain in the west's emerging capitalist societies. Wallerstein wanted to show how a forced-labor scheme was not incompatible with the emerging European world-economy, who incorporated it as a periphery of its own development.

[6] Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development: a Critique of Neo-Smithian* Marxism, New *Left Review* n°104, July-August 1977, especially pp. 33-41 and 53-61.

expansion and trade enlargement, rather than using a qualitative approach highlighting the "specificity" of relative surplus value production – are relevant in different ways.

The first point is relevant to understand the way different class structures generated different and conflicting political systems. The second point, instead, rests on the distinction between absolute and relative surplus-value in Marx' theory of labor-value, and while Brenner supports his argument by referring to Marx, his position has two main defects: the first being a general misunderstanding of the conceptual difference between relative and absolute surplus value in Marx, and the second being an excessive minimization of the role of trade in "kickstarting" the capitalist mode of production[7].

Notably, in Marx' distinction, absolute and relative surplus value designate a tension within the capitalist mode of production, mostly temporal and developmental. The "specificity" of relative surplus value is tied to the replacement of the conditions of production as they emerge "from the womb" of the old society, what he calls formal domination of capital, to the real process of domination of capital, typical of wholly formed capitalistic societies, where social conditions have been subsumed under the cycle of production and reproduction of capital. However, the prevalence of relative surplus-value in a capitalist economy does not exclude the recourse to absolute surplus-value production, and most importantly it does not imply that pre-capitalist societies can be organized around the latter, as Brenner argues, which is a non-sequitur from a Marxist perspective.

The dynamic of "core" and a "periphery" is probably a blurrier phenomenon than what it might seem. It can be said to depend less on "surplus transfer" and more of a series of other intertwined mechanisms of political and economic nature that hinder the development of "peripheral" nations, making them dependent on the one hand and disintegrating them internally. This series of mechanisms are related to the other much-discussed concept of "imperialism".

In Volume Three of Capital, Marx analyzed the role of interest-bearing capital in the birth of modern finance. Interest, as a part of profit and a share of the total surplus-value, represents itself in the realm of speculation, where a specific part of surplus-value seems to yield a value above itself without the mediation of production. The formation of financial capital, while originally being the enabler of circulation between different industrial capitals, was greatly enhanced by public works such as railway construction and the commercial enterprises of the colonial world. The shift to a finance-based economy is conceived by Marx as a "transitional phase" whereby capital as a social

[7] The main quotation he uses to underline the "specificity" of relative surplus-value to capitalism is at page 31, taken from Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, page 645, Penguin Editions, 1976. His misunderstanding seems even weirder in that context.

relationship is abstracted from the society, and the bourgeoisie as a physical class is progressively substituted by a stratum of administrators, managing "private production without private property", and thus being "the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself"[8].

In the history of political concepts, it is known that Lenin combined this theoretical analysis of Marx' in Volume Three (although only a part of it) with the studies of Hobson and Hilferding on imperial and colonial policies to create the theoretical basis for his concept of imperialism, which he described as "the highest stage of capitalism". Imperialism, in Lenin's book, is conceived as the manifestation of the needs of productive expansion and the globalization of international commerce, appearing on a political sphere as a competition for global power. But this form of competition for power, rather than being its actual content, is only an appearance, and he criticizes Karl Kautsky in the book for claiming that imperialism was tantamount to a "politics of the states". In the last chapter of Imperialism, Lenin resorts to a metaphor to describe imperialism, depicting it as "a shell which no longer fits its contents, a shell which must inevitably decay if its removal by artificial means be delayed."[9]

For Lenin, monopoly capital was intrinsically bent on colonial expansion. This role, in his theory, was enabled by the financialization of society and the need for capital in imperialist countries to acquire materials, both in the form of raw materials and in the form of human labor, to continue its outwards expansion. His theory of monopoly capital can draw a comparison, to some extent, to Rosa Luxembourg's earlier theoretical explanation on the accumulation of Capital in her homonymous book ("The Accumulation of Capital") written in 1913: both theories can be said to be tied to the question of the "realization" of surplus-value by capitalism, in Marxian terms, and the possibility or impossibility of an indefinite expansion of capitalism, with Luxemburg and Lenin elaborating on the questions in different and perhaps conflicting ways.

Departing from the alleged contradictions of Marx' scheme of enlarged reproduction in Volume II of Capital, Luxemburg argued that capitalism cannot possibly realize its total surplus-value within a purely capitalistic society of two classes and two "departments" of production. This begs the question: how can the accumulation of capital, premised upon the realization of surplus-value, exist if this surplus-value cannot be realized? To escape the contradiction, she resorts to the idea that capitalist countries need to incorporate and "erode" pieces of non-capitalist systems to accumulate, and in the same process fight "tooth and nail" for the largest share of these non-capitalist markets to

[8] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy,* edited by Frederick Engels, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, 1887, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Capital-Volume-III.pdf. , pp. 315-17.
[9] Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Foreign Languages Press, 2020, p. 131.

sell their commodities. For Luxemburg, this dynamic is both the product and the result of the contradictions engendered by the Marxian tendency of the rate of profit to fall, which equalizes profit rates across the globe but still needs differential rates of profit to sustain accumulation.

The other pre-condition making accumulation possible is, for Luxemburg, the destruction of a "natural economy", comprising pre-modern agriculture and the old stratum of pre-industrial handicrafts. To provide for an historical explanation of this process, she makes the case of the conquest of India by the British crown, the destruction of the old farmer economy in the United States after the civil war, and the colonization of Algeria by France – the latter being a very cogent depiction of the process that this essay is trying to critically assess[10]. Colonization is not just embedded to the emergence of capitalism but is also isomorphic to it, in that that it violently separates the producer from their means of production, starting out as a great process of agricultural destructuration and expropriation. Colonialism destroys and incorporates; it assimilates and erodes.

It is possible to say, in the context of the theory of peripheral formation, that Luxemburg understood something intrinsic of it (including the crises of accumulation due to the impossibility of "eroding" further pieces of non-capitalist society) but failed to acknowledge the fact that capitalism can perfectly accumulate and thrive in a world completely subsumed to capital itself, as is the world we currently live in[11]. A post-colonial world is a world where all the old relations of production have vanished, but where the shadow of the violence produced by colonization persists and condemns the living to a persistent state of social implosion, to the benefit of a few centers of accumulation.

Rosa Luxemburg's interpretation of the scheme of enlarged reproduction therefore rests on a fallacy: she retained some of the assumptions of the simple reproduction cycle, like the impossibility of enlarged consumption for both classes, with the ill-founded expectation that this scheme must lead to a necessary expansion. Paul Sweezy noted that the reason why she clung so rigidly to the "impossibility" assumption had political roots: against the reformism of the German social democratic party in 1913, she needed to not only prove that indefinite expansion was impossible for capitalism (against the thesis of Tugan-Baranowski that she criticizes in her book), but that collapse was inevitable, given the process of progressive incorporation of the non-capitalist world into the capitalist sphere[12]. Lenin's theory of imperialism, despite the disappearance of

[10] In particular, she frames Algeria's colonization in the context of the destruction of the old communal ownership of the land with the practice of "*cantonnement*", which meant the fragmentation and expropriation of the land by the state, making possible the large influx of settlers and capitals that France exported to Algeria from 1847 onwards. Cfr. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, pp. 377-85.

[11] See for example Jacques Camatte, *Il Capitale Totale, il "Capitolo VI" Inedito de "Il Capitale" e la Critica dell'Economia Politica,* Dedalo Libri, 1974

[12] Paul Sweezy, *Rosa Luxemburg's "The Accumulation of Capital"*, Science & Society, Fall, 1967, Vol. 31, No. 4, A Centenary of Marx's "Capital" (Fall, 1967), pp. 474-485

classic monopoly capital and the criticism leveraged by some for Lenin's historical fallacies[13], seems to work better in dispelling this dilemma of the expansion of capital.

So far, we did a review of some of the theories that can constitute a framework for our interpretation of the question of Algeria and peripheral countries. We mentioned the question of expropriation and capitalism, which is the "so-called primitive accumulation", a concept notoriously elaborated by Marx in the last chapters of the First Volume of Capital. Is it possible to understand the periphery through the lenses of this concept?

For Marx, primitive accumulation constituted macro-moment in time when the conditions for the formation of capital were violently imposed on the society. His example for this process begins with the formation of the "enclosures" in England between the XVIth and XVIIIth century, where the English demesne was fragmented, privatized and its use drastically converted to pasture on one hand and intensive agriculture on the other, thus depriving much of the English population of their means to survive, and converting the former peasants to property-less proletarians. This was paralleled, if we take Wallerstein's theory again into account, with a drastic change in the structure of the ruling class in England: a part of the old aristocracy turned into the "gentry", which meant they turned into agricultural capitalists competing in the market[14].

As previously mentioned, the history of the birth of capitalism in Europe took first and foremost the form of an agricultural revolution, which spawned the systematic production of commodities as its prerogative and end[15]. It had been said that colonialism and colonization are processes isomorphic to that history of agricultural expropriation, and they both constitute the basis for an understanding of primitive accumulation, as Marx himself shows[16]. However, can the concept of primitive

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[13] Giovanni Arrighi, for instance, in *The Long XXth Century*, criticized Lenin's theory of imperialism on the ground that the presumed "higher stage" of capitalistic development was just a recurring phase in a Kondratieff-like cycle of expansion, stabilization and decline of hegemonic powers. Financialization, far from being a modern phenomenon, signaled the shift from one dominant power to the other, a thesis that was partly adopted from Marx. Cfr. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long XXth Century*, Verso Editions, 2010, pp. 166-179.

[14] This was discussed by Immanuel Wallerstein in "The Modern World-System I", where he relates the emergence of the concept of the gentry to the increasing trade in Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan England and sees the "rise of the gentry" as intertwined with the nascent "strong core state" of capitalist England. Cfr. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I, Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Chapter 5, pp. 415-423

[15] In this sense, Amadeo Bordiga was one of the few Marxist thinkers to do a critical investigation on the agricultural roots of capitalism in "*Mai la Merce Sfamerà L'uomo*", published as a series of articles for the journal *Programma Comunista* between 1953 and 1954.

[16] It is well known that Marx thought that capitalism began with "*the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins" and that "These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation. On their heels treads the commercial war of the European nations, with the globe for a theatre. It begins with the revolt of the Netherlands from Spain, assumes giant dimensions in England's Anti-Jacobin War, and is still going on in the opium wars against China, etc"*. His concept of primitive accumulation is clearly inclusive of the colonial world as well. Cit. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Samuel Moore and

accumulation hold the same meaning in relation to the non-European and peripheral world? Silvia Federici's theory of primitive accumulation, for instance, posits an endlessly repeating cycle of enclosure-formation against the "commons" of marginalized communities and, in the case of international politics, against subsistence and communal farming in third world countries. This continuous process of destruction, going against some of the assumptions of Marx, is viewed by Federici as the cause of witch-hunts in early modern Europe and of the recurrent episodes of violence against women and witch-hunting in Sub-Saharan Africa rooted in community disintegration.[17] So, a colonial and post-colonial understanding of primitive accumulation would disprove the idea of a macro-moment in time when primitive accumulation happened and capitalism as a system was born.

But even if Marx' concept was to be taken at face value (as it will be taken in the present essay), primitive accumulation in a colonial context, contrary to the world of "core" countries, did not lead to an autonomous capital formation either. It was the same system of colonialism and its violence that prevented these countries from developing their own economic base. Samir Amin, for instance, in "Unequal Development", establishes a theory of dependency where two types of capitalistic expansion are counterposed: one, an "autocentric" development, typical of advanced economies, and another one, "extroverted", characteristic of underdevelopment. His theory relies on a certain interpretation (or rather, a misinterpretation) of the question of the transformation from value to prices in Marx: for Samir Amin, the existence of wage differences in sectors of "equal productivity" is the product of an unequal international price system which enforces transfers of surplus from the periphery to the core.

Like Rosa Luxemburg before him, Amin grounds his theory on the idea that relations between the periphery and the core rest on a continuous process of primitive accumulation against a set of pre-capitalist conditions of production. As a result, core economies will be able to create an internal unified market capable of accumulating and reproducing money-capital, while peripheral economies will have their economies totally dependent on export and services who rely on the dominant role of foreign capital, coupled with soil destruction and rural impoverishment as a social precondition for dependency[18].

Edward Aveling, edited by Frederick Engels, Vol. I, Progress Publishers, 1887, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Capital-Volume-I.pdf. , p.533.

[17] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, "The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women", Autonomedia, 2004, pp. 61-131, and more recently Silvia Federici, *Caccia alle Streghe, Guerra alle Donne* (Ital.), Nero Edizioni, 2020.

[18] "It was Rosa Luxemburg's great merit to have realized that relations between the center and the periphery depend on the mechanisms of primitive accumulation. because what is involved is not the economic mechanisms characteristic of the internal functioning of the capitalist mode of production but relations between this mode of production and

Despite trying to describe the economic ratio of post-colonial underdevelopment, Samir Amin stretches the concepts of Marx' theory without properly understanding them. This is clear in the way he talks about prices and the role of profit rate equalization: for example, as Marx said, the expression "price of labor", even if framed in the context of wage inequality, is as irrational as a "yellow logarithm"; the value of labor cannot be reified as a "price" vis a vis the value it holds in the production process[19]. Samir Amin is much more a disciple of Ricardo than a Marxist in this respect.

In Unequal Development, Amin seems to think that the "export of capital" is a new characteristic of "the age of monopolies". These dynamics force the periphery to adopt productive lines that are functional to the needs of core countries, and this in turn raises the rate of profit, counterbalancing the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and to equalize at a global level. Even if this idea is justified with references to Marx, at a closer look this can hardly be coherent with his theory, both historically and economically. This problem is shared, to some extent, with Lenin's ideas in Imperialism, despite Lenin being much closer to an actual Marxist analysis: indeed, capital accumulation has always begun with some form of monopoly; capital export existed before the rise of the unequal development of modern monopoly capital. A closer look to Giovanni Arrighi's "The Long XXth Century" can help broaden our critical framework.

The merit of Giovanni Arrighi is that it shows the trajectory of the "historical series" of different hegemonic countries, from Venice to the US, and puts forward the idea that all of them started out from some form of state-led monopoly. The changes in their structure of production happened, in Arrighi's account, through a technical and social shift triggered by external and internal revolutions: for instance, the shift from Spanish to Dutch domination happened partly due to changes in technical equipment in shipbuilding in the Netherlands, and the need to mass produce some of this equipment, which revolutionized the structure of production in the latter country. This is a process that Arrighi calls "internalization", a process that enlarges the productive base as well as making decaying powers dependent on the newer emerging power, whereby the old power exports capital indirectly or directly to the new one.[20]

formations that are different from it."; "The capitalist system makes use of the precapitalist forms of appropriation that are current in the countries of the periphery in order not to pay for the upkeep of the land. Systematic destruction of soils is a major factor of Iong-term impoverishment for the dependent economies. This destruction is to the advantage of the dominant economies, through prices that are lower than would be those of possible substitute products." Samir Amin, *Unequal Development*, The Harvester Press, 1976, pp. 140 and 154.

[19] Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. III*, p. 592.

[20] Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long XXth Century*, pp. 86-162.

Since the capitalist mode of production has in some sense emerged through monopolies, a better distinction to draw to understand colonization, post-colonialism, underdevelopment, and their outcomes, rather than monopoly or non-monopoly capital, is the distinction between formal and real domination of capital in Marx. This is a conceptual distinction that Marx thoroughly analyzed in his sixth unpublished chapter of Capital Vol. I., but references to it are scattered throughout Marx' economic works, both published and unpublished. What distinguishes imperialism, the "highest stage of capitalism" and the era of post-colonial domination from the previous stage of capitalism, is perhaps the transition from the old conditions of "formal" domination to the "real" domination of capital over the life of human species[21].

Colonialism needed to introduce a certain degree of social transformation and "marketization" to pre-capitalist societies – for instance, it had to enforce private property of the land against communal agriculture in Algeria. But this marketization was obviously intended to hinder the native country from being able to pursue the route of independent development. Accumulation was reached, nevertheless, and it was produced by keeping the "periphery" backward. The evidence of this historical fact prompted academic critics like Samir Amin and Wallerstein, as we have seen, to create a theory that sought to investigate the roots of it by turning the relationship of production upside down: as Brenner would have claimed, "dependency" theorists are in their essence more neo-Smithian or Ricardian than Marxist[22].

After reviewing all these theories, it is possible to see the first parts of a larger picture. The "economic disintegration of the periphery" is the product of a series of concomitant factors: a shift from formal to real domination of capital over the conditions of production, of a political history of violence and accumulation enforced by colonialism and post-colonial economic power, and a world-system where different states are placed in a hierarchy of functions between "core" and "periphery". The other factor that must be explained here to complete our theoretical overview is the temporality of state-formation, from the emergence of the first nation-states to the uncertain unity of a big part of post-colonial states. Why are post-colonial nations disintegrating?

The modern nation-State was undeniably a creation of capitalist conditions. Although some critics like Samir Amin try to claim that a form of nation-State did exist under pre-modern conditions, and that some nation-States coincided with a "tributary" system of production, most of the geohistorical evidence leads to the equivalence between modern nation-State and capitalist conditions of

[21] Karl Marx, *Il Capitale: Libro I, Capitolo VI Inedito*, La Nuova Italia, 1969, pp. 51-72.
[22] Or, as Loren Goldner argued in "Vanguard of Retrogression", they might also be referred to as "New Left Review marxists", since the New Left Review was the breeding ground for their ideas.

production. It seems problematic to accommodate for a vision of history where transitions between modes of production are mostly understood in reverse[23].

The development of the nation-state in Europe was at the same time a result of a process of expropriation of the peasantry from their means of production, of expanded circulation, of new and revolutionized methods of production and of political conditions specific to Europe between the XVth and the XIXth century. The expansion of circulation created the basis of the modern monetary system, which further abstracted itself from immediate exchange, and ultimately developed into money-capital when the conditions for the exchange between the commodity labor-force and the commodity wage-capital were already set in motion. When European nation-states started building their colonial empires, this development of money-capital was further facilitated by the commercial enterprises of the colonial world, which reinforced money-capital and the banking system of the colonial countries.[24]

The modern nation-state was thus premised upon a localized process of accumulation. In this case, the macro-moment theory of primitive accumulation can work to explain the temporality of state-formation: up until a certain period, the nation-state had a certain autonomy from the global economy, since not all the world was subsumed under fully capitalist conditions. When the major wave of decolonization happened, between the 1940s and the 1960s, it was precisely during the time when the world was marching towards global integration: the US, the new dominant superpower emerging out of World War Two, had managed to impose its financial hegemony and to unite the world under a renewed cycle of enlarged capitalistic reproduction. In some ways, the US hegemony helped create the conditions for decolonization, as much as it made nation-states superfluous.

A localized primitive accumulation, and the possibility of the foundation of an autonomous and internally "autocentric" nation-state, had by this account already ended. This macro-moment would therefore coincide with the long cycle between the XVth to the early XXth century, from the first unified European nation-states until the revolutions bringing down the last two big pre-capitalist empires of the world – Russia and China. The new nations emerging from colonialism, especially in Africa, did so through a variety of political expressions, and most of them did not constitute a real

[23] Samir Amin, in "The Arab Nation: Some Conclusions and Problems", shares this view. His criticism of "orthodox Marxists" can only be reasonable if he accounts for a rigid conceptualization of "feudalism" as a mode of production, but he fails to see the complex, transitional aspects of it, as outlined for example in the *Formen* chapter of Marx' Grundrisse. Cfr. Samir Amin, *The Arab Nation: Some Conclusions and Problems*, MERIP Reports, June 1978, No. 68, pp. 3-14.

[24] Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, Chapter V; and Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. III*, Chapter 25, pp. 274-292, where he talks about the role of bills of credit in the nascent financial speculation of the British Empire, especially in relation to India.

break from the political conditions of colonialism. Algeria, on the other hand, emerged out of colonialism with one of the strongest and most "revolutionary" movement against colonial rule. However, political rivalry, the heritage of internal segmentation, the destruction of the old conditions of production coupled with the end of the cycle of nation-formation, created the conditions for the collapse of the illusions of the democratic ideologies of the FLN.

The hypothesis that this essay is trying to advance is that the cycle of nation-states' formation was already over between the 1950s and 1960s. The new American domination signaled a crucial shift, according to Arrighi, from the dominance of industrial capital over commercial capital to the domination of financial capital over industrial capital. This shift has been widely debated, especially after the crisis of the mid-70s, under the headings of "neoliberalism", almost as if a profound global shift could be understood as a mere "politics of the states". It entailed more than a that: when the profitability crisis of the 60s led to the oil crisis of the 70s, and the Bretton Woods agreements were revoked by Nixon in 1971, an entirely new monetary system was put into place[25].

Some of the new countries embraced what economists called "import-substitution" strategies, developing their own industrial base by sheltering it from competition during the '60s and '70s. This strategy, as the one embraced by Algeria during the rule of Houari Boumedienne, failed to produce long-term benefits, at the cost of extremely high rates of exploitation: Amin, for example, criticized it as ineffective for an autocentric development, since it did not affect the extraversion of the economy of these countries[26]. Putting aside the critiques to Amin's argument, it is easy from these premises to see how the building of a sheltered industrial base, without the financial means to create an internal market of money-capital and commodities, led in most cases to indebtment and dependency on foreign financial borrowings. The history of the debt crisis of the third world in the '80s and '90s was a watershed moment for the unraveling of that internal fragility: suddenly the disintegration of the periphery appeared as an evident reality.

The structure of post-colonial states was also undermined by the occurrence of the various forms of ethnic and religious conflicts that the post-Bretton Woods social crisis could only exacerbate. Most of these conflicts, especially after the '90s, were rooted in ancient ethnic schisms, but the very fragility of these states was the root cause of their outbreak. This measured, to some extent, to the radicality of the movement of decolonization that brought the countries in consideration to

[25] The connection between the oil crisis of the '70s, the "profitability crisis" of the second half of the 60s and the emergence of the neoliberal monetary system can be empirically observed in the data on a world rate of profit in Micheal Roberts's article "A world rate of profit: important new evidence", on his website https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/.
[26] Samir Amin, *Unequal Development*, p. 193.

independence: the more a state was born from a policy of accommodation with the former colonial power, the higher the probability that its structure would be extremely weak politically.

In a world system where the freedom of movement for capitals determines the policy of states (where the State is therefore "subsumed" to Capital), where poor, underemployed and excluded masses amass themselves in the slums of the new urban centers of third world cities, without hopes of being integrated in a productive system that expelled from itself, and where religious fundamentalism has replaced the old forms of aggregation in a regressive movement towards neo-tribalism, this could only mean that the old world is dying and a new one is only waiting for the moment when the human species would overcome its fragmentation and unite under a new community, a new *gemeinwesen*, to leave behind the destruction of the present[27].

Decolonial, post-colonial culture and periphery analysis

At some point in the history of ideas – presumably after the "world revolution of 1968", as Wallerstein calls it – a renewed interest on the "colonial question" emerged in Europe, the United States and Latin America. This interest was anticipated by a long wave of anti-colonial thinkers, that in many ways reflected in their thought their conflictual cultural background and identity. The first wave of decolonization as a cultural movement, which happened in the interwar period and in the decades immediately after the Second World War, was perhaps politically introduced by Lenin's denunciation of imperialism from the standpoint of a successful revolution in Russia and the Baku congress of 1920, although most of its breeding ground was already present in the collective resistance to domination of the colonized.

This being the final part to the introduction of this essay, it will not dwell too much on the vast reality of anti-colonial thinkers – to give an example, analyzing the work of black thinkers in the US like W.E.B. Du Bois or people like Ciryl L. James, who wrote influential books such as "The Black Jacobins" on Toissant L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution, might be the matter for a totally different dissertation. Nevertheless, the literary works of two of the founding thinkers of the anti-colonial/decolonial critique and another one from contemporary post-colonial thought will be discussed and integrated in our account: Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Achille Mbembe.

[27] The article "*Lo Stato nell'era della Globalizzazione: Ipertrofia del controllo e collasso dei rapporti nella società civile"* elaborates most of these points in a beautiful way. The concept of the *gemeinwesen*, instead, will be elaborated much later. Cfr. N+1, n°32, *Lo Stato nell'era della Globalizzazione: Ipertrofia del controllo e collasso dei rapporti nella società civile*, pp. 3-40

The figures of Fanon and Césaire need few introductions. Both were the product of their times, philosophically (existentialism, phenomenology, surrealism, psychoanalysis etc.) as well as the product of an environment of "colonized" intellectuals in the French colonies; both have evolved their thought in a context of recognition of different allegiances (the question of nationalities, of race, of the way a colonized is "recognized"). The first one in in a temporal order, Aimé Césaire, will also be the first one to be discussed, especially in relation to his famous work "Discourse on Colonialism".

Even though Césaire, who pioneered the thought of decolonization, is seldom acknowledged by many contemporary postcolonial academic writers as he should be, the movement of *négritude* he helped to create was one of the first literary movements to be directly inspired and led by colonized people, as a way to reclaim, poetically, a pan-black perspective of liberation. Its origins are unclear, but nowadays the birth of the concept of négritude, after much incertitude in the past, has been recognized to date back to an issue of the journal "l'etudiant noir" in 1935, in an article titled "racial consciousness and social revolution" penned by Césaire himself[28]. The article covers extensively Marxism and the question of race: for him, the "black revolutionary" deceives themselves as long as their voice is counterposed to that of the "*négre*". He argues that between the allure of abstract universalism and the sterile particularism of racial identity a complement can exist to bring the black person to consciousness of themselves: thus, *négritude* was born.

Négritude, as a literary movement, was heavily influenced by surrealism's revolutionary vocabulary. This had to do with the fact they both shared the same trajectory towards social change. Some critics have tried to downplay the contribution of surrealism to the literature of Césaire and Négritude, but Césaire himself explained in his words that "Surrealism provided me with what I had been confusedly searching for. I have accepted it joyfully because in it I have found more of a confirmation than a revelation.[29]" The surrealist drive towards the unconscious was arguably the reflection of a desire to shake the immobility of the old European powers, who not only blocked the social movements inside of them but blocked any attempt at decolonization in the interwar period.

Despite later criticism by Frantz Fanon for Césaire's supposed "essentialism" and for his centering an abstract blackness who according to him did not break away from colonialism, Césaire poetic denunciation of colonialism in his "Discourse on Colonialism" remains a milestone in the literature

[28] For the history of the controversy surrounding the origin of the term "negritude", see Christopher L. Miller, *The (Revised) Birth of Negritude: Communist Revolution and "the Immanent Negro" in 1935*, PMLA, May 2010, Vol. 125, No. 3 (May 2010), pp. 743-749.
[29] Quoted by Robin D. G. Kelley in "*A Poetics of Anticolonialism*", in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Introduction, Monthly Review Press, 2001, p. 16.

of decolonization[30]. It is possible to affirm that the political radicality of Cesaire's Discourse on Colonialism lies less on a much-criticized "black essentialism" and more on the scathing critique of the illusions of European intellectuals on the eve of the process of decolonization of the 1950's and 1960's.

Among the many passages of the book which deserve to be recalled, the most important and significative of all of them might be his critique of the illusions of antifascism, which he expressed famously expressed in these terms: "Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not the crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the "coolies" of India, and the "niggers" of Africa."[31]

Nazism and fascism can be understood as the political outcomes of a process of violent subsumption of the species to a totalitarian form of capital domination, first tried out as an experiment in the colonies and then brought back to Europe. This is relevant for the present argument: so long as people in the West fail to see and feel the damage inflicted by the world-system to racialized people worldwide, any potentiality for change would be stifled, even when it opposes fascism.

Aimé's *Discourse* ends with a reflection on the role of the United States in promoting decolonization after World War Two. In the theory that has been previously outlined, the transition to a US-led hegemony after the war has in some ways opened the conditions for decolonization. This was chiefly accomplished by depriving the former European powers of their political and financial weight. Césaire, in a prescient way that fits perfectly with a post-colonial critique of the social fragility of the formerly colonized nations, warned (the book was written in 1952) about the dangers of the American economic power: ""The bulldozers! The massive investments of capital! The toads! The ports!" "But American racism!" "So what? European racism in the colonies has inured us to it!" And there we are, ready to run the great Yankee risk. So, once again, be careful!

[30] Fanon's criticism of his old master became a famous debate within the following decolonial literature. This criticism was especially outlined in his essay "Racism and Culture", of 1956, presented at the "Congress of Negro Writers and Artists" of the same year.
[31] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Monthly Review Press, 2001, p. 36.

American domination-the only domination from which one never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers unscarred."[32]

"Colonized" intellectuals gradually but surely started developing a consciousness of the national dimension of their identity, a consciousness which criticized both the ideologies of colonialism and advanced a new way of filtering world culture through the "native's" eyes. Frantz Fanon, the great Martinican thinker, represented more than anyone the full potentialities (and contradictions, perhaps) of this collective awareness process.

Since Fanon's first foray into social criticism, he was preoccupied with the deep psychological issues that racialization and colonialism play on their subjects – and on their perpetrators, an intuition that Fanon took from Césaire's Discourse on Colonialism. For example, "Black Skins, White Masks" centers around the theme of recognition, black identity and affirmation, social gaze, and dehumanization. Aside from a general overview of the book, which will not be undertaken here, some philosophical elements emerge; Fanon rejects the Hegelian idea of recognition in the slave-master dialectics, opting instead for a dialectic made of conflict and confrontation, and the work of negation aiming to destroy the previous forms of relationship. This dialectic is by him reframed in the relationship between colonized and colonizer, white and black people.

His later books would bring some of his early intuitions to subsequent elaboration. This is evident, *en passant*, in his famous chapter on violence in The Wretched of the Earth, where violence is seen as the affirmation of the identity of the native, as a "yes" to themselves as a people during the struggle. Another idea he further develops from his earlier writings is a criticism to the cultural construct of "The Human", which he sees as a tool for alienating the colonized and setting themselves outside of an acceptable model of humanity, centered on the European individual. This opens the search, in the revolutionary process of liberation, for a new humanism, such as the one invoked at the end of The Wretched of the Earth[33].

Returning to the *négritude* movement, according to Fanon the poetics of Césaire, Senghor and Demas, despite springing from the necessary conditions of a larger anticolonial awareness, was merely an "unconscious" aspect of the struggle for freedom of the colonized. In this context he epitomized it as a "vivid style" that was the byproduct of this awakening but simply remained in the terrain of poetry[34]. By trying to harken back to a pre-colonial cultural heritage, the poets of

[32] Ibid., p. 77
[33] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, pp. 311-316.
[34] Ibid., pp. 209-224.

négritude were, for Fanon, nurturing the illusions that a collection of "particularisms" could substitute itself to the fight for a politics of the present.

But what is exceptionally relevant for our research is, namely in The Wretched of the Earth, the political analysis he weaves about the shortcomings of decolonization. In this, Fanon was already predicting many of the political and economic fault lines that would plague post-colonial countries, including Algeria. He denounced the maneuverings and the immaturity of the new post-colonial bourgeoisie, and their tendency to preoccupy themselves with adapting themselves to the lifestyle of the European bourgeoisie. He described the middle class of the colonial country as an "intermediary class" and he predicted the dangers of giving the army too much political autonomy after national liberation, fearing a rise of authoritarianism and technocratic military dictatorships – a fear that would come true in Algeria with Boumedienne's *coup d'etat*. He rightly envisioned the predatory conditions that foreign capital would impose on the post-colony, and the financial drain that a poorly developed financial system would cause there, although he analyzed it in the context of a bourgeoisie putting their newfound wealth into foreign bank accounts.

All of Fanon's analysis remains in the sphere of politics. It is fully justifiable: at the time of the publication of his book (1961) Fanon was still fighting alongside the FLN in Algeria. Hopes were ascribed to liberation against colonial powers, and a full consciousness of the conditions of the struggle was still far to be reached; this fact often constitutes a necessity of a revolutionary movement: for, as Genet said, "One has to live tragedy, rather than staging it". A clear-headed view of the historical development of former colonial countries should simultaneously recognize the causal links of the disintegration that a world system has brought upon them and "feel", at heart, the affirmative dynamic that the upheavals of national liberation raised on a world stage, in that sense preparing the stage for a future liberation of mankind.

From the times of Césaire and Fanon, the ideas of decolonization, who moved to a new sphere of cultural discourse after 1968, followed in many aspects the path of the exhaustion of revolutionary movements after the 1970s, and became more and more intertwined with debatable philosophical and sociological ideas, such as Derridean deconstructionism and "text"-related critiques. These flaws can be seen in the much quoted and sometimes abused writings of Gayatri Spivak and Arjun Appadurai.

What can be taken of the contemporary post-colonial discourse to evaluate the rifts of today's global history, and of Algeria specifically? The theoretical exposition of Achille Mbembe in "On the Postcolony", for instance, can be used to critically assess whether his intuitions can be integrated in the critical space of this essay or if, after all, much of what can be explained of the

present world might be found elsewhere. Besides the chapters of the book that are devoted exclusively to cultural representations, what matters in the present case are the elements of his phenomenology that might reflect a view of the society's structure.

His view of the "entanglement" of the African temporalities can, for example, be an interesting a hypothesis to frame a critique to be contrasted with the recurrent themes of a fair amount of post-structuralist academic literature about social identity. Considering this, to posit a before and after colonization is arguably not enough to exhaust the problem of the relationship between temporality and subjectivity in the post-colonial world, and this rings true with Algeria as well: however, his criticism of the Braudelian "*long durée*" applied to the temporal shifts of African societies is rather questionable[35]. Acknowledging the problem of temporalities does not mean that a geohistorical perspective is unreasonable or too linear for the post-colonial world and Africa.

In "On Private Indirect Government", the loss of competitiveness of modern-day Africa and the informal economy that rose together with poverty and destitution after the shocks of economic restructuring is framed within the reflection of complex, intermeshing temporalities, and different identities at work. His phenomenology of the disintegration of the state and the economy is peculiar: while he compares the situation of 1990s Africa to the history of Tunisia and Egypt at the end of the XIXth century, he warns that this loss of post-colonial sovereignty is not merely a process of recolonization[36]. And, as a matter of fact, it is not: the failure of the bureaucratized economy of the Third World and their "salarization" strategies meant a proliferation of independent power centers, without anyone who could restore a properly functioning central state[37]

In Mbembe's account, the African territorial state is being exhausted, and Africa is witnessing the birth of different political economies and systems of exploitation[38]. But can this hypothesis hold? Is Africa witnessing the genesis of different political economies or is it just experiencing the shock of the "material community" of global Capital, with annexed fragmentation? The current mode of production is one, and the human species is living "in the heart of the beast", especially in the periphery, no matter how complex a description of "temporalities" might be.

Can Mbembe's phenomenology serve to broaden our critical perspective? Maybe, or maybe not. But since most phenomena of thought are to some extent product of a reified reality, what matters for this discussion is less what the interpreters of decolonial and post-colonial thought have

[35] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, University of California Press, 2001, pp. 16-17.
[36] Ibid., pp. 73-74. The debt of Egypt at the end of the XIXth century is in no way comparable to the economic woes of modern-day African countries, although both phenomena relate to colonialism.
[37] Ibid., pp. 79-80.
[38] Ibid., p. 93.

theorized about their reality (although in a passionate and compelling way, like Fanon and Césaire), and more what can be argued from the living experience of their tension: a radical rethinking of the "world of alienation" created by the history of colonialism and post-colonialism.

In conclusion, having reviewed both the "superstructural" and the analytical theoretical positions that form the basis of this dissertation, the history of the case study of Algeria can begin.

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF ALGERIA

History and trajectory of pre-colonial Algeria

"Algérie montait à la tête;" Algeria went to one's head. So was the idea, repeated by Alistair Horne in "A Savage War of Peace," that European settlers felt at the unbearable vastness of the country. In the realm of societies, the Algerian nation proper did not exist prior to the modern age. This is easily evident from the geography of Algeria itself: vast, harsh, difficult, majestic. The history of Algeria from a geohistorical perspective was shaped by the numerous dominations and resistances that it endured; Carthaginians, Romans, Greeks, barbaric tribes, and most importantly the Arab conquest of the maghrib, which forced an ethnic schism between a native Berber population and the new rulers of the region. Algeria as an entity was shaped, after the Islamic conquest, by the various interactions it had with the tribes and clans that sought to establish caliphates along the Mediterranean coast. Centuries of tribal rivalry were then suppressed by the ottomans, who established their own domination based on tribal segmentation and the patronage of the urban and rural aristocratic classes. The nation-state is a modern, capitalistic phenomenon, and the history of Algeria proves this assumption even more.

John Ruedy, in his history of Modern Algeria, introduces the two concepts of segmentation and integration to explain the internal features that existed in pre-modern Algeria. While segmentation divided the society among tribal fiefdoms, integration presupposed a centralized, unitary state where a unified culture could be diffused among the population.[39] The ottoman strategy of segmentation failed, but Algeria was never totally tribalized. While French colonization stunted Algeria's development towards an integrated nation-state, it also destroyed the old ottoman, Islamic elites without worrying about the political consequences this act would have on future generations of Algerians.

After centuries of state formation and decomposition, and the corsair successes of the independent state of Khayr-ed-Din "Barbarossa," the ottomans conquered Algeria in the first half of the XVIth century. This conquest happened in the context of the diversion of world trade from the Mediterranean sphere towards the Atlantic, the rise of the European overseas conquests and

[39] John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: the origins and development of a nation*, Indiana University Press, 2005, pp. 16-17.

reorganization of production in Europe. The beginning of the ottoman decline started from this world context and Algeria shared the fate of an uncertain ottoman domination over North Africa.

Corsair operations were the main source of revenue in Ottoman Algeria throughout the XVIth and XVIIth century. The operations were managed by the so-called *Taifa al Rais*, which controlled the liquid wealth flowing from sea raids. In the XVIIth century, political power was transferred from the ottoman *Aghas* to the Taifa, and the commander of the Taifa was named *dey* of Algeria, who chose several other officials he nominated in the process. The prosperity of the urban centers of Algeria depended entirely on the pirate activity of the *Taifa* since agricultural development remained scarce and constrained by a difficult geography.

One of the peculiar aspects of the ottoman domination was that the ottoman rulers never collected a series of statistical data on the population of Algeria, and this posed a problem of demography: how big was Algeria's population before French conquest? How did population changed after the French disembarked in Sidi Ferrouch in 1830? One thing is certain: population numbers were surely underestimated by the French national statistics during colonial times to hide the reality of a demographic collapse following military conquest. So, later statisticians started performing various types of inferences from later colonial data, with curves of retrogression to assume how numerous was Algeria's population in 1830[40].

Anyway, it could be said with relative certainty that population in the urban areas prior to colonization was already declining, due to the dominance of western powers over the Mediterranean, the decline of privateering, and the impact of the Napoleonic wars. This was also sometimes the product of tribal conflicts, in the segmented structure of pre-colonial Algeria. Colonial French anthropology had repeatedly tried to deny the existence of an Algerian nation by pointing to the destructiveness of these tribal conflicts, abstracting from their larger context: an Algerian nation, while waiting for a modern awakening, was nonetheless perceived embryonically in Ahmed Bey's reforms and later in the resistance of Abd al Qadir to the French invasion.

Among the sedentary population of pre-colonial Algeria, amounting to circa 50% of the Algerian population at the time of the French conquest, there were landless peasants, *qsouriens*, desert cultivators of dates and vegetables under an irrigation system, and freeholder peasants, freehold land being named *mulk* in Arabic. Most mountain cultivation were held as Mulk, and the Grand Kabylia, with its mountainous roughness, is the perfect example of this environment. The rest of the population was composed of desert nomads and other non-sedentary tribes.

[40] Ibid., p. 21.

The other divide was cultural: the role of *maraboutism* and saint veneration was an anomaly from an Islamic point of view but reflected the long-held cultural views of the tribes of rural Algeria. Islam itself, as in many parts of the Maghreb, reflected a division between rural and urban religiosity.

In the power system of the ottoman era, three different strata of "concentric cycles" existed for the segmented tribal order of Algeria: the first, and closest to the centers of power, consisted of the *Makhzan* tribes, which were tax-exempt, occupied the beylic territories and richest land and were socially privileged, notably the western *Makhzan* tribes of the *Douars* near Mascara. Other Makhzan tribes were pre-existing tribes who were subsumed under Turkish rule. The second concentric circle was the *rayat*: tax-paying tribes and non-tribal sedentaries and who funded most of the institutions of the beylical government, and the majority of rayat included the people living in the so-called *'azl* land, state-owned land leased to tribes, while another minor part of rayat tribes was made of those living in *'arsh* land, which was not state-owned, and had to pay taxes either to the bey or the *Makhzan* tribes surrounding them.

How could pre-colonial Algeria be defined in terms of modes of production? For example, the nature of agriculture in pre-colonial Algeria was communal, mostly propertyless, and almost entirely for subsistence. Juxtaposed to a pre-capitalist agriculture, some clear signs of an exchange market economy existed, especially in coastal cities. Some have hypothesized a form of "command feudalism", clearly owing to the fragmentation and hereditary formation, as opposed to the more communal framework of earlier tribes. Some, like Samir Amin, have hypothesized a "commercial tributary mode of production", others instead relied on a classic definition of "Asiatic" mode of production, due to the direct extraction of the agricultural surplus by the State both before and under the Turk *ojaq*.

Regardless of economic distinctions, it is out of question that Algeria was living outside of the capitalist world-economy under Turkish rule. Did a genuine Algerian national consciousness predate colonialism? Probably a nascent form of Algerian consciousness was cultivated during the last decades of the *Beylik* rule, especially under Ali Khodja and the *Beylik* of the East ruled by Ahmad Bey, taking the form of a progressive "Algerianization" of the state in the first half of the XIXth century. But the real struggle of national identification started right after the French conquest of Algeria, in the form of resistance and conflict against the French colonialists.

The French Conquest: the beginning of colonization

The French conquest of Algeria in 1830 had its origins in the Napoleonic wars. To sustain its war effort, France brokered a deal with the Jewish merchant families of the Bakhri and Bushnaq in Livorno to pay for a large quantity of Algerian grains to be shipped to France. At the same time, the Napoleonic wars completely disrupted trade in the Mediterranean, with Algeria directly affected by it.

France repeatedly refused to pay its debt throughout the years. Algeria was urging France to repay, and on April 29, 1827, Pierre Deval, the French consul in Algiers, was summoned by Hussein Dey and asked about the French debt problem. Deval replied to the *Dey* that the king of France could not reply about it, because he could not lower himself to talk with the Dey of Algeria. Hussein Dey, enraged by the answer given, hit Deval with his fan and insulted him and the king of France. The "Fan Affair" was the ideal pretext for an invasion, as a way to both cancel the "Bakhri-Bushnaq" debt and to strategically use the French bases already in function in cities like Annaba.

France and Algeria went on a standoff. The King appointed the Price de Polignac, a conservative royalist who viewed favorably French expansionism in the Mediterranean, as his prime minister. At first France tried to exact concessions from the Sublime Porte but failed, then it tried to encourage Mohammad Ali of Egypt to "liberate" north Africa from the Ottomans and make concessions to French requests in the process, but Mohammad Ali declined. The solution for Polignac and the king Charles X was to attack the "nest of pirates." The proposal sought to overcome the French public's alienation towards the monarchy with a military victory. Louis de Bourmont, another royalist and Marshal of France, was put in command for the invasion. Landing began on the 14th of June 1830. On June 29, the French navy reached the plateau of El-Biar and on the 4th of July Algiers was conquered. The Turkish garrison who defended the city evacuated Algeria. On July the 10th, Hussein Dey fled for Naples.

The Algerian adventure, however, did not save the government, which fell after Polignac failed to respect the constitutional process for invalidating the elections of July 25, 1830. The fall of the monarchy of Charles X and its unpopularity sparked the "liberal revolution" of king Louis Philippe, who was skeptical at best and openly hostile at worst to the conquest. Meanwhile interests surrounding the Algerian adventure started mounting, and a mass of Europeans used the invasion as

a pretext to try to gain a better life in the future colony[41]. Count Bertrand Clauzel, who substituted Louis de Bourmont as commanding General on September 2, 1830, initiated the property-buying frenzy of the European settlers by buying agricultural property himself on Algerian soil.

With a series of military campaigns, the French rulers tried to install surrogates of the Beylik rule but without success. Some of the pieces of the old ruling class accepted French sovereignty, but others, like Ahmed Bey of Contantine, just refused to pay tributes to the invading army. The deadlock of French politics created by the situation was eventually resolved in 1834 by the war minister Soult Duc de Dalmatie, who signed the Royal Ordinance of 22 of July 1834 establishing the principle of "limited occupation" and therefore recognizing the birth of a French-occupied Algeria.

Legislation in Algeria, according to this principle, would from then be drafted militarily, but the concept of "limited occupation" was soon to be shattered by the new mass of settlers who flew to the Algerians shores. On the Algerian side, two main forces opposed resistance to the French invaders: Ahmed Bey, the pre-colonial modernizer, and Abd al Qadir.

Ahmed Bey's power was based upon a series of notably powerful families in the region of Constantine. During resistance to French conquest, he refused to cede Annaba, and in retaliation French troops were sent to Constantine to take his fiefdom over, but they were defeated in 1836. During the same period, the resistance of Abd al Qadir gained steam in the West of the country. Abd al Qadir was born in a family of the Banu Hashim nobility (deemed to be the direct descendent of the Quraysh, to which the prophet Mohammad belonged) and his father Muhi-al-din was the *Muqaddam* (the religious leader) of the western branch of the *Qadiriyya Zawiya* sufi brotherhood.

The Banu Hashim of Algeria were associated by the population with anti-Turkish resistance: both Muhi-al-Din and Abd al Qadir were already put under house arrest in 1826 by Hassan Bey for their activities. After being released, they went to do the Hajj in Makkah and returned to Algeria amid popular acclamation. Muhi-al-Din, After the Dey's defeat by the French, was appointed by the Ottoman Sultan to be the calif of Tlemcen, and here he launched a campaign to liquidate the

[41] To give an idea of the skepticism that reigned in France a few years after the Algerian invasion, it might be apt to quote a report from the parliamentary commission inquiring about Algeria in 1834: "We have sent to their deaths on simple suspicion and without trial people whose guilt was always doubtful and then despoiled their heirs. We massacred people carrying (our) safe conducts, slaughtered on suspicion entire populations subsequently found to be innocent; we have put on trial men considered saints by the country, men revered because they had enough courage to expose themselves to our fury so that they could intervene on behalf of their unfortunate compatriots; judges were found to condemn them and civilized men to execute them. We have thrown into prison chiefs of tribes for offering hospitality to our deserters; we have rewarded treason in the name of negotiation, and termed diplomatic action odious acts of entrapment." Cit. *Procès verbaux el rapports de la Commission nommée par le Roi, le 7 juillet 1833, pour aller recueillir en Afrique tous les faits propres à éclairer le Gouvernement sur l'état du pays et sur les mesures que réclame son avenir* (Paris: 1834), vol. 1, pp. 333-34., in John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria,* Indiana University Press, 2005, p. 50.

remnants of Ottoman rule in the western coast, along with the system of *makhzan* tribes, now mostly allied with the French invaders. In Oran in 1832, he launched a jihad against the French in front of an assembly of notables in the city of Mascara, and the same year his son Abd al Qadir was given the lead of the revolt.

Abd al Qadir's capabilities as a general brought him to extend his revolt to two thirds of Algeria in seven years. The French had no choice but to conclude a treaty with his state in 1834, the "Desmichels treaty", named after the commanding general in Oran, in which the French recognized his sovereignty over the rest of the Oran province from the Moroccan border to Miliana to the Chelif Valley. Abd al Qadir's victories continued in 1835, when he defeated a French column in the battle of the river Macta, near today's Mostanagem. Ahmed Bey's victory against the French in Constantine in November 1836 prompted the French to replace Count Clauzel with Charles Marie Comte de Damremont, and attempt conquest again in October 1837 against Ahmed Bey's troops. After an eight-days siege of Constantine, they finally conquered the city, and Ahmad Bey left to join the resistance guerrilla. The fall of Constantine was a crucial moment in the French conquest of the Algerian hinterland.

At the beginning of the chapter, it was argued that an embryonic form of Algerian state existed in both Ahmed Bey's and Abd al Qadir's political projects. It is up to debate whether their two movements signified a rise of a modern nation-state there, but for the sake of a multi-layered interpretation of the transitions in history, it is possible to see a modernizing tendency in both, despite their inner differences, particularly the fact that Abd al Qadir tried to implement a newer egalitarian system while Ahmed Bey stood for the old aristocratic order, although modernized and "de-Turkified".

The Tafna treaty of 1837, signed by Thomas Robert Bugeaud, bestowed most of central Algeria to the state of Abd-al-Qadir. The Amir used the concessions of the treaty to establish a firmer rule on his domains. The treaty left unclear the eastern border of his state with the French possessions: the issue of crossings between Algiers and Constantine made a French invasion of the hinterland between the two cities inevitable. Abd al Qadir, understanding the situation, prepared for an armed clash between with the French army between November 1939 and the beginning of 1840. These tensions ended the policy of limited occupation: under the command of the now governor general Robert Bugeaud, the French ought to evacuate the country or occupy it completely. Bugeaud launched a total war against Abd-al-Qadir, who retread to a mobile capital called *zmala*.

In 1843 Abd al Qadir settled in Morocco to launch his anti-French offensive from there, hoping to gain support from the Ottoman Sultan. While generalized resistance mounted, and Abd-al-Qadir

scored a series of victories against the French, in 1846 he suffered a series of successful French attacks. The sultan declared him outlawed from Morocco, pressured by the British who feared a possible French invasion of the western borders of Algeria. Abd al Qadir, pursued by Morocco and France, eventually surrendered on December 21, 1847, to General Louis de Lamoricière, Commander of Oran Province, in return for a safe-conduct permitting him to retire to Alexandria or Acre, in modern-day Israel.

With Abd al Qadir and Ahmed Bey defeated, and resistance gradually moving to the mountains but slowly fading, the actual colonization process initiated, albeit most of it had started during the decade of the 1840s. In this decade, in fact, the plains of the Algerian tell saw an explosive rise of the European settlers, who quadrupled from 1841 to 1851: the increasing pieces of land that the French occupiers seized from Turkish and communal properties started being distributed to the new colons[42]. The violence of expropriation and the negative effects it had on the Algerian Arabs pushed even liberal writers like Alexis de Toqueville to say that France had "rendered Muslim society much more miserable and much more barbaric than it was before it became acquainted with us."

Primitive Accumulation in Algeria: expropriation and pauperization

The main drivers of colonization in Algeria during the Second Empire and the Third Republic were, admittedly, proletarian overpopulation in France and the opening of new opportunities for Capital accumulation in a period of rising capitalist development. French Capital was attracted to the new colony, as returns on investment were much greater than France and "virgin" lands could be seized and made valuable. Indeed, rural colonization had the greatest social impact within the colonial conquest. Although the state, until 1870, was the principal intermediary in transferring land from Algerian to European hands, taking it from the previous Turkish domains, direct acquisition gradually replaced state mediation. The most attractive rural properties were not freehold, so the process of acquisition was irregular and often outright illegal (in a process of primitive accumulation like the one described by Rosa Luxemburg in her analysis of colonial Algeria in "The Accumulation of Capital").

Vast swathes of beyilical land were expropriated by force from the tribes and families who possessed them before colonialism. The practice of *cantonnement*, meaning a fractioning of the land

[42] For a relationship between the population of European settlers and ownership of land, see the table in John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 69.

under various domains, was used to displace nomads and semi-nomads from the '*arsh* and *sabiqa* common lands they occupied, as well as the sedentary tribes. This process was further reinforced during the second empire - from 1852 to 1870 - when the increased role of big capital helped the rise of new European settlements in Algeria through companies such as the *Compagnie Genevoise*, that became at the same time the biggest property-holders of land in the colony, employing expropriated peasant as their underpaid laborers. In France, colonialist mythology would always frame colonization in Algeria as the act of intrepid European pioneers who turned a formerly unutilized land into an agricultural powerhouse, but the average Europeans who came to Algeria did not in fact work in the fields: it was the work of proletarianized Arabs and Berbers in European-owned land that created the wealth of *Algerie Française*.

During the offensive against Abd al Qadir's state between 1843 and 1847, Robert Bugeaud instituted the "*Bureax Arabes*" in 1844, a series of offices with fiscal and judiciary powers linked to the army and employing mixed personnel of Arabs and French, to try and assimilate to some extent the Arab population. With the passing of the time, these institutions came to be resented both by the Algerians and the colons: they were ultimately dismantled in 1870. For municipal and territorial administration, three types of judiciary divisions were created in 1845: the *communes de plein exercice*, where French law could be applied and with a significant colon population, *communes mixtes*, ruled by the military, mostly Arab and endowed with limited self-government, and finally the Arab territories of the hinterland ruled by military force alone. In representing bodies, the principle that the majority community would represent a minority in them would be enforced until the end of World War Two, together with the division between *communes de plein exercice* and *mixtes*.

The *senatus-consulte* laws of 1863 and 1865 were enacted by the French government to reorganize the land legislation of the now incorporated colony of Algeria. To compensate for the legalization of the process of expropriation, the first *senatus-consulte* reinstated a part of the rights that tribes had to their land, subdividing native land in *douars*, or village communities, administered by *jamas*, or councils, where tribes would have residual control. This small concession, however, infuriated the colons, who saw it as a military inference in their appetite for appropriation. The *senatus-consulte* of 1865, on the other hand, declared that Algerian Muslims, even if they were formally French, had to be ruled under Islamic law, and if they wanted to become French, they had to completely renounce their status to adopt full French citizenship. This became the cornerstone of the legislative inferiority of the Arabs compared to the French colons, and the birth of the so-called *code de l'indigenat*, and only a tiny number of Algerians decided to renounce to their *indigéne* status in a move that amounted for many Algerians to apostasy against Islam.

The proclamation of the Third Republic in 1870 with the end of Louis Bonaparte was welcomed by the European settlers as a positive change: they wanted the departure of the army from Algeria and the "democratization" of colonial institutions, i.e., their control over them. A series of decrees, like the ones of the 24th of October 1870 and the 24th of December 1870, instated trial by jury and expanded civil power of the Europeans over the Algerians natives. The French defeat at Sedan in September 1870, instead, raised the hopes of the natives, who came from a decade of hunger, natural disasters, demographic collapse and forced impoverishment under colonial expropriation. The Kabyle revolt of 1871 by Al-Muqrani and Bu Mazraq represented another attempt at returning to a resistance against the French colonizers. The revolt was defeated after a few months, and this defeat spurred vengeance on the part of the colons and further spoliation of the land of the defeated tribes.

The governments of the Third Republic gave the greatest support for the increased pace of primitive accumulation. Facts such as the allocation of 100.000 hectares of Kabyle land to Alsatian refugees after the Franco-Prussian war became emblematic of French policy during this time. Although the two *senatus-consultes* of 1863 and 1865 had released vast amounts of land for colonial appropriation, the colons still saw these laws as the major hindrance to their efforts. Their aim was a complete dismantling of native property.

The Wernier law of 1873 and another law in 1887 were the instruments through which colons appropriated up to 1.750.000 hectares of new land, through reckless speculation, fragmentation, and the idea that the forced introduction of private property was a solution to the backwardness of the Algerians. These laws made the destruction of native property a state priority: they revoked the right of *shufa*, of preemption of private land, and retention of jointly held *mulk* property by native owners. Whereas the second empire pushed for the investment of large sums of capital into Algeria, the Third Republic returned to the idea of populating Algeria with a class of small European freeholders, creating a class of small peasants akin to that of France. Between 1872 and 1892, over 309.891 hectares of public land were "recovered", and 26% of '*arsh* land were declared state forest or vacant property between the 1890s and the 1900s[43].

Despite all efforts, the political will to create an Algerian replica of the French small peasant proprietorship failed, since stronger economic determinations pushed for a progressive concentration of property in the hand of few colons. Land concentration accompanied also, by the 1880s, a shift towards viticulture in Algeria, due to the phylloxera epidemics in France and a decline in the price of wheat. Viticulture and wine production will become the main export of the

[43] Ibid., pp. 83-84

colony. In fact, by 1914 vineyards accounted for 44% of European real property[44]. At the same time, after the suppression of the Kabyle revolt of 1871, other revolts spread over the borders of France's effective control over the area, around Biskra as well as in the Chaouia borders of western Aurès between 1876 and 1879, and finally between 1881 and 1882 in southern Oranie.

The colons were assimilated *qua* French citizens by giving them significant parliamentary representation. Their focus shifted, in this context, from assimilation to *association* with metropolitan France. In Algeria, the newfound status of the colons pushed for the creation of the *Delegations Financieres*, which was the first representative body in the country and was composed by, obviously, an almost total majority of Europeans. The jurisdiction of the *Communes de plein exercice* and *communes mixtes* expanded as military territory receded in the farthest areas of the Saharan region. A new class of "dependable" Muslim civil servants, in the form of *Qaids, Bachagas* and local *Shaykhs*, emerged from the ashes of the old pre-colonial social order, a class of people who will be mockingly renamed by the Algerians as "*Beni-Oui-Oui*" – the lapdogs of the French rulers.

To satisfy the requests of the colons, the *Jamas* and *douars* were abolished in 1874, and by the time of the 1880s most of Algeria was organized in *communes mixtes* and a few *communes de plein exercice*. The *code de l'indigenat*, partly introduced by the *senatus-consulte* of 1865, was integrated with a specific penal code after the Kabyle rebellion. The new *code* included crimes not punishable under French law but that applied to Algeria's Muslim majority. Punitive legislation was coupled with heavy taxation for the natives, through the so-called "*impôts arabes*", which Arabs had to pay in addition to French taxes. Colons, naturally, were exempted not only from the *impôts arabes*, but also from paying taxes on "undeveloped real estate", at least until 1918. By 1912, while native Algerians owned just 38% of the land and capital goods, they paid 71.19% of all taxes collected in Algeria[45].

The laws enacted between 1873 and 1887 expropriated but most importantly commercialized and privatized the land in Algeria, breaking communally held land by natives into small, unsustainable plots. Natives could in theory buy back these plots of land, but often they couldn't afford it, thus being effectively expropriated. Natives bought the worst land while all the most fertile land was invariably given to the Europeans, and most of the impoverished ex-peasants had no chance but to migrate to the cities.

[44] Ibid., p. 85.
[45] Ibid., p. 92.

Taxation, debt, and the marketization of the grain surplus caused native production to decline between 1875 and 1915, as well as the number of livestock owned by native farmers and shepherds, with especially drastic decreases of the levels of livestock per capita[46]. Natives who owned small plots of land often worked as sharecroppers for colon farmers, to integrate their meagre earnings. Tribal order began to progressively disappear, and the old aristocracy of Moorish origins, alienated from the new social reality and deprived of their social functions, was renominated "*les vieux turbans*", "the old turbans", since they envisaged themselves as the keepers of the old traditions against the "new".

The conflictual nature of colonial development and the birth of the Algerian consciousness

We have seen how a veritable process of primitive accumulation was carried out by the French colonial power. In Marx' account, primitive accumulation always predates the birth of capitalism. We have mentioned the idea of Samir Amin, according to whom the pre-colonial mode of production in the Arab states, rather than feudalism, was a "tributary" mode of production. For him and other theorists, colonialism merely added to this substratum a newer "colonial" mode of production through articulations of linkage and effectiveness between capitalism and pre-capitalist modes of production. In the present essay, it will be agreed that Algeria was indeed thrown into a capitalist order, but what the "colonial" question really entailed was the relationship between a prolonged use of violence and the actual centralization of production in the attempt to form a unified, national cycle of reproduction – which will be accomplished only after decolonization.

A first movement of national Algerian consciousness during colonialism, reflecting a newfound tension towards a national unification, appeared in the "*evolués*", the first nucleus of an Algerian nationalist intelligentsia, and the so-called "young Algerians", who were the first to channel the voice of an emerging Algerian middle class in their publications. On their journal "*L'Islam*", in 1911, the Young Algerians called for the unification of the tax system, the elimination of the *code de l'indigenat*, the broadening of the municipal voting system and a reform to Muslim public representation. Among those who joined the movement there was Emir Khaled, the son of Abd al Qadir, who became an outspoken representative of the Young Algerian program. The Young

[46] Ibid., p. 97-98.

Algerians were relatively isolated: for a long time, the nationalist movement could not unify in Algeria[47].

The flaws of the colonial system were increasingly evident to many Europeans in metropolitan France. Despite this, any reform movement since the 1890's crashed against the parliamentary opposition of the colons. After a minor revolt over colonial forestry rules near Margueritte in 1902, metropolitan France stopped proposing reforms to the system for some years. The momentum returned in 1907, when the Young Algerians proposed the extension of compulsory military service to the natives, a proposal which was rejected by the colons and the natives alike.

Some of the revendications of the Young Algerians, such as an increased political representation and a reform to the *code de l'indigenat*, were eventually accepted during the second government of George Clemenceau, at the end of the 1910s. The Jonnart reform plan, enacted in 1919 and eventually approved in the same year, contained a plan to expand the Muslim electorate, institute a separate college for non-French voters and create an intermediate body of native citizenship. Since representation in municipal and general councils was still limited to one third and one fourth of Muslims respectively, the intermediate body would assure that at least some of the requests of the Muslim representatives could be listened. The Jonnart law exempted all voters from being subject to the *code de l'indigenat*. The reform plan was a conservative reform: the more demanding wings of the Young Algerians thought it was too narrow and demanded full French citizenship with retention of Muslim prerogatives, the abolition of the *communes mixtes*, and compulsory bilingual education for all Algerians.

The rise of a national movement in Algeria in the first half of the XXth century had its material background in the distorted economy of the colony, in the effects of the two world wars, in the neglect of agriculture and in the absence of a real industrial development until the 1950s. All these factors contributed, to some extent, to the radicalization of its demands. During the years between 1918 and 1954, barley and hard wheat production remained substantially stable, with very high fluctuations, but after demographic decline during the first four decades the native population was

[47] John Ruedy frames this absence of unification as a reflection of the contradictory process of class formation after the disintegration of the old society: "As the old Algerian society disintegrated, the new social formations appeared at different rates, often in isolation from each other and with few established patterns of communication amongst them horizontally or vertically. While all classes or subgroupings were profoundly touched by colonialism, they were touched by it in different ways and often had different perceptions of that reality. This meant that they developed different analyses of the colonial situation and different or only partially convergent agendas for remedy even after most accepted the basic concept of an Algerian nation. In this widely differentiated social setting, no leadership appeared before 1954 capable of building a broad consensus about either goals or tactics." Cit. John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 115.

growing at fast rates: Algerian food production could satisfy the needs of a lesser percentage of people as time went by[48].

Viticulture absorbed the bulk of Algeria's exports. The sector epitomized the nature of colonial property and was so important that Algeria became the third wine producer in the world in the first half of the XXth century, after France and Italy. The colonial nature of the economy hindered the development of an actual industrial base and concentrated all efforts into agricultural export, which was profitable and labor-intensive due to the cheap labor provided by the natives. This became painfully clear after World War Two, when reformers in France tried to desperately save Algeria by reforming its economic base.

While economic relations were classically colonial, the political power of the colons was not. Colon oligarchy preserved its privileges by applying fiscal pressure to manufacture compared to agriculture. As late as the 1940s, metropolitan France tried to attract a light industrial sector to Algeria through fiscal incentives, but even at the eve of the Algerian war of liberation only a tiny minority of the native population worked in the industry, the rest being employed in agriculture. The service sector, compared to an underdeveloped industrial base, accounted for almost half of the Algerian economy in the 1950s, a clear sign of an underdeveloped, colonial setting[49].

The sheer number of the Muslim population more than doubled in size from its XIXth century statistics until the 1950s. This was principally due to declining death rates and improved sanitation, but the contradictions of the economy of French Algeria also determined a rush towards the urban centers and the creation of an endemic lumpenproletariat living in the *bidonvilles* of the colonial order. The Algerian natives started to occupy the geographical places of the European settlements, outnumbering them in their urban environment. Together with proletarianization, native society witnessed an increased process of social stratification.

Returning to the aftermath of the Jonnart reform, Emir Khaled still campaigned for the full application of the Young Algerian program, although some other *evoluèe* had accepted the Jonnart reform as a positive fact. Meanwhile the colons had lobbied for a reinstatement of the *code de l'indigenat* for all native Algerians, both at home in the *Delegations Financieres* and in metropolitan France. Emir Khaled, although frankly assimilationist, was seen as a political troublemaker in Algeria: he went to exile in France in 1924. There he discovered both the

[48]John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 116. Data taken from the *Annuaire Statistique de l'Algerie*.
[49] Ibid., p. 119. This is also the thesis of Samir Amin on the nature of the "extroverted" economies, but whereas this, applied to post-colonial nations, could be debatable, it is nevertheless fully verifiable in the case of colonialism.

communist party and the *Etoile Nord-Africaine*, the first explicitly nationalist organization among Algerians, led by Messali Hadj.

Four movements had sprung up at this point: the *Federation des Elus Indigenes*, the *Etoile Nord-Africaine*, the Islamic Reform Movement and the Algerian Communists. Benthami ould Hamida, one of the former leaders of the Young Algerians, became the head of the *Elus* movement. Ferhat Abbas, one of the future protagonists of the FLN, started his career in the *Elus*, with his journal *L'Entente Franco-Musulmane*. Dissatisfaction with the line of the federation brought many of its regional branches to quarrel, and finally the Constantinois federation emerged as the leading branch, with Mohamed Bendjelloul as its chief.

The Islamic reform movement, inspired by the teachings of the famous reformer Mohammed Abduh, was led by Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis. The Islamic reform program denied integration with France and criticized the role of marabouts and Sufi brotherhoods in distorting the religious consciousness of the Algerians. While some have stated that Algerian nationalism stemmed from this Islamic reform movement, their religious puritanism, especially that of Ben Badis, was more akin to a Wahhabi sect than that of the future revolutionaries of the FLN. The claim might have originated from a dispute between Ben Badis and Ferhat Abbas, the latter having famously claimed that that an Algerian nation did not exist and therefore Algeria's future was tied to integration with France[50]. Ben Badis replied that Algeria was indeed a nation, and its future was not tied to France and could not be France.

In metropolitan France, Algerian workers were pushing for nationalism. The *Etoile Nord-Africaine*, the most influential organization among the Algerian workers, was presided by Emir Khaled and Messali Hadj, the latter becoming the new charismatic leader of Algerian radicalism. The "Algerian demands" that the *Etoile* formulated in 1927 included the independence of Algeria, the withdrawal of the French army, an Algerian parliament elected through universal suffrage, the abolition of the *code de l'indigenat* and the freedom of the press. It was a democratic program that differed from the others in that it adamantly called for the independence of Algeria.

Messali Hadj's movement was seen as subversive in France and banned twice. The aura of revolutionary radicalism of Messali Hadj attracted great resonance among the Algerian emigre

[50] "Had I discovered the Algerian nation, I would be a nationalist and I would not blush as if I had committed a crime. (…) However, I will not die for the Algerian nation, because it does not exist. I have not found it. I have examined History, I questioned the living and the dead, I visited cemeteries; nobody spoke to me about it. I then turned to the Koran and I sought for one solitary verse forbidding a Muslim from integrating himself with a non-Muslim nation. I did not find that either. One cannot build on the wind." Cit. Ferhat Abbas, *La France c'est moi*, L'Entente Franco-Musulmane, 23 February, 1936, in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace, Algeria 1954-1962*, New York Review Books, 2003, p. 52.

community, and the newspaper of the Etoile movement – *El Oumma* – became very popular among the Algerian workers community in the metropole. Hadj ambivalently tilted between Arab nationalism and Marxism-Leninism, and at the end he decidedly switched to the former, causing the French Communist Party to criticize him. Notwithstanding the faults of the Messalist ideology, the French communist party's relationship to the Algerian national movement from the 1930s to the 1950s would be tragic[51].

The 1930s in Algeria opened with the effects of the great depression and the broadening of old wounds in the form of the celebration for the centenary of the "*presence française*" in 1930. At one of these celebrations, as reported in "A Savage War of Peace" of Alistair Horne, a "*Beni-Oui-Oui*" *bachaga* declared that if the Algerians had known the French in 1830 as they were in that year of 1930, "they would have loaded their muskets with flowers"[52]. In this desolating atmosphere of colonial triumphalism, the communists, the Islamic reformers, and the moderate nationalists wanted to press for greater change.

Signs of increased social tension in the colony led French legislators to approve, in 1935, the Reigner decree, extending the *code de l'indigenat* to anyone causing social disorders. Then, in 1936, the government of the leftist *Front Populaire* was elected in France; new hopes for reform emerged among many Algerians. The first Algerian Muslim Congress met in Algiers in 1936 and proposed a charter of demands to the French government: universal suffrage, suppression of the *Delegations Financieres* and the *communes mixtes*, administrative assimilation to France, compulsory free education, end to judicial expropriation and abolition of the forest code. The pressure of Algerian groups convinced the government to accept the proposals, and to enact a reform to grant citizenship to as many as 25.000 Algerian *evolués*; it was the content of the Blum-Violette bill, named after two of the ministers of the Popular Front. The Blum-Violette bill was to become the "litmus test" for the line of many Algerian opposition groups.

Messali Hadj and the Etoile notoriously criticized both the Charter of Demands and the Blum-Violette reform. Fearing that his radical predicament could destabilize Algeria, the French disbanded the Etoile in 1937, and then his new organization, the PPA (*Parti du People Algerien*). He was condemned to two years of prison under the Reigner decree and released in 1939 and then again imprisoned and condemned to hard labor the same year.

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[51] The French communist party, until as late as 1958, was ambiguous at best and openly hostile at worst to the cause of Algerian nationalism. This became especially clear after Setif in 1945 and the militarization of Algeria under Guy Mollet in 1956. When the French Stalinists understood that an independent Algeria was inevitable it was too little, too late.

[52] Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*, New York Review Books, 2003, p. 47-48.

Ultimately, the Blum-Violette bill was again buried under colon pressure, as with other pieces of legislature under colonial Algeria. This led to embitterment and disappointment on the Algerian opposition. The end of the Blum-Violette bill saw the definitive burial of the Young Algerian program of assimilation within the framework of French Algeria.

In World War Two, the Algerian movement entered more difficult times. When the allied forces landed in Algeria in 1942, economic hardship was mounting, and a French territory was being occupied by the United States, which at the time had a clear anti-colonialist stance, as stated by the Atlantic Charter of the previous year. In December 1942 a "Message from the Algerian Muslim Representatives to the Responsible Authorities" was sent by Ferhat Abbas, hoping to be received either by French or American authorities. However, a group of militants of the nominally banned PPA met with Abbas to draft what became known as the "Manifesto of the Algerian People".

While the Manifesto was nominally welcomed by the then Governor General, in a few months De Gaulle became the president of the French national liberation committee against Vichy, and he appointed Georges Catroux as governor general of Algeria. Both De Gaulle and Catroux pushed the revendications of the manifesto to more moderate tones, but they sensed that the problem of Algeria would not be exhausted by small concessions. A citizenship reform was enacted in 1944 and the *code de l'indigenat* was abolished, with increased Muslim representation. Yet, after the fall of the Blum-Violette bill it was too little too late for Algeria.

Ferhat Abbas decided to organize, in March 1944, a movement called the AML (*Amis du Manifeste e de la Libertè*), to implement his vision of nationalism. The Islamic reformers under Shaykh Ibrahimi gave their endorsement to the project of Abbas, and within months his organization became very successful. Meanwhile, the PPA started organizing paramilitary cells in the Kabylia and Constantinois regions, and PPA loyalists flocked into the AML and overwhelmed the moderate faction of Abbas by calling Messali Hadj the "uncontested leader of the Algerian People".

Shortages of grain and bad harvests had devastated the Algerian agriculture between 1944 and 1945. On the backdrop of the war and the increased hardship faced by the Arabs, in May 1945 a revolt burst during V-E Day, the 8th of May, in Setif, under the lead of the PPA and the AML. Demonstrators were told by the colonial police they could demonstrate only if placards and flag were not wavered. Contrary to orders, the protesters began wavering green and white flags with the Islamic crescent, and the demonstration turned into open revolt, both in Setif and in the region of Guelma. Colonial forces passed to the offensive and the PPA, seizing the moment, launched an insurrection, but they did it after it was evident that colonial offensive was already under way. Meanwhile, having heard of the violence in the cities, peasant villagers started descending on the

coast to wreak vengeance on the European colons. Arab and Kabyle villages were bombed and between 18 and 23 May a plot to seize military headquarters in Oranie uncovered. The French Communist Party stood on the side of the repression, and shared responsibility "without a murmur".

Some argue the PPA and Messali Hadj were ready to prepare an insurrection, but ultimately failed due to faulty command structures, and thus Hadj had condemned the revolt to end in a colonial massacre. Repression against the Algerian natives was particularly gruesome, and tens of thousands of Algerians died in lynch mobs and direct attacks from European settlers. The writer Kateb Yacine would say of Setif "that my sense of humanity was affronted for the first time by the most atrocious sights. I was sixteen years old. The shock which I felt at the pitiless butchery that caused the deaths of thousands of Muslims, I have never forgotten. From that moment my nationalism took definite form."[53]

After Setif the AML was outlawed, and Abbas changed the name of his party to UDMA (*Union Democratique du Manifest Algerien*). The PPA boycotted the elections of the Constituent Assembly in 1946, only to change tactics and dissolve the PPA into the MTLD (*Mouvement pour le Triomphe de le Libertées Democratiques*). As the last representative of the assimilationists, Abbas proposed in the Palais Bourbon a transformation of Algeria in an autonomous Republic within the French Union. This proposal was rejected, and the prestige of his party consistently decreased.

The new organic law of the Algerian Constituent of 1946 would perpetuate the two separate electorates and the separation of colleges of the Jonnart Law for choosing representatives. It was approved by the First Assembly of the Fourth French Republic in 1947. The law instituted an Algerian Parliament in place of the *Delegations Financieres,* thereafter renamed "Algerian Assembly". Although newly created, the powers of the assembly were very limited, since defense, judicial organization and administrative matters were still in the hands of the Governor General. The organic law sought to abolish the *communes mixtes* and to finally Arabize the administration, but since approval of these measures rested on the Governor General no measure was ever taken. The MTLD surprisingly won the first round of the elections of 1947 in most of the electoral colleges and in major cities, and as a response the French appointed Marcel Edmond-Naegelen, a stern adversary of the Algerian nationalists, to wage war on the nationalists in Algeria in the next year. Systematic electoral manipulation to impede a victory of the MTLD in the second round was employed, though intimidation, terror tactics and deception, tactics used in all the elections between 1948 and 1954 in Algeria.

[53] Quoted in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, pp. 38-9.

The MTLD was intended to be the electoral face of the PPA, standing above a secret, armed branch, later named the OS (*Organisation Speciale*). Two of the leaders of the OS, Hocine Ait Ahmed and Ahmed Ben Bella, started a political career that brought them to become protagonists of the nationalist movement in the next years[54]. Hocine Ait Ahmed, being Kabyle, was uncomfortable with the PPA defining its movement as "Arab", preferring instead the term Algerian: internal conflicts over ethnic issues in the PPA and the MTLD would reappear later in the FLN.

The MTLD progressively dissolved its forces amid internal power struggles between the Central Committee, headed by Benyoucef Benkhedda, and Messali Hadj. A third faction of people who sympathized for the OS and came both from the "messalists" or the "centralists" decided to create a new force called CRUA (*Comité Revolutionnaire d'Unitè e d'Action*). The CRUA, in 1954, laid the ground for what was effectively the beginning of the Algerian war of liberation. A new conception of nationhood, throughout the five decades separating the birth of the Young Algeria movement and 1954, was born in Algeria: one that was characterized by a contradictory development but that on the other hand expressed a unitary desire for shaking off the oppression of more than a century of colonial dispossession.

The beginning of the struggle for national liberation

Many have argued that Algeria entered a period of prolonged bloodshed in 1954, unlike Tunisia or Morocco, because as a nation it could no longer function as a colony but at the same time it could neither retain the old social and tribal order, for it had almost completely disappeared. The disappearance of the old Arab and Turkish systems of power left a "human dust" of impoverished colonial subjects that sooner or later would not just rebel, but also put the French in front of the dilemma of the *fait accompli* of national liberation without "valuable intermediaries"[55].

[54] A list of the founding members of the OS is given, for its significance, in Horne's book: "Some of the names are worth mentioning, as all were to reappear later as founder leaders of the F.L.N.: Ahmed Ben Bella: *imprisoned, subsequently escaped.* Ali Mahsas: *imprisoned, subsequently escaped.* Mostefa Ben Boulaid: *imprisoned subsequently escaped.* Belkacem Krim: *underground in Algeria.* Omar Ouamrane: *underground in Algeria.* Lakhdar Ben Tobbal: *underground in Algeria. Mohamed Boudiaf: underground in Algeria. Mohamed Khider: in refuge in Cairo. Hocine Ait Ahmed: in refuge in Cairo."* Cit. Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace,* pp. 90-91

[55] In a sense, a part of the French colonial rulers already understood the outcome of their policy before the emergence of an Algerian national movement: "Back in 1894 Jules Cambon, then governor-general, wrote to the Senate describing the consequences of the French policy of breaking up the great traditional families of Algeria, "because we found them to be forces of resistance. We did not realise that in suppressing the forces of resistance in this fashion, we were also suppressing our means of action. The result is that we are today confronted by a sort of human dust on which we have no influence and in which movements take place which are to us unknown."", Cit. Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace,* p. 49.

Concentration of land ownership in late colonial Algeria followed an established path of extreme inequality. By 1954, some twenty-five per cent of all the farming land was owned by only two per cent of the total agricultural population[56]. Additionally, the Maspetiol report of 1955 shocked France by revealing the open secret that one million Muslims (there were circa nine million Muslims in Algeria by 1955, and constantly growing in population) were totally or partially unemployed and two million severely underemployed. Unemployment, inequality, and the entrenchment of the privileges of the pied noirs were the reality of post-war Algeria.

At the same time, between 1953 and 1954, France was politically in chaos. In the attempt to defend its colonial possession in the east, France had embarked on a prolonged war in Indochina since 1945. General Nguyen Giap of the Viet Minh resisted for fifty-six days the bombardments of the French army in Dien Bien Phu between March and May 1954, and on the 7th of May 1954 the Viet Minh defeated the French: Dien Bien Phu fell to the anti-colonial rebels. Politically, Dien Bien Phu caused the downfall of the then government of Joseph Laniel in France, which was replaced by Pierre Mendes-France.

Mendes-France came to office with the promise of achieving peace in Indochina, and he kept his promise: the Geneva conference of July 1954 finally established peace (on a temporary basis, as was evident in the division of Vietnam) in Southeast Asia. French public opinion shamelessly praised the fact that while Indochina was burning, "at least Algeria remained calm", not knowing what was going to happen next.

The first meeting of the CRUA happened the day Dien Bien Phu fell, the 7th of May 1954. The defeat of the French army galvanized the Algerian nationalists. Belkacem Krim and Omar Ouamrane, two *maquisards* (i.e., guerrilla fighters in the countryside) who were active since the late years of the 40s and whose militias reached 500 members in 1954, joined the CRUA in June. At top speed, the nucleus was reorganized, contacts established and on the 10th of October 1954 the FLN (*Front de Liberation Nationale*) was born.

The operations of the FLN were subdivided into six Wilayas, or regions; each Wilaya would be under the command of a colonel supported by three assistants. The first general leader was Mohamed Boudiaf and the wilaya commanders were respectively Moustapha Ben Boulaid for Wilaya One (the Aurés mountains and Nementcha); Mourad Didouche for Wilaya Two (the northern Constantinois); Belkacem Krim for Wilaya three (the region of Kabylia); Rabah Bitat for Wilaya Four (the district of Algiers); and Larbi Ben M'Hidi for Wilaya Five (the Oranie territory).

[56] Ibid., p. 77.

The command of the FLN was then subdivided between an interior and "exterior" command, the latter composed of Ben Bella, Mohamed Khider and Ait Ahmed, who lived in exile in Cairo. The so-called *neuf historiques* who founded the FLN, despite the opposition of the MTLD, were ready to start an insurrection.

The date of the beginning of the revolt was the 1st of November - All Saints' Day for the catholic pied noirs. The FLN tried to establish contacts with Nasser's Egypt, but Nasser failed to respond to the requests of the newly formed organization. Meanwhile, military preparation in the Aurès mountains under the command of Ben Boulaid and Bachir Chihani kept mounting for the entire month of October. The first objective was the auresian city of Batna: the highway between Batna and Biskra had to be cut by an FLN commando, and any *Beni-Oui-Oui* Muslim governor passing through had to be killed.

The attempted insurrection in the Aurès did not go well: it ended with the killing of a liberal teacher called Guy Monnerot and of a *Beni-Oui-Oui qaid* named Sadok. In the rest of Algeria, the FLN squads failed to properly respond to military orders, especially in Algiers and Oran. In the official misinterpretation of the colonial officials, the responsibility was attributed to the MTLD, which was thus outlawed. At the same time, Rabah Bitat's cell in Algiers was dismantled by the police, and Benyoucef Benkhedda, although still part of the MTLD and foreign to the events, was thrown in jail for having written a letter complaining about the repression. Prison turned him to the cause of the FLN: immediately after being released, Benkhedda joined the Front.

Having received news of the events in Algeria, Mendes-France sharply condemned the attacks and declared that Algeria had to be protected as an integral part of France ("*Ici, c'est la France*"[57]). The French army was sent into the Aurès mountain to patrol the region, but they did not find anyone. Failure in November 1954 would only be temporary: soon recruitment for the FLN advanced.

The French government, sensing that a reform was needed to avoid social chaos, sent in the first months of 1955 Jacques Soustelle, a liberal and anti-fascist ethnologist, to become governor general. After the departure of Soustelle to Algeria, Mendes-France fell under the pressure of the pied noir lobby and was replaced by Edgar Faure. The heart of Soustelle's program was the full implementation of the provisions of the organic statute of 1947, and ultimately "integration" of Algeria into France rather than mere "assimilation". To tackle rural poverty, he and his liberal advisors Germaine Tillon and Vincent Monteil established the SAS (*Section Administrative Specialisée*), constating of several centers of social assistance scattered in the poorest regions of the

[57] "Here, that's France"

country, but as the war went on and the FLN gained strength, the SAS administration became a target of the FLN attacks and their political use more problematic. Concurrently, Ben Boulaid was captured by the army in March 1955, leaving the situation in an apparent calm for France and the settlers.

The strategy of the FLN in 1955 had changed: the initial orders of the insurrection forbade any attack on the European civilians, but this also meant that what was supposed to be a war against colonialism was still hardly felt by the colons, in a context where the French army had almost doubled its contingent in Algeria. Soustelle, trying to balance between his commitment to reform (frustrated by the ultras of the Algerian Assembly) and his policy of military order in the colony, opted for further militarization. This took the shape of the policy of "collective responsibility": all actions committed by guerrilla fighters would provoke military repression in villages and communities, regardless of direct involvement, with indiscriminate bombings and "*ratissages*", i.e., "mopping-ups", in the countryside.

The policy of collective responsibility created embarrassment for the liberals who still supported the governor general, beyond obvious vast resentment among the Muslims. The turning point happened in Philippeville, on August the 20th, 1955: under the orders of Ben Tobbal and Youssef Zighout, who inherited the command of Wilaya Two after the death of Mourad Didouche in January, the FLN attacked the mining town of El-Halia, a suburb of Philippeville (now Skikda) and wantonly massacred the inhabitants, regardless of age or sex. Reaction on the part of the settlers and French colonial police was pitiless, with thousands of Arabs dying in lynch mobs and reprisals. As always, any violent action that incited repression from the French threw more people in the hands of the FLN, and more and more formerly reformist natives switched on the side of nationalism. Jacques Soustelle, having witnessed the event, changed its politics from a liberal reformer to a hardline colonialist and pro-pied noir. Assimilation and integration had died, and the FLN fully embraced the strategy of terrorism[58].

After the events, more and more people criticized Soustelle, even from within his own government. The "Algerian question" was tabled for the first time at the UN general assembly; France temporarily stepped out of the assembly in protest against their supposed "intrusions in internal affairs". A delegation of formerly pro-French Muslim politicians wrote the "declaration of the Sixty-one", supporting the idea that nationalism had become the widespread aspiration among the Algerians. Edgar Faure, from metropolitan France, anticipated the date of the general election to the 2nd of January 1956. Two new forces emerged from these elections: a much more powerful

[58] Ibid., p. 143.

communist party and Poujade's movement of militant, reactionary shopkeepers. On the 24th of January a new government presided by Guy Mollet emerged. Soustelle was replaced by Georges Catroux, and had to return to France in February 1956, amid the sorrow of the pied noirs who deplored his departure. Georges Catroux was extremely unpopular amongst the pied noirs, and therefore subsequently replaced with Robert Lacoste on the 6th of February 1956, after widespread protests.

In the Aurès, Bachir Chihani became commander in the absence of Ben Boulaid. Things were not going well for the FLN between 1955 and 1956: as a commander, Chihani was ambushed by the French army in September 1955 and lost most of his helpers, as well as his arms and a quantity of secret documents and letters to and from Ben Bella which were then collected by the French *Deuxieme Bureau*, the information service of the colonial army. Chihani was for this reason executed by the FLN. Ben Boulaid, having returned to the Aurés after escaping prison a year before, noticed the chaos and tried to recover a semblance of military order, but was killed by the French on the 27th of March 1956 with a booby-trapped radio which exploded in front of him, tearing him to pieces.

Messali Hadj's movement, renominated MNA (*Mouvement National Algerien*) after the 1st of November 1954, started engaging in a prolonged political struggle against the FLN, both at home and among the *emigre* community in France. In the summer of 1955, the confrontation resulted in a guerrilla attack by a general called Bellounis in Guenzet, near Setif. Bellounis was encircled and resolutely defeated by the FLN forces guided by Mohamedi Said and Amirouche, the heads of the Wilaya Three who replaced Krim and Ouamrane. The FLN was already in the process of establishing contacts with Abbas' UDMA, who by March 1956 had declared his will to dissolve the Algerian Assembly, together with other like-minded Muslim deputies, in the face of the political dead end reached. The assembly was effectively dissolved on the 11th of April: Abbas then joined the FLN. The Algerian Communist Party, in July, voted itself out of existence in disagreement with the French Communist Party's support for colonialism, and most of its members joined the ranks of the FLN. The UGTA, the general union of Algerian workers, also decided to stand for the FLN. The FLN was left as the main organization representing the Algerian struggle for independence.

The Soummam platform and the Battle of Algiers

From the early days of the dissolution of the CRUA and the insurrection of All Saints' Day, the "internationalization" of the national struggle was one of the principal objectives of the policy of the Front. At the 1955 conference of non-aligned countries in Bandung, delegates unanimously approved an Egyptian resolution calling for the independence of Algeria. Ait Ahmed, Khider and M'hamed Yazid of the FLN had been invited and present to the conference. In March 1956, Tunisia and Morocco declared their independence from France: the borders of Algeria had become porous, and a source of shelter for the FLN. Meanwhile, new institutions needed to be built, to accommodate for the expanded action and interests of the organization, often in opposition to the externals and their "Cairo Bureau".

At a conference in a village near the Soummam river in August-September 1956, the direction approved a new charter: the Soummam platform. This political platform gave birth to a new body called the CNRA (*Conseil National de la Revolution Algerienne*), effectively an embryo of a future Algerian parliament. As executive cabinet, the conference created the CCE (*Comitè de Coordination et d'Execution*), presided by Benkhedda, Ben M'Hidi, Saad Dahlab, Belkacem Krim and especially Abane Ramdane, a brilliant agitator and advocate for terrorism, who at the time of the conference had become one of the most powerful figures of the FLN. Soummam established the principle of never accepting a cease-fire until the political question of independence had been recognized, together with the primacy of the "interior" over the "exterior" forces. The new CNRA was structured by a mixed composition of the original CRUA members together with two former UDMA militants, six from the MTLD and two from the Islamic reformers.

The externals in Cairo planned on returning to Algeria in time for Soummam, but for logistical problems forced them to stay outside of the country. At the same time, notified of the decisions taken at the congress, they viewed it as a coup against them, motivated by ethnic reasons nonetheless (they were Arab, whereas most of the FLN leadership of the Soumman conference was Kabyle). These tensions could have easily disintegrated the entire movement, had not the episode of the French hijacking of the plane where the externals were flying from Morocco to Tunisia occurred, on October 12th, 1956. The plane was ordered by the French Air Force to land in Oran, where the FLN leaders were then escorted as political prisoners to France.

With the PCA and the MNA almost completely neutralized, the FLN propaganda was firmly in the hands of Abane Ramdane, who aptly expanded it with the founding of a newspaper (*El Moujahid*) and a radio station (*La Voix d'Algerie*). A great part of Ramdane's propaganda was directed at the

Algerian war veterans, to turn them against France. Recruitment was aimed at non-Muslims too: the French doctor Pierre Chaulet was one of the first pied noirs to join the movement, and his house became one of Abane's headquarters to smuggle all sorts of military equipment for the FLN. Chaulet went on escorting both Krim and Ouamrane from Kabylia to Algiers in his car. During 1956, Frantz Fanon notably joined the FLN: his political writings during his first years as a FLN militant reflected his gradual realization of the necessity for a violent overturning of colonial rule[59].

On the other side, the French army and the French paratroopers advanced: the number of French forces totaled 400000 by the fall of 1956. To tackle the guerrilla, they coined the so-called system of "*quadrillage*", a strategy consisting in dividing the territory into small and more controllable areas of circa a hundred or a few more square kilometers. Under Guy Mollet in metropolitan France and Robert Lacoste in Algeria, the French started the policy of "*regroupement*", i.e., forcibly transferring populations from villages in areas where the FLN was most active into military concentration camps. Moreover, on June of 1956, Zabane and Ferradj, two members of the FLN in prison, were executed. The FLN answer to the colonial offensive was twofold: to plan an eight-days strike that had to demonstrate the Algerians' determination to break the military will of the French, and a new wave of terrorist attacks and bombings in Algiers. This was to be beginning of what was later called the "Battle of Algiers."

Larbi Ben M'Hidi was appointed political leader of the Algiers zone, together with Yacef Saadi as his military chef. A series of terrorist attacks escalated from fall to winter in the city. One of the most notable ones was the homicide of Amedèe Froger, the mayor of Boufarik, on the 28th of December 1956, shot by Ali la Pointe in the Rue Michelet of Algiers, which shocked both the pied noirs and the French opinion. Ali la Pointe, a former petty gangster of the Casbah of Algiers and recruit of the FLN, had become one of the most charismatic protagonists of the Front in Algiers. Bombings at popular venues and bars of the European city continued until January, in famous places among the pied noir crowd such as the Milk Bar, the *Coq Hardi* or the *Otomatic*.

Raoul Salan, commander-in-chief of the army, prepared the French countermeasures and Jacques Massu, commander of the elite 10th paratrooper division of the army, took control of the city. Massu relied for crucial intelligence during the operations on his *eminence grise* Yves Godard, his chief-of-staff and commander of the cloak-and-dagger 11th shock unit of the army. Jacques Massu was a

[59] A personal account of Fanon's engagement with the FLN can be found in the article "Algeria's European Minority", where he explains how he became progressively convinced of the inutility of trying to mediate with the French. Cfr. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, Grove Press, pp. 163-178.

returnee from France's defeat in Indochina and Suez, and in Algiers he was given total command for the restoration of public order.

Under quadrillage, the zone of Algiers' Casbah was allotted to Colonel Marcel Bigeard of the 3rd division of colonial paratroopers. When the FLN proclaimed an eight-days strike on January 28th, 1957, Massu and Bigeard were able to militarily break strike by forcing shopkeepers to open their stores at gunpoint and turning the quarter into a fully-fledged military war zone. This strike, originally a proposal of Ben M'Hidi, was planned to coincide with the UN's debate about the Algerian question. The unsuccessful results it brought proved it to be the greatest mistake, tactically speaking, of the FLN during 1957.

The methods employed by the 10th paratroopers to break the FLN's hold on the city notably included the systematic use of torture against any Arab or non-Arab suspected of supporting the strike or the FLN (a fact that was later to be visually reconstructed in the 1966 film "The Battle of Algiers", but also in the 1958 book "*La Question*", by Henry Alleg, an Algerian communist who decided to describe the torture he endured in Algeria in his book[60]). The French army tortured countless people, with many dying for the extreme harshness of their methods, or "disappeared" in "death flights".

Larbi Ben M'Hidi, while the rest of the CCE decided to flee for Tunisia, chose to stay in the city. He eventually died at the hands of the French paratroopers after being caught on February the 25th of 1957, while the French *paras* were heading for his street in search of Benkhedda. Djamila Bouhired, the author of a failed bombing on the Air France headquarters on the previous year, was captured in April 1957, and sentenced to death - a sentence that was later to be commuted. The terror network of Yacef Saadi in Algiers progressively faded under military pressure, despite the bombing of a popular casino in the pied noir neighborhood of Bab-El-Oued in June 1957. Yacef Saadi was tracked down in his refuge in September 1957, where he was caught by the soldiers of the 1st foreign paratrooper division and sentenced to death (a sentence that would be later pardoned by De Gaulle in 1958), and Ali la Pointe died after the paratroopers detonated his hideout, on October 8, 1957. The Battle of Algiers was over.

[60] The methods of torture and death employed were to be used again in the "dirty wars" of Latin America: such was the influence of the methods of repression of the French army during the Battle of Algiers.

The political retreat of the FLN

The use of torture in the army's headquarters and prisons sparked a public outcry in France and Algeria. Notable people resigned from their posts, such as the police prefect of Algiers Paul Teitgen, and the General Jacques De Bollardiere, who was appointed commander over an area near Blida in 1956. The DPU and DPO, *"dispositif de protection urbaine"* and "*Detachement Operationnel de Protection",* were the tools of organized whistle-blowing and secret interrogatories that made torture officially institutionalized in French Algeria.

The immediate impact of the Battle of Algiers was wholly negative for the FLN. With its organization disrupted and its secret networks broken down, the CCE (which, will be recalled, at this point consisted of Ramdane Abane, Belkacem Krim, Benkhedda and Saad Dahlab) was bitterly criticized by the "externals" in its strategy, especially for the eight-days strike of January 1957. Regardless of immediate failure, in a longer perspective the Battle of Algiers succeeded in its intents, for it finally gathered the attention of the world towards the "Algerian question", raising the issue outside of France or the international conferences of Bandung and the UN.

By 1957, the French forces appeared to have neutralized the FLN and its army (the ALN), while at the same time thousands of Algerians were deported to the *centres de regroupment* camps to "take out the water from the fish" of the guerrilla. To counter the Front's influence, the ethnologist Jean Servier created the *harkis* units, composed of deserters of the FLN and *ancient combatants* faithful to France, and soon joined by many Beni-Oui-Oui qaids who were eager to fight for France. At the same time, Christian Lèger, a zouave who served in Indochina and gained experience with Nguyen Giap's techniques of guerrilla, was called to serve in Algeria and founded in Algiers the *groupes the renseignement et d'explotation*, or "bleuite" forces – a network of Muslim double agents and informers. The *bleuites* were especially used to infect and undermine the structure of the FLN in Algiers.

In the meantime, at the border with Tunisia, a new wall with barbed wire, the so-called Morice Line (named after the defense minister of the Lacoste government), was being erected to stop the flow of weapons and border crossings from neighboring countries to Algeria. In this situation, the entire political line of the FLN was called into question. Ben Bella, Ali Mahsas and others of the exterior gained new importance: the Soummam policy of the "primacy of the interior" fell. During the CNRA meeting in Cairo of July 1957, the FLN rectified some of the points of Soummam, establishing an enlarged CCE that was effectively dominated by the five Wilaya commanders: Abdellatif Boussouf of the Wilaya Five and his assistant Houari Boumedienne became two of the

pivotal figures of the new FLN, and they would play a crucial role in the political history of Algeria after the war. Abane Ramdane, the "Mao of Algeria", was deemed responsible of the failures, disposed by his comrades, and killed in mysterious circumstances in Morocco.

The FLN shifted its actions in trying to break the Morice line through raids on the Tunisian border. Most of these attempts were fruitless: hundreds of militants died in the attempt. However, just when the French seemed to have stopped the advance of the anti-colonial forces, it was precisely at that moment that the balance inside the French camp began to crack. A series of coinciding factors combined to create a rift that would, as a first step, bury the political edifice of the Fourth Republic.

"*Je vous ai compris!*": the return of De Gaulle

As French military forces had rose to half a million conscripts operating in Algeria, more and more French families questioned the utility of sending their sons to fight in a bloody, costly, and long-lasting colonial war that had taken the toll of almost everyone, both in France and in Algeria. Secondly, the instability of the governments of the Fourth Republic made any long-term decision impossible, and the French economy still had not fully recovered from the damages of the war. The army's distrust towards French politicians, already ingrained since the beginning and coupled with the effect of the defeats at Dien Bien Phu and Suez, grew to unprecedented heights. The pied noirs, sheltered in the illusions of preserving their old ways of life, shared this distrust: this deadly alliance between the settlers and the army generals would shape the hopes and then the furious rage of both in the face of the inevitability of decolonization.

Tensions rose further at the beginning of 1958. In the Tunisian city of Sakiet at the border with Algeria, Algerian soldiers of the ALN shot twice at French aircrafts passing along the border. In retaliation, on the same day of the 8th of February, French bombers attacked and completely leveled the town of Sakiet. Eighty people died, most of them being Tunisian civilians. The air raid took place without civilian authorization or international mediation, and the event caused an international uproar, so high that Bourghiba's Tunisia decided to evacuate the French garrison stationed in Tunisia still waiting for a post-independence treaty with France. The French army, on the other hand, thought that the tactics of counterinsurgency employed meant that victory was soon to be reached. What they could not envision was the political consequences that this pressure would create in France and in colonial Algeria too, and partly because of their military actions in Sakiet.

In April 1958, another government crisis opened in France. After the fall of yet another short-lived government, Pierre Pflimlin, an Alsatian politician, assumed power to form a new government. Meanwhile, in Algeria, powerful forces united to bring down the French political establishment. Jacques Chaban-Delmas and Leon Delbecque, two fervently Gaullist generals, had served as political "antennas" for Charles De Gaulle in Algeria since 1957. Charles De Gaulle, who scornfully refused to take part in the formation of the Fourth Republic's party-led politics, was precisely admired by many for his supposed political "cleanliness". The aims of Chaban-Delmas and Delbecque were shared by the so-called "group of seven", a loose movement represented by Pierre Lagaillarde, *ultras* paratrooper and leader of the *Association Générale des Étudiants d'Algérie*, Jean-Thomazo, colonel of the 25th airborne division and pied noir Gaullist, and Jo Ortiz, leader of a populist group of ultra-rightist shopkeepers. All of them wanted De Gaulle to bury the Fourth Republic.

At the end of April, a series of pied noir protests started again against Pfimlin, accused of wanting to sign a deal with the FLN. Even though De Gaulle was already stating in interviews his contempt against the "illegitimacy" of the Fourth Republic, he was still far from desiring to return to politics. In May, the French army executed three men convicted of terrorism, and the FLN, in response, executed three French prisoners on the 9th. This event sparked another revolt among the settlers. Raoul Salan, the chief of the army, wrote a telegram announcing a demonstration on the 13th of May in front of the *monument aux morts* of Algiers. Salan gave it to Lacoste the next day, and Lacoste resigned from his post, leaving Algeria for France. The *Gouvernement général* stood empty.

The first to advance the proposal for the establishment of a committee of public safety to save colonialism was allegedly Alain de Serigny, director of the conservative newspaper *L'Echo d'Alger*, on the 10th of May. To make his intentions even clearer, on the 11th his newspaper included an article clearly addressed to De Gaulle. On the 13th of May 1958, under the assurance of Chaban-Delmas and Delbecque that De Gaulle would stand by their side and that the army would not go against the crowd, a great mass of pied noirs, led by Lagaillarde, gathered around the *monument aux morts*, seized the building, and proclaimed the establishment of a committee of public safety, appointing Jacques Massu as its president. On the 15th, Massu declared in a speech "*Vive l'Algerie Française, et Vive De Gaulle!"*, dissolving the ambiguities around his political aims. The crowd, composed of different factions of the colon political sphere, seemed to be poised for a putsch against the French government[61].

[61] A description of the putschist climate during that time in Algiers can be read in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, pp. 335-343.

In this political imbroglio, many others pleaded De Gaulle to come back to politics in Paris. De Gaulle was seen by most French as a *super partes* figure who still retained the confidence of the army. On the 16th, De Gaulle finally answered the requests, declaring that he was ready to assume power. However, the army in Algeria was also ready to embark in a *coup d'etat* in French territory, to force the process leading to a De Gaulle government. This coup was planned under the name of operation *"Resurrection"*, initiated by Jean-Thomazo in Corsica, on the 24th of May. Pfimlin, under pressure, was compelled to accept the investiture of De Gaulle. On the 27th of May, as the crisis reached its peak in Paris, a coup in France seemed due. Pflimlin would resign the day after. Under invitation from the president Rene Coty, the 1st of June 1958, De Gaulle finally accepted to form a new government that would lead France out of the Algerian chaos. The coup was avoided.

In his new government, De Gaulle posed his conditions: he held that he would rule by decree for six months, until a new constitution was ratified, and that the Fourth Republic would be replaced by another republic – the Fifth Republic. In the history of France, the outcome of the May 1958 crisis showed how intertwined colonial crises in Algeria are in the development of France's politics and economy: not just as a "core" and "periphery" relationship, but also as a symbiotic process of structuration/destructuration[62].

On June the 4th, De Gaulle flew to Algiers to pay a visit to the Committee of Public Safety. Here, from the balcony of the Governor General palace, he delivered a highly emotional speech to the crowd beginning with the famous utterance: *"je vous ai compris!"* ("I have understood you!"), that was aimed at the army and at the Algerians as "French citizens", but left unsolved the question of the future of the country, in the usual cryptic way in which he delivered his speeches. Sure enough, in June 1958 he did not understand the nature of what was happening there, and still thought that some form of reconciliation would take place, even if most of the Algerian Muslims were already embracing the national idea, to no avail of reconciliation.

De Gaulle's fundamental proposals to resolve the "Algerian problem" were unveiled in October with the "Constantine Plan": this plan included massive education investment, infrastructural and industrial development expansion that were designed to create thousands of new jobs in Algeria and pull the colony out of underdevelopment. The urgence for this plan stemmed, among the other things, from the sudden discovery of reserves of oil in the Saharan desert on January of the same year, a big discovery which attracted investment and determined a contentious ideological and

[62] We have seen how French policy could not allow for a peaceful transition to power or a smooth process of economic change in Algeria. It was also noted how the colonial elite forced its political power onto the French metropolitan government. But what lies underneath are always material forces: relations of economic interdependence that, in 1958, destroyed the Fourth Republic.

political battle that would drag on during the last moments of the war between the FLN and France[63].

The newfound popularity of De Gaulle was shared by both Muslims and Europeans alike. This was clearly an obstacle for the anti-colonial forces: despite the FLN boycott against the constitutional referendum for the approval of the Fifth Republic in September, circa 76% the Muslim population went to the polls, and 99% of them voted in favor.[64]

The shift to "Self-Determination": the FLN against De Gaulle and pied noir reaction

To expand its offensive, in 1958 the FLN brought the civil war to the *metropole*. This step was even more arduous, since metropolitan Algerian politics was still monopolized by Messali Hadj's MNA. On a diplomatic side, the CCE of the FLN tried to exploit the East-West divisions of the Cold War to their own aims: the creation of the GPRA, the provisional government of the Algerian revolution, on the 19th of September 1958, in Tunis helped to pursue this political operation. Ferhat Abbas was nominated president, and Ben Bella his vice-president, and the most prominent position were occupied by the "triumvirate" of the CCE at the time of the foundation of the GPRA: Abdelhafid Boussouf, Lakhdar Ben Tobbal and Bekacem Krim.

De Gaulle tried to lure the FLN to his side with the offer what he called the *"paix des braves"*, an amnesty of political prisoners in exchange for unconditional surrender. The FLN rejected his offer and publicly criticized the outline of the Constantine plan. Meanwhile, Massu was asked to resign from the committee of public safety, Salan was reassigned in France, and the government in Algeria, changing name from "Governor General" to "Delegate General", passed in the hands of Paul Delouvrier, with Maurice Challe as his army chief. Challe successfully continued the work his predecessors, so much that by 1959 the organization of Wilaya Two, Three and Four seemed completely in disarray against his attacks. Guerrilla shifted to nearby Tunisia and Morocco, where the external ALN counted more than ever, while internal guerrilla persisted on a smaller scale, ignited by the absence of a political solution and the complete militarization of life.

[63] Some would define it as the "resource curse" of Algeria. More than a curse due to oil alone, oil throw Algeria into the spiral of the world economy and indebtment without having formed a proper industrial base after the end of colonialism. The Constantine plan was ineffective not just because the French wanted to pursue it, but because native accumulation in a colonial situation was impossible.
[64] John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 173.

De Gaulle soon realized that independence was inevitable. The question was how to negotiate with the future powerholders of an independent Algeria. So, on the 16th of September, in another of his speeches, he first uttered the word "self-determination", referring to Algeria. A peace settlement was now the priority, rather than trying to cling on the principle of French Algeria. De Gaulle's political turning point suddenly destroyed all the illusions that colons and army generals had nurtured towards him after his return to power. The speech determined a shakeup inside of the *ultras* pied noir movement: Jo Ortiz, together with Jean-Jacques Susini, a student of Corsican origins, replaced Lagaillarde in the lead of the movement, and together with him they founded the FNF (*Front National Français*) adopting as its symbol a fascist Celtic cross.

Tensions started mounting again among the European population. The FNF became a fully-fledged militia, organized by Ortiz and Jean-Claude Perez, a pied noir counterterrorist who had participated in a series of guerrilla actions against the FLN in the previous years. The army, while aware of what was brewing, did little to prevent the formation of that reactionary militia. The FLN, still in the process reorganizing itself after the offensive of Challe's army, adopted a strategy of smaller terrorist attacks. The predictable pied noir reaction helped strengthening the FNF and the army. The army, particularly, was on the verge of revolt against De Gaulle's new policy of self-determination; among the new protagonists of this rebellion was Jean Gardes, author of the hijacking of the FLN "exterior" plane in 1956 and head of the psychological and propaganda warfare operations for the *Cinquieme Bureau*. Gardes had already worked to reach the FNF for a joint action with the army generals.

For the FLN, it was too a time of tensions. On the 13th of December 1959, a new CNRA was held in Tripoli, Libya. Widespread dissatisfaction resurfaced about the war conduct of the ALN. Krim and Ferhat Abbas were being attacked, in the thirty-three days session of the council, by Boussouf and Boumedienne. Krim, in particular, was criticized for his role as minister of the armed forces. Boussouf and Boumedienne both proposed to replace Krim's minister with a new Inter-ministerial committee: a unified General Staff controlled by Boumedienne. This motion was approved during the council: the General Staff, as we would see, will play a crucial role in future Algerian politics.

The application of the Constantine Plan was repeatedly thwarted by the political instability of the situation. Delouvrier, although the Delegate-General, was isolated politically and most of the army, included Massu, had no confidence in him: Massu's power, on the other hand, was greater than ever in the history of Algeria. Despite that, Massu still had confidence in De Gaulle, and wanted to use his power to contain the "simmering" tensions of the ultras of Susini, Ortiz and Jean Gardes. Massu's staunch Gaullism, however, started to crumble, and in mid-January, in an interview

conceded to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* he expressed his disappointment against the policies of De Gaulle and claimed that he "will not execute unconditionally the orders of the Head of State."

The scoop, published the 18th of January 1960, was such that De Gaulle, enraged, demanded Massu to be relieved of all his posts. He was ultimately transferred to the city of Metz and never allowed to return to Algeria again. This lit the spark that Ortiz, Susini and Lagaillarde, the latter having returned to agitate with his militiamen after the revolt of May 1958, were waiting for. On the 24 of January 1960, the "Massu bomb" triggered an open revolt supported by the FNF. The organizers of the revolt felt that the army, similarly to the events of May 1958, would let them wreak havoc in the city undisturbed. A week of pied noir revolt, renamed "Barricades Week", began.

After a few days of unrest, with violent clashes between the police and the protesters and deaths from both sides, De Gaulle gave another televised speech the 29th of January 1960, condemning the barricades and supporting again the idea of an Algerian self-determination. The authors of the failed insurrection eventually surrendered to French Justice, and Lagaillarde was forced to disband his militia.

In the FLN camp, a few politicians, among them Ferhat Abbas, proposed to settle for a degree of compromise with the French. Abbas' conciliatory ideas were firmly rejected by the military wing, which was growing bigger and more influential after the end of Barricades' Week. Boumedienne, now in a position of control both over the ALN and the FLN, managed to impose a new military organization, tactics, and men in charge of making discipline respected.

At the same time, some first attempts at negotiations started from dissident representatives of the Wilaya Four of Algiers, with informal talks between Bernard Tricot, the Elysée counsellor, and a delegation of three FLN militants in the Algerian *bled* between March and April. These representatives, in disagreement with the rigidity of the GPRA, sought to determine their own conditions for future negotiations. On the 10th of June 1960, a delegation presided by the wilaya commander Si Salah was finally received by De Gaulle at the Elysée palace. On the 14th, in a televised speech, De Gaulle advanced an invitation to a cease-fire with the GPRA. Eleven days later, the first official FLN delegation flew to Melun, south of Paris, to engage in the first official talks with the French government. Yet, some days before, the 21 of June, Lakhdar, Abdellatif and Halim, the three Algerois dissidents who had informal talks with Tricot, were executed by the FLN. Si Salah would be killed by the French the following year, in the so-called "Operation Tilsit".

Talks in Melun ended without any progress from both sides, but De Gaulle's implicit recognition of the GPRA provided the FLN with another diplomatic victory: De Gaulle had renounced to the idea

of never granting recognition to the provisional government that he made in the speech of September 1959. Meanwhile, the Algiers FLN network, destroyed by *blueites* infiltration during Yacef Saadi's command and partly impaired after the elimination of the three dissident negotiators in 1960, was being reorganized by Boumedienne and his men to launch another wave of minor attacks against European civilians, which arguably helped the FLN maintain pressure on De Gaulle and the colon population. On November 4, 1960, De Gaulle took another step in accommodating to the idea of Algerian independence in another speech.

Reviewing his course of actions during the two years he had been in power, the head of the French government claimed that his policy was to move "from government of Algeria by metropolitan France to an Algerian Algeria", with its own laws, government, and institutions. To give a political expression to it, twelve days later he called for a referendum to ask the French and Algerian electorates whether they supported the idea of self-determination or not.

Gradually, after yet another speech that enraged the supporters of *Algerie Française,* most of Delouvrier's collaborators withdrew from supporting the Delegate-General, and he decided to resign on the 23rd of November. In turn, De Gaulle was preparing a visit to Algeria in December; his political tour happened to be in synchrony with another UN "Algerian debate" and with the voting of an Afro-Asian resolution for an UN-backed independent referendum for the self-determination of Algeria. Abdelkader Chanderli and M'Hamed Yazid, the two FLN militants in charge for the diplomatic work at the UN, managed to push this resolution to the assembly.

The colon reaction was, in parallel, growing more violent. The FNF, at this point, included more than a million members, and had ties with most of the pro-colonialist establishment in France, including the usual Jacques Soustelle and Jean-Marie Le Pen, the soon-to-be founder of the *Front National*. But the epicenter of French disaffection against De Gaulle was shifting from the civilians to the army, who from then onwards would constitute the bulk of the leadership of the pro-colonial movement.

Raoul Salan, still exiled in France but secretly returning to Algeria to receive the representants of the FNF, was secretly plotting a coup together with the 1st foreign paratrooper units and the Oran-born pied noir activist Edmond Jouhaud. On the 9th of December, when De Gaulle would have arrived in Algiers, the *paras,* him and Jouhaud would call for a general strike and exploit the disorder to march with military troops through the city, seize power and then detain De Gaulle. The plan ultimately failed, because De Gaulle knowingly refused to visit Algiers and opted for smaller cities, and the paratroopers did not act as planned. To give a poignant image of the desperation that these dissident generals and pro-colonialist reactionaries were showing during the protests of

December 1960, the Algerian writer Mouloud Feraoun said: "they resemble senile beggars who masturbate in a corner to make people believe that they are virile".[65]

On the 11th of December the FLN decided to counter the FNF: green and white Algerian flags started appearing in mosques and all around the city of Algiers, and a mob of Muslims descended to the streets from the Casbah, in a scene that was even reconstructed at the end of Pontecorvo's "The Battle of Algiers", and unleased violence against the pied noir population. The Muslim demonstration was highly successful, the Casbah returned to be a bastion of Muslim resistance and the attempted Jouhaud coup failed. The GPRA, triumphant over the success of the demonstrations, saw this moment as a turning point of the war: some French journalists even called the evens the "Dien Bien Phu of official propaganda"[66].

The Evian negotiations and the last years of colonial Algeria

On the 20th of December 1960, the General Assembly of the UN voted the pro-Algerian motion of the Political Committee, with a sharp majority of positive votes. The French referendum was scheduled to be held on January 8th, 1961. The vote of the French referendum was also overwhelmingly favorable, despite the usual FLN boycott. The same month the French authorities disbanded the FNF; the same leaders, in a final attempt to resist decolonization, reformed the movement in Madrid in the final, most deadly, and destructive form of pied noir violence: the OAS (*Organisation Armée Secrete*). Among its military leaders were the usual Raoul Salan, who had moved to Madrid in his exile, the general Marie André Zeller, and Jouhaud. The movement received a boost after Maurice Challe, who took early retirement from his post in Algeria in April 1960, secretly flew to Algeria in April 1961 to join the OAS.

On February 1961, De Gaulle, sensing the need to accelerate the pace of the negotiations, sent the then member of the constitutional council Georges Pompidou to pre-negotiate an accord with Ahmed Boumendjel in Lucerne, abandoning the condition of a ceasefire first, which was refused by the FLN, and proposed a unilateral truce for the French army in Algeria. Pompidou also agreed to meet the representatives of the GPRA in Evian for the 7th of April; however, the actual Evian

[65] Quoted in Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, p. 507.
[66] Ibid., p. 511. Another quotation from the same page includes a remark by the journalist Janet Flanner: "In Paris, it is considered that three myths died in Algeria over the weekend, these being the selfish myth of the white ultras that Algeria is French; the mendacious myth of the French army that only a fistful of fighting rebels in Algeria wanted independence in all those years of war; and the major, miracle myth that De Gaulle could make peace — though no one here, or probably anywhere, thinks that anyone else could make it."

negotiations would only start on May 20th, 1961. Surrounding the impending negotiations, the violent menace of the OAS would loom above the last year and a half of the Algerian war.

The first actions the OAS concentrated in another attempted coup. On the night of the 21st of April, the OAS would use the 1st foreign paratrooper regiment as an instrument to take over all the governmental facilities and detain the military commander and the governor. On the morning of April 22, Challe announced that he and his colleagues had assumed full powers in Algeria and the Sahara. However, the "putsch of the generals" did not achieve the infrastructural support it needed: only one of the unit commanders of the capital regions was on the side of the putschists.

The putsch failed after a few days, for lack of support from the rank and file of the army, De Gaulle's condemnation, and the generalized negative reaction of civilians in metropolitan France. Salan, Jouhaud, Gardes and the rest of the plotters escaped but were sentenced to death in absentia by the French government. Marie André Zeller gave himself up in Algiers and was tried together with Challe in France. The 1st, the 18th and the 14th foreign paratrooper units were disbanded, and their members forcibly transferred to France. The French government had no other options, in the circumstances, than to negotiate with the FLN.

It has already been noted that colonization in Algeria was premised upon the destruction of the old social affiliations and identities. All social ties had to be rebuilt in the process leading to the struggle for independence, as Fanon noted in his writings on Algeria[67]. The unification of a national consciousness did not prevent, nevertheless, that the different groups leading the nationalist movement would only become more internally heterogenous over time. The ALN-dominated FLN of Boumedienne and Ben Bella would on the one hand condemn the "cult of personality" of the early revolutionaries of the "glorious years" (particularly of Ramdane Abane) only to build a class of technocrats who were to rule over the inadequate institutions of the FLN without ever reshaping them or changing their role into a more efficient one.

The FLN, during and after the liberation, had different and contradictory political tendencies inside its structures which were rarely united by anything more than the armed opposition to French colonialism. Many of its members would claim pieces of political power in the post-colonial institutions and very rarely their claims would be satisfied. On top of this, the power shifts of the year 1959-1960 in the GPRA and the CNRA only proved to bring more fragmentation to the movement. The cost of political victory was that divisions would continue to muster up under the shadows of military intransigence.

[67] Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, Grove Press Editions, pp. 28-32.

On May 20th, 1961, the French government finally began negotiations with the FLN in the French city of Evian. The FLN delegation, comprising Boumendjel, Krim, Ahmed Francis and Saad Dahlab - Krim's second-in-command in Foreign Affairs – was escorted daily from their accommodations on the Swiss side of the lake where Evian is located. Though absent because they were still in prison, the leaders of the exterior (including Ben Bella) were ideologically present at the conference, and their implicit pressure determined the stance of the negotiations. Coherently with the tenets of the Soummam platform, no ceasefire, however unilateral was the truce, were to be agreed without a political solution. The two main points of contention (the political guarantees for the pied noir population and the question of sovereignty in the Sahara), pitted the French delegation against the Algerian nationalists. No clear stance was given on both issues.

To the French requests of giving the right to dual citizenship for the European settlers, the delegation was unanimous in replying negatively. Only an Algerian sovereign state, according to them, would be in an international position to negotiate such rights. The other question, that of the Sahara, proved to be the most philosophically and politically challenging in the history of the war: it was repeatedly mentioned that, after oil reserves were found in the Saharan desert, a new economic interest arose on the French side. Therefore, it was politically predictable that, at Evian, the French government would resort to an historical argument – that the Sahara was never an integral part of Algeria, but its borders were artificially created by France after colonization, a true historical argument used instrumentally within the context of the Evian talks – to try and save their economic interests there. The FLN response was as immovable as the others, and perfectly coherent with the Soummam platform: the Sahara formed an integral part of the Algerian nation, and no concessions of sovereignty were to be allowed during negotiations.

The negotiations dragged for nearly a month, to reach an impasse in mid-June; despite their restart in Lugrin on July the 20, this new session would only last 8 days. De Gaulle, amid political desperation for the result of the talks, proposed a partition of Algeria, an idea that created controversy and protests both from the anti-war camp in France and obviously from the FLN. Almost all the cards the French played backfired.

A day before the end of Lugrin, on the 19th of July, Bourguiba decided to blockade the Tunisian French naval base at Bizerte. The French army counterattacked by sending paratroopers and war planes and killing seven hundred people in their raid. In retaliation, Bourguiba decided to cut all diplomatic ties with France, thus leaving the French government without a crucial mediating party in dealing with the Algerian question.

While the French government negotiated with the FLN, the OAS, under the leadership of Raoul Salan as its leader from Madrid, had already started its terror campaign in Algeria and metropolitan France. The killing of Roger Gavoury, the head of French police in Algeria, executed by Roger Degueldre, a former paratrooper soldier who commanded the OAS delta squads in Algeria, was meant as a frontal attack against any concession to decolonization. By autumn the OAS had fully established itself in the cities of Algiers and Oran, becoming notorious for the so-called "*stroungas*," a pied noir slang term to denote plastic bomb explosions.

The FLN, reluctantly, had to act to counter the threat of the OAS. Internally, despite its successes, rifts continued to expand: at the fourth CNRA, convened in Tripoli in August the 5th, 1961, Boumedienne sent a letter of protest to the GPRA for their conduct at Evian, with alleged accusations of corruption, "bourgeois ideas" and softness in their dealings with the French, but beneath the surface the dispute was about power in the movement; in fact, the ALN and the General Staff badly tolerated the authority of the GPRA over themselves.

Virtually the entire GPRA was against the idea of giving more power to the General Staff. Nevertheless, Ben Bella and the "externals" in prison, who despite their absence were gaining more political weight, backed the proposal of Boumedienne, and supported a reshuffling that ousted Ferhat Abbas from the presidency and moved Belkacem Krim out of the ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Interior Ministry, on the grounds of his alleged weak negotiating record. The 28th of August, a communique describing the accomplished GPRA reshuffle was issued, and among the other points it focused on the preservation of the integrity of the Algerian territory, specifically regarding the question of the Sahara. The intransigence on the Saharan question paid; on September 5, 1961, De Gaulle renounced all territorial claims to the Algerian Sahara.

During the fall of 1961, Algeria was gradually descending into chaos. The terrorism of the OAS *stroungas* was becoming bloodier every month. With the help of Louis Grassien, a former Rheims police officer, the French government tried to promote a counterterrorist anti-OAS brigade in Algiers, together with a new movement (*Mouvement pour la Communautè*) whose aim was to target the places where the OAS gathered. They were irregular forces formed by the government: soon the MPC was joined by another organization, the so-called Force C, informally nicknamed "*Les Barbouzes*" by the French press. The MPC, lacking a proper military training, was rapidly wiped out by the OAS, but before being destroyed it helped provide sensible information to the militias of the Force C. Despite all efforts, the irregular struggle against the OAS by the French state was a failure.

In metropolitan France, the OAS could count on political allies such as the usual Jacques Soustelle, Robert Lacoste, Leon Delbecque and all the other *ultras* of French Algeria. The social situation was escalating in France too; on the 17th of October 1961, during a pro-FLN demonstration in Paris which violated a racially charged curfew "for the Arabs" imposed by the prefect of the Parisian police, Maurice Papon, the police shot and killed hundreds of Algerians, throwing their dead bodies into the Seine from a riverfront nearby. A few days later, a writing would appear on that riverfront: "*Ici on noie les Algériens"*[68].

To avoid further chaos, the overwhelming majority of the FLN wanted to resume the negotiation process. Since now even Ben Bella agreed to return to the negotiating table, everyone in the FLN convened for the necessity of new talks. Preliminary talks, thus, took place in December in the "Chalet du Yeti", located in the Jura Alps, in neutral territory. Louis Joxe, the minister of Algerian affairs of De Gaulle, was representing France, and Saad Dahlab and Ben Yahia were representing the FLN.

Although De Gaulle had previously renounced all territorial claims on the Sahara, several issues (among them, the presence of French military bases in Algeria) had still not been resolved. On the 17th of February, talks reached a new impasse, but both parts managed to reach a compromise for the 7th of March. On that day, the two sides would meet again in Evian.

At this point, knowing it was over for *Algerie Française*, the OAS had declared total war on the French army. Against a backdrop of increased reactionary violence, the new Evian talks carried on and finally, on the 18th of March 1962, the final agreements were signed. These agreements marked the official beginning of the independence of Algeria. But what did they entail?

First, the Evian agreements declared a ceasefire, premised upon the recognition of the sovereignty of Algeria. Then it brought upon a settlement for the military question: the French would have to reduce their military contingent and were at the same time assured leases on military bases, including important ones like Mers-el-Kabir. France was also expected to provide economic aid for three years in the same way it would have done under the Constantine Plan of 1958. French oil companies were given special treatment on the extraction of oil over a period of six years, but the subsoil resources were declared to be the property of the Algerian nation. Algeria was to remain in the franc zone, and a Provisional Government would be formed, assuming power on the 7th of April, with an equal number of Algerian and French members, to decide for another referendum to ratify the Evian Agreements. The referendum would take place between three to six months after the

[68] "Here we drown the Algerians"

ceasefire. Guarantees were given to French citizens in Algeria for three years, after which they could opt either for Algerian or French citizenship.

It has been repeatedly highlighted how the FLN accomplished what it had pursued since Soummam until the final days of Evian in 1962. The Evian agreements, despite everything, had obtained some concessions for the French too, especially in certain rights for the French settlers. These concessions, however, proved to be unnecessary: soon, after Evian, most of the pied noir would voluntarily leave the country in droves to establish themselves in France, selling their property to the cheapest price possible, and destroying everything they could not take with them in a final outburst of rage and desperation of a dying social order against the native Algerians.

The OAS unleashed its final and bloodiest terrorist campaign after the ceasefire started, on the 19th of March. As a response, the French army retaliated, launching a full assault against the OAS. A few weeks later, Jouhaud was captured and brought to prison, and with him Challe and Zeller. On the 7th of April Roger Delguedre was captured and then Raoul Salan on the 20th. After the establishment of the provisional government, and amid other acts of residual violence by the now headless OAS, the new government started taking shape. On the 1st of July 1962 the Algerians voted for independence, and finally, on June the 2nd, Algeria was proclaimed an independent country. A new era began, with hopes that would soon be disappointed.

The economic impact of the Algerian war and the political crisis of 1962

The war had left Algeria in shambles. But even before the war, its economy was already in crisis: both its agriculture and mining sectors had been stagnating for decades, counterbalanced only by the growth of the colon-led sectors of manufacture and services[69]. During the years of the war, the discovery of oil attracted a long wave of investment, starting from 1956 to 1961, but most oil companies waited for a turn of the tide in the war, and even so the decline in productivity in agriculture and the industrial sector could not be masked by the oil euphoria of the last years of colonial Algeria. The Constantine Plan of 1958, with its blueprints for industrial rejuvenation and education investment, was premised on the end of the war, but since the war did not come to an end private capital started fleeing the country, and industrial production declined as well. Agriculture

[69] In John Ruedy's book, he uses statistics from Samir Amin, *L'Economie du Maghreb*, Vol. I, 1966, p. 190.

was also plummeting, due to the policy of *regroupment* of transporting peasants away from farms and villages into concentration camps.

This last act – the *regroupment* policy – was precisely the coronation of a process started with the beginning of colonization: the expropriation of the land and the pauperization of the peasants. At the end of the war, most Algerian peasants were left without land, and displaced from their homes and the precarious village life they used to lead before 1956. Most of these former peasants had moved to the urban centers, crowding them with a mass of impoverished, underemployed, and bewildered proletarians that would pose a fundamental challenge to the history of post-independence Algeria.

Violence and expropriation were continuously used throughout the history of French Algeria by the French rulers to deprive the Algerians of any means to establish themselves. The first 40 years of colonial rule, as it was shown in the first parts of the history of Algeria, marked an absolute decline in population, and the independence war similarly produced an excess mortality of up to 1000000 people, at least according to the Algerians sources. Marx used to say that violence is "the midwife of a new society", and it can be said to be true both when France created a colony and when, finally, violence brought Algeria into national unity and capitalist integration.

However, some questioned the utility of the Evian agreements. From a critical perspective, the political concessions at Evian (on military bases, on an agrarian reform and on the preferential treatment of French companies in Algerian soil) seemed to evoke a neo-colonialist threat after the establishment of an Algerian republic, a prediction ringing true a posteriori but less due to the political phrasing of the text and more to the shortcomings of the political struggle of the FLN, an organization that was able to mobilize the Algerians in a civil war and create a sense of national unity for a bourgeois-democratic struggle, but that was still unable to solve its internal rifts and was fragmented in separate fiefdoms who, in the post-independence situation, will manifest themselves in a renewed struggle for power[70].

As a matter of fact, in the last months before the referendum of July 1962, the struggle for power inside the FLN became even bigger. In the two CNRA meetings in Tripoli between May and June 1962, no progress was made to outline the political institutions to be created for the new Algerian state. The different factions inside the FLN coalesced around its distinct divisions (the GPRA, the General Staff, the UGTA union, the French Federation, the "*purs*" who were released from the

[70] Cfr. "*La "Révolution algérienne" est-elle une révolution?"*, in Programme Communiste n° 16-17 and 21, 1962. The article compares the program of the FLN and the Evian agreements to the agrarian reforms in Morocco and Tunisia, and heavily criticizes the FLN's program for its lack of coherence in the face of "neo-colonialism".

prison of Aulnoy after the signing of the Evian Agreements) to discuss two major questions: the adoption of a political agenda – the "Tripoli Program" – and the nomination of a Political Bureau.

The Tripoli program, written by Ben Bella and a group of leftist FLN intellectuals, started with an overview of the history of French colonialism and warned about the neo-colonial risks that the perspectives of Franco-Algerian cooperation could bring after the Evian agreements. Most importantly, it heavily criticized the GPRA and the wilaya leaders for their conduct in the war. It advocated, against market economics, a form of socialist collectivism based on the rural masses and the urban poor, and an economic planning process. Ben Bella, together with Boumedienne, proposed that the Political Bureau be formed with the five ex-prisoners of the exterior, and only one member of the GPRA and of the wilaya. This amounted to a wholesale rejection of the leadership of the FLN during the war, and the CNRA was hesitant to adopt this proposal: the Tripoli meetings ended without any agreement on the political institutions of Algeria.

After the proclamation of independence, the disarray inside the FLN became even more glaring. On the 11th of July, Ben Bella entered Algeria from Morocco to establish the so-called "Tlemcen group", composed by him, the General Staff of Boumedienne, the ALN, the nominated ones of the Political Bureau, and Ferhat Abbas, Ali Boumendjel and Ahmed Francis, who as it was clear at this point were deeply embittered for their rejection from the GPRA. Benkhedda, on the other hand, formed the "Tizi Ouzou group" with the leaders of the wilaya two, three and four and the French federation of the FLN. The two groups were characterized by political as well as ethnic divisions, since the Tlemcen group was almost completely ethnically Arab and the Tizi Ouzou group Kabyle.

However, after a war of words in the month of July, the GPRA started accepting the composition of the Political Bureau. The two sides agreed to hold elections for the National Assembly in August, coherently with the Evian platform. Despite that, the wilaya leaders adamantly continued to oppose Boumedienne and the General Staff, and especially his plan to convert the ALN into a new army, the ANP (Armée National Populaire), fearing such a conversion would mean giving away their military power and submit to the authority of the General Staff. The Political Bureau tried negotiation, but some wilaya leaders still remained against the plan.

On the 1st of September of 1962, a demonstration was held in Algiers with the slogan "*baraka saba'a sanin*", "seven years is enough". Meanwhile, the forces of Boumedienne had already reached the Algerois region and Ben Bella reached Algiers on the 4th of September. The next days, all dissident wilayas capitulated, and after the capitulation Boumedienne marched through Algiers with his troops. Eventually, elections for a National Assembly could be held. A list of 196 candidates was drawn, and on September 20 the Algerians went to the polls to ratify the list. Both

the provisional government and the provisional executive remitted their powers to a National Constituent Assembly, and on the 25th of September Algeria was proclaimed as the "Popular and Democratic Republic of Algeria"

The Ben Bella years: illusions of collectivism and the reality of a social crisis

It was already mentioned how, during the last months leading from the Evian agreements to the proclamation of the republic, a mass exodus of Europeans settlers happened. Hundreds of thousands of pied noirs with their families packed everything they could and moved to France, savagely destroying hospitals, libraries, factories, and other pieces of infrastructure that could benefit the Algerians in their now independent country. With the departure of the Europeans, the bulk of the professional and technical class disappeared and suddenly the Algerians were faced not only with a shortage of skilled labor but also of capital and education facilities to rebuild the nation.

As a result, a massive contraction of GDP happened between 1960 and 1963. In such a disastrous economic situation, an urgent transformation was needed to cope with the needs of a population who endured the violence of colonialism and the privations of the war and was mostly displaced and unemployed. In spite of this, the history of the first five years of independent government in Algeria, especially during the years of Ben Bella, were years of power consolidation rather than coherent economic planning and policies, even if only in the realm of capitalistic development. It will only be during the Boumedienne years that Algeria will embrace a form of Arab-style state capitalism centered around hydrocarbon extraction, but at the price of stifling all dissent and putting the aspiration to build an import-substitution industrial base above the concrete needs of the Algerian population.

Reviewing the account of the war, the division between the "socialist" and the more "liberal" and reformist factions stands out from approximately 1956 until Evian and beyond. Liberals, in the post-war situation, represented the aspiration of the Arab middle class and of those who, after 1962, were able to grab as much colon property as possible to enrich themselves. Fanon had already warned about this class of *nuveaux riches* in "The Damned of the Earth" in that an anti-colonial revolution cannot be based on this stratum of people, let alone representing their demands of simply replacing

the colon on their property, of being a national bourgeoisie only copying the habits of their old masters[71]

The "socialists," on the other hand, and Ben Bella among them, had a following among the intellectual middle class and a part of the urban workers, and of course most of the historical leadership of the war. The two factions, regardless of their political leaning, ignited the Algerian political discourse with a deeply populist vocabulary of "popular" ambitions. These ideas, despite their aggressive demagoguery, failed to reach the peasants of the countryside, who at the time of independence still constituted approximately 70% of all the Algerian population.

Despite holding politically similar ideas, the old leadership split into separate "clans" for power purposes, under the cover of ideological reasons. The Tlemcen group of Ben Bella, for example, was able to accumulate power through buying the assent or militarily defeating the leaders of the wilayas, and then forming a Political Bureau of people who stood naturally on their side. After defeating the Tizi Ouzou group, political trouble started coming from the UGTA direction, and in the same fiefdom from people who he could not control like Abbas, Mohamed Khider and Boumedienne and his supporters, the so-called "Oujda Clan". Moreover, different political views often were espoused by people of the same sub-affiliation: Abbas and Khider for example had radically different ideas on which power rested the adoption of policymaking, Abbas standing with the National Assembly and Khider on the side of the party. Regardless, the FLN as a united party was something that belonged more in the realm of ideologies than reality.

Ben Bella was the one political leader who could ascend to power in that situation. In January 1963, he succeeded in bringing the UGTA members under the control of the Political Bureau and position himself at the forefront of the most important social movement of the immediate years after independence in Algeria: the *autogestion*, or self-management movement. This movement was spurred by the fact that many larger estates, rather than falling into the hands of the land-grabbers, were seized by the peasants who organized collectively to bring in the harvest. This example was repeated in some urban factories where management committees were set up by the workers, but the larger phenomenon consisted of course in a wave of agrarian self-management.

Ben Bella sought to validate the claims of the agrarian collectives by creating what was called the BNBV, the *Bureau National des Biens Vacantes* (National Bureau of Vacant Property). This institution, in March 1963, launched the "March Decrees", wherein a new legal definition of vacant property was put forward, and established a system of worker self-management to be applied to all

[71] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 150-157, Grove Edition, 1963. Fanon had high stakes placed on the anti-colonial revolutions, and his political ideas would be superficially applied during the Ben Bella years.

seized property. The decrees wildly fueled Ben Bella's popularity as a Third World leader, and Khider, who collided with Ben Bella over internal political prerogatives, resigned from his post of Secretary-General of the Political Bureau. The FLN was totally controlled by the now head of state Ben Bella.

The example of self-management in Algeria increased the popularity of the country as an experiment of a "truly popular" revolution against capitalism. This experiment, however, was rooted less in a truly anti-capitalist fervor and more in the chaos and practical needs of the population amid a socially unstable period. After nationalization, in October 1963, of the remaining French farms, the self-managed economy counted for More than 2.000.000 hectares of land, and employed more than 200.000 workers, about one-eighth of the total rural population. The breadth of the movement could not mask on the other hand the fact that *autogestion* was a myth, as John Ruedy calls it, although an immensely powerful one.

The advisors of the self-management projects of the BNBV included some foreign Trotskyists, named "*pied rouges*" by the Algerians, who truly believed that the Algerian autogestion wave could usher in a truly democratic and decentralized model of socialism. Perhaps this was partly what Ben Bella had in mind during these years, besides the power struggles he participated in. But the confusing legislation on which they relied on, and the overlapping of responsibilities between different technicians and management committees, made extremely difficult the application of its directives among the rural workers. Soon authority would fall on the directors of the ONRA, the *Office National de la Reforme Agraire* (the National Office of the Agrarian Reform), an additional institution created after the March Decrees to provide for coordination between the different self-managed units, making these self-managed farms and factories unofficially state-owned ones, although still formally under workers' control.

Anyway, self-management turned to be economically counterproductive, especially after 1964. Besides self-management, in terms of economic policies the FLN was still at a standstill. The year 1963 was occupied by the drafting of the constitution of Algeria, and Ben Bella, together with the Political Bureau, overcame the resistances of liberals like Ferhat Abbas (who wanted the constitution to be drafted by the National Assembly) to draft a constitution suited for his political needs. After being ratified, the constitution of Algeria was officially adopted on the 8th of September 1963.

The 1963 constitution of Algeria declared Algeria to be a "socialist state", with Arabic as its official language and Islam its official religion. It enshrined *autogestion* as its major weapon against poverty and economic dependency and professed the need to continue the anti-imperialist struggle.

It made the FLN the sole governing body of the country, creating a one-party state. The constitution was approved with more than 96% of votes in the national referendum to ratify it, and a week after its adoption Ben Bella was elected President of Algeria, with Boumedienne as his Vice President along with Minister of Defense, and head of the now renamed ANP (*Armée Nationale Populaire*). The whole structure of power was now completely centered around himself, since of the six historical chief who managed to survive the war Khider was politically gone, Ait Ahmed was in Kabylia organizing resistance and Mohamed Boudiaf was under arrest in the Sahara for setting up an "unlawful party."

The new Ben Bella rule was fraught with opposition precisely for having monopolized the political leadership of the FLN. Different forms of unrest and guerrilla developed from personal and ethnic rivalries, often tinged with the notes of a dissident "socialism". A major example of this happened in Kabylia under the guide of Ait Ahmed and Mohand ou El-Hadj, who formed a new guerrilla group called FFS, "*Front des Forces Socialistes*" (Front of Socialist Forces), calling the Ben Bella rule a "fascist dictatorship" but at the same time, incoherently, trying to negotiate with these same "fascists" by proposing a collegial leadership of the six *historiques*, including of course Ben Bella.

The timing for this revolt was also unfortunate for Ait Ahmed and his acolytes. In October, a border dispute had broken out with Morocco on its central and southern border, and in response for the denial of a negotiation Morocco invaded the western Algerian border. Ben Bella called Ait Ahmed a "Moroccan agent" bent on destroying the progresses of the Algerian revolution, and in turn most of his followers deserted his camp to join the war to defend Algerian-Moroccan border. As a result, he called for a truce in his guerrilla.

In February 1964 he nonetheless resumed his attacks, with acts of sabotage and even an attempt to murder Ben Bella himself. Ait Ahmed's limited support was based in his Kabylia stronghold. Boumedienne, by fall 1964, had started to amass thousands of ANP forces in eastern Algeria and Kabylia to counter the rebellion. In his advance, several people were arrested (Abbas included) and finally Ait Ahmed was captured together with his political allies. The year after, in 1965, Ait Ahmed was tried and sentenced to death, but eventually Ben Bella commuted his sentence to life imprisonment and in 1966 he escaped to Europe in exile.

In describing the history of the years of Ben Bella, we have seen how the aftermath of the proclamation of the Algerian republic was characterized by political infighting, social crisis, and power struggles. After the nationalization act and the approval of the constitution, he at last convened another FLN congress in Algiers in April 1964, which in his intentions was aimed at transforming it into a "vanguard party" with a sharp ideology and a clear revolutionary

commitment. The internal situation of the party nevertheless differed from such lofty ideals. Ait Ahmed, Boudiaf, Abbas, Khider and other FLN leaders refused to participate. Belkacem Krim, however, did attend the congress and with him some of the wilaya leaders.

The outcome of the congress was a new political platform called the "Algiers charter." Similarly to the Tripoli platform, the charter reaffirmed the idea of an Algerian "socialism" and proclaimed it to be totally consistent with the Islamic cultural heritage. It opposed the revolution, in a somewhat Fanonian political turn, to the small native bourgeoisie and in the bureaucratic elements "infiltrating" the party. Consequently, the party had to be purged of all the "non-revolutionary" elements. Arabization had to be pushed forward into education. The system of self-management was to be completed with a further collectivization of agriculture, and a program of industrialization contingent on the creation of a national market. Even in the most favorable of economic and political conditions, it has been highlighted how such an economic program would have required means that, despite hydrocarbons, Algeria did not have: soon only forced industrialization would remain.

The delegates at the congress expressed reservations on many aspects, including Arabization. Boumedienne was lukewarm to the idea of strengthening the party, for he saw a stronger party as a competitor to the power of the army. Lastly, some questioned the need to purge the non-revolutionary elements: the FLN in 1964 had become a vast and heterogeneous body and was perhaps "incapable of purging itself"[72]. Or better, the FLN was manifesting itself as the party of a half-formed Algerian bourgeoisie who still struggled to accommodate with the remnants of the anti-colonial struggle.

So, the party did not become a vanguard, let alone a revolutionary body. As John Ruedy correctly underlined, the FLN in 1964 was a "study in heterogeneity": committed ideologues stood side by side with aspiring bureaucrats, military officers and wilaya leaders. The Algiers charter created a revolutionary myth that did not correspond to reality: more concretely, the party bureaucratized itself insofar as Algerians took the path of ascending the party hierarchy to climb the social ladder as an alternative to the state. The two had intermingled to form a unified body of political ossification.

By centralizing all political decisions around himself, Ben Bella had in some way deprived of substance the FLN. Economically speaking, all the FLN's plans were well behind schedule not just in application, but even in their textual formulation. Indeed, in 1965, with still dramatically high

[72] John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 205.

rates of unemployment (over 45%), poverty, and displacement, a comprehensive economic plan did not yet exist. The only faction inside his power network who still resisted his political pressure was the military wing of Boumedienne: while he received key government posts under the rule of Ben Bella, the latter likewise started to contain the influence of Boumedienne by appointing in October 1963 Tahar Zbiri, a wilaya chief, as Chief of the General Staff, or removing some of Boumedienne's close acquaintances from strategic posts, such as Ahmed Medeghiri from the Interior Ministry in 1964. The straw that broke the camel's back for Boumedienne was probably Ben Bella's attempt to foster the creation of popular militias, a proposal that obviously ran counter to the desiderata of the military.

Between May and June 1965, during the preparations for a second Bandung conference to be held in Algiers, Ben Bella undercut Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was his Foreign Minister at the time, in addition to being a political ally of Boumedienne, to personally negotiate with the participating countries. When Boumedienne attempted to defend Bouteflika, Ben Bella threatened the two with dismission. Rumors spread that he was seeking to rehabilitate Ait Ahmed to appoint him as Foreign Minister. As a reaction, Boumedienne's army moved to take over the country, and on the 19th of June 1965 he arrested Ben Bella in his residence under the lead of Tahar Zbiri, *sine effusione sanguinis*. During the years of Boumedienne's rule, Ben Bella would remain under arrest until 1979, when Chadli Bendjedid came to power and freed him from prison after fourteen years.

The Boumedienne Years: military rule and the fragility of industrialization

The coup of 19th June 1965 was in some way the product of a predictable evolution in the power hierarchy of Algeria. Some people from the left-wing of the new state bureaucracy had placed their hopes on the autogestion movement, even when the absence of a real content clashed vis a vis a now self-referential political elite. Even situationist writers like Mustapha Khayati seemed to think that Algerian self-management was in itself a revolutionary movement, only betrayed by the political usurpation of the FLN bureaucracy and the "underdevelopment of the theory" in Algeria[73].

By this time, despite the political confusion of the first three years of FLN rule, Algeria's path of development seemed to be established. On midday of the same day of the coup, Radio Algiers

[73] Mustapha Khayati, *Class Struggles in Algeria*, 1965.

broadcasted a proclamation from a new body called the "Council of the Revolution," explaining the people what happened. The broadcasters denounced what they called the "sordid calculations" of the Ben Bella government and promised to rein in the excesses of "personal power." The council, not yet fully formed when the coup took place, was mostly based on the Oujda clan of Boumedienne, and it included the General Staff and four wilaya leaders who were no longer in the army.

The Council also relied on guerrilla leaders. Since Boumedienne stressed the need for "collegiality" over personalism, he attempted to win their resistance by offering them government posts in non-strategic positions or non-governmental posts. Under military rule and with most opposition under control, the Algerian government of Boumedienne was finally able to address the economic problems of the country. This coincided with the rise of a stratum of technocrats who were previously outside of political infighting, and who determined the policies of Algeria until the end of the seventies.

The Council of the Revolution suspended the constitution of 1963 and abolished the Central Committee and the Political Bureau of the FLN. Political discourse had to be replaced with a more education-oriented process guided from above. Although Boumedienne was formally against bureaucratization, his vision clearly led to an overinflation of the bureaucracy. Local ranks and wilaya assemblies were to be elected from candidates chosen by the party. Technocrats, party bureaucrats, military leaders and government hacks increasingly isolated themselves from public opinion, taking decisions of decisive importance in an autocratic way.

A few days before the suppression of the rebellion of Tahar Zbiri in December 1967, a rebellion motivated by the delusion of the chief of the ANP at the post-coup policies for the ex-*maquisards*, Boumedienne declared 1968 to be the "year of the party", appointing Ahmed Kaid, a member of the Oujda Clan, as the responsible for its revitalization. But although he denounced the party as a place of "torpor" and immobilism, he arguably created the perfect conditions for the final petrification of the party structures. The ANP was to be purified of "regionalism" into a truly unified body but remained substantially divided among different groups of influence. In short, both the party and the army reflected a fragile situation where bureaucratic opportunism and factionalism were still hampering the development of cohesive institutions[74].

On June 19, 1975, after ten years since the coup, the government announced the need to draft a new Charter for the future course of Algeria. A year later, in June 1976, the official draft was put to

[74] Cfr. William H. Lewis, *The Cycle of Reciprocal Fear*, African Studies Bulletin, Dec. 1969, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Dec., 1969), pp. 323-337.

referendum and adopted by a large majority of voters, and the public, despite the overall militarization of life in the country, were invited to openly discuss its content over a period of months before its ratification.

Like its predecessors of the Tripoli program and the Algiers Charter, the new charter started with an overview of the history of Algeria and its present political path. Encompassing an analysis of the Algerian "socialism" and party structure, the charter anticipated a new constitution, on which the National Charter of 1976 was intended to be the conceptual framework. This constitution was in effect adopted some months later, in November 1976, and it reaffirmed Islam as the state religion, the Algerian version of state "socialism" as its economic choice and republicanism as the political principle of Algeria, under the guidance of the one-party rule of the FLN.

Notwithstanding a general degree of "readmission" of public political life in the new constitution, the executive branch was still granted the bulk of the authority and the charter served to further strengthen the power of Boumedienne, in the same fashion as the Algiers charter strengthened the power of Ben Bella in 1963. The only political participation that he could envision was that of political subordinates to an unaccountable state power.

In the years between 1962 and 1979, foreign relations followed the direction of Algeria's commitment to non-alignment. In this respect, both during the Ben Bella and Boumedienne eras, its leadership was respected by Third World countries as a beacon of anti-imperialism. Most of the attacks of the Algerian FLN politicos were reserved to the United States, but soon Franco-Algerian relationships, which in the Ben Bella period were predicated on the financial and technical assistance bestowed by the Evian agreements, came to an abrupt halt after Boumedienne took power and enforced a program of nationalizations. The shift in foreign affairs was accompanied by a revitalization of the question of foreign military bases and nuclear-testing facilities, still leased out to the French.

Against the retaliations of the French, Algeria drew closer to the Soviet Union, which since the end of the sixties provided vast quantities of military aid and heavy military equipment to the Algerian army. This did not mean a renunciation to non-alignment: promotion of conferences among non-aligned countries continued and the Algerian government advanced new economic policies, among the other proposals of facilitated lines of credit for developing countries and in the OPEC the defense of strict production quotas of oil.

In relation to its neighbors, and especially Morocco and Tunisia, hostilities became perceptible right after the war of independence. The border war with Morocco in 1963 and the failed recognition of a

border agreement with Tunisia and Libya showed how much Algeria benefitted, although in a conflicting manner, from the geography of colonialism. An apparent benefit, as the geography of colonialism is deceiving: the great benefit of the vast Saharan region and its natural resources would prove to be an economic trap for any Algerian government succeeding Boumedienne.

The policy of nationalizations in the period between 1966 and 1971 resulted in the state acquiring most of the strategic economic sectors of the country – mining, banking, manufacturing – but most importantly in the complete nationalization of gas extraction and of half of the oil sector. To accommodate with the needs of planning that such a vast statalized sector entailed, new companies were created to manage each branch. Naturally, the best financed, and most staffed state company was the hydrocarbon company, named SONATRACH (*Société Nationale de Transports et de Commercialization des Hydrocarbons)*, a big conglomerate that since then attracted most of the scientists and technicians of the country.

The strategy of development devised by Boumedienne's government rested on a series of four-year plans organized by Abdessalam Belaid, his minister of industry and energy, who sought to overcome the threat of economic dependency by rapid industrialization and import-substitution strategies, and at the same time prioritizing investment over consumption. Belaid's strategy, betting on the economic return of hydrocarbon extraction, favored industry and energy infrastructure over agriculture. This meant that in the original intentions of the economic planners, these selected key industries (the "*industries industrialisantes"* of the French economic advisors of Belaid), given their capital-intensive nature, would have furnished the rest of the economy with the return needed and the "capital absorption" for the other sectors, including agriculture.

In turn, heavy industry was to be preferred to light industry. This line of development, of deemphasizing agriculture and consumption to the benefit of heavy industry and oil, was also a sign of the neglect of the consequences of industrialization to the agricultural population in the hope that somehow everyone acceded to an equitable share of the economic pie spurred by the new industries, which was clearly not the case in the Algeria of the '70s.

The first two four-year plan (the one of 1970-1973 and the one of 1974-1977) drastically increased public spending. The two plans allotted investments according to the aforementioned sectoral imbalance: more investment in total industry and hydrocarbon capital, and less investment in agriculture, infrastructure and consumer goods, with various degrees of intensity. The effect of these investment plans, as a further complication, increased the sectoral imbalance, since agriculture and social infrastructure could not absorb the funds that they were granted under a planned

economy scheme, and consequently the rest of the unused funds were reabsorbed by industry and oil extraction[75].

Leaving aside the problematic aspects and the fragility of industrialization during these years, Algeria still managed to increase its GDP by a rate of 7.2% per year between 1967 and 1978, with even greater rates for industry growth, which doubled in size in ten years. Population increased drastically and even more the number of people living the urban areas, that almost doubled in 1977 compared to 1966. Concurrently, wage growth of most workers had been small compared to the volumes of industry growth, and the unemployment rate was still above 20% at the end of the '70s. A rising working class demanded better working conditions and by 1977 there were more than 500 strikes per year in Algeria.

Under the surface of bourgeoning economic growth hid deep systemic imbalances and fragilities. The *industries industrialisantes*, subject to pressures to meet targets and capital demands beyond their earnings capacity, increased dependency on foreign companies to form turnkey enterprises, a sub-effect of industrialization which determined in turn increased development costs and demand for foreign supplies, and consequently the government turned to international banks to meet its capital needs, thus substantially increasing its external debt over the '70s. Most Algerian industries operated under their capacity because of the lack of a domestic market for their commodities and insufficient inputs. The consumption demand generated by the increased urban population and industrialization could not be met, and a part of foreign currency went out of the country to pay for consumer goods.

But the real difficulty concerned the agricultural policy. Compared to other middle eastern and north African countries, both the output and the investment in agriculture had been very limited, both because of a deliberate economic policy and because of geographic and technological factors of land use[76]. Agriculture grew at rates of one-third of the GPD growth during the same period. The entire sector constantly underproduced, even the self-managed sector, which had in the same period became an entirely state-owned sector not unlike the Russian *Kolkhoz* of the Stalinist and Khrushchevian eras.

Most of the land, approximately 75%, remained in the private sector, and was lacking modern equipment and modern tillage methods. The demand originating from the urban population could

[75] See the tables of Lawless, *Algeria: The Contradictions of Rapid Industrialization*, in *North Africa: contemporary politics and economic development* (1984), p. 165, included in John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 218.
[76] Although the data is limited to 1971, the trend is still visible in the first six years of Boumedienne in the data provided by Elias H. Tuma. Cfr. Elias H. Tuma, *Food and Agriculture in the Arab Countries*, Middle East Journal, Autumn, 1974, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 381-395.

not be satisfied by the archaism of the agricultural sector, and therefore Algeria started becoming less self-sufficient in food production as industrialization moved forward, decreasing its rate of self-sufficiency by one-half in less than ten years (from 70% to 35% between 1969 to 1978).

Attempts at adjusting the situation were produced in the form of a "Charter of the Agrarian Revolution," in 1971. This reform sought to rehabilitate the private agricultural sector by encouraging "maximum commercialization" of agriculture and a greater wealth accumulation in rural areas. The charter also called for the building of "socialist villages" to slow down the depopulation of the rural hinterland. A series of land redistribution schemes between 1972 and 1975 were intended to eliminate the debt of the sharecroppers and distribute more than 1.300.000 hectares of land to more than 100.000 landless peasants. However, less land than expected passed onto the "reformed sector", since many middle landowners resisted the expropriations of the plan by subdividing land among their family members. In 1977, in a total of circa 7.500.000 hectares of cultivated land, 2.000.000 hectares of land were in the self-managed sector and more than 4.400.000 hectares were still private, with all the inefficiencies that it presupposed[77].

The Charter did create some production cooperatives and socialist villages, but very few showed any sign of profit or growth. The private sector alone sustained the agricultural growth rates during the '70s, and it was a sector showing – as we recognized – deep signs of crisis: production of hard wheat had actually declined between 1962 and 1978, while production of other grains barely grew during the same period. Meat and vegetable production, on the other hand, kept up with population growth but not with increasing demand.

On a societal and cultural dimension, the Boumedienne years were also ripe with contradictions. The identity of the Algerian nation after independence was often encompassed in the FLN motto "Islam is our religion, Arabic is our language, Algeria is our fatherland", but the role of minority languages (primarily the Berber of the Kabyle communities), the type of Islam preferred and especially the educational attitude towards the use of French (who served as the lingua franca in the national liberation war and for most of the *historiques*) were still unclear. The policy of Arabization, carried out both by Ben Bella and Boumedienne, similarly clashed with the interests of different social groups, most notably the Kabyles, who were comparatively much more francophone and cosmopolitan than their Arab counterparts; and, in the cultural environment of Algeria, the schism between the use of Arab and French evoked not the difference between two antagonizing modernist projects, but the ambivalence between the embrace of a traditional Islamic culture in the

[77] John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 223.

case of Arab, and the needs of a modern society, represented by French – a language that throughout the ‘60s and ‘70s remained the operating language of the bureaucracy and industry.

This contradiction was mirrored in the education policies of the first 16 years of independence. The number of children attending primary school rose three-fold in 1977 compared to the years immediately after independence, and secondary and tertiary enrollment role fifteen times the levels of 1962. Gendered as it was (women and girls were still denied the same access to education as men, in this case with a religious-ideological justification), these increases in education levels reflected the transition from a society centered around settler colonialism to one where education was strategic in the modernization needs of a new, sovereign nation.

The education system put in place after 1962 was a modified version of the French education system. Its Arabization, at the end of the ‘70s, was almost universally completed in primary but did not entirely touch the secondary level, where a two-track system was implemented: in the former track, Arab was used as the main language and French taught as a foreign language, while in the latter all scientific matters were taught in French and the rest in Arabic. This system proved to be a tool of social discrimination against the Arabized students, who were almost universally poorer and lower class than their francophone counterparts, and who did not accede to the same job opportunities as the latter, thus widening the inequalities already implicit at the beginning of the post-colonial era.

The role of women was likewise ambiguous. After liberation, despite the great number of women who fought in the ranks of the FLN, religious attitudes continued to obstruct their strides for social equality. The number of women in education and in the workforce notably increased, in spite of everything. A formal constitutional equality between the sexes was granted, but a new family code was necessary to guarantee this equality on a practical level. So, Algerian feminists in the Boumedienne period fought for a more liberal family code, but that never reached the floor of the National Assembly. The clash between the aspirations of many Algerian women and the patriarchal cultural background of the country would reach its apex in the 1980s, during the Bendjedid era.

The Bendjedid Years: social restructuring, neoliberal crisis, and the role of political Islam

On December the 27th 1978, Houari Boumedienne died, and on February the 7th 1979, Chadli Bendjedid, the Oran commander of the ANP and a member of the Council of the Revolution in 1965, was elected president. The two remaining candidates for presidency (Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui) lost and it was partly due to the vast support of the military that Bendjedid enjoyed as a known Boumedienne loyalist. Still, a reevaluation of the preceding period was already under way in the public consciousness, as well as in the FLN cadres. Immediately after being elected, he moved to assure control of the key institutions of the FLN, in a gradual process of "de-boumediennization" of them.

Bendjedid, allowed in this by the constitution of 1976, appointed as prime minister Mohamed Abdelghani, a business-like administrator, and with this move he insulated himself from the political infightings of the Algerian society even more than Boumedienne did before him. Superficially, he continued to invoke a rhetoric of political continuity with the Boumedienne era, but it was clear to everyone how Bendjedid was determined to question the ratio of the economic policies of the previous Algerian government. His critique was particularly directed at the big conglomerates (the SONATRACH, SONACOME, SNS, etc.), accusing them of monopolizing investment to the detriment of other sectors and squandering state funds in enterprises with low levels of productivity and excessive concentration of resources in a few towns of the Mediterranean coast.

In the context of his critique, the lack of attention to agriculture and to consumer production was brought to attention, in a situation where the demand for food imports was jeopardizing foreign currency reserves. The new four-year plan conceived by Bendjedid's government, called "Towards a Better Life", indicated a relaxation of the industrial austerity of the Boumedienne plans, with major cuts to hydrocarbon and industrial investment and increases in the consumer and finished products areas, in agriculture and in housing, healthcare and social infrastructure.

This process paralleled a widespread denunciation of the corruption and nepotism of state companies. From 1982 onwards, the 66 state corporations were broken down in 474 units, and the 19 state industries in 120 subdivisions, which were to be spread in a larger territory outside of the coastal cities of Oran, Algiers and Constantine. SONATRACH alone was divided into 13 smaller companies. There were, undoubtedly, political purposes in breaking up the big state conglomerates:

as big as they were, state companies had fueled the rise of power centers potentially hostile to the government, and the first political figure to fall out of grace after the election of Bendjedid was noticeably Belaid Abdessalam, the architect of the Boumedienne plans and founder of SONATRACH. Presiding over the new plans was Abdelhamid Brahimi, the head of the American office of SONATRACH and advocate for economic liberalization.

Complementing the new economic plans, the planners of Bendjedid adopted the pegging of the Algerian dinar to the dollar, a measure justified by the fact most oil exports were paid in dollars. The artificially high exchange of rate created new imbalances and systematically reduced the earnings from any other sector outside of oil, raising prices substantially in the country. Industrial manufacture became entirely uncompetitive, and tourism was thoroughly discouraged. The foreign currency reserves of the Algerians abroad almost never went to the national banks either.

One of the aims of the Bendjedid plans was to diversify Algeria's resource extraction program. To counterbalance the excessive dependence on oil for foreign exchange earnings, the development of gas extraction facilities was prioritized, together with the development of a gas pipeline running from Hassi R'Mel, near the city of Ghardaia, through Tunisia and the Mediterranean Sea.

Predictably, the economic results of the plan were disappointing. Investment lagged, jobs creation was slow but at the same time a service sector of bureaucrats and government-linked jobs ballooned between 1980 and 1984. GDP growth averaged 4.3%, a rate that in a context of high demographic increase nullified all gains. Housing construction projects, while initially projected to reach 500.000 lodgings, ended up by building only half of them. The increases in industrial production were mainly due to a fuller utilization of existing facilities, but during that time capital utilization of the industrial sector was a mere 68%, and agriculture and the other sectors fell even shorter in their performance[78].

Critics of Bendjedid argued that, given the hostile international environment and the underdeveloped nature of the industrial sector, industrial take-off could not be reasonably expected in the ten years of Boumedienne, and dismantling the conglomerates was premature and threw the entire economy into confusion. This criticism is reasonable from a "boumediennist" point of view but abstract from a historical perspective: it fails to recognize how the inherent problems of a command economy in the international trends of the seventies and eighties played out in increasing these fragilities further. Algeria could hardly escape the same fate either, no matter for how long the

[78] Ibid., p. 237.

policy of state capitalism continued, and this can be proven both theoretically and in the economic crisis that plagued the country in the second half of the 1980's[79].

In foreign relations, some notable points of the Bendjedid era were the negotiations for the freeing of the American hostages during the Teheran crisis of 1980 and 1981, the disputes on the Western Sahara with Morocco and the general "*recentrage*", as it was called, of the diplomacy of a state seen by many as a Soviet proxy in the Maghreb, non-aligned only in nominal terms. Relations warmed with France too: in 1983, Chadli Bendjedid was the first Algerian president to make a state visit to the hexagon.

The issue of the disputes with Algeria's neighbors over their border claims continued to prompt hostilities and geopolitical intrigue. Bendjedid, between 1983 and 1984, tried to brandish the question of the Western Sahara to improve the country's relationship with the United States: in 1984, when Morocco formed a political alliance with Libya, the "Arab-African Union", the US viewed this move with disappointment, since Libya under Muhammar Qaddafi was thought to be a sponsor of international terrorism, and so the Algerian government attempted to leverage its regional influence by being invited at the White House in April 1985 to separately deal with the American government.

The situation of the Moroccan-Libyan union had its roots in the Algerian initiative to ratify a pan-maghrib treaty, the "*traité de fraternité et de concorde"* in March 1983, as a tool to resolve Algeria's territorial disputes and to increase cooperation with its neighbors. Morocco did not join the treaty, and this caused Libya to throw its support to Morocco; both countries decided to form a political alliance in the year after. Even though the union would be disbanded two years later, the question of the Western Sahara persisted until the end of the '80s, when the Algerian economic situation deteriorated, and this compelled Bendjedid to resume negotiations and restore diplomatic relations with Morocco. Finally, in February 1989, Algeria joined the so-called *Arab Maghrib Union* with Morocco and its other regional neighbors, and from then Morocco stopped recriminating on its eastern border for the time being.

In the previous chapter about the Boumedienne years, we already introduced an overview of the social problems that the unequal pace of Algerian development produced. All these problems literally exploded during the Bendjedid years: the unresolved question of Arabization would be the

[79] We have already mentioned Samir Amin in his critique of import-substitution strategies. A better critique from this essay's perspective would be that the rate of exploitation introduced by the plans of Belaid Abdessalam was out proportion, from a purely capitalist point of view, both with the productivity increases but most importantly with the creation of an enlarged cycle of capital reproduction, something that could not be produced with a resource-based economy.

first one to burst. University students in Algiers started protesting the privileges granted to their francophone peers, and soon Islamist groups capitalized on the growing discontent. The government, thus, responded to the requests by deciding to Arabize the justice system "with a stroke of pen", thereby removing the barriers to job opportunities for law graduates in the country's Arabized education sector. However, the immediate effects of this measure triggered a revolt in Kabylia: a strike at the university of Tizi Ouzou in 1980 soon spread to secondary and middle school students, and it paralyzed the region with a general strike.

Concessions to Kabyle protesters would not stop the government in its commitment to Arabization, and this partly expressed a crucial cultural turn during the Bendjedid years: to overcome the leftist and "boumediennist" resistance to social restructuring, his government included several Arabist advisors with stark politically conservative viewpoints and whose agenda was cultural rather than economic. Coincidentally, Kabyles formed the backbone of most of the Algerian leftist organizations; this conservative attitude was also expressed in ethnic terms, as a clash between Arabs against "Berberists."

The rise of political Islam in Algeria gave the incentive to this cultural turning point. The ideology of political Islam, rooted both in the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the writings of Sayyd Qutb, has rose due to the outcome of the failed promises of the Arab nationalist parties: many young Algerians, growing up in the post-colonial era, had their opportunities restrained and were relegated to the margins of society, despite the triumphant ideologies of their anti-colonialist fathers who now turned into the administrators and the beneficiaries of the new systems of power. The mosques became the only places where dissent was allowed to be expressed, in the absence of any semblance of public participation, and expressed in religious terms, nonetheless. It is well known that even secular leaders like Sadat or Bourgiba of Egypt and Tunisia, in their attempt to rein in the "Marxist" left, encouraged a certain degree of freedom for the Islamists during the '70s and '80s.

The role of political Islam was to some extent the ideological counterpart of the disintegration of the nation-state in the middle east and North Africa: it accompanied its demise and its restructuration along fragmented, transnational lines (political Islam of Sunni faith, in particular, with its emphasis on a transnational "Umma", is the perfect counterpart to a sovereign state that has ceased to be sovereign, but has not been replaced by a post-capitalist society). Algeria, under pressure from international markets and its own economic contradictions, was gradually descending into social chaos.

The new protagonists of the Islamic movement in Algeria, Shaykh Abdelatif Sultani, Ahmed Sahnoun and Abassi Madani, went on organizing protests and informal mosques outside of government's control. During 1982, groups of Islamist students began demanding the abolition of the National Charter, the establishment of a fully Islamic government, the prohibition of secondary and higher education for females and so on. Their methods involved several violent clashes with the other students at the nation's universities: when in November 1982 a group of Islamists killed a leftist student at the Algiers university campus, the government cracked down, arresting hundreds of them. Hundreds of thousands rallied against the arrests, and in the protest Sultani, Sahnoun and Madani were arrested in their turn.

Bendjedid tried conciliation in place of outright political clash. Some Islamic leaders were put on parole and most repressive measures relaxed. The Islamist movement, meanwhile, gained more popularity: in 1984, when Abdelatif Sultani died, some of his fellow militants claimed that up to 400.000 people participated to his funeral. On another fringe of the Algerian political Islam, a new guerrilla movement, the "bouyalists" (from its leader Mustapha Bouyali, an ex-wilaya four soldier who became progressively disillusioned with the corruption inside the FLN) started organizing a new *maquis* in the countryside.

The bouyalist guerrilla did not last long: between 1985 and 1987 a greater part of its members was tracked down, killed and their activity suppressed, including Bouyali himself, in 1987. Some of the bouyalists, despite the repression, would reappear in the 1990s and during the height of the civil war.

The process of Islamization continued to affect the government of Bendjedid. In the long struggle for a new family code, which was shown to be the centerpiece of the revendications of the Algerian feminist movement, the drafting of a family code in 1981 proved to be entirely frustrating: no women were appointed in the drafting commission, and the text relegated women to a status of permanent inferiority. When in December the bill reached the parliament, a massive protest against the code forced the government to back down.

In 1984, nevertheless, higher pressure of Islamic fundamentalist led the Algerian government to enact an even more patriarchal bill: most of the social prerogatives that women had before were now subjected to the approval of her male "guardian", in accordance with a conservative interpretation of Islam. In the "enriched" 1986 version of the national charter, all guarantees of gender equality included in 1963 and 1976 were abolished, and a greater stress to religious education implemented. Social disintegration and patriarchal resurgence go hand in hand.

The second economic plan of 1985-1989, named “work and discipline to guarantee the future”, emphasized a new call for belt tightening and efficiency. The import bill for food and the debt service ratio kept growing. The price of oil began to decline around 1984 and 1985, and in the next years it plummeted, together with the value of the dollar, to whom the Algerian dinar was pegged. The need to service higher debt costs and to sustain lower export revenues of oil gave way to a campaign of import slashing and austerity. Notwithstanding these measures, foreign debt kept rising and a big balance of payments gap persisted. Algeria avoided rescheduling its debt, but in the meantime its economy was in recession and inflation spiraled to double digit rates. Due to import restrictions, most basic commodities were in extreme short supply.

Then came the IMF. In 1987, under the IMF advise, Algeria started dismantling its state capitalist sector, beginning with the abolition of the Ministry of Planning, replaced by a more anodyne “National Planning Council” that took care of the “general economic policy”. The socialist sector in agriculture was replaced by two types of privately-owned arrangements, the *exploitations agricoles individuelles* and the *explotations agricoles collectives*. The state disengaged completely from agricultural production. State corporations were transformed into joint stock companies under a board of directors, and state shares were subdivided into nine funds. In April 1990, all state monopoly on credit ceased and foreign and domestic private investment was fully recognized in the banking and financial institutions, and in August 1990 the same happened with the state monopoly on import-export trade.

At the same time, the second half of the 1980s saw social unrest spreading. In 1986, riots erupted in all of the major cities, and especially in Setif and Constantine, where high school students protested the new religious and political policies and faced repressions of great brutality. But the year 1988 marked a watershed in social turmoil: amid recession, inflation, massive lay-offs, rampant unemployment and scarcity of foodstuff, industrial strikes escalated like wildfire in the Algerois region. The ascent of new class of profiteers and speculators from the liberalizations of the ‘80s created new anxieties in a situation of enforced collective austerity. On October 5, 1988, the revolt exploded in Algiers, and swiftly moved to the other cities of Algeria: Oran, Blida, Annaba, Mostaganem.

The composition of the revolt came to involve leftist student organizations, unionists, PAGS members (*Parti de l'Avant-Garde Socialiste*, un unofficial leftist organization founded in 1966) and large numbers of fundamentalists and Islamists. On the next day, the government declared a state of siege, and order was restored with hundreds of deaths and thousands of protesters tortured under

custody. “Black October”, as it was called by the Algerian public, stained the reputation of the army like no episode before.

On the 10th of October, Chadli Bendjedid responded to the anger with a new set of political reforms and fired the much-hated head of the military security force, Medjoub Lakhal-Ayat. The next month, on November the 3rd, voters approved a constitutional amendment making the prime minister responsible for the National Assembly. In turn, he asked Kasdi Merbah, who served as the security chief for Boumedienne, to be appointed as the prime minister. Regardless of political opposition, his program of reforms was approved in December and Bendjedid came away with a new mandate to implement it, the third in his presidency.

This new program of political reforms ultimately materialized in a new constitution, in February 1989. The new constitution, meant to represent a shift towards pluralism in public life, changed the definition of Algeria from a “socialist state” to just the democratic and popular republic of Algeria. The role of the army was severely curtailed, together with its participation in the political bodies. Most political parties were liberalized, and citizens could now be allowed to form “associations of political character.” Yet economic conditions continued to worsen and Bendjedid fired Kasdi Merbah for mismanagement and replaced him with Mouloud Hamrouche, the up-to-then Secretary General of the Presidency.

Greater political relaxation brought about a flourishing of new and old political parties: even Hocine Ait Ahmed, the old FLN general, returned from exile to reconstitute his *Front des Forces Socialistes*. Secular parties were a mixture of new regionalized movements, centered around Berber rights, such as the RCD (*Rassemblement Pour la Culture et la Démocratie*) and old forces who never completely disappeared under the shadow of the one-party rule, like the PAGS. But the most important of the new political formations, rather than a secular party, was the *Front Islamique du Salut*, or FIS, an Islamist coalition composed of a mixture of Salafi extremists and the more moderate *Djazarists* of francophone education.

Its founder was Abassi Madani, one of the leaders of the Islamist movement in Algeria in the previous years, who within the FIS became close to the positions of Ali Benhadj, the imam of the Al-Sunna of Bab-El-Oued. In an unexpected movement, Bendjedid decided to recognize the FIS in September 1989, although this recognition violated parts of the constitutional requirements, since the FIS was a party based exclusively on religion.

The amalgamation of political forces emerging from the political liberalization of 1989 asked for new elections. Bendjedid refused to authorize new early elections, but instead scheduled a round of

local and provincial elections for June 1990. The new electoral system had to be proportional. To counter a decision that was thought to be rigged against their interest, most secular parties boycotted the upcoming elections, including Ait Ahmed's FFS. When elections were held, only 65% of voters turned out to the polls, and the FIS won the absolute majority of the votes, and the majority of wilaya administrations and municipal governments – with the notable exception of Kabylia.

With regional government posts in their hands, and religious measures implemented locally, the propaganda machine of the FIS worked at full pace: this was glaring especially in the context of the Iraqi war of 1991, which became a rallying issue for the FIS forces in 1991. The FLN, under leadership of prime minister Mouloud Hamrouche, perceiving the threat that the FIS victory signified to its rule, promulgated a new law establishing parliamentary elections by districts regardless of population. The law also forbade campaigning in mosques and schools and men casting their votes for their wives, all practices adopted by the FIS to lure voters and increment their electoral strength.

Predictably, the FIS protested the new law. In March 1991, the FIS called for a general strike, and what came about resembled less a regular strike and more a full-on assault to state power, anticipating the situation that would be unleashed a year later. The military, while deprived of former power, still had stakes in the situation, and that was the case of General Khaled Nezzar, the minister of defense of Bendjedid from July 1990. To command ground forces, Nezzar appointed his colleague, Mohamed Lamari. Nezzar, challenging the president in his actions towards the FIS, prompted him to declare a state of siege on June 4, 1991, and the next day Prime Minister Hamrouche resigned.

Chadli replaced Hamrouche with Ahmed Ghozali, another former SONATRACH administrator, but retained Nezzar as minister of defense, and successively nominated Larby Belkheir minister of the interior. Ghozali changed the electoral law for the upcoming legislative elections and postponed them from June 27 to the end of the year, promising "clean and free" elections. Already before the end of June, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj were demanding the establishment of an Islamic state and threatened jihad in retaliation for not doing so. As a reaction, the army arrested other hundreds of FIS militants, including Madani and Benhadj. The FIS "consultative council" was handed to a more moderate djazarist *ad interim* after the arrests, Abdelkader Hachani, and street confrontation between the FIS and the army declined momentarily, at least until fall.

The date for the first rounds of new elections was December 26, 1991, with a proportional system. Abdelkader Hachani, despite Madani and Benhadj still in jail, on the 14th announced the FIS would participate in the elections. The results, unsurprisingly, gave the majority votes to the FIS, and an

absolute majority in more than one-third of electoral districts. The second round of elections, scheduled for January 16, 1992, would have certainly given another victory to the FIS. Bendjedid, sensing the danger that the FIS victory would have meant for the FLN, at the end of January held a secret meeting together with Ghozali, Nezzar and Benkheir.

The military urged Chadli Bendjedid to resign. On the 11th of January, in a televised speech, Bendjedid announced his official resignation, and claimed that the parliament had been dissolved since January the 4th. The next day, the military leaders who forced Bendjedid's resignation declared that state power had been devolved to a new organ, the HCS (*Haute Comité de Securité*), with Ghozali, Nezzar and Belkheir as its principal members. On the 13th, the HCS annulled the results of the December 26 elections and created a new state committee to preside over a provisional government. The Bendjedid era ended with a military coup and the beginning of a new, bloody decade: a decade of civil war.

The Algerian Civil War, 1992-2002: state disintegration, Islamic revolt and persisting social wounds

Departing from the various routes that our critical history has taken, we took note of the elements that shaped the formation and unraveling of the Algerian nation: a pre-capitalist, pre-colonial era coming to an abrupt end through the emergence of European commercial power, debt and colonial conquest; a history of colonialism that lasted for more than 130 years, and was based on the fragmentation and the destruction of the old community ties of the Algerian population, bringing forth a mass of destitute colonized subjects in a settler colonial environment; a war of liberation, conducted under hardship and violence, that managed to finally unite the Algerians under a national project but could not resolve the internal contradictions of the nation itself, politically, ethnically and socially; and a post-independence period with different phases of development, from collective self-management projects, to vertical industrialization operated through soviet-like production plans to a period of crisis where the state economy apparatus was dismantled and liberalization was synonymous with deep economic problems.

The most critical period in the history of post-independence Algeria is arguably the 1992-2002 civil war that pitted a homegrown Islamic guerrilla movement against the state. The conflict, although expressed ideologically as a war between secularist forces and Islamic militias, was rooted in the

economic crisis and it unfolded on the backdrop of the old, contentious "resource curse" of a country that over time has been reduced to a resource exportation economy: the curse of oil and gas.

A few months before the military coup of the 13th of January 1992, in November of the previous year, the Algerian government had approved a law that allowed foreign investors and oil companies to participate, up to 49%, to the exploitation of existing reserves, as well as of new ones such as the reserve near Hassi Messaoud. This was intended to recover a part of the missing earnings, up to 40 billion dinars, for the abandonment of the gas projects of the Bendjedid government. After the coup, the economic crisis only became worse, and concessions more demanding. But before analyzing the specific aspects of that crisis, we shall return to the political trajectory that sparked the civil war.

Immediately after Benjdedid's resignation, the HCE (*Haute Conseil d'Etat*, high state council) outlawed the FIS and dismantled its centers. The HCE was composed of some well-known figures: Khaled Nezzar, the army general and minister of defense for Bendjedid; Ali Kafi, head of the national association of the "old Mujaheddins", Ali Haroun, minister of human rights when Ahmed Ghozali became prime minister and finally Mohamed Boudiaf, the old FLN fighter who left the country after 1964 and returned from Morocco after the military seized power in 1992.

Arrests of FIS militants began right after the proclamation of the military government. Amid massive protests, the army arrested Abdelkader Hachani and other FIS leaders between the 22nd and the 28th of January. On February 9, the government declared a new stage of siege. The next day, Islamist forces claimed an attack against six police officers, who died in the attack. It was probably the starting point for the subsequent insurgency.

Over the next month, the FIS was officially dissolved. The local councils controlled by the FIS were replaced with government-appointed delegations. Abassi Madani was condemned in July to twelve years of prison. Meanwhile, Boudiaf assumed the political role of the ideological unifier, assuming a crucial role in the nomination of a National Consultative Council, a body designed to replace the parliament dissolved after the coup. On the other hand, Boudiaf sought to rein in the dysfunctional fragmentation of the country's party system between 1989 and 1991 by founding yet another party, the RPN (*Rassemblement Patriotique National*), as a united political force of all secular parties – a political move that made clear his opposition not just towards the FIS, but also towards the FLN and the state corruption of its one-party rule.

On June 29, 1992, Boudiaf was giving a speech in Annaba when he was shot dead by Boumarafi Lembarek, a lieutenant of the Algerian counterintelligence service. During the trials that ensued, Lembarek confessed that the decision to kill Boudiaf came from his "religious conviction": even

though it was initially hypothesized that the killing of Boudiaf could not be an isolated accident, the Lembarek trial revealed the ambiguity of the perpetrator; he was acting in isolation, but at the same time speaking on behalf of "those whose path to power had been cut off", i.e., the Islamists of the now dissolved FIS. Boudiaf, the old *historique* and leader of the FLN, was acclaimed by many Algerians as the "men of hope" in a difficult situation, and his death caused a massive popular outrage.

The death of Mohamed Boudiaf determined a reshuffling of the composition of the HCE, with Redha Malek, a diplomat during the Evian negotiations, filling the post of Boudiaf, and Ali Kafi becoming the new president. Belaid Abdessalam, the famous minister of industry of Boumedienne, accepted the role of prime minister, ousting Ahmed Ghozali. Abdessalam chose not to comply with IMF pressures for "structural adjustment" and chose instead to denounce the reforms of Bendjedid during the previous years. On the other side of the conflict, Islamist violence was spiraling out of control.

The first targets of the new Islamic insurgency, were, unsurprisingly, police officers and soldiers. A bomb exploded at the Algiers airport on August the 26th. As months went by, the number of deaths brought forth by the insurgency were estimated between 3000 and 6000 in November. Consequently, curfews were imposed by the army in several wilayas and later extended to the other regions; all the while the military government established special tribunals to deal with anyone accused of terrorist acts – often just for the suspicion of criticizing the government. Two tendencies were developing inside the military in relation to the insurgency: the "eradicators" and the "conciliators", with the seconds trying to mediate the repressive tendencies of the former.

The new civil war repeated, to some extent, some of the schemes of the FLN liberation war of the 1950's – but only as a reactionary tragedy. In 1993 the Islamist forces were aiming more and more to noncombatant civilians; in October, three French consular officers were kidnapped and released with a note warning all foreigners to get out of the country. Security forces, whose units included at this point special units trained in guerrilla warfare, not unlike the French paratroopers of the 1950's, counterattacked, often with increasing resort to torture.

As we noticed in the previous chapter, small pockets of guerrilla groups inspired by political Islam started appearing in Algeria already by the second half of the '80s, in the form of "bouyalist" militias and, after the military crackdown against the bouyalists in 1987, the so-called "Afghans" (a name earned for having received their guerrilla training alongside the Afghani mujaheddins, in a perfect example of the transnational nature of fundamentalist Sunni Islam), headed by the former bouyalist Mansouri Meliani. Another armed group that emerged before 1992 was the MIA

(*Mouvement Islamique Armée*) of Abdelkader Chebouti, nicknamed the "lion of the mountains", which was tied to the FIS and geographically centered in the Atlas Mountains near Blida. A split over political matters between Chebouti and Said Makhloufi led to the creation of a new splinter group by the latter, the MEI, *Mouvement pour l'Etat Islamique*, that was active especially between the cities of Boumerdes and Jijel. Both movements were severely impaired by the army in the years after 1993, and a part of their members merged to other guerrilla groups, the biggest one among them being the GIA (*Groupe Islamique Armée*).

The GIA leadership, composed of an agglomeration of different units led by different "emirs," condemned any calls for dialogue coming from the djazarists of the outlawed FIS. Significantly, their slogan was "no dialogue, no truce, no reconciliation." It was perhaps the most radically Islamist of all the Islamist guerrilla groups of the civil war. Another armed group to emerge, in May 1994, was the AIS (*Armée Islamique du Salut*), centered around the west of Algeria: since it attracted several FIS loyalists, it proclaimed itself as the "armed wing of the FIS", in total opposition to the intransigence of the GIA against the FIS. As years went by, targets switched from state and the military to purely civilian assassinations. For the GIA militiamen, through a series of fatwas, anyone who collaborated with the "apostate" regime, or participated in its education system, its institutions etc., was a target for killings. Adopting outright mafioso methods, communes and villages were forced to pay fees to the insurgents.

In a reversed resurgence of the specters of the Philippeville massacre or the Battle of Algiers, gruesome episodes of violence became greater as the years progressed. Different groups of Islamists in turn engaged in internecine wars, sparked by personal or ideological rivalry. On the side of the state, the tactics of the army, the police forces and gendarmerie of Algeria amounted to brutal repression of any opposition: thousands of people died and were tortured under custody under the cloak of fighting the Islamist insurgence. It was really a "dirty war", like the one waged by the French army against the FLN: widespread evidence shows that, at the height of the civil war, soldiers dressed as civilians carried out village massacres among civilians as a diversion to blame them on the Islamists.

In the international field, the first country to support the military junta was – predictably - France: fearing an influx of refugees or the impact that an Islamic victory could produce on its own Muslim population, the ex-colonizer country from 1992 onwards started sending arms supplies and defense infrastructure to the Algerian army. Concurrently, this also brought the influx of GIA terrorism on French soil in 1995, with attacks on public transportation facilities in Paris and near Lyon, in July 1995.

The military sought to maintain its internal unity in the face of the violence and condemnation of their response to terrorism. Liamine Zeroual, a man who resigned from the army in 1989 to protest Bendjedid's recognition of the FIS, replaced Khaled Nezzar as minister of defense. Meanwhile, Belaid Abdessalam, having failed at achieving political results, was forced to step down and Redha Malek, a longtime ambassador for the Algerian government, substituted him. Malek, considered by some to be a man of the "Party of France", was convinced that accepting the conditions of the IMF was necessary. He would, nevertheless, govern for less than a year, up until 11th of April 1994 - a few days after having accepted another devaluation of the dinar and the unpopular austerity measures recommended by the IMF. Liamine Zeroual, in the meantime, had become the new president.

Zeroual was widely seen as a conciliator. Yet, he stood between the conflicting interests of the "eradicators" and the "conciliators" in his cabinet. Many of those inside the government were army generals: Mohamed Lamari, Tawfik Mediene, Mohamed Betchine, Benabbes Gheziel, and their viewpoint equally divided between the two camps. For this reason, the secret negotiations between Zeroual and the FIS were slow to make progress, but in the middle of the stalemate the representatives of seven Algerian political parties agreed to meet in the Sant'Egidio community, in Rome, to draft a new political platform. The parties of Sant'Egidio included the FIS, the FFS, the FLN, Ben Bella's movement for democracy, the Trotskyist Workers' Party, Nahda and Contemporary Muslim Algeria: the Sant'Egidio platform was thus signed on January 13th, 1995.

This platform called for a new national conference, which would bring forth a short-term transitional authority and convene new elections under the rules of the 1989 constitution. It required the army to withdraw from all fields of politics. The platform included Islam as an important part of Algerian identity, together with the Arabic and Amazigh languages. It demanded the release of all political prisoners, and the end of torture and reprisals against Algeria's citizens.

The Sant'Egidio platform was rejected by Zeroual, on the ground that its program constituted an undue interference in Algeria's internal affairs. This stance, seemingly ideological, had its motivation in the structures of his government: the military hardliners would have never accepted a recognition of the excesses of violence they carried out against civilians.

In April 1995, the Zeroual government, represented by the chief of the military security Mohamed Betchine, decided to resume negotiations with the leader of the FIS Abassi Madani; to make things easier, Madani was transferred to house arrest. This prompted some FIS leaders to gather in June and agree to issue a call to stop the violence. In response, the GIA emir Djamel Zitouni threatened

with physical elimination anyone of the FIS leaders who negotiated with the government, including Madani and Ali Benhadj.

This sudden pressure for a dialogue with the FIS stemmed from the incoming presidential elections, scheduled to take place at the end of 1995. In such a situation, presidential elections before parliamentary elections would have meant a strengthening of the military executive: the Sant'Egidio platform leaders opposed on this ground the participation to these elections. Regardless of opposition, presidential elections were held in November 1995, and the candidates who accepted to run for them, besides Zeroual, were Said Saadi's RCD, the HAMAS party of Mahfoud Nahnah, and the liberal Islamic PRA of Noureddine Boukhrouh. Amid boycott and criticism, Zeroual's list won with more than 64% of votes, and minor percentages were allotted to the remaining parties.

Shortly after the inauguration of his new government, Zeroual decided to appoint a rather anonymous Kabyle called Ahmed Ouyahia to serve as prime minister, the remaining ministers being mostly those of his previous cabinet. In January 1996, violence resumed and expanded further; Islamist forces started carrying on attacks on trains, buses, individual civilians, women without scarves, journalists, civil servants, artists, and everyone they deemed worthy of being a target. Amid a resurgence of violence, the government announced new parliamentary elections for 1997, although with modified rules to remedy for the shortcomings of 1990 and 1991. This required a new constitution: the new constitutional text would be in effect drafted between the spring and the summer of 1996.

The constitution, ratified in November 1996, strengthened the executive branch, and formed, for the first time in the history of Algeria, a bicameral legislature, with a lower house and an upper house - the APN and the Council of the Nation, respectively. The text reinstated most political guarantees, but it explicitly forbade the foundation of parties "hostile to the basic liberty of the nation" or on purely religious, linguistic, or ethnic basis. The next year was also the bloodiest year of the entire civil war, but that did not stop Zeroual to press for the need of parliamentary elections, and a new electoral law was likewise approved.

Before the new electoral law could pass, some of those who supported the government – together with Ahmed Ouyahia, the prime minister - founded the RND, (*Rassemblement Nationale Democratique*), a secular, pro-government party. When election came, on June 5, 1997, the RND gathered a relative majority of votes. It was significative, after much opposition, that in the elections of 1997 all Sant'Egidio parties participated as well. Ouyahia was again elected prime minister, creating a cabinet with posts divided between the FLN, the RND and the MSP (the ex-HAMAS).

In conjunction with the electoral process, secret negotiations had begun with the AIS, conducted by General Boughaba, the commander of the military district of Constantine. Boughaba tried to convince the AIS, represented by Mezrag Madani, that a new clemency law enacted by Zeroual would benefit them. To accommodate with the negotiations, several hardliners were dismissed from the government, like Benabbes Gheziel in July 1997. The same month Abdelkader Hachani, the FIS leader, was freed from preventive detention, where he was held since 1992, and Abassi Madani was released from prison. On August the 20th, 1997, Mohamed Lamari (previously an eradicator) and Mezrag Madani signed a secret agreement for the amnesty of all guerrilla groups that would call for a truce. Indeed, Mezrag and the AIS declared a unilateral cease-fire the next month.

The completion of the 1997 parliamentary elections meant, within the new constitutional framework, the appointment of new wilaya councils for the Council of the Nation; on the 23rd of October, local elections were held and the RND won even more seats. In this political turmoil, many Algerians saw the process of the restoration of political pluralism as a mere top-down process instigated from the parties in power: democracy was an empty shell covering the restructuration of the state, while blood was flowing in the streets of Algeria.

The evidence of the excesses of violence employed by the army in Algeria would spark, in 1997 and 1998, calls for international investigations. A UN mission was allowed to enter the country in 1998, under the supervision of Zeroual; either way, this mission was mostly seen as ineffective. Zeroual, on September 11, 1998, publicly announced that other presidential elections would be convened for 1999, and that he would not run as a candidate. His resignation could be explained due to the pressure of the military hardliners, who were resentful for the role of the RND and of the civilian forces in the negotiation process with the AIS, and they also resented the fact that Ouyahia and Betchine had diverted funds from the army to fuel their entourage; Ouyahia and Betchine, under these circumstances, resigned, the first in October 18 and the second on December 14, 1998. Smail Hamdani, an ambassador during the Ben Bella years, became prime minister instead of Ouyahia, and led the country to the incoming elections of the next year.

So far, an overview of the political process spanning the central phase of the Algerian civil war - the period between 1992 and 1999 – has been outlined. To return to the beginning of the chapter, we have stated that the Algerian conflict had its root in the economic and cultural disarray suffered by the country since the end of the 1980s: the cumulative pressure spurred by the planned industrialization during the ‘70s, the decline in agricultural production, the increasing need to import consumer goods into the nation and the unresolved social tensions exploded when prices of crude oil started falling. The program of economic liberalization launched by Chadli Bendjedid with

his first two plans continued in its negative aspects (and under IMF pressure) in the '90s: lay-offs, termination of subsidies, cuts to welfare provisions and privatizations were the reality of the decade, along with the violence of a war.

The explosive growth of the population after independence and rampant inflation fueled the above-mentioned contradictions; in 1989, the IMF offered a package of financial aid to Bendjedid conditioned on several reforms and on the devaluation of the dinar. The dinar was effectively devaluated by one-third between 1989 and 1991, but that did not help to stimulate the growth of other exports outside of hydrocarbons: the economy was locked into a vicious circle of rising import costs, declining industry, high inflation, and lowered standards of living for a mass of growing unemployed.

The cost of foreign debt became unsustainable, and by 1993 the country edged close to bankruptcy. The successor of Redha Malek, Mokdad Siti, agreed on June 1994 to a debt restructuring with the Paris Club, and in the next year, in March 1995, more international aid arrived in the state coffers, premised on a "stabilization program" to curb inflation and to privatize the remaining public companies. As expected, instead of stimulating production or stabilizing the economy, the privatization process (and especially the elimination of the import-export monopoly) turned importation of goods into a profitable semi-legal business, with the so-called "*trabendo"* sector flourishing in the cracks of the legal economy. Algeria would not recover economically until the early '00s, largely due to a rise in oil prices and a fall of the cost of debt servicing, but the recovery would be uneven and leave the social wounds of the civil war unhealed.

Real income in Algeria had fallen by 35% in 2001 compared to its 1993 levels. Unemployment was officially estimated at 29% in 1998, though many economic observers put these numbers at higher percentages, and unemployment for younger Algerians was twice as high[80]. Education, healthcare, and housing spending, under the IMF plans, were reduced to a bare minimum and the living conditions of many Algerians became desperate. When the 1999 elections took place in April 27, and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the former foreign affairs minister of Boumedienne, overwhelmingly won, he embarked on a program of "national reconciliation" and economic recovery. His plans for a reconciliation included the beginning of consultation with Islamists, and the enactment of "Law of Civil Concord", which amounted to political amnesty for prisoners involved in acts of terrorism, as long as they officially declared to cease their hostilities.

[80] The statistics are those of John Ruedy, Cfr. John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, p. 274.

The policy did bring some political relief: by January 2000, more than 5000 Islamist militants had renounced to continue their actions and about 5000 prisoners were released from prison. The death of Abdelkader Hachani in November, however, and the language of the Law, unbalanced towards a condemnation of the Islamist insurgents, ignited other tensions. Bouteflika's policy of reconciliation had left behind, among the others, the mothers of the "disappeared" both by the armed group and the state army: the law offered them no compensation. The families who suffered because of terrorism protested the law for its amnesties of known murderers. Hundreds of GIA militants, besides those who surrendered, continued to fight in a new group called GSPC (*Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat*), and elements of the military at odds with the Law doubled on their effort to repress the guerrilla. This caused the death toll of the year 2000 to rise compared to 1999, only to then decline in the year after, due to progressive distension.

In February 2000, Bouteflika personally undertook the reshuffling of the army cadres, under the disapproval of some of the army's eradicators. At the end of 2000 he chose to appoint the economist Ahmed Benbitour as his prime minister, who would then resign a year later complaining about the "minor role" he has been assigned. His place was then occupied by Ali Benflis, previously the minister of justice of Chadli Bendjedid after 1988, who would serve until 2003.

On foreign policy, Algeria under Bouteflika returned to a semblance of normality. Relations with France were reestablished on a stable basis, in a move that eerily echoed concerns about France's role in influencing the policy of her ex-colonial outposts. Gradually, both politically, economically, and socially, the civil war was being left behind, and by 2002 most guerrilla had disappeared. The social scars remained: the ethnic question, and the Kabyle dissatisfaction over the marginalization of their language, were not settled despite Bouteflika's concession to a series of Kabyle protests between 2001 and 2002. Poverty, sluggish growth, and cultural divisions persisted, and if the "fear effect" of the memories of the civil war is said to have hampered the emergence of an Arab Spring like that of Tunisia in 2011, fear did not stop the population from creating new movements such as the *Hirak* of 2019[81]. The State and the post-colonial society of Algeria, similarly to that of its neighboring countries, had crumbled, and their "salarization" strategies crashed against the course of the world economy; but what sets the case of Algeria apart from the other North African nations is the trajectory that led to the downfall of its illusions: once a leading country and perceived model of national liberation, it sunk into the path of dependency and ultimately internal disintegration in the tragic reversal of fortunes constituted by a ten-years civil war.

[81] For an in-depth investigation on the psychological spectrum associated with the Algerian civil war and its aftermath, see Faouzia Zeraoulia, *The Memory of the Civil War in Algeria: Lessons from the Past with Reference to the Algerian Hirak*, Contemporary Review of the Middle East, 7(1), 2020, pp. 25-53.

CONCLUSIONS

Dieter Forte was a German playwriter who wrote a play on the German Peasants' War of the XVIth century, named "Martin Luther and Thomas Müntzer, or the introduction of bookkeeping" (in German, *Martin Luther & Thomas Münzer, oder Die Einführung der Buchhaltung*). If one ventures to read the book, one might see evoked all the images of that century in Germany, with the intrigues of Martin Luther, Frederick of Saxony, Thomas Müntzer, the Pope and his assistants, and so on. But surprisingly, a book the Peasants' War is devoid of one element: the peasants.

Instead, the real protagonist of "Martin Luther and Thomas Müntzer" is the figure of Jakob Fugger, the banker who bought the Sacred Roman Empire, the Netherlands and Spain by bribing the German princes to vote for Charles V of Hapsburg, the man who owned all the mines of Germany and whose empire of bookkeeping stretched the entire Europe and beyond.

What does a book on XVIth century Germany have to say about Algeria and post-colonial nations? The answer lies in the last part: in a last recollection of his ever-multiplying fortunes with his assistant Schwarz, Fugger intones a prayer in front of Thomas Müntzer's impaled face to a deified Capital, who "has ordered everything according to weight, order and measure", who seems to abstract itself from humanity and lead it to its own will[82].

As a metaphor for the conclusion to this essay, no representation could be more compelling: Capital personified, the "Fuggers of the world", erects barriers and destroys them, throws entire countries into the world-system only to them swallow them in its whirlwind, buys men, mines, resources, and minds: it is a "closed" system that engulfs everything, a "material community" of the world.

During this exploration of the trajectory of Algeria, the non-linear interaction between factors of culture, language, economy, and geography in the evolution of a country has been used as the material to prove a certain interpretation of the history of capitalism, as the one sketched in the introduction. The method, while still unrefined, can be productive of further explorations in the material structure of geohistorical change.

The histories of the middle east and North Africa have been analyzed in many conflicting ways. The history of Algeria, for example, is sometimes viewed from a Franco-centric perspective, although the center of the colonial relationship was not France, but what was in between; the contradictions of Arab nationalism are too often viewed as the byproduct of a mere political failure;

[82] Dieter Forte, *Martin Lutero e Tommaso Müntzer* (Ital.), Einaudi, 1974, pp. 261-66.

and the problem of the role of Islam has been notoriously exaggerated both by the western culturalist (and frankly racist) writers such as Samuel Huntington and by some Arab writers themselves, although in the opposite sense. In short, the modern history of the Middle East and North Africa needs to be seen from a more materialist perspective.

For instance, American domination and periphery formation/disintegration, especially in the middle east, are coextensive, and not just for the effect of the political choices of different American governments. This idea can be confronted with Wallerstein's "The Curve of American Power", where he analyses the rise and decline of the US hegemony from 1945 until the early '00s. It might be recalled that it was stated that the role of the US indirectly promoted decolonization after World War Two: in Wallerstein's account, this decolonization drive was coupled with a worldwide phase of "developmentalism" between the 1950s and 1970s, endorsed by both the USSR and the US, that was partly functional to the building of the economic superpower of the US dollar[83].

However, we have already analyzed how the shift to post-Bretton Woods deregulation and the effects of the oil crisis threw developing countries into mounting problems of balance of account deficits and debts. This was true for Algeria as well. The shift to deregulation started a prolonged decline of the US, while making the dollar the monopoly currency of the world and ruining everyone else.[84] Arab Nationalism failed because the "Fuggers" of financial capitalism ruined its project. A materialist worldview means viewing things in their global connections and looking at cultural shifts from the perspective of underlying economic change.

The history of Algeria, in all its complexity and interest, is the ground for many other possible interpretations. The scope of this essay – talking about the disintegration of the periphery using the history of Algeria as its metaphor and representation – while arguably not entirely settled, is to provide the reader with a theoretical and critical outlook that is ultimately ethical: developing a clear understanding of the material relations of global history in the periphery to deepen our psychological understanding of the marginalized by the history of capitalism, the "wretched of the earth".

To conclude with a few remarks, the role of dispossession and the breakup of the pre-capitalist community was a crucial element in the explanation of the history of French colonialism in Algeria. "Primitive accumulation" means not just separating the individuals from their means of production, but from their ways of life, and from their interior conceptualizations – their *gemeinwesen*, or

[83] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Curve of American Power*, New Left Review 40, July/August 2006, pp. 4-7
[84] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

being-in-common, using a concept developed by Jacques Camatte from the early writings of Marx[85].

And the *gemeinwesen* is precisely the point of a radical critique to the present society: to recover what is lost while at the same time envisaging the new. To give life to a different community of the human species, in the process of liberating the individual from the shackles of the old; to heal the scars of community destruction of past and present processes of accumulation and overcoming the rigidity of past social bonds.

Understanding colonialism and post-colonialism means understanding ourselves, "we" who live in the colonial west; it means deconstructing the meanings we implicitly construct but also freeing the possibilities buried under the mantle of ideology. It means not just engaging in fruitless cultural critiques but fighting for an entirely new world.

And ultimately this is the aim of this essay: to understand Algeria as well as the social system that brought this nation to being and to be moved to change the present state of things, not outside but inside of Europe and the West. Like Walter Benjamin's angel in *Angelus Novus*, the human species is still waiting for a redemption.

[85] Marx first employed this concept in an article of 1844 titled "Critical Marginal Notes on "The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian"".

SUMMARY

In the current situation of economic and political turmoil, drawing a connection between the economic disintegration experienced at a global scale and the specific disintegration of the world's periphery is increasingly necessary. The concept of periphery, however, needs a specification: the idea of "periphery" is not fixed but is evolving and changeable. The essay is about decolonization in Algeria as the example of how a successful revolution of a colonized nation could not avoid being engulfed in the contradictions of a peripheral nation in a global context, and the consequent demise of the promises this revolution raised on a collective level. The historical method used, rather than understanding events in a linear way, seeks to view things in a non-linear, "tragic" way, where every secular trend collides and interacts in a way that produces bifurcations.

On a cultural level, the situation of post-colonial and decolonial studies nowadays seems stuck on the level of a mere cultural and phenomenological critique: this prevents the post-colonial field of study to avoid falling into the traps of "point of view epistemology". The aim of this essay, rather than following phenomenology, is going to address the material roots of the problem, and while it is far from easy it can be theoretically productive. To understand post-colonial development, the systemic question of the birth of capitalism is crucial. Some elements of modern capitalism stand out as evident: its destructive pace of change, its global reach, and the effects it has on vulnerable societies. The first idea that can be analyzed is Wallerstein's concept of the world-system; the world-system according to him is a geographical relation that establishes an enlarged economic and cultural dimension, going beyond the single nations.

The world-system for Wallerstein is specifically capitalistic, for a world empire could not produce the basis of the modern world-system, namely the nation state. If we take his explanation of the world-system, it seems coherent with a Marxian interpretation of history, except for one aspect: labor relations. Wallerstein disagrees with the idea that wage labor is indispensable for the birth of capitalism. For him, "core", "peripheral" and "semi-peripheral" countries in the world-system can employ different methods of production under the umbrella of a dominant capitalism. But the problematic aspect of it is that this leads to an understanding of capitalism a system driven purely by commercial expansion and political force: Robert Brenner criticized Wallerstein's system arguing that it was a reedition of Adam Smith's The Wealth of the Nation and that it did not consider class formation and qualitative change in production. On the other hand, Brenner is wrong when he attributes to Marx a distinction between absolute and relative surplus value as one between a pre-capitalist and capitalist society: for Marx, both forms of surplus value are tendencies within

the same mode of production. Brenner also minimizes the role of international trade in "kickstarting" capitalism.

If we can accept the premises of Wallerstein on "core" and "peripheral" formation, its specific aspects are blurrier than they might seem. To understand them better it is helpful to look to the concept of imperialism, starting from Marx: in the Third Volume of Capital Marx explains the origins of financial capital from its inception as a subordinate part of industry to its growth thanks to the commercial enterprises of colonialism up to the "transitional phase" where it becomes abstract from society itself. Lenin, in "Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism", took Marx' analyses and combined with the studies of Hobson and Hilferding to explain "imperialism" as the manifestation of the productive expansion of monopoly and financial capital. Another parallel theory was that of Rosa Luxemburg in "The Accumulation of Capital", and both theories are to some extent preoccupied with the "realization of surplus-value" and the expansion possibilities of capitalism. For Rosa Luxemburg capitalism cannot realize all its surplus value in a purely capitalist society. That is why it needs to conquer and destroy pre-capitalist societies, so that it can use them to sell its mass of commodities and exploit them for resources and labor, "eroding" them in the process. This means, also, the destruction of a "natural economy", and she explains this process through the example of the colonization of India and Algeria and the ruin of the agricultural economy in the US after the civil war. However, her interpretation of the reproduction cycle of capital in Marx rests on more than a fallacy and is grounded in political motives against the German social democracy.

By reviewing all these theories, it is impossible not to talk about the problem of "primitive accumulation" as it was sketched by Marx. Famously for Marx this happens in a "macro-moment" in time when, on one hand, traditional agriculture is destroyed, and he makes the example of the British enclosures between the XVIth and XVIIIth century and colonization outside of Europe: the two developments are isomorphic. For Silvia Federici, rather than a macro-moment in time, primitive accumulation is an ongoing process of expropriation of the "commons", nowadays happening in many Sub-Saharan economies. Marx, despite the critiques, did not mean to say that primitive accumulation was the same in core and colonized/peripheral countries or that primitive accumulation meant the autonomous industrialization of the latter. This calls into question the issue of economic dependency. Samir Amin for example establishes two types of development, one "autocentric" and the other "extroverted": colonial and post-colonial countries are usually in the second category, and the wage difference between core and peripheral countries are attributed to an unequal international prices system, entailing "surplus transfer".

Amin's hypothesis is grounded on similar ideas as that of Luxemburg: to accumulate, capitalism must erode pre-capitalist societies. He quotes Marx but he differs substantially from him, especially in his assumptions on the international price system: he is more Ricardian than Marxist. For Amin in "Unequal Development", the export of capital is also a new phenomenon tied to monopoly capital. Lenin put forward a similar concept, but they are both wrong, as Giovanni Arrighi shows; capital export is part of a transitional dynamic between declining and rising superpowers of capitalism. His "historical series" of superpower shows the interrelation between technical revolutions in production and exterior dynamics of expansion: he calls this process "internalization" of the factors of production. Arrighi points to the fact that capitalism was born from monopolies. So, the real conceptual difference is not between monopoly and non-monopoly capital, but between formal and real domination of capital.

After reviewing these theories, we can frame the "economic disintegration of the periphery" as a process entailing a shift from formal to real domination of capital, a history of systematic violence against non-European populations and a hierarchy of functions between "core" and "peripheral" countries. The other factor is the temporality of nation-state formation: the hypothesis of the essay is that the cycle of the modern nation-state, born as the precondition and determination of capitalism in Europe, and premised upon a localized process of accumulation and expropriation, has come to an end: the period where the end of the autonomy of the nation-state was produced was precisely the highest period of decolonization, coinciding with the rise of the American superpower and a shift from industrial to financial dominance in the world economy, which is some ways paved the way to decolonization. Algeria was no exception in the end of this autonomy. The import-substitution strategies of post-colonial countries crumbled, and this led to them incurring in debt and dependency on foreign borrowings: the debt crisis of the third world proved how fragile nation-state formation was in the post-colony. To an economic crisis, a social and ethnic crisis often followed, producing civil wars and religious conflicts rooted in ancient schism but caused by modern determinations. Globally, the crisis of the periphery reflects a general crisis of capitalist profitability.

Juxtaposed to an economic analysis, a cultural analysis of the theories of decolonization is also necessary. The works of three thinkers will be reviewed: Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Achille Mbembe. The first two, who are almost universally considered the pioneers of decolonial thought, produced their ideas in a context of interaction between European tendencies like surrealism and existentialism and a rising national consciousness in colonized countries: the literary movement of "*négritude*" is a perfect example of this. The importance of the "Discourse on Colonialism" of Césaire, for example, lies less in a supposed "black essentialism" and more in the denunciation of

the racist illusions of the European intellectuals during the process of decolonization. But the most important illusion that Césaire denounced was the hypocrisy of liberal Europeans in denouncing Nazism but not acknowledging the genocides of colonialism outside of Europe. Nazism was in fact premised upon colonialism. At the same time, Césaire warned about the pretended anti-colonial tendencies of US politics under Truman as a "domination from which one never recovers".

Frantz Fanon was perhaps the thinker that more than anyone represented the potentialities and the contradictions of decolonial thought. His intellectual trajectory – from the analyses of anti-black racism in "Black Skins, White Masks" to a complete political account of anti-colonial revolt in "The Wretched of the Earth" – is one of a discovery of a new humanism and a new dialectic between colonizer and colonized. Fanon, among the other things, criticized Césaire for being too essentialist and having asserted his critique to colonialism only in terms of poetry. In the "Wretched of the Earth", Fanon sketched a critique of the incoming post-colonial bourgeoisie as a rotten class only interested in following their old masters. This is especially prescient of Algeria's future, considering the book was written in 1961. Fanon remained on a mere political level – a full consciousness of the conditions of the struggle could not be reached in the struggle itself. Since the times of Césaire and Fanon, the ideas of decolonization have moved into the realm of academic discourse and have somehow lost their depth. To see if this is the case, the description of post-colonial countries in Achille Mbembe's "On the Postcolony" might be critically assessed vis a vis this essay's theoretical position. A few interesting points can be derived from the book: the "entanglement" of African temporalities, his description of the decomposition of state prerogatives in "On Private Indirect Government" and the demise of "salarization" strategies. However, his concepts are rather confused, especially when he describes the post-colonial "systems of exploitation". Having reviewed both the theory and the cultural representations of colonial and post-colonial history, the critical history of Algeria can start.

The first thing to be said is that Algeria as a nation did not exist prior to the modern age. Its history has been shaped both by its impervious geography and by the history of conquest and resistance of its people. The centuries of Algerian tribal segmentation prove how a modern nation-state is intrinsically connected to the emergence of capitalism: neither Khayr-Ed-Din Barbarossa and his corsair operation nor the Ottomans after him could unite the country into a unity. The latter did not even provide reliable statistics of the population prior to colonization. Before French conquest, the Algerian population was equally divided between nomadic tribes and a sedentary population structured around communal or freehold land. The tribes of Algeria were granted different privileges according to their closeness to the ottoman power, the most privileged ones being the *makhzan* tribes that were exempt from paying taxes. The mode of production of Algeria was

characterized in various ways, either as a feudal, or "tributary" or "Asiatic" mode of production, by different scholars.

Even considering the "Algerianization" of the administration during the rule of Ahmed Bey and Hussein Dey in last years of the Ottomans, the real struggle for national identification started only after 1830. The roots of the French conquest lie in the Napoleonic wars, when France brokered a deal with two powerful Jewish merchant families to pay for a large quantity of Algerian grains to feed its army. The debt France owed to Algeria will never be repaid, and when in 1827 the French consul in Algiers replied in front of the Dey that the king of France could not lower himself to talk with him, he was slapped with the Dey's fan. The "Fan affair" offered a pretext for an invasion.

Different strategies were tried but ultimately, under Prince de Polignac as the French prime minister and the Louis de Bourmont as marshal of France, it was decided to invade Algeria, hoping that a victory would have boosted the popularity of Charles X in France. Landing began on the 14th of June 1830 and a month later, on July the 4th, Algiers was conquered. This did not translate in any case into a newfound popularity for the king, who was replaced by the "liberal revolution" of Louis Philippe against him and Prince de Polignac. In their conquest, the French tried to install surrogates of the beylik rule, but many old dignitaries refused to bow to the new rulers. The Algerian political deadlock was resolved by the war minister Soult Duc de Dalmatie, who established the principle of "limited occupation" of Algeria. French Algeria was born, and its rule would be a military rule. Nonetheless, after the mass influx of settlers attracted by the new colonial possibilities, the principle of limited occupation was soon to be shattered completely.

Algerian resistance to French colonization would coalesce into two protagonists: Abd al Qadir and Ahmed Bey. Ahmed Bey managed to defeat the French in Constantine in 1836, and Abd al Qadir, the son of a noble family of religious leaders, organized the resistance in the west of the country, conquering two thirds of Algeria in seven years and forcing the French to sign a treaty with him in 1834. In 1837 Ahmed Bey's fiefdom in Constantine, after an eight-days siege, fell to the French army. Abd al Qadir's state, meanwhile, gained strength, especially after the Tafna treaty of 1837, and represented perhaps an embryonic form of Algerian nation-state with a modernized system of power. The Tafna treaty had created an unstable border at the east of Abd al Qadir's state, and soon the French army started clashing again against him. The new governor general of the French territories, Robert Bugeaud, opted for a total confrontation aiming to annihilate the Algerian resistance, and in a few years between 1843 and 1847 Abd al Qadir was defeated and arrested in December 1847. Resistance moved to the mountains but gradually faded, amid the explosive rise of a population of European colonists populating the Algerian plains.

With a pacified population, colonization gained steam, as this constituted a great economic deal for the growing capitalism of the Second Empire, together with the expulsion of proletarian overpopulation from France. Expropriation and primitive accumulation through the forced acquisition of both common and freehold land was the main effect of colonization, and the policy of *cantonnement* was its legal framework to displace the Algerians from their common land. During the second empire the now expropriated and privatized land fell into the hands of a few private companies who exploited the impoverished Arabs and Kabyles to cultivate it for French profits. The administration of Robert Bugeaud introduced three elements in the life of the colony: the *Bureax Arabes* to establish a link with the indigenous population and the *communes de plein exercice* and the *communes mixtes,* i.e., municipal administrative bodies with different rules depending on the ratio between the French and Arab population, which would survive until the end of WW2. The two *senatus-consulte* laws of 1863 and 1863 were enacted to reorganize the land and territory legislation of the Algerian colony, and they both further liberated land to be appropriated by the settlers and established that, while the natives were formally French citizens, they were to be ruled under Islamic law. To become fully French, they had to renounce their indigenous status. This meant the cornerstone of their legislative inferiority vis a vis the colons.

The end of the Second Empire and the proclamation of the Third Republic in 1870 was met by the settlers with enthusiasm, who hoped that the departure of the army could mean a democratization of colonial institutions and their consequent appropriation. Another spark of revolt happened in 1871 in Kabylia, after 40 years of dispossession, hunger and demographic decline for the natives, and its suppression reinforced the power of the settlers. New land was expropriated in 1873 under the Wernier law, which made the destruction of native property a priority and was aimed to create a class of small European landholders in Algeria.

However, concentration of the land was inevitable, and the shift to viticulture in the 1880s accelerated this process. Colons were given parliamentary representation in the French parliament and assimilated, and a governing body was established in Algeria, the *Delegations Financieres*, with an almost total European representation. A class of disposable Muslim civil servants was created, disparagingly called *Beni-Oui-Oui* by the Algerians. After the Kabyle rebellion a new penal code for the natives, the *code de l'indigenat*, was introduced. Heavy taxation was imposed on Muslims, and by 1912 the natives paid more than 70% of all taxes in Algeria. The methods of dispossession, fragmentation of the land, taxation and forced indebtment established by the French all helped destroying the ancient tribal society to the benefit of the Europeans, in a veritable process of primitive accumulation.

Against the backdrop of this destruction, a new Algerian consciousness started to emerge in the first decades of the XXth century, in the form of the "*evolués*" and Young Algerian movements, representing the voice of an emerging Algerian middle class. Their revendications for a reform of the *code de l'indigenat* and increased political representation were partly accepted in the Jonnart reform of 1919, but the outcome was still too conservative and easily attacked by the colons. The progressive rise of a national sentiment among the native Algerians followed the contradictions of the development of the colonial economy in the first half of the XXth century, especially in the relation between the explosive growth of population of the natives, a relative stagnation of the agricultural production of grain and absence of a real industry.

The son of Abd al Qadir, Emir Khaled, who previously had joined the Young Algerians movement, went to exile in France in 1924 and here discovered the Etoile Nord-Africaine of Messali Hadj. Four nationalist movements had emerged in the mid-20s: *Federation des Elus Indigenes*, the *Etoile Nord-Africaine*, the Islamic Reform Movement and the Algerian Communists, with different leaderships and political perspectives. The Etoile, in particular, was the most radical of them in pushing for Algerian nationalism: it was seen as subversive in France, but also had a troubled relationship with the French communist party.

In the 100th anniversary of the French conquest, a climate of colonialist triumphalist reigned. Social tensions mounted and so did repressive measures, but the ascent to power of the Popular Front government in 1936 represented a glimmer of hope for the Algerian movements. An Algerian Muslim congress met in Algiers to present a charter of demands for the new government, which would then be received in the form of the so-called Blum-Violette bill of 1936, whose main proposal was the granting of citizenship to 25.000 *evolués*. The Blum-Violette bill was rejected by Messali Hadj's *Etoile*, and in 1937 his organization was permanently banned, together with his newly founded PPA (*Parti du People Algerien*). Like other pieces of legislation before it, the bill was buried under settler pressure, and the hopes for assimilation nurtured by the Young Algerians shattered, radicalizing the demands of the movement.

Fast forward to WW2, Algeria was occupied by the American forces in 1942, and in this context Ferhat Abbas, a former member of the *élus* and editor the journal *L'Entente Franco-Musulmane*, met with some members of the clandestine PPA to draft the "Manifesto of the Algerian People". After a few months De Gaulle became president of the liberation committee against Vichy's France and together with Georges Catroux as governor general he accepted a part of the revendications of the Manifesto but on more moderate term. Despite this, after the end of the Blum-Violette bill any concession would be too little too late, and this became evident in 1945, when a revolt erupted in

Setif, on the 8th of May, and was organized by Abbas' new movement AML (*Amis du Manifeste e de la Libertè*) and the PPA. The revolt attempted an insurrection but was crushed by the French and especially by the even more gruesome lynch mobs of the settlers. Setif represented a watershed moment for the Algerian nationalism. In 1946, a new organic law was drafted for Algeria and approved the next year, retaining some of the aspects of the Jonnart Law (i.e., perpetuating the two separate electorates and the separation of colleges) but abolishing the *Delegations Financieres* into a new Algerian Assembly that was however devoid of power vis a vis the governor general. Meanwhile, at the Algerian elections of 1947, the new movement of Messali Hadj, the MTLD (*Mouvement pour le Triomphe de le Libertées Democratiques*) won the first round and France decided to stop it by consistently manipulating the electoral process. All attempts to gain more representation were suppressed between 1948 and 1954. In the face of the political stalemate, a new armed organization, the OS (*Organisation Speciale*), appears, and amid political confrontation between the different factions of Algerian nationalism some OS sympathizers decide to lay the foundation of the CRUA (*Comité Revolutionnaire d'Unitè e d'Action*), that would later form the basis of the FLN in the same year of 1954. More than a century of dispossession had created a "human dust" that was ready to explode without "valuable intermediaries". More than a million Muslims were unemployed by 1955 and inequality had reached extreme levels. At the same time France had suffered a famous colonial defeat in Dien Bien Phu, Indochina, and that galvanized Algerian nationalists. The FLN was established on the 10th of October 1954, and its operations were divided into six different regions (Wilayas) led by a colonel supported by three assistants. Alongside the "interiors", a group of "exterior" militants in Cairo was to aid the FLN politically. Even with the opposition of the MTLD, the FLN decided to start its war on the 1st of November of 1954, starting from the Aurès mountains.

The attempted insurrection failed in the whole country and the French cabinet reinstated its commitment to a colonial Algeria: nevertheless, the start of the insurrection only threw more people on the side of the FLN. In 1955, sensing the need for a reform, France sent Jacques Soustelle, a liberal ethnologist, to be the governor general. His program consisted in the implementation of the provisions of the organic statute of 1947 and the creation of centers of assistance for the poorer areas of the country. But by 1955 the strategy of the FLN, which before avoided targeting European civilians, changed in the face of increased repression: on August the 20th 1955 FLN militants massacred the civilians of a European mining town near Philippeville. Repression and lynch mobs against Arabs would be pitiless, but any violent action brought more Algerian support for the FLN: more formerly moderate Muslim politicians claimed that nationalism had become the widespread

aspiration of the Algerians. Soustelle was ultimately sent back to France a year later, and replaced by Georges Catroux, who had to return to France a few days later: Robert Lacoste took his place.

The ranks of the FLN were facing the first difficulties, first in the Aurés mountains against French attacks and then against Messali Hadj and his movement, now renamed MNA (*Mouvement National Algerien*). Anyway by 1956 the FLN had neutralized the MNA and succeeded in conquering the lead of the nationalist movement in Algeria: Abbas dissolved his organization and joined the FLN and so the Algerian communists, who voted their party out of existence to protest against the French communists' support for colonialism. Concurrently, the "Algerian question" was for the first time tabled at the UN general assembly and in the Bandung conference of non-aligned countries. In March 1956 Tunisia and Morocco declared their independence from France. During this political situation, the FLN organized a conference near the river Soummam, and produced its first coherent political platform: the Soummam platform. Its principle of the supremacy of the "interior" and the institutions it created left the "exteriors" disappointed, but the tensions between the new direction of the FLN and them were interrupted by the French hijacking of their flight from Morocco to Tunisia in October, which led to themselves being imprisoned in France.

New propaganda tools were created to spread the message of the FLN. On the other side, the French army advanced through Algeria with new methods of control, the so-called methods of "*quadrillage*" and "*regroupement*". In response, the FLN prepared its strategy for the "Battle of Algiers": a concerted effort to bring about urban terrorism and a direct confrontation with the French army in Algiers, culminating in an eight-days strike in January 1957, which coincided with a new UN debate about Algeria. The French forces, commanded by Marcel Bigeard and Jacques Massu, managed to break the strike militarily, transformed the Casbah of Algiers into a fully military zone and imposed a regime of terror on anyone suspected to collaborate or be part of the FLN with widespread torture and "disappearances". The executive committee of the FLN decided to flee for Tunisia but Larbi Ben M'Hidi, the head of the Algiers operations, decided to remain; he died at the hands of the French paratroopers after being caught. The other protagonists of the battle of Algiers surrendered or died a few months later: the battle was over. The immediate impact of the Battle of Algiers for the FLN was extremely negative, but in the long run the episodes of 1956/7 managed to draw the world's attention on the Algerian matters for the first time. On the French side, the use of torture by the army sparked widespread condemnations and protests. A wall with barbed wire along the border with Tunisia, the Morice line, was erected to impede the flow of weapons from neighboring countries to the FLN. The FLN faced its political retreat in a political process against the Soummam leaders, replacing its leadership and condemning Abane Ramdane, the ideologue of the battle of Algiers, to death.

The French colonial front, precisely when it seemed to have won the battle, started to crack. Many began to question the need to send French soldiers to fight a colonial war. The governments of the Fourth Republic, short lived and ineffective, did not have the power to initiate any change. The distrust of the army and the pied noir against metropolitan France grew at unprecedented heights. Soon a new series of events would make the Fourth Republic tremble: in April 1958 a new crisis of government opened in France, and a coalition of reactionary forces and pro-colonial army leaders started plotting to bring De Gaulle back to power against the politicians of the Fourth Republic. After yet another round of executions both from the army and the FLN, the pied noir revolted and on the 13th of May 1958, under the lead of the colonialist *ultras*, occupied the palace of the governor general in Algiers. The crowd established a committee of public safety and nominated Jacques Massu as its president, who stood both for De Gaulle and for French Algeria. In this political imbroglio, De Gaulle finally accepted to return to politics, and amid two agitated weeks under the menace of a military *coup d'etat* De Gaulle was invited by the president to assume power to avoid chaos, becoming president of France on the 1st of June. De Gaulle posed his conditions: he would rule by decree for six months and a new constitution would have to be approved, meaning another republic – the Fifth Republic. In the history of France, the outcome of the May 1958 crisis showed how intertwined colonial crises in Algeria are in the development of France's politics and economy.

When De Gaulle finally visited Algiers, he gave a speech in front of the crowd promising to solve the rifts between Algeria and France. His plan to tackle the problems of Algeria was the so-called Constantine plan, a massive investment plan for the industrialization and modernization of the colony, motivated among other reasons by the discovery of oil in the Sahara. The FLN rejected the plan and the "*paix des braves*", an amnesty of political prisoners in exchange for unconditioned surrender. On the 19th of September 1958, the provisional government of the Algerian revolution was established in Tunis. De Gaulle forced Massu to resign from the committee of public safety and installed a new government in Algeria. Maurice Challe, the new army chief, manage to push the FLN guerrilla to neighboring Tunisia and Morocco. De Gaulle soon realized that independence was inevitable, and on the 16th of September 1959 he first uttered the word "self-determination", referring to Algeria. This new political shift was perceived as a betrayal by the people who brought him to power a year earlier, so these people would then form a new reactionary political movement, the FNF (*Front National Français*), becoming a fully-fledged militia aided by some elements of the French army. The FLN, on the other hand, was experiencing a political crisis, which lead to the faction of Houari Boumedienne gaining more power and the formation of a "General Staff" replacing the minister of war. The application of the Constantine plan proved to be impossible, and

a few months later, in January 1960, another pied noir riot broke out over the forced transfer of Massu to France. After a few days of unrest, De Gaulle gave another televised speech condemning the barricades and supporting again the idea of an Algerian self-determination, and the revolt gradually faded.

After unofficial attempts by dissident wilaya members, the first real talks between the French government and the FLN started in Melun, on the 21st of June 1960. De Gaulle, with this move, had implicitly recognized the GPRA, the provisional government of Algeria. Although Melun did not produce a concerted position, De Gaulle would return to the idea of Algerian independence in another speech in November, claiming he was in favor of moving to an "Algerian Algeria". Faced with the imminent demise of French Algeria, the FNF and more and more dissident elements of the army started plotting against De Gaulle, planning for a coup against the president in December which eventually failed. The UN general assembly, on the 20th of December, voted a pro-Algerian resolution with a clear majority of positive votes. As the FNF was disbanded by France, its organization regrouped in yet another and more dangerous organization: the OAS (*Organisation Armée Secrete*), receiving a boost in popularity after Challe decided to join.

After a few months of pre-negotiations, an FLN delegation was again received in the French city of Evian on May. Meanwhile, the OAS concentrated its actions in another attempted coup on the 21st of April, which again failed due to a lack of support from the rank and file of the army and boycott from France. The paratrooper units in Algeria were disbanded and its members transferred to France. The French government needed to negotiate with the FLN, which in 1961 was ridded with internal conflicts, reflecting the heterogenous nature of a seemingly victorious Algerian national movement and a shift toward a more military-oriented organization. In Evian, the two main points of contention (the political guarantees for the pied noir population and the question of sovereignty in the Sahara), pitted the French delegation against the Algerian nationalists, without reconciliation, and in July the talks ended without any visible result.

Tunisia, which until then had been a "moderate" element mediating between France and the GPRA, was lost after it decided to blockade the French naval base in Bizerte in July. On the front of the OAS, by fall it had started to fully establish its terror campaigns and plastic bomb explosions in Algeria and metropolitan France. Algeria had descended into chaos, and so did France, when on the 17th of October 1961 a pro-FLN demonstration turned violent in Paris and the Parisian police started killing hundreds of Algerian protestors. The FLN, now with another power reshuffling and the resignation of Abbas, decided to resume the negotiation process, first in the "Chalet du Yeti" and then finally again in Evian, in March 1962. De Gaulle, realizing the intransigence of the FLN on the

Sahara, decided to renounce all claims on it. Knowing it was over for French Algeria, the OAS launched a total war against the French army, but still the Evian agreements were reached on the 18th of March, recognizing the sovereignty of Algeria, establishing a provisional government, and regulating the transition from French to autonomous rule, with a referendum to ratify the agreements after the end of an agreed ceasefire. The OAS unleashed its most brutal violence right after the ceasefire was announced, amid a mass exodus of French settlers leaving Algeria for France. The heads of the OAS were captured and tried in France and on the 1st of July the Algerians voted for independence. The day after, Algeria officially became independent.

The war left Algeria in shambles, but a general crisis was already unfolding in the decades before, especially in agriculture and in the lack of industrialization. The Constantine plan failed to attract private capital to the colony and the *regroupment* policy, destroying what was left of traditional agriculture, managed to coronate a process started at the beginning of colonization: the expropriation of the land and the pauperization of the peasants. The Evian agreements, despite their political utility, tended to evoke the specter of a neo-colonial risk, especially in the oil concessions to French companies, and the FLN was still unable to solve its internal rifts. The new struggle for power produced another political document (the Tripoli program) and a Political Bureau composed by the five externals of the war, in a total rejection of the leadership of the interior. The new coalitions gathered in different "clans" who confronted each other, and on September the forces of Boumedienne's ALN (the army of the FLN) marched through Algiers and all the dissident voices capitulated. On the 25th of September Algeria was proclaimed as the "Popular and Democratic Republic of Algeria".

With the exodus of the pied noir, the bulk of the technical and professional class was gone, a deep recession between 1960-1963 damaged the economy and the country needed to be rebuilt. The post-independence political context was however a context of power consolidation rather than systematic economic rebuilding. The FLN was split into two general tendencies, one more "socialist" and the other more generally "liberal". Ben Bella, who after independence became the most powerful man in the FLN, belonged to the first group, and had the institutions of the Tripoli platform on his side: moreover, he put himself at the forefront of the *autogestion*, or self-management movement of peasants occupying the vacant land of former European landlords, by creating in March 1963 an office of vacant property designed to nationalize and coordinate the new self-managed farmland. Despite the political euphoria and the "myth" of self-management, self-managed agriculture started becoming economically counterproductive, especially after 1964.

Ben Bella became the president of Algeria after ratifying a new constitution in 1963. All institutions were centered around himself, and the FLN became the sole governing body of the country. Former FLN militants like Hocine Ait Ahmed protested the new political course with guerrilla actions but in the end surrendered to the new authority. The aftermath of the proclamation of the Algerian republic was characterized by political infighting, social crisis, and power struggles, and the attempt to turn the FLN into a "vanguard party". All this ended abruptly when Boumedienne, Ben Bella's vice president, minister of defense and head of the ANP (the national army) staged a putsch against Ben Bella in June 1965, replacing him with a military junta under his leadership. The end of the Ben Bella period inherited the same problems affecting the country after independence: widespread poverty, mass unemployment, social chaos.

When Boumedienne took power in June, he denounced what he called the "sordid calculations" of the Ben Bella government and promised to rein in the excesses of "personal power.". The new military power suspended the constitution of 1963 and instituted a technocratic rule to preside over crucial decisions in an insulated way. The FLN, which by the time of Ben Bella was already becoming a bureaucratic machine, ossified itself, but also retained the same divisions and fragmentation as before. Boumedienne's program consisted in reorganizing the economy around vertical production plans and nationalizations, especially of the oil sector, to boost industrial development and escape dependency through an import-substitution strategy. Politically speaking, a new constitution was drafted in 1976 that broadened political participation (although under military rule), and the foreign policy of the new state was marked by the commitment to non-alignement.

The plans of Boumedienne and his economic advisor, Belaid Abdessalam, focused on heavy industry and left behind agriculture and light industry. The idea behind this program was that heavy investment, especially in oil extraction, would have benefitted the entire economic sphere and slowly created an internal market for goods. Unfortunately, whilst the economy did grow at high rates, the strategy also produced unsustainable contradictions, especially in the consumption needs of an ever-growing population, and agriculture yields started decreasing together with low investment, in spite of new reform attempts during the seventies. On a cultural level, the era was ripe with other contradictions, in religious, educational and gender issues, especially in the contentious question of the "Arabization" of the Algerian education system. All these contradictions would explode during the years of Chadli Bendjedid, who was elected president of Algeria right after Boumedienne died in 1978.

Bendjedid was widely considered to be a Boumedienne loyalist, but immediately after being elected, he moved to assure control of the key institutions of the FLN, in a gradual process of "de-

boumediennization" of them. His new course questioned the ratio of Boumedienne's centralization of the economy in big conglomerates, especially the SONATRACH oil conglomerate. He promised to increase the standards of living of the Algerians with a renewed focus on consumption and agricultural investment and the breaking up of the state conglomerates. To complement his actions, his government pegged the Algerian dinar to the dollar, hoping to stabilize the currency together with oil exportations. However, Bendjedid's plans created even more problems than Boumedienne's plans, making industrial production entirely uncompetitive and gradually reducing the Algerian economy to the sector of oil and gas exportations. Algeria entered in the whirlwind of the world economy in a vulnerable way.

On foreign policy, Bendjedid engaged in prolonged territorial dispute with Tunisia and especially Morocco during the eighties, only to end in 1989, with the joining of the so-called *Arab Maghrib Union* with Morocco and its other regional neighbors. His political orientation, while Boumedienne was generally considered pro-Soviet, shifted towards the US and France. Social problems, as we already mentioned, exploded in this era: the question of Arabization created huge rifts between the Kabyle and Arab population, translating into religious conflicts as well. The eighties were the times when a rising movement of political Islam violently questioned the legitimacy of the old Arab nationalist political class; to accommodate with the requests of an ignited religious discourse, the social policies of Bendjedid became gradually more conservative, in particular against women's rights.

After oil prices plummeted in the second half of the eighties, the Algerian economy spiraled into debt and recession and was subjected to the "recommendations" of the IMF, leading Bendjedid to thoroughly privative the state sector. Social unrest became endemic: in 1988, a revolt broke out in Algiers, and in the violent aftermath of the revolt Bendjedid responded with new political reforms to increase political participation and yet another constitution in 1989. The economy continued to bleed, and the new Islamists of the FIS (*Front islamique du Salut*) capitalized on the discontent by gaining the absolute majority of votes in the elections of 1991, and the majority of wilaya administrations and municipal governments. The army, although it was weakened after the 1989 constitution, responded to the threat of the ousting of the FLN with a *coup d'etat* in 1992, banning the FIS and arresting its leaders.

The outcome of the *coup d'etat* of 1992 was a civil war that lasted for ten years and made hundreds of thousands of deaths. The newly formed Islamist guerrilla groups attacked the Algerian state, in a cycle of torture, devastation and social disintegration. Mohamed Boudiaf, who returned to Algeria from exile in 1992, was shot dead by an Algerian lieutenant sympathizing for the Islamists. In a

tragic reedition of the Algerian war of liberation but as a reactionary farce, the guerilla went from attacking the army to attacking civilian targets. The prime ministers that succeeded in those convulse years between 1992 and 1994 (Ahmed Ghozali, Belaid Abdessalam, Redha Malek) all had to deal with the brutality of the army, new requests of "structural adjustment" from the IMF and social tensions spiraling out of control. In 1994, Liamine Zeroual replaced the president Ali Kafi at the head of the military junta and initiated a process of negotiation with the outlawed FIS. At the same time, a vast spectrum of Algerian political parties (included the FIS) gathered in Sant'Egidio, in Rome, in 1995 to agree on a political platform for a return to democracy in the north African country.

New presidential elections were called by Zeroual in 1995, which were boycotted by the Sant'Egidio parties, and in November 1996 he promulgated a new constitution, envisaging a return to political guarantees, creating a bicameral legislature, and forbidding the foundation of parties "hostile to the basic liberty of the nation" or on purely religious, linguistic, or ethnic basis. 1996 and 1997 were the bloodiest years in the whole civil war, with attacks on buses, trains, villages, and everyone the Islamists (especially the GIA, the most intransigent among them) deemed worthy of being attacked. When the parliamentary elections of 1997 came the Sant'Egidio parties finally participated, and negotiations continued amid a climate of conciliation between the government and the FIS. Gradually, after the demise of Zeroual in 1999 and the election of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in the same year, tensions were brought under control with a policy of reconciliation, and foreign relations returned to a semblance of normality. The crisis of the nineties, that had produced a collapse in real incomes and the standards of living of the Algerians besides a bloody civil war that destroyed the society, would not be solved until the early '00s, largely due to a rise in oil prices and a fall of the cost of debt servicing. The recovery, however, could not avoid Algeria sinking into the path of dependency and internal disintegration in the tragic reversal of fortunes constituted by a ten-years civil war. In conclusion, a metaphor to describe this process of disintegration of the periphery can be drawn by a book of Dieter Forte on the Peasants' War in Germany during the XVIth century; Capital personified, the "Fuggers of the world", erects barriers and destroys them, throws entire countries into the world-system only to them swallow them in its whirlwind, buys men, mines, resources, and minds: it is a "closed" system that engulfs everything, a "material community" of the world. The ethical question raised by this essay is how to overcome the destruction brought about by capitalism, to advance the emergence of a new community, or *gemeinwesen* of the human species through the understanding of the periphery, and specifically the case of Algerian history.

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