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**Decolonization and Diplomacy:
The Algerian War and the Fall of the
French Empire (1954–1962)**

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Introduction

Over the centuries, European empires have made a real race to grab as many colonial territories as possible in order to increase their wealth and prestige. This has led to the emergence of completely distorted situations especially in African countries, this thesis aims to explain and tell the Algerian war or one of the most particular and unique decolonization conflicts of recent history. Through the use of academic sources, newspapers, books and historical documents we will try to make a thorough analysis of how and why was formed what we know as French Algeria and what distinguished it from other forms of colonial possessions; We will analyze the causes and effects of the conflict for independence with particular attention as the title might suggest to the international dimension that it assumed explaining why this military conflict was in fact a real issue of international relations.

First of all the thesis will start making an historical analysis over the phenomenon of decolonization and will explain how the international landscape reacted to it, then it will talk about the French methods and strategies through which Algeria was colonized, with the 1830 invasion for desire of king Charles the X.

An important analysis will therefore be devoted in the first chapter to explain the introduction through colonialism of the French-speaking ethnic group of the Pieds Noirs and the consequent unequal distribution of resources will lead to the birth of a discontent among the Algerians who within a century, soon after the Second World War will be one of the main causes for the outbreak of the revolt.

From the second chapter we will instead enter into the heart of the conflict, starting with the organization of the revolt and the foundation of the FLN and telling causes and effects of the beginning of the conflict.

However, the core of the thesis (chapter 4) will be devoted to the deepening of the international dimension that the conflict eventually assumed, deepening the great capacity that the FLN leaders had in penetrating into various countries reaching the political spheres and thus guaranteeing if not the support at least the recognition of even western countries.

We will then analyze the main protagonists more microscopically starting from the components of the liberation front and its internal struggles for political control over the revolt, the political and institutional changes in France, the return of De Gaulle and finally the OAS and the desperate French extremists' fight to stop the negotiations among France and FLN to end the war.

The objective of this thesis is therefore to outline a 360-degree panorama of what the struggle for independence of the Algerian state meant and to explain how it was distinguished from all the others by the methods with which it was conducted starting from the cultural plane and military and then to the international one. All this thanks to a careful comparison of multiple sources mainly Italian, French and English.

1. Historical context: decolonization in the 20th century

1.1 Analysis of the global decolonization process and the role of the great powers.

Europe had been surely predominant in world's events and policies for at least two centuries thanks to its economic and military power. After the second world war, the context seriously changed facing the collapse of European overseas empires; in the 1950s the phenomenon of decolonization sped up and the number of independent countries by 1970 had increased at least four times since 1945. The premise of this decolonization phenomenon was that first of all the oppressed peoples' were aware of the fact that their colonizers were not able anymore to maintain the control over their empires after a conflict as it was the second world war, then they were not interested to conform to a bipolar struggle as it was cold war without having first won the struggle for their own interests.¹

In substance, the first reason why the decolonization happened on wide scale in the 1950s was that European countries were exhausted by the last conflict and even their inhabitants started to doubt the centrality of their countries in the world.

A very important role was played by UN, which thanks to the recognition of the principle of self-determination on united nations charter (1945) started a diplomatic path that brought to the legitimation of independence claims among the colonies. In the following years, the UN through resolutions and special committees exerted diplomatic pressure on colonial powers to gradually grant independence. This international framework provided nationalist leaders with a political and diplomatic platform to assert the right to self-government.

Diplomatic efforts by the united nations to end colonialism culminated when the General Assembly, in 1960, adopted its landmark Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Declaration not only recognized

¹ Grosser, P., Badel, L., & Westad, O. A. (2017). *The Cold War: a world History*. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL26928347M/The_cold_war 261-286

the right of all people to self-determination but also proclaimed that colonialism should be brought to an unconditional end.²

The second important reason that we can underline was the creation of the various anticolonial movements, parties and the consequent rebellions that even if weren't able alone to defeat their European colonizers, surely were capable to increase the cost of colonialism and make the colonial effort less popular between European citizens.

In fact under an economic point of view the beginning of the independence claims was also accompanied by an awareness among the European peoples who understood how colonialism was actually becoming less and less profitable. Secondly, with the end of the war and the establishment of the Marshall Plan, European countries began to depend less and less on colonial trade and more and more on trade with the United States.³

So, even with significant American support under the economic point of view, a combination between economic weakness at home and rising resistance in the colonies determined decades of tension and changes.

In general, those colonies that offered neither concentrated resources nor strategic advantages and that harbored no European settlers won easy separation from their overlords. Armed struggle against colonialism centered in a few areas, which mark the real milestones in the history of postwar decolonization.⁴

The British empire's decolonization surely started in 1946; after the elections in India, the Muslim league strengthened its consensus, and the consequence was a negotiation between party leaders stressed by a very huge street violence, who finally preferred to choose the partition and avoid civil war. In 1947 British finally left India and a divided Pakistan facing public order and religious problems.⁵

² (n.d.). Decolonization. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/decolonization>

³ (n.d.). Marshal plan, 1948. Office of the Historian. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/marshall-plan>

⁴ Webster, Richard A., Magdoff, Harry, Nowell, Charles E.. "Western colonialism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14 Dec. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism>. Accessed 25 February 2025.

⁵ Webster, Richard A., Magdoff, Harry, Nowell, Charles E.. "Western colonialism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14 Dec. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism>. Accessed 25 February 2025.

It's important to remember as well how this landscape related to the cold war, both USA and USSR were ideologically speaking against colonialism, but this didn't mean that they were not interested to intervene in colonial disputes. Wherever the US rather than the USSR could have the possibility to enlarge their political hegemony they used to intervene.

From the encounter between cold war and decolonization phenomena, there was the rise of a new concept, the third world; third world leaders thought that cold war was simply a new European method to dominate foreign affairs through zones of influence and for this reason countries were quite reluctant to embrace capitalism as a form of government, cause it was the same of their former European colonizers but also communist dictatorships, that seemed too autocratic and absolutist.

In the meanwhile, Before the decolonization process really began, two diplomatic attempts were made by France and England to try to preserve the colonial empires by granting autonomy.

In 1946 France established the French Union (Union Française), which replaced the concept of colonial empire with a sort of semifederal union that granted the colonies a bit of political autonomy and some voice in decision making in Paris, but it was suppressed by the constitution of 1958 and replaced by French Community ("la Communauté").⁶

It replaced the French colonial empire with a semifederal entity that absorbed the colonies (overseas départements and territories) and gave former protectorates a limited local autonomy with some voice in decision making in Paris. By the constitution of 1958 it was replaced by La Communauté (see French Community).

The United Kingdom instead established the "Commonwealth of the nations" which was created for the will of the colonies to be more autonomous since XIX century; Canada obtained the self-government for first in 1840 and was followed by Australia (1901), New Zealand (1907), South Africa (1910) and Irish Free State (1921).

⁶ (n.d.). French Union. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/French-Union>

Balfour report in 1926 established that commonwealth members were all equal and then the Westminster statute (1931) legalized the “de facto” independence by promising to colonies the possibility co-manage their foreign policies autonomously.

In the post war period there was a serious turning point for commonwealth of the nations since the possibility of adhesion was given to India and Pakistan (1947) following their declaration of independence, this gave birth to the possibility of adhesion for countries who had indigenous populations and not of British descentance and finally in 1949 members obtained the possibility to be republics but by recognizing British monarch as symbol of unity. The commonwealth of nations still survives today with a membership composed by 56 countries.⁷

We can summarize the situations just explained by saying that the European countries, despite decolonization being an advancing and unstoppable reality, implemented a series of more or less successful attempts to try to maintain their zones of influence. The desire to maintain certain zones of influence was due to the fact that the colonies still represented a possibility for the European countries (overall UK and France) to have first of all more sources of raw materials and energy (French investment on Algeria was obviously linked to its energy sources of oil and gas), maintain closed markets as the colonies were a protected market for the colonizing countries and finally the fear of loss of prestige especially after the Suez crisis which marked the end of Franco-British dominance.

These independence and development questions were discussed during the Afro-Asian Bandung conference (1955), where was stated that the agenda of nonaligned countries would have included full economic and political sovereignty among third world countries, peaceful resolution of conflicts and following nuclear disarmament.⁸

French Fourth Republic constitution provided for token decentralization of colonial rule, and cycles of revolt and repression marked French oversea possessions for 15 years after the end of World War II. In 1946 French army tried to regain Indochina, a

⁷ (n.d.). History of the commonwealth. Commonwealth Network.
<https://www.commonwealthofnations.org/commonwealth/history/>

⁸ Grosser, P., Badel, L., & Westad, O. A. (2017). *The Cold War: a world History*.
https://openlibrary.org/books/OL26928347M/The_cold_war 261-286

former colony that after the war obtained the independence by exploiting a vacuum of power left by Japan former hegemony in the Asian continent. All French efforts to regain Indochina were annihilated when, after the Communist victory in Chinese civil war the Viet Minh started being helped by Mao dictatorship with weapons until their main victory in Dien Bien Phu (1954). After this military defeat France accepted peace according to Ginevra conference conditions, which divided Indochina in 4 countries: North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, the loss of Indochina will be the principle for the succeeding riots and losses of French colonial empire.⁹

In 1965, the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of Suez Canal, previously controlled by French and British, this represented a clear challenge to European colonial order and to western control over the region.

Facing this crisis, Great Britain, France and Israel planned a strong military intervention to regain the control of the canal and reduce Nasser's power over Arabian political landscape. However, their strategy was based on the presumption that the US would have sustained the initiative, Eisenhower strongly opposed the effort for political reasons linked to presidential elections but also for not being informed in time about the intention to do it. Part of the pressure the US put on the UK to stop the military invasion was financial, as Eisenhower threatened to sell US reserves of sterling, thus causing the British currency to collapse.

The Suez crisis resulted in a European loss of prestige and a "translatio imperii" due to the fact that they could not act anymore independently by new global equilibriums dominated by the US and USSR. This political humiliation reduced their control over colonies and strengthened the independentist movements and their consensus over peoples.¹⁰

⁹ Webster, Richard A., Magdoff, Harry, Nowell, Charles E.. "Western colonialism". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14 Dec. 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism>. Accessed 25 February 2025

¹⁰ Boddy-Evans, Alistair. (2024, June 25). Decolonization and Resentment During the Suez Crisis. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-suez-crisis-43746>

The following challenge to British colonial power came from Sudan, a territory that was previously under a joint control among UK and Egypt but substantially was managed as a British protectorate after Egypt obtained the possibility of self-government in 1922.

In 1948 a colonial democracy was conceded to Sudan, and immediately its politicians started to debate if it was better to ask for unify the country with Egypt or for the total independence of the country. Finally the dominant northern politicians opted for the independence of Sudan, following the Burmese model, in 1956 the country officially became an independent republic and decided to not join the British commonwealth.

However, this rapid decolonization did not solve the cultural and religious problem that divided Sudan between the northern part, predominantly Muslim and subject to historical Arab migrations and south, inhabited by a Christian majority instructed that spoke English rather than Arabic as it was in the northern part. This division brought the country to a succession of war and peace periods.¹¹

1.2 Characteristics of French colonialism in Algeria.

French situation was very different from British decolonization; firstly France was the main European great power committed in north-western Africa, thanks to its hegemony over the region known as “Maghreb” (the west); French domain over this region started in the first half of XIX century with the invasion of Algeri (1830).¹²

In 1830 Algeria was nominally under the sovereignty of a military Turkish government, since the XVI century French merchants began to establish routes between Algeria and

¹¹ Birmingham, D., & Birmingham, D. (2008). *The Decolonization Of Africa* (1st ed.). Routledge. Retrieved 26 February 2025 from <https://www.perlego.com/book/1620830> (Original work published 20 February 2008)

¹² Birmingham, D., & Birmingham, D. (2008). *The Decolonization Of Africa* (1st ed.). Routledge. Retrieved 26 February 2025 from <https://www.perlego.com/book/1620830> (Original work published 20 February 2008)

Europe and from that moment they begun to be constantly committed in very complex commercial situations.¹³

During one of these controversies, the “dey” (ruler of Algiers) slapped a French consul defining him “damned scoundrel of an idolater” in 1827 and for this reason, French navy started as a punishment a naval blockade to Algiers’s harbor. After three years of naval blockade king Charles X exploited the pretext as a *casus belli* in order to start the invasion of the country, overall in order to distract popular attention from the hard internal problems that France was living and that culminated in the deposition of the king after the July revolution. However the French adventure in Algeria never obtained the consensus hoped for, a French depute even declared in the parliament: “I would give Algiers for the worst village of the Rhine”, it was simply considered a way to deviate French essential interests in Europe. Algiers fell in a few days but despite the initial enthusiasm for the conquest, an internal armed resistance was enacted from the inhabitants. In 1832 a new character of Algerian resistance arose, the 25 years old Abd-El-Kader, who enacted a war against the French army which lasted until 1847, when he was forced to surrender; despite his military abilities he was never able to totally unify the warlike Algerian tribes.¹⁴

French invasion of Algiers was only the beginning of what soon became the French Maghreb, in 1880s it continued eastward with the institution of French Tunisia and then culminated in 1912 with the establishment of a French protectorate over the sultanate of Morocco, which unlike the rest of Maghreb never fell under the Ottoman domain and maintained its independence since the middle ages.¹⁵

What differentiates the colonization of Algeria from the rest of the countries under French domain is that after the first years of stabilization, French government started to introduce its settlers in the Algerian territory, mainly composed by farmers and that soon will arrive to be a consistent part of Algerian population, the so called “Pieds noirs” (Black feet”).

¹³ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 17-40

¹⁴ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 17-40

¹⁵ Birmingham, D., & Birmingham, D. (2008). *The Decolonization Of Africa* (1st ed.). Routledge. Retrieved 26 February 2025 from <https://www.perlego.com/book/1620830> (Original work published 20 February 2008)

In 1841, the number of Pied Noirs was already 37.374 compared to an indigenous population of 3 million, to let them work, French administrators started an expropriation campaign as a punishment for many riots of the Algerians, for example only in 1871 half of a million hectares were confiscated in Cabilia (an Algerian region). The first effort to pacificate with local population was made by Napoleon III, who promulgated a law aimed at recognizing Algerian tribes' property over many lands but the execution never corresponded to his initial intentions.¹⁶

In 1870 the Pieds Noirs had already reached two hundred thousand people, and consequently rebelled to the French military administration of Algeria, forcing Paris to concede them more autonomy and a semblance of French metropolitan government. All French possessions in the Maghreb were governed under the administration of the ministry of foreign affairs through the institution of protectorates, exception done for Algeria which was under the ministry of internal affairs, the minister appointed the general governor, who according to non-written tradition couldn't be a Pied Noir, under him were the prefects of Algiers, Oran and Costantine, that being French departments had the right to send deputies and senators initially elected by Pieds Noirs and many privileged Muslims, then a second electoral college was created to comprehend the totality of Muslim population.¹⁷

In 1946 each electoral college could elect eight senators and fifteen deputies for the national assembly, this meant that a million of Pieds Noirs could have the same elective power of eight million Muslims.

The inferior levels of administration was divided in "communes de plein exercice" and "communes mixtes"; the commune de plein exercice was that with European predominance (exception done for some extreme cases such as Costantine which has an overwhelming Muslim majority) based on French model and characterized by a government majority (European) and an elective municipal college (three fifth of whose seats belonged to Europeans). The "commune mixte" instead was reserved to Muslim majority districts and was governed by a French administrator who governed through local "*caids*" all appointed by the central governor.

¹⁶ Horne, A. (2006). A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962. New York Review Books 41-57

¹⁷ Horne, A. (2006). A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962. New York Review Books 41-57

The consequence of this method of government in Algeria was that, in 1922, there were 300 European administrators for the “communes mixtes” that governed three million Muslims and finally in 1954 257 European administrators for a population of four and a half million Muslims; this is what revealed itself as the most disliked aspect of French government in Algeria.¹⁸

Another important problem of the French administration can surely be identified in the concession of French citizenship, since Muslims were automatically subjects and not citizens of the French republic. France let to Muslims to maintain their culture and their religious law, but if they wanted to obtain French citizenship they had to definitively renounce to Islamic law, committing an act of apostasy.

France made a lot of bureaucratic obstacles to avoid that the Muslims could obtain citizenship, as a result in 1936 only 2,500 Muslims were French citizens and with the Cremieux decrees in 1870, the entire Algerian Jewish community automatically obtained French citizenship.

The fact that an ethnic minority could have this privilege represented an unbridgeable breaking point between Algerians of Muslim ethnicity and French administration.

Many efforts were done by French government in 1868, 1919 and 1935, but the result was sadly the same for each of these; the reform attempts met the strong opposition of reluctant *pieds noirs*, fearful of possible changes. The main attempt was that of 1919, made after the great war, during which 173,000 Algerian colonial troops fought in the French army losing 25,000 killed as a recognition for their sacrifice, French government made a law to facilitate a bit the access to citizenship for Muslims.¹⁹

Another attempt was made by Leon Blum's government but the Algerian reaction to this new possibility of Muslim assimilation evolved in several riots among the *pieds noirs*, the Algerian press strongly criticized what was considered a reckless move that did not take into account the possible social consequences in the country, the associations of war veterans “ancient combattants” started demonstrations in the streets and mayors threatened to resign.

¹⁸ Robert Aron, *Les Origines de la Guerre d'Algérie* (Parigi: Fayard, 1962)

¹⁹ Robert Aron, *Les Origines de la Guerre d'Algérie* (Parigi: Fayard, 1962)

To conclude this first chapter, we can firstly state that the premises for what was the Algerian war can be found in two main themes; for first the decline of the colonial empires which, following the Second World War, were incapable of maintaining their overseas possessions and this situation after the Suez Crisis became practically an irreversible landscape.

Then, the introduction of settlers on Algerian soil who soon formed communities with very different rights from those of the natives and who appropriated of a good part of the cultivable lands. This pivotal characteristic differentiates French colonialism in Algeria from that in all other countries, where there was a small minority that administered but not a real community of European citizens and for this reason historians tend to compare the Algerian form of colonialism to those of South Africa and Rhodesia, where European settlers represented a consistent part of population.

Finally, a great input to the causes of the Algerian revolution was made from French administration, that granted very different political rights between European settlers and the indigenous people and that did not have the courage to go beyond the pressure of the pieds noirs whenever attempts at reform were made to try to make harmony with the country's Islamic indigenous people.

2. The Algerian War (1954-1962): Causes and Dynamics

2.1 Origins of the conflict: economic, political and social motivations

To understand how and why the war started in Algeria we need to face with a very important event that is considered what definitely destroyed Franco-Algerian relations. On May 8 1945 both the French and the Algerians were organizing several demonstrations; French community was celebrating the liberation from Germany while Algerians were ready to claim the liberty that for more than a century was denied to them from France. The previous weeks were marked by a series of small events which in their own way foreshadowed what was about to happen; among these things were schoolchildren being stoned, buses being attacked, threats being made to "fatma" or domestic workers, ordering them not to work for their European masters anymore, as well as the appearance of pro-independence graffiti on the walls of the great cities. The promoters of these initiatives were identified as militants of a newly formed nationalist organization; "Parti du peuple Algerien". As a precaution, the French authorities immediately arrested Messali Hadj, head of this organization.

In 1945 Algeria suffered two years of hunger because of the lack of agricultural crops and the restrictions due to war economy, and the local district was in clear food crisis because the supplies accumulated for famines had been expropriated by the Vichy French. Tensions and resentment culminated on May eight when a crowd of 8,000 people marched toward Sétif asking for the liberation of Messali. Butterlin, the sub-prefect of the district ordered the police chief to seize the protesters' flags. This inevitably led to a direct clash during which it is not clear who fired the first shot according to historical sources, some accusing the protesters and others the French police.

As a consequence of this first clash, groups of armed citizens started to massacre European colons announcing the start of the "jihad". This terrible explosion of anger lasted for five days, many historical sources sustain that at the end the totality was of 100 dead and 100 wounded among European civilians, this led immediately to a repression of the French army during which 40 towns were bombed by air force and

navy and many roundups were done with summary executions. Also in this case historical sources are in disagreement, they speak about a number between 1,000 (Tubert report) and 45,000 (Radio Cairo) dead during French repressions.²⁰²¹

Sétif massacre was minimalized by French media speaking about only a hundred dead, in the meanwhile the impact on Algerian citizens was incalculable and unacceptable, for them was the precise moment on which they realized that coexistence with the French could no longer continue.

Many days later the landing of the 7th regiment of Algerian “tirailleurs” coming back from Europe where they had fought for years against the Germans, their return was marked by stories of the massacre that shocked the soldiers, many of them immediately joined the FLN (Front de liberation national) among them was a decorated sergeant whose name was Amhed Ben Bella, who refused the promotion to officer and soon declared “the horrors committed in the Constantine area convinced me that there was no other way; Algeria to the Algerians”.²²

Within a few months Ben Bella joined the MTLN and then, being disappointed by its unproductive dialectics founded a fringe (Organisation Spéciale) dedicated to opposing colonialism by all legal and illegal means, this will become the first nationalist organization to prepare the armed confrontation with France.

From the point of view of the pieds noirs, the massacre instead contributed to increasing fear and alarmism, thus contributing to a further demand for security measures by the army against the Algerians and popular opposition to any reform initiative.

After the riots of Sétif, the various liberation movements felt more disunited than ever because of the arrest of their leaders (Messali Hadj and Ferhat Habbas), the liberals also scolded the M.T.L.D. (Messali’s party) for its role in the disastrous massacre. But soon the great consensus will shift from Habbas’ liberals to the more extremist M.T.L.D

²⁰ Jean-Pierre, Peyroulou . “Setif and Guelma (May 1945) | Sciences Po Mass Violence and Resistance - Research Network.” Setif-And-Guelma-May-1945.Html, 25 Jan. 2016, www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/setif-and-guelma-may-1945.html.

²¹ Horne, A. (2006). A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962. New York Review Books 59-79

²² Horne, A. (2006). A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962. New York Review Books 59-79

(Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques) and even the same Habbas will start to change his moderate positions facing French countermeasures.

Going beyond the Sétif massacre we need to address two very important causes that between 1945 and 1954 contributed to fuel the growth of popular discontent against French colonialism: disputes over the division of land and the increase in the birth rate among Muslims.

Despite French efforts for industrialization and modernization, Algerian economy was still based on agriculture, but the problem on this side was that as soon the European share of cultivable lands arose, the Muslim share diminished, this provoked serious inequalities since according to surveys of the time, the average number of hectares belonging to the pieds noirs was 123,7 while to the Muslims only 11,6. The rise of Algerian wine industry caused by the explosion of phylloxera in Europe did not led to the results it hoped for and even brought to more remarked inequalities. Despite wine industry represented 50% of Algerian exports in France it only gave Muslims a work that was not only barely enough to guarantee their survival but led them to produce something that was humiliating for them because it was forbidden by their religion. Finally we can add that the average salary of a Muslim worker was 16,000 francs per year facing the European equivalent of 450,000. These conditions pushed many Algerians to migrate from 1945 onwards to find better conditions and in fact at the outbreak of the war in France there were around half a million of them.²³

The second important phenomenon that needs to be analyzed for its links with the economic crisis in Algeria is the birth rate explosion of the Muslim community.

During French invasion of 1830 Algeria had a population composed by three million people, that was nearly halved by war, famine and diseases, in 1906 population was reconstituted and counted nearly four and a half million; thanks to European medicine techniques the infant mortality decreased.

In 1954 Muslim population reached nine million, its birth rate was ten times higher than that of pieds noirs, in this was hidden the great fear of pieds noirs to be definitely

²³ Robert Aron, *Les Origines de la Guerre d'Algérie* (Parigi: Fayard, 1962)

substituted and the reason of their opposition to any policy of assimilation between France and Algeria.

Given these economic and demographic premises we can move to a further event, after which the hostilities exploded and the independentist movements restarted to organize themselves after Sétif, the electoral frauds.

During 1947 municipal elections the decisive victory of Messali alarmed the Pieds Noirs who couldn't afford such a situation on a national scale, for this reason the following year, when was the moment to vote the national assembly, there are testimonies of ballot boxes filled with false ballots by loyal "caids" and local officials. In many villages ballots weren't even delivered. Nationalist rallies were broken up by the police and in some cases they opened fire on the crowd, in many cases as a form of protest people refused to vote. The most notable example was the election results where the MLTD dropped from 10,647 votes in the first round to just 2,534 in the second. In 1951 during the elections in Djelfa neither MLTD nor UDMA obtained a single vote, while the gubernatorial candidate had 800 (in a town with 500 electors) and in Port Gueydon the gubernatorial candidate obtained 23,645 votes out of 23,671.²⁴²⁵

We can definitely affirm that the way by which French managed the elections was probably the final strike that brought a population of nine million people to definitely embrace the cause of those who wanted to break with the French presence since it was clear that there was not a possibility to enforce rights through legal means.

2.2 The Algerian revolt: the push for independence and the international context (1954)

On 23 march 1954, a committee composed of four members; two former leaders of the OS (Mostefa Ben Boulaïd et Mohamed Boudiaf) and two moderate centralists (Mohamed Dekhli et Ramdhane Bouchbouba) founded the organization that soon

²⁴ David C.. Gordon. The Passing of French Algeria. 1962.

²⁵ Horne, A. (2006). A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962. New York Review Books 59-79

became famous as the organizer of the first riot that started the revolution, the C.R.U.A (Comité révolutionnaire d'unité et d'action).

The C.R.U.A. immediately saw a great growth in the following months and on 23 June 1954, a summit was done in a house in Clos Salambier (an Islamic neighborhood in Algiers) during which 22 former members of the OS were called to call the revolution till the total independence of the country.

Mohamed Boudiaf founded the committee of the five, charged to implement the decisions of the 22 leaders, The committee was composed of Boudiaf himself, together with Mohamed Larbi Ben M'Hidi, Mostefa Ben Boulaïd, Mourad Didouche and Rabah Bitat. On August 1954 the committee enlarged itself including the sixth member, Krim Belkacem as representative of the Kabylia, this committee of the six will be the decision maker of the start of the revolution on first November of the same year.²⁶

The committee of the six decided to implement the plan by starting the revolution on the first of November, which is known as All Saint's day. This decision was not made casually, first of all that day was too important for the catholic Pieds Noirs, so the police was on a minimal surveillance situation, secondly that date would have had a great effect on the revolutionary propaganda. Inspired by the methods of French resistance, of Viet Minh guerrilla and of what the veterans learnt from the French army experience, the C.R.U.A. divided the country in six autonomous zones called wilayat, the operative groups were divided on the base of five or five or six trusted members who knew each other.

The plan called for each group leader to organize a pre-established attack on a public place or large property of the settlers, the targets were mainly members of the French army and the police, taking care not to touch any civilians to avoid a second Sétif.

The first major problem that arose at the outbreak of the revolution was the opposition of the M.L.T.D. to the plans of the C.R.U.A.

²⁶Yves Courrière, *La guerre d'Algérie - Les fils de la Toussaint*, 1968 75-200

The appeal launched by the Messalians not to follow up on the "slaughterhouse" of the C.R.U.A. found support in Algiers with the result that the bulk of the rebels employed in the city had been mobilized from Kabylia.²⁷

Even more important was the problem of arms supply. For this purpose a network of rudimentary explosives factories was set up, managed by Zoubir Bouadjadj, leader of the Algiers. For what concerns the firearms supplied to the rebels, their transportation was done on a daily basis to organize the All Saints' Day revolt. The little the rebels had to arm themselves was composed of hunting rifles, weapons abandoned by the Germans at the end of the war, by the French of Vichy and finally weapons stolen from the French army depots. In any case, there were no weapons more powerful than machine guns and nothing arrived from the Soviet bloc, a small part was purchased from abroad with what at the time were the meager funds of the F.L.N.²⁸

Another big initial problem was the lack of help from Nasser's Egypt where the triumvirate of the C.R.U.A. composed of Ben Bella, Ait Amhed and Khider was located. Unfortunately, the Egyptian government delayed the requests for weapons and funds from this delegation for a long time, saying that the aid would arrive after the revolution had already begun.²⁹

In the previous months various signals of the rebellion were found by French authorities, overall during a meeting between Mendés France and Ferhat Abbas (An Algerian nationalist) who warned the Prime Minister of the risk of the situation worsening if the government did not make concessions to the Algerian people.

There were also many reports of weapons factories and training camps for rebels but the French authorities did not take the matter seriously and took no action other than some investigations.

The initial plan established by Ben Boulaid was that no one would fire a shot before 3 am on November 1st. Things did not go that way and the various rebel groups, in the grip of general disorder, attacked all the targets (mainly police barracks, mines and institutions) well in advance, alarming the French forces. Due to the general disorder,

²⁷ Yves Courrière, *La guerre d'Algérie - Les fils de la Toussaint*, 1968 75-200

²⁸ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 83-107

²⁹ "La Toussaint rouge" Bernard Droz, Maître de conférences Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris.

the actions did not have the desired outcome but the message was very clear; the war had begun and the point of no return had been reached.

The outcome of All Saints' Day was quite negative overall, despite the damage inflicted on institutions, telephone lines, factories and mines the insurrection did not appear to have a large popular consensus; so, the FLN's proclamation broadcast by Radio Cairo and the national press seemed extremely optimistic:

“To clarify, we outline below the main points of our political program:

GOAL: National Independence through:

Restoration of the sovereign, democratic and social Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles.

Respect for all fundamental freedoms without distinction of race and religion.

INTERNAL OBJECTIVES:

Political cleansing by returning the national revolutionary movement to its true path and by destroying all vestiges of corruption and reformism, the cause of our current regression.

Gathering and organizing all the healthy energies of the Algerian people for the liquidation of the colonial system.

EXTERNAL OBJECTIVES:

Internationalization of the Algerian problem.

Achievement of North African Unity within the natural Arab-Muslim framework.

Within the framework of the United Nations Charter, affirmation of our sympathy towards all nations which would support our liberating action.”³⁰

³⁰ “1er Novembre 1954 : Le Texte Intégral de La Déclaration Du Secrétariat Général Du FLN - Jeune Afrique.com.” JeuneAfrique.com, www.jeuneafrique.com/41168/politique/1er-novembre-1954-le-texte-int-gral-de-la-d-clARATION-du-secr-tariat-g-n-ral-du-fln/.

The first French reaction, as expected, was the M.L.T.D., arresting its leaders and outlawing the movement. The general council of Algier's department voted unanimously a resolution in order to:

- 1) Restore order with firmness and speed.
- 2) Punish the guilty
- 3) Not tolerate any weakness
- 4) Basing French policy on the healthy elements of the population.

In France, the newspapers gave little importance to what happened on All Saints' Day, they only spoke of some deaths and injuries due to attacks on police stations. Prime Minister Mendès France, on the other hand, for whose government the news could not have arrived at a worse time (just three months after the defeat in Indochina), immediately committed to fight the affront with all means without compromising.

Asking for a vote of confidence on November 12, Mendès France obtained 294 votes against 265, keeping the government alive thanks to the pro-Pieds Noirs party of René Mayer.

Shortly thereafter, the first French paratroopers arrived on site, requested by Governor General Leonard. Their commander was colonel Ducournau, veteran of Indochinese campaign and survived to Dien Bien Phu, he was chosen because of his knowledge of Viet Minh's guerrilla tactics and started the first hunt to the rebels in Algerian mountains.³¹³²³³

³¹ Horne, A. (2006). A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962. New York Review Books 83-107

³² Yves Courrière, La guerre d'Algérie - Les fils de la Toussaint , 1968 75-200

³³ "La Toussaint rouge" Bernard Droz, Maître de conférences Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris.

3. The National Liberation Front (FLN): the driving force of the revolution

3.1 Origins, strategies and internal organization of the FLN.

The FLN (Front de Libération National) Was founded on 1st November 1954, as we previously said in occasion of the ryot known as “Toussaint rouge”, by the initiative of the CRUA, that decided to unify all the revolutionary groups for the common cause of the independence, by 1956 nearly all Algerian nationalist organizations were reunited around the FLN which emerged as the real engine of the revolutionary forces, the only great exception was the MNA that soon became the only rival force of the FLN by originating a real fratricidal war.³⁴

The FLN was basically divided in two branches, the political one to which belonged the diplomacy and internal administration and the military one, also known as national liberation army.

The central level of the movement was managed under the jurisdiction of the “coordination and implementation committee”, founded in 1956 as an executive organ which had the mansion to direct the war and take strategic decisions.

The international relations of the party belonged instead to the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA), instituted in 1958 and based in Tunis, that served as exiled government.

The congress of Soummam (1956) established a hierarchy that gave priority to the internal affairs rather than foreign affairs, so the military struggle was primary and diplomacy secondary.

For this reason is very important to address and analyze how the front was organized territorially speaking.

The FLN divided Algeria in six operative regions (Wilaya) each of these had its internal hierarchy.

³⁴ Aissaoui, Rabah. “Fratricidal War: The Conflict between the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA) and the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in France during the Algerian War (1954–1962).” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, Aug. 2012, pp. 227–240, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2012.709701>. Accessed 19 May 2021.

Wilaya was commanded by its chief with the help of his military and politic advisors, then each Wilaya was divided in zones, each of these zones had its commander. Zones were divided in sectors and the militainment of the order in these belonged to “Katibas” that were the military battalions formed by 120-150 men that instead were divided in “Soffs”, small combat groups formed by 10-20 men who acted through guerrilla operations.

A consistent part of the liberation army was based in the neighboring states (Tunisia and Morocco) and were committed to supply weapons and men to the soldiers based in Algeria.

It's important as well to underline that the leadership of FLN was made up of people with very different backgrounds and ideologies, that even in the second world war fought for different armies. Among these figures we can surely mention as we previously said Ben Bella, former French colonial soldier during the second world war who joined the regiment of “tirailleurs Algériens”, who joined the army because it was one of the few possibilities for Algerians to build a career, then on the opposite side of the war there was another future member of FLN leadership, Said Mohammedi, who instead joined the Muslim S.S. regiment formed by Hajj Amin Husaini, and then employed as an agent of the Abwehr.

Mohammedi hoped as many other Algerians that Hitler's victory would have meant the liberation of Algeria and all the other colonies from French oppression, after the war he was imprisoned and condemned to life-prison then released under conditional liberty in 1952 and became a colonel of FLN and chief of Wilaya 3 (Kabília). Another Pivotal figure surely was Ramdane Abane, imprisoned after Sétif massacre he passed his time in jail studying the revolutionary books of Lenin and Marx, then he became known as the “Robespierre” of the FLN, or “Mao” as well considered by many historians to be one of the most brilliant minds of the FLN leadership. Some FLN officers declared that Abane was the only leader that if had lived long enough would have become a political figure similar to Tito and Mao.³⁵

³⁵ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 135-153

Abane will become the leading figure of the movement by leading the Soummam conference during which, after the initial period of the war, signed by a situation of confusion due to the different hierarchies and interests of each Wilaya the official hierarchy will be established and overall the roles will be assigned.

On the orders of Abane, rigid military and political hierarchies were established to avoid excesses and divisions of the past, but also limitations as the decision to organize the army from private to colonel grade as maximum role instead of general to avoid the cult of personality.

3.2 Internal conflicts and rise of the FLN

Initially, the coexistence between the FLN and the MNA was peaceful and almost friendly, with each celebrating the other's successes as they fought for the same goal, the independence of Algeria, but with different methods.

The first problems arose when these two forces started to control the Algerian migrants in France, asking for contributions to finance the war that could be voluntary or forced. French police estimated that the amount of FLN and MNA donations in France was around 500 billion francs, however, despite some efforts that were initially done to forge an alliance between the two forces tension grew rapidly. The organization of the two forces differed, while French police was able to infiltrate inside MNA the mostly clandestine structure of FLN made much more difficult for it to discover anything about the organization.

A peculiarity of this war was the FLN's decision to expand the conflict to French territory through attacks, expansion of the movement among immigrant workers and fund-raising, a method that would soon be taken up by the Irish Republican Army.³⁶

Also the strategy of the two organizations differed as well; the MNA started to organize demonstrations and strikes on the anniversary of Toussaint Rouge in many French cities and hoped to obtain its goal through political means. FLN asked to remain quiet during the anniversary to avoid all the possibilities of police repression, the organization used

³⁶ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 258-260

to support armed actions as the only way forward and so organized the armored struggle in France.

By the beginning of 1956, the struggle between the FLN and MNA reached its peak, the FLN activists accused Messali and the MNA of having engaged in secret dialogues with the French minister of interior trying to make an agreement to isolate the FLN and organizing aggressions against them.³⁷

In the meanwhile, FLN's consensus was seriously growing, a great number of former MNA supporters started to join the front, the reason behind this particular phenomenon was that the MNA, with its strikes and its demonstrations was seriously hit by police repressions and many of its nationalist leaders were arrested, so a lot of Algerian migrants in France started to sympathize the FLN because first of all it was clearly the strongest faction in their motherland and secondly because they started to prefer its clandestine structures that were more likely to be less under the repression of the police thanks to its different methods of struggle.³⁸

In summer 1956 MNA's leadership was forced to leave Paris and tried to reorganize itself by setting in Saint Etienne and then in Lyon; many detachments of the movement were left in disarray without instructions, and exasperated by internal struggles with the FLN they continued to call for unity in revolutionary action.

Seeking to re-establish its hegemony among Algerian migrants, the MNA organized a new wave of demonstrations and strikes, the most famous of which was in Paris where 5,000 demonstrators marched from the mosque to the parliament but were blocked by the police. On 26 November 1956, the MNA militants detained in Fresnes prison, including leading MNA militant Mohamed Ben Ahmed (known as Mohamed Maroc), started an unlimited hunger strike to be granted political status. This hunger strike was supported by the MNA which launched a protest campaign and distributed tracts.

³⁷ Aissaoui, Rabah. "Fratricidal War: The Conflict between the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA) and the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in France during the Algerian War (1954–1962)." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, Aug. 2012, pp. 227–240, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2012.709701>. Accessed 19 May 2021.

³⁸ Aissaoui, Rabah. "Fratricidal War: The Conflict between the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA) and the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in France during the Algerian War (1954–1962)." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, Aug. 2012, pp. 227–240, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2012.709701>. Accessed 19 May 2021.

In 1956 although the MNA was still the dominant faction in metropolitan France, the FLN started to openly fight its rival organization by organizing several armed groups “groupements de choc” whose task was launching armored attacks against MNA bastions. The French police, seeing the outbreak of this series of violence between the two Algerian factions, saw the opportunity to hit the Algerians in their weakest moment, for this reason when the police operations against them increased the FLN and MNA mutually accused each other of denouncing the respective militants to police.

All the efforts to make a compromise between the two factions were definitively suppressed after the FLN soldiers massacred all the male inhabitants of Melouza, a village in Kabylie that supported the MNA.

In 1957 MNA was still dominant in certain parts of France but had already lost nearly half of its effective members, according to French police 114 Algerians were killed in august by the FLN armed groups during their operations.

Even if French police arrested many militants according to their estimations the FLN had nearly 9000 militants and MNA 5000, out of a population of 329,000 Algerian migrants nearly one third financed the nationalists.

By the end of the 1950s, after a bloody struggle in metropolitan France, the FLN had achieved hegemony over the Algerian communities and the MNA was relegated to a few restricted areas.³⁹

In Algeria the armed forces of the RNA are slowly dissolving and many leaders had been arrested or killed. A case in point was that of Mohamed Bellounis who, in an attempt to keep his faction alive, tried to reach an agreement with the French in exchange for weapons and materials to use against the FLN but was arrested in the meantime.⁴⁰

³⁹ Aissaoui, Rabah. “Fratricidal War: The Conflict between the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA) and the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in France during the Algerian War (1954–1962).” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, Aug. 2012, pp. 227–240, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2012.709701>. Accessed 19 May 2021.

⁴⁰ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 258-260

The MNA also tried to negotiate with France the possibility of ending the war by making Algeria a partially autonomous territory although dependent on France but this only further weakened its limited consensus among the population.

At the end of the war the only faction that emerged was the FLN as the official liberator of the nation and after having crushed both militarily and politically the MNA, after all it must be kept in mind that the support of the United Nations as well as other non-aligned nations abroad was obtained thanks to the international diplomacy work carried out by the FLN and this allowed it to legitimize itself as an official political force inside and outside Algeria.

4.0 The Algerian war in the international context.

4.1 A diplomatic rather than military victory.

In this pivotal chapter we will discuss how and why the Algerian war has been a so unique case due to the means by which it was fought by the FLN. The Algerians never obtained a real supremacy militarily speaking facing the French army, which through a very hard campaign was able to inflict very heavy losses to the Algerian rebels (at the end of the war France had nearly 40,000 dead while Algeria around half of a million).

What we are going to deeply analyze is the diplomatic struggle that let the FLN to obtain the international recognition and so to be helped being in spotlight by building a really great network of diplomacy not only in the international conventions such as Bandung but even in many western countries such as the case of U.S.A, Italy, Switzerland and the efforts in establishing alliances many times also failed as it was for U.S.S.R and China.

Since 1954, when the RCUA (revolutionary committee for unity and action) declared its priorities and objectives, one of the main was the internationalization of the struggle, which was a task assigned to Ben Bella and its group of Cairo. The first diplomatic efforts were made in Egypt because Nasser at that time imposed himself as the figure that would have led to the revolution and independence of Arabian peoples.

Unfortunately Nasser revealed to be only a great illusion because he refused to sent the promised aids to the Algerian FLN and declared that he would have sent weapons only when the war would have officially begun.

Initially the furniture of weapons was the greatest issue of FLN, they had serious problems in finding somebody who could help them, in fact Ben Bella in 1955 was constantly moving from a capital to another in search of new financial aids and weapons.

The threat that Ben Bella posed to the French from the very beginning can therefore be easily understood, just think of the fact that in 1956 he suffered two attacks from which he miraculously escaped, which were most likely organized by the French secret services.

One of the first deliveries of weapons was made thanks to the charter of the Queen of Jordan's private yacht anchored on the coast of Spanish Morocco, which unloaded the FLN weapons while the farmers of the Rif erased the tracks from the beach by grazing their sheep there.

The real turning point for the international relations and so for weapon furniture of the FLN happened in 1956, when Tunisia and Morocco gained their independence, creating a friendly border around Algeria which became a key to victory.

For what concerns Tunisia, since French had imposed as a condition for the independence to maintain military contingents on the Tunisian soil and friendly relations among the governments president Burghiba, afraid that an excessive help to FLN would have meant a new French occupation of the country gave to Ben Bella less than he had requested but enough to at least grant the military surviving of the movement and the right to asylum, but Tunisia never directly intervened in the conflict.

Instead, on a strictly diplomatic level, the FLN's first major success was achieved in 1955 thanks to the underhanded work of Ait Amhed, who allowed the FLN to gain entry as a representative of the Algerian people at the Bandung conference, the moment in which the birth of the Third World was conceived and attended by 29 nations.

Having no recognized government behind them, the Algerians were only able to participate unofficially in the conference, however the latter, after having condemned all forms of colonialism, unanimously approved the motion of the Egyptian allies for the right to independence of Algeria.

Behind the scenes, Ait Amhed met with numerous delegates from other Arab countries and received promises of large sums of money and weapons. He then had a long conversation with Ho Chi Minh who expressed his utmost solidarity with him on the French problem.

The accession to the Bandung conference was the greatest political and diplomatic victory of the FLN not only because it obtained recognition and aid in the struggle for independence by all the third world but above all because after this conference the

access to the United Nations was almost a direct consequence. Five months later, Algeria became the subject of debate at the General Assembly.⁴²

Although less incisive in practice, it was equally important for the United States and England to become aware of the Algerian conflict. The Battle of Algiers and the scandals of torturing rebels and civilians by French soldiers began to make their way around the world. In London in 1958 there were three days of labour demonstrations in front of the French embassy. Overseas the head of the American Federation of Labor, protested with Mollet for the arrest of the Algerian trade union leaders in 1956. Many US journalists began to have clandestine relations and secret visits to the FLN, Herb Greer spread in America his films shot in Algeria where they were shown the brutality of the French army.

Between 1957 and 1958, the US policy towards Algeria was greatly influenced by the work of the FLN at the United Nations, thanks to the sending of Abdelkader Chanderli and M'hamed Yazid, both cosmopolitan figures with extensive experience abroad.

Soon they started to spread leaflets to raise awareness about the war in all university campuses, opened up avenues of mass communication and began thanks to their capacity for public relations to hang out with politicians who shape public opinion.

Although the FLN's terrorist acts initially generated outrage at the United Nations General Assembly, they soon ended up generating even more irritation towards France, held responsible for the war. One of the FLN supporters at the UN told Edward Behr: "You must realize that every time a bomb goes off in Algiers, we are taken more seriously here."⁴³

In July 1957, in the American Senate, the young senator John F. Kennedy gave a speech inviting President Eisenhower to use American influence to reach a solution that would lead to the recognition of Algerian independence and lay the foundations for a agreement with France and neighbouring countries. Kennedy also blamed US politics for betraying its own principles of independence and anti-colonialism by feeding anti-Western propaganda in Asia and the Middle East.

⁴² Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 135-154

⁴³ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 253-275

Senator Kennedy's speech was the turning point for American policy on Algeria, under such pressure the United States changed its policy; from that moment they stopped supporting France at the United Nations and began abstaining. This represented a very hard blow for France and a victory for the FLN.

In December of the same year, representatives of the FLN were accepted to the Eurasian conference in Cairo held by Nasser and shortly after the delegations of the front began to build relations with the USSR and China.⁴⁴

In substance, after Bandung, the material and diplomatic support of Egyptian president Nasser increased significantly, Egypt sent important weapons and facilitated meetings between FLN leaders and representatives of nationalist movements in Tunisia and Morocco, fostering collaboration between North African movements against France.⁴⁵

The FLN strategically leveraged every favorable international event to increase its military and diplomatic actions: every external diplomatic success or international mention increased the FLN's aggressiveness and confidence on the battlefield.

The French immediately perceived the danger of the FLN's international strategy, believing that without external support the rebellion would collapse rapidly.

For this reason, France was forced to fight on the international diplomatic front, particularly at the United Nations, trying to delegitimize the FLN and deny that Algeria was an international problem; however, this attempt at delegitimization paradoxically strengthened the international visibility of the Algerian question.⁴⁶

All this work was possible thanks to the already mentioned congress of Soummam, where diplomacy was put at the first place among the war strategies of the FLN. The goal of the Algerians was to make a French military victory impossible, except on the battlefield, at least by isolating France itself through the work of independent delegations spread over international territories.

⁴⁴ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 253-275

⁴⁵ Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 69-90

⁴⁶ Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 69-90

The establishment of an advanced diplomatic structure with eight permanent offices (Cairo, Damascus, Tunis, Beirut, Baghdad, Karachi, Jakarta, New York) and mobile delegations to visit international capitals and trade union and commercial meetings was thus established.

This network was also at the basis of the organization of international propagandistic activities to oppose the French narrative and present the struggle as national and political, not religious or extremist. This activity was mainly aimed at the liberal public opinion in France but also in other countries with numerous Algerian communities as we explained in the case of America, An extraordinary work of propaganda and public relations was carried out that allowed the FLN officials to even get the sympathy of Senator Kennedy.⁴⁷

To achieve this, the FLN strengthened its affiliated organizations such as the UGTA (Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens) and created the UGCA (Union Générale des Commerçants Algériens) to organize strikes in conjunction with international events (such as the UN General Assembly) and to attract further global attention.

Obviously even if not totally committed in the conflict nor with France neither with Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia did a great diplomatic effort in order to help Algeria to isolate France and legitimate their warpath to independence.

In September 1956, the French government (Mollet) attempted secret negotiations with the FLN to find a political solution, suggesting possible autonomy.

These negotiations, however, were compromised by the interception of the Egyptian ship Athos, which was carrying weapons for the FLN. This episode made clear the international support for the insurrection and prevented any public negotiations.

Soon, another pivotal event will definitively let the world understand how the Algerian conflict was not a French internal question anymore: in October 1956, the arrest by France of Ben Bella and the FLN foreign diplomatic delegation on a flight from Rabat to Tunis caused a very serious international diplomatic crisis.

⁴⁷ Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 111-116

This episode led to a strong international condemnation, making clear the definitive internationalization of the Algerian question and France appeared isolated, unable to control or politically manage the conflict.

The arrest of the FLN external delegation, together with the Suez operation, proved definitively that the Algerian question was no longer an "internal affair" of France but an international problem, exactly what the FLN had pursued since the first day of the revolt.

From this moment on, France lost substantially the war in diplomatic terms: it could no longer control or contain it without jeopardizing the stability of the Republic, which was radically changed with the return to the scene of general De Gaulle, as we will analyse further later.⁴⁸

In August 1958 there was another breakthrough, with a series of attacks on French territory, the FLN immediately attracted global and foreign media attention.

The purpose of this FLN initiative was to remind the world that the Algerian conflict could destabilize not only France, but the entire Atlantic Alliance (NATO), leveraging on the fear that the "virus" of the conflict could spread beyond the Mediterranean.

On 19 September 1958, Ferhat Abbas, a political figure initially in favor of integration with France but who came closer to nationalism due to the latter's continuous refusal to grant autonomy, proclaimed in Cairo the creation of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA).

All the Arab states except Lebanon officially recognized the GPRA, in just ten days, the GPRA obtained the recognition of 13 states. France initially did not react drastically to the recognition of Morocco and Tunisia to avoid further destabilizing the regional situation but preferred to wait.

⁴⁸ Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 111-116

After the formation of the GPRA, the countries of the Arab League quickly approved significant financial support (34 million dollars), demonstrating a united support of the Arab region to the Algerian cause.⁴⁹

Despite internal differences, the economic and diplomatic support of the Arab countries remained essentially unchanged and constant.

The GPRA had clear priorities, which is why it immediately set out to establish a wide network of diplomatic representations:

By October 1958, official FLN diplomatic offices had been established in West Germany, Spain, Finland, the United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as representatives in Egypt and other Arab countries.

There were also 45 Algerian representatives active in 20 countries, including the USA, Japan, India and Indonesia by October 1958.

This global diplomatic network of the GPRA, which had administrative base between Tunis and Cairo, forced France to open its eyes, it was no longer possible to talk about the war in Algeria as an internal affair of the republic.

Although there was formally a minister of the Ester, the management of international policy was in reality divided between various members and ministries of the GPRA.

On 24 July 1955, the Secretary-General of the United Nations received a letter from 14 Afro-Asian countries asking for the inclusion of the Algerian question in the agenda of the tenth session of the General Assembly on the instructions of their governments. In their letter they also stressed the importance of self-determination in the formation of the United Nations and referred to resolution number 637 on the right to self-determination and the exercise of fundamental freedoms, approved by a majority of the Assembly.

As a result of this event, the General Assembly decided to place the Algerian question on the agenda of its tenth session, after having submitted it for examination and inquiry by the Political Committee of the Assembly. In addition, the Algerian diplomacy had a

⁴⁹ Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 195-196

great influence in transforming the positions defended by the French administration against what it called the "Fellaga" (the outlaws), and finally resorted to a first secret meeting with Mohammed Yazid who represented the UN Front in New York on 21 January 1956.⁵⁰

Yazid managed relations directly with the UN, Abdelhamid Mehri was specifically involved in North African affairs and in general the dispersion of diplomatic responsibility was inevitable given the complexity and scale of the international operations of the GPRA.

Diplomacy was not limited to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but permeated all GPRA activities; the Ministry of Armaments managed international relations for the purchase of arms from German dealers to communist China, the Ministry of General Relations instead was responsible for the management of clandestine financing operations in Europe and the Middle East.

Lakhdar Bentobbal, GPRA's Minister of the Interior, clearly stressed that each GPRA agency (military, political, diplomatic or social) had to act in terms of "internationalization" As we have already said, the conflict was not to be won militarily but in the context of international relations.⁵¹

So the GPRA acted as a kind of overturned government, much more oriented to the outside than to the inside, thus making diplomacy its best weapon and key to achieve the much fought independence.

Its structure, with ministries and diplomatic representations acting at the international level creating consensus and serving as a sounding board, confirmed the absolute centrality of international diplomacy in the strategy for independence.

As far as the countries of the Soviet bloc are concerned, we must say that although they were initially at least on paper supporters of the Algerian cause, they never showed great interest in supporting it. East Germany and Czechoslovakia, for example, provided

⁵⁰ Glorieuse Algérie. "Glorieuse Algérie." Gloriousalgeria.dz, 2023, gloriousalgeria.dz/Fr/Post/show/131/La-Diplomatie-Alg%C3%A9rienne-1954---1962. Accessed 4 Apr. 2025.

⁵¹ Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 195-196

the FLN with weapons in exchange for money but forbade the opening of Algerian diplomatic offices on their territories.

During the visit to Beijing of the leaders of the FLN, they found themselves transiting from Moscow, but were not received by any official ceremony except some mention in the newspapers. In addition, the Soviet ministers met them only informally and avoided both sending aid and recognition of the nation.

The reality is that Khrushchev was in dialogue with De Gaulle and supported his proposal to grant a limited self-determination to Algeria, explaining to him that also the USSR would support the project to avoid a possible US intervention or influence in the area.

As a result, the Algerians tried to play the Chinese card, explaining to Mao that his intervention was necessary to change the orientation of the Soviet Union. However, even this visit did not bear the expected fruit, Mao explained to the Algerians that Khrushchev was simply exploiting the inconsistencies between Western countries to prevent the United States from absorbing France in their influence taking advantage of a moment of weakness.

However, there was a partial change in the position of the USSR, this was due to the support that France gave to the USA during the U-2 spy plane crisis in 1960. For this reason, Khrushchev stopped supporting the French policy on Algeria but continued to refuse to provide direct aid to the GPRA.⁵²

Among the socialist countries that immediately supported the Algerian uprising, Cuba and its leader Fidel Castro certainly stand out, who together with Sukarno (Indonesian president) and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghanaian president) was one of the main supporters of the cause. In practice, however, their help was not as effective, but only part of a much larger international phenomenon.

4.2 Italy and Switzerland, westerners out of the chorus.

⁵² Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 221-229

Italy and Switzerland are two very special cases in the international relations of the conflict. Although the bulk of Western countries tended either to remain silent on the issue or to support the French government in the case of Italy and Switzerland it was the exact opposite. These two countries played a crucial role in the conflict in supporting the FLN both by diplomatic means and for concrete aid, in this paragraph we will analyze in depth the dynamics that linked Italy and Switzerland to the Algerian war.

At the outbreak of the conflict in 1954, Italy certainly paid little attention, being taken by other problems. First of all, the main interest of the Italian government (led by Mario Scelba) was certainly directed to European issues, NATO and its own internal politics (such as the question of Trieste and entry into the UN). The Italian government, as well as public opinion and the press initially perceived the Algerian revolt as a matter of French public order and not a conflict of liberation and decolonization.⁵³

Although Italy had adopted an anti-colonialist position after the end of its empire, the government maintained a very neutral attitude towards Algeria, in an attempt not to undermine relations with France, Key ally in Europe and strategic partner in NATO.⁵⁴

In 1956, under the Segni government and with Gaetano Martino at the Foreign Office, Italy is increasingly concerned about the French instability and, fearing a possible approach of France to the Soviet Union seeking support on the Algerian question, the country chooses to remain close to the Paris government, in the hope that this will strengthen European cooperation (1957 Treaties of Rome).

The first turning point is identifiable in the Suez crisis (1956) and the DC-3 plane crash (with the capture of Algerian leaders by France). As a result of these episodes, Italy found itself divided between its anti-colonial position and support for France. The government therefore decided to maintain an ambiguous attitude, condemning the Franco-British intervention in Egypt but avoiding voting against France at the UN, so as not to completely deteriorate diplomatic relations between the two countries.

⁵⁴ Mourlane, Stéphane. "La Guerre d'Algérie Dans Les Relations Franco-Italiennes (1958-1962)." *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, vol. n° 217, no. 1, 1 Mar. 2005, pp. 77–90, <https://doi.org/10.3917/gmcc.217.0077>.

Finally, although until 1957 Italy had behaved as a loyal ally, the Suez crisis clearly showed the growth of more autonomous and critical positions towards French colonialism, especially by the "neo-Atlantic" circles. Christians and to the left, we can therefore say that these episodes caused the Italian interest in the Algerian crisis began to take on more faces.⁵⁵

Despite internal divisions, especially in public opinion, a climate of trust between Italy and France was restored in 1959. The Italian government, led by Antonio Segni, was according to the French a reliable ally and aligned with the Atlantic and European policy.

During a visit to Paris, Segni and Minister Pella were informed of the French line over Algeria. In June 1959, De Gaulle assured the Italian president Gronchi that France no longer wanted to dominate Algeria as it had done in the past and Gronchi responded by emphasizing the need to strengthen solidarity and cooperation between Italy and France as Mediterranean countries.

As a result, during the UN meetings, particularly the debates on the Algerian question, Italy maintained its constant support for France despite the growing pressure from the Afro-Asian group and the pro-FLN movements. Despite some hesitation in 1959, Italy finally supported at least officially the French colonial policy partly thanks to some events that stimulated its changes such as the speech of De Gaulle on self-determination of 16 September 1959.⁵⁶

In 1957, Italy's Zoli government faces an internal crisis and has a limited mandate to ferry the country towards the 1958 elections. In the meantime, Giuseppe Pella, appointed Foreign Minister, proposes a new line of foreign policy called neo-Atlantism.

The neo-Atlantism is a strategy that tries to balance:

⁵⁵ Murlane, Stéphane. "La Guerre d'Algérie Dans Les Relations Franco-Italiennes (1958-1962)." *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, vol. n° 217, no. 1, 1 Mar. 2005, pp. 77–90, <https://doi.org/10.3917/gmcc.217.0077>.

⁵⁶ Murlane, Stéphane. "La Guerre d'Algérie Dans Les Relations Franco-Italiennes (1958-1962)." *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, vol. n° 217, no. 1, 1 Mar. 2005, pp. 77–90, <https://doi.org/10.3917/gmcc.217.0077>.

Membership of the Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and Italy wanted to play an important role in the Mediterranean, so there was a need for dialogue with countries undergoing decolonization, including Algeria.

While maintaining a solid alliance with France as we have previously explained, Italy was cautious and tried to take on the role of mediator between Paris, Washington and the Arab countries. However, without compromising the international balance or going to directly irritate the French government taken by its fragility.⁵⁷

The French feared that Italy, under the pressure of figures such as Mattei (ENI), Gronchi, Fanfani and La Pira, was developing an overly autonomous policy in North Africa, which could weaken support for Paris from the UN. However, Italy formally maintained its support for France at the UN, contributing in 1957 to a resolution calling for negotiations between the belligerents.

Between 1958 and the beginning of 1959, Fanfani, secretary of the Christian Democrats and at the same time president of the Council and foreign minister, proposed a more active Mediterranean policy aimed at "extending the zone of freedom" in the Mediterranean, a vision inspired also by the vision of Enrico Mattei, provided for an equal dialogue with the countries of the South, especially the Arab world, and was defined as "neo-Atlantism": a strategy that sought to reconcile loyalty to the Atlantic alliance with greater autonomy in Mediterranean relations.⁵⁸

This new policy was met with suspicion by the French government, concerned that Italy might deviate from its policy on Algeria. Despite these fears, the Fanfani government maintained an officially pro-Paris position, refusing recognition of the GPRA (Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic) and voting against the African-African resolutions at the UN and being cautious on transit issues of Algerian leaders.

However, there was a growing conviction in Italy that Algeria was destined to become autonomous; personalities such as Fanfani, the president of the Republic Giovanni

⁵⁷ Bruna Bagnato . L'ITALIE, LA FRANCE et LA GUERRE D'ALGÉRIE.

⁵⁸ Bruna Bagnato . L'ITALIE, LA FRANCE et LA GUERRE D'ALGÉRIE.

Gronchi, Mattei and Giorgio La Pira wanted negotiations with the National Liberation Front (FLN). In this context the Mediterranean Colloquium of Florence, organized by La Pira and supported by the government and ENI: an event that tried to give voice to the Arab countries, including Algerian independents, and to impose Italy as mediator. Although it aroused strong tensions with France, the meeting represented a first attempt - failed - to open channels of informal diplomacy between Paris and the FLN.⁵⁹

As we can learn from the book: “A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era” Italian media showed a certain interest in the Algerian war, sympathizing with the cause of the FLN. During the battle of Algiers, numerous journalists (for example from *Il Tempo*, *ANSA*, and *Il Giorno*) came and made contact with the liberation front to talk about the war from the Algerian point of view.

This media wave on the conflict obviously generated discontent in Italy not only among communists and socialists but also among Catholics, who being outraged by the violence that was taking place gathered in a series of committees to support peace in Algeria.⁶⁰

In Italy, the publication of “La question” by Henri Alleg, a French journalist tortured by French paratroopers during the battle of Algiers, contributed greatly to the knowledge of the Algerian situation. The book was published by the publishing house Einaudi under the title of “La tortura” and it dates back to a few years before the beginning of the collaboration between Giulio Einaudi and Giovanni Pirelli, the firstborn of the colossus tires, who gives up his place at the head of the family business to pursue his publishing activity, approaching over the years to the Algerian and third-world issue.⁶¹

When we talk about the relations between Italy and Algeria we cannot stop to dwell on who was the protagonist of the relations between the two countries: Enrico Mattei.

⁵⁹ Bruna Bagnato . *L’ITALIE, LA FRANCE et LA GUERRE D’ALGÉRIE*.

⁶⁰ Matthew James Connelly. *A Diplomatic Revolution : Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era*. Oxford ; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002. 134-135

⁶¹ Giulio. “L’Italia E La Battaglia Di Algeri - Jacobin Italia.” *Jacobin Italia*, 17 Sept. 2020, jacobinitalia.it/litalia-e-la-battaglia-di-algeri/?utm_so. Accessed 4 Apr. 2025.

Enrico Mattei (1906-1962) was an Italian entrepreneur and politician, famous for having founded ENI, one of the main energy companies in Italy. He became famous for openly challenging the "seven sisters" or oil-exporting countries by supporting national energy independence and creating autonomous relations with producer countries, especially in the Arab world and Algeria.

As much as Mattei's interest in the cause of independence of Algeria we can identify its beginning in 1958, when returning from Beijing -with an Italian diplomatic corps after a conversation with the Chinese- because of bad weather, the plane had to land in Siberia.

On the same flight there was a group of GPRA executives composed of Benyoucef Benkhedda, Mahmoud Chérif et Saad Dahlab, the latter spoke with Mattei and then introduced him to Benyoucef Benkheda with whom they talked about the Algerian situation and the problem of independence.

Mattei immediately offered his moral and financial support to the Algerians, declaring: "In front of you, I affirm currently appear as a saboteur. But I could be a partner, loyal and effective"

Immediately a very close relationship was established between Mattei and the leaders of GPRUA, shortly after a delegation was hosted in Rome by the government and a headquarters of the FLN was opened in Rome.⁶²

Following numerous diplomatic initiatives between the government and the FLN, Mattei began to fully engage in the search for a solution to Algerian independence, although he knew perfectly well that France was not disposed to compromise.

In November 1958, Mattei met in Warsaw the French ambassador Burin De Rosier, the latter knew Italy well as he had worked as a consul in Milan. During the meeting, Mattei explained his plans for Algerian independence, the country's oil and North Africa.

⁶² Omar, Kerkeb. "Le Relazioni Italo-Algerine : Enrico Mattei E La Guerra Di Liberazione Nazionale Algerina (1954-1962) – Aleph." Edinum.org, 23 Dec. 2021, aleph.edinum.org/5579?utm_, https://aleph.edinum.org/5579?utm_. Accessed 4 Apr. 2025.

Mattei stressed how much it would also be good for France to free itself from the Anglo-American domination of the oil market.

During the meeting in Warsaw, Mattei proposed an agreement between France, Italy and the countries of North Africa for the exploitation of natural resources so as to allow France to conserve resources by eliminating the very onerous effort to maintain Algeria.

Mattei's plan was based on a split of the revenues from Saharan oil; 50% to the producing country and the remaining 50% to the country that worked the oil through refineries; 50 % to the producer country then 50 % split between France and Italy, 20 % Italia- 30 % Francia for what concerned Algerian oil and 30 % Italy - 20 % France for Moroccan oil.⁶³

So Mattei had a decidedly ambitious and far-sighted vision, aimed at building an alliance between Italy and North African countries, especially Algeria to break the Anglo-Saxon domination on the oil market.

Mattei rejected the French offer, which envisaged involving ENI in the exploitation of the resources of the colonial Sahara to make the Italian support for the insurgents cease as he already imagined an independent Algeria and decided to act accordingly.

Mario Pirani, collaborator of Mattei and ENI envoy in North Africa, testified about the occurrence of diplomatic meetings between Mattei and representatives of the GPRA such as Benkhedda, Krim Belkacem and Ben Bella, to establish future cooperations.

Mattei was committed to supporting the Algerian revolution through the media and newspapers (for example, *Il Giorno*) but also by drawing up energy and industrial projects such as the creation of a refinery and a Mediterranean gas pipeline.

Unfortunately, the premature death of Mattei led to the suppression of all these ambitious projects and especially to the exclusion of ENI from the oil agreements when France chose to involve Standard Oil.⁶⁴

⁶³ Omar, Kerkeb. "Le Relazioni Italo-Algerine : Enrico Mattei E La Guerra Di Liberazione Nazionale Algerina (1954-1962) – Aleph." Edinum.org, 23 Dec. 2021, aleph.edinum.org/5579?utm_, https://aleph.edinum.org/5579?utm_. Accessed 4 Apr. 2025.

⁶⁴ Omar, Kerkeb. "Le Relazioni Italo-Algerine : Enrico Mattei E La Guerra Di Liberazione Nazionale Algerina (1954-1962) – Aleph." Edinum.org, 23 Dec. 2021, aleph.edinum.org/5579?utm_, https://aleph.edinum.org/5579?utm_. Accessed 4 Apr. 2025.

On 27 October 1962 the plane in which Enrico Mattei was travelling crashed near Pavia, causing the death of the latter, although initially it seemed an accident the subsequent investigations made it clear that it was an attack.

To date, the mystery of who was behind this attack remains open, as there are multiple suspects. According to some theories it was attributable to the large international oil companies, annoyed by Mattei's attempt to challenge their monopoly. Other investigations suggested Franco-American interests opposed to Italian expansionism in the Sahara, a trail was also opened suggesting the Sicilian mafia as someone else's armed arm, perhaps for US or competing industrial interests.⁶⁵ Finally, another investigation was opened that led back to the OAS, which allegedly acted to counter one of the major international supporters of the Algerian rebels.⁶⁶

As for a second nation that played an equally important role in the conflict, namely Switzerland, the FLN made it one of the diplomatic operating bases in Europe. This was made possible primarily by a network work that the FLN began to exploit the presence of the UN and the Red Cross, thanks to which they introduced themselves. The FLN's diplomatic campaign in Switzerland then took off in 1957, when the FLN opened its offices in Bern and was represented by Ferhat Abbas until 1958.

In 1958 Ferhat Abbas was appointed president of the GPRA, his office was moved from Bern to Rome, without a fixed seat. In his place, Omar Khodja was appointed provisional representative of the FLN in Switzerland in November 1959, with the task of helping Algerian refugees remaining in office until May 1961, when he was replaced by Moussa Boudiaf.

It should be noted that the Swiss government did not officially recognize GPRA, but tolerated the presence of its ministers, allowing informal meetings and issuing visas. Some members of the GPRA, including Ferhat Abbas, Krim Belkacem, Boussouf, Mehri and especially Ahmed Francis, regularly visited Switzerland, officially for health

⁶⁵ MORONI, GABRIELE. "La Verità Sulla Morte Di Enrico Mattei è Rimasta Sepolta Nel Fango." *Il Giorno*, 25 Oct. 2022, www.ilgiorno.it/cronaca/enrico-mattei-indagini-inchieste-e5d09b1c. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

⁶⁶ "L'ombra Dell'Oas Sul Delitto Mattei a Bascapè "I Paramilitari Francesi Lo Volevano Morto."" *La Provincia Pavese*, 11 Mar. 2021, laprovinciapavese.gelocal.it/tempo-libero/2021/03/11/news/l-ombra-dell-oas-sul-delitto-mattei-a-bascapè-i-paramilitari-francesi-lo-volevano-morto-1.40014982. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

reasons or stay through the organizations mentioned above, But in reality they were visits for diplomatic or logistical activities.

In a short time Switzerland became an important bridgehead for the arms trade linked to the FLN, not surprisingly the first murders related to the "Main rouge" French organization operating in Switzerland were all against arms dealers linked to the FLN.

But even more important was the banking activity of the FLN in Switzerland, since there were economic activities of a certain scale mainly due to the arms trade, the FLN opened all its main accounts and had them managed by the Société des Banques Suisses.

In 1959, Michel Debré (French prime minister) asked the Swiss authorities to monitor the FLN's cash flows, but the latter refused to breach bank secrets.⁶⁷

Shortly thereafter, an unprecedented situation of tension was created between France and Switzerland.

France, deeply irritated by the activities of the FLN in Swiss territory, urged the closure of the FLN office in Bern and the expulsion from Swiss soil of all FLN militants and Algerian deserters from the French army.⁶⁸

However, Switzerland remained faithful to its principle of neutrality and responded cautiously. After the 1957 scandal (Dubois-Mercier affair, which involved the French secret services in clandestine activities on Swiss soil), the Swiss government decided to evaluate each French request in compliance with its own Constitution and international law.

⁶⁷ Amiri, Linda. "Les Espaces de Voisinage Dans Les Conflits de Décolonisation : Le Cas de La Suisse Pendant La Guerre d'Indépendance Algérienne." *Matériaux Pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, vol. N° 97 - 98, no. 1, 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 50–57, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.097.0009>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

⁶⁸ Amiri, Linda. "Les Espaces de Voisinage Dans Les Conflits de Décolonisation : Le Cas de La Suisse Pendant La Guerre d'Indépendance Algérienne." *Matériaux Pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, vol. N° 97 - 98, no. 1, 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 50–57, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.097.0009>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

France continued to urge the Swiss to expel all FLN militants and deserters, using its position of neutrality as an excuse not to take part in the conflicts. However, the Swiss decided not to listen to the French demands and the response was that since it was not a conflict between sovereign states but a civil war, the principle of neutrality did not exist as valid only in conflicts between states.

However, although Switzerland tolerated the presence on its territory representatives of the GPRA, prohibited them from any political activity towards Algerian residents. A measure designed to prevent Switzerland does not have the same problem as France, that is to say the establishment on its territory of a counter-state FLN who would supervise and control immigration. Aware of strategic importance Switzerland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the GPRA recommended to its representative to limit their activity to diplomatic initiatives.

Their authority over Algerian immigration was not only moral, since the Algerian workers settled in Switzerland were attached to the French Federation of the FLN, as students returned to U.G.E.M.A. (General Union of Muslim Algerian men). There was therefore an antinomy between the mission of the GPRA and Federation and the U.G.E.M.A. executive Committee.

Obviously, to understand the course of events that led Switzerland to become the most important coordination center of the FLN in Europe, it is necessary to delve a little deeper into how the Algerian presence has evolved in this country.

Before 1955 the numbers of the Algerian community in Switzerland were very marginal, however the local police had already detected the clandestine presence of several personalities linked to the FLN including Ahmed Ben Bella.⁶⁹

The Algerians' interest in Switzerland increased primarily because they could hold FLN meetings there without fear of French repression and get in touch with other anti-

⁶⁹ Amiri, Linda. "Les Espaces de Voisinage Dans Les Conflits de Décolonisation : Le Cas de La Suisse Pendant La Guerre d'Indépendance Algérienne." *Matériaux Pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, vol. N° 97 - 98, no. 1, 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 50–57, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.097.0009>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

colonial leaders, such as the Tunisian Salah Ben Youssef and the Moroccan Ahmed Balafrej.

At that time, the Egyptian embassy in Switzerland had already become a reference and a bridgehead for all North African nationalist movements. From 1956, Morocco and Tunisia also placed their embassies in Switzerland and even their diplomatic baggage at the disposal of FLN militants.

The embassies of Tunisia and Morocco in Switzerland played an equally important role in helping Algerian refugees fleeing from France who transited from Switzerland to North African countries. The Swiss authorities realized that Algerians not registered with the French consulate could easily obtain Tunisian and Moroccan passports, which allowed them to travel without being disturbed.

From 1958 onwards, Algerian immigration to Switzerland increased exponentially, but it was mostly students, while workers for economic reasons preferred Germany as a destination. Just think that in January 1958, the Ugema (General Union of Algerian Muslim Students) moved its executive committee from Paris to Lausanne, with the consent of a FLN leader in France, but without the official approval of the federal committee.⁷⁰

The executive committee of UGEMA (the organization of Algerian students) was sanctioned by the FLN for not respecting the hierarchy, accused of leaving without authorization, that is to say desertion.

To summarize the role of UGEMA in Switzerland, we must first point out that this association handled the financial and organizational issues of Algerian students. Since the war of independence was still going on, these students did not receive any aid from the French government, and therefore Ugema had to find alternative sources of funding to enable them to continue their studies and live in dignity abroad.⁷¹

⁷¹ Amiri, Linda. "Les Espaces de Voisinage Dans Les Conflits de Décolonisation : Le Cas de La Suisse Pendant La Guerre d'Indépendance Algérienne." *Matériaux Pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, vol. N° 97 - 98, no. 1, 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 50–57, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.097.0009>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

To make this possible, UGEMA had to launch a campaign to raise funds and scholarships through international channels. The funds and scholarships came from WUS (World University Service): an international organization that helped refugee or distressed students.

In this case, he received a major donation from the (American) Ford Foundation, which made it possible to fund Algerian students. But equally important were the funds from the governments of Morocco and Tunisia, as well as from the international federation of students, which was close to socialist ideology and promoted anti-colonialist initiatives in the world and supported the students who did so.

Finally, aid arrived from the countries of Eastern Europe (in an anti-imperialist key) and from the United States who wanted to weaken the French hegemony in North Africa.

Many Swiss citizens were part of networks that supported the FLN, fundamental were publishers like Nils Anderson, who was responsible for publishing books censored in France as "la question" of Henri Alleg, thus playing a crucial role in the FLN's propaganda; through the Curiel network, it was also responsible for fundraising as well as publications.

In 1960, Jean Mayerat, president of the municipal council of Yverdon (Switzerland), was arrested while carrying copies of the FLN newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, in France. This triggered a scandal that further deteriorated relations between France and Switzerland. Mayerat was sentenced to one year in prison and the investigation revealed that the newspaper was printed in Switzerland by the printers of *La voix ouvrière* (organ of the Workers' Party).

Following the scandal, the printing and distribution of *El Moudjahid* in Switzerland was banned.

During the conflict, committees and organizations openly pro-FLN were established in Switzerland, including: the "Suisse-Algérie" committee, the "Mouvement

anticolonialiste français", and the group "Jeune Résistance", which helped deserters from the French army.⁷²

While France had reason to complain about all these pro-Algerian activities taking place in Switzerland, the Swiss themselves were annoyed by the French policies of the Foreign Legion, where many Swiss citizens served. This caused further diplomatic tensions between France and Switzerland, where enlistment in the legion was prohibited by law. In particular, the debate on torture had great resonance: the brochure *Ils accusent*, which collected testimonies of former legionaries about atrocities in Algeria, strengthened the anti-colonial campaigns.

However, despite French pressure, Switzerland did not renounce its neutrality. Following the failure of the Melun negotiations (June 1960), at the request of the GPRA (the Algerian provisional government in exile), Switzerland agreed to play a mediator role in relaunching the peace process.

In November 1960, the GPRA decided to resume negotiations but wanted to avoid another failure like that of Melun. For this he seeks a more confidential, untied from interests and diplomatically favorable context.

Having discarded the US, Germany and the East for geopolitical reasons, Switzerland appears to be the ideal country, thanks to its independent policy based on integrity and neutrality.

The work was started by the Swiss lawyer Nicolet, close to the FLN who contacted the Swiss diplomat Olivier Long. On 23 December 1960, the first secret meeting between the parties took place after the French referendum on self-determination (January 1961), and De Gaulle finally gave the green light to the talks.

For a whole year, Switzerland plays a crucial role in mediating to keep the negotiations between the parties alive despite the ongoing tensions.

⁷² Amiri, Linda. "Les Espaces de Voisinage Dans Les Conflits de Décolonisation : Le Cas de La Suisse Pendant La Guerre d'Indépendance Algérienne." *Matériaux Pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, vol. N° 97 - 98, no. 1, 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 50–57, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.097.0009>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

According to Olivier Long, “the mountains of mistrust on both sides may have been dislocated because, despite their suspicions, Algerians were always convinced that the other could not use Switzerland for lure into a trap. Only the Swiss bond has allowed the French and Algerian doubt their good faith and engage in negotiation”.⁷³

To conclude, we can say that from 1958 on, Switzerland really took part in the war of Algeria, although not with weapons, but as a strategic node of diplomacy and French contestation of the war, Also serving as a logistical and political refuge for the FLN, militants. Participating in the negotiations allowed Switzerland to reaffirm its foreign policy values, which were put to the test by a conflict that was not its own but had strong internal consequences, especially in the French-speaking regions.

So this chapter, through the analysis of a series of books and academic works, has made it possible to address what is the focal point of this thesis, or that what really distinguished the Algerian liberation conflict from other wars of decolonization was precisely the decisive role played by international relations. Never before had an emerging nation been able to exploit its relations with the world to such an extent as to turn the tide of a conflict against a colonial empire that militarily seemed to be lost in every way.

⁷³ Amiri, Linda. “Les Espaces de Voisinage Dans Les Conflits de Décolonisation : Le Cas de La Suisse Pendant La Guerre d’Indépendance Algérienne.” *Matériaux Pour l’Histoire de Notre Temps*, vol. N° 97 - 98, no. 1, 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 50–57, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.097.0009>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2025.

5.0 The OAS and the fight against Algerian independence.

5.1 Origins, strategy and objectives of the OAS.

The “*Organisation armée secrète*” was founded as a consequence of the referendum for Algerian self-determination held in 1961 with which the Algerian independence was approved with nearly 75% of votes in favor and 92% of affluence.

After years of internal and external war and thousands of deaths and injured, the French population was exhausted and consensus towards the war was at an all-time low, the text of the referendum was the following:

“Do you approve the bill submitted to the French people by the President of the Republic and concerning the self-determination of the populations of Algeria and the organization of public powers in Algeria prior to self-determination?”

The organization was founded in January 1961 in Spain by former officers of the French army and foreign legion; Pierre Lagaillard, Raoul Salan (who took part in the putsch of Algeri) Jean Jacques Susini and others who were still part of the army as Yves Guérin Serac.

After the failed putsch of Algeri in 1961, during which many generals as Raoul Salan and Pierre Sergeant tried to stop the negotiations among France and FLN, this gave the first great input to the formation of the leadership of OAS. Although the name was invented by Lagaillard and Susini during the Madrilenian exile, this very particular paramilitary organization descended from the various anti-terrorist organizations held by the *pieds noirs* from 1956. The first operation of the OAS took place in January 1961 with the assassination of a liberal lawyer in Algeir and then followed that of the Mayor of Evian when the negotiations to end the war started.

Essentially the OAS, born from the desperation of a few army ultras, owed its success to the coincidence of the failed putsch in Algeria which did nothing but bring other members of the armed forces who joined together for a last desperate effort in an attempt to stop something that was almost decided.

Soon the OAS started to define its hierarchies, as commander in chief nearly obviously was chosen the general Raoul Salan, former commander of French forces in Algeria but

then fired by president De Gaulle because of its opposition to his policies of negotiation during the war. Salan left the general direction of the OAS to the 27 years-old Jean Jacques Susini, the far right former medicine student who first distinguished himself by founding student movements in favor of French Algeria, and then by organizing riots during the days of the barricades in Algiers in 1960, which cost him imprisonment and then exile in Spain, he was as young as determined, his task will be the office of A.P.P (Action Policy Propaganda).

Under Susini's leadership, the executive key-role was given to Jean-Claude Perez, chief executive of O.R.O section (Organization-Information-Operations), despite he was the founder of one of the first counter-terrorism organizations in Algiers he never showed any interest in policy, he declared himself has neither fascist nor communist, he personally signed all the executive acts of OAS. Finally the O.M. office was given to Gardes (Organization of the Masses).

Initially, the OAS used all the money stolen from government coffers during the April putsch to finance itself, then in a few months it substantially adopted a very similar strategy of financing to the FLN by asking contributions also with extortion and as the FLN forbidden to smoke to Muslims to finance the organization the OAS forbidden holidays in foreign.⁷⁴

Often families who disobeyed the ban on holidays abroad found a letter in their home that ordered them to pay an extra sum of money, threatening reprisals if they did not.

Occasionally, a series of bank robberies helped to swell the OAS funds, which quickly reached two and a half billion francs for the three Algerian metropolises alone.

The objective of the OAS, although the conflict had an almost certain outcome, was to put De Gaulle in a situation where he was unable to govern Algeria and to try to orient public opinion towards a solution different from the one desired by the president.

To put it briefly, General Salan hoped to create in Algeria a situation similar to that of Apartheid in Rhodesia, where President Ian Smith, breaking ties with the U.K. had founded an autonomous state outside the Commonwealth.

⁷⁴ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 541-568

It is also true that, within the OAS, chaos and ideological fragmentation reigned supreme, there were people who had joined because they wanted a solution like that of Rhodesia, others who hoped for an Algeria where pieds noir and Muslims were fully integrated with each other and Susini instead being a fanatic of the state of Israel even hoped to attract the trust that the Muslims gave to the FLN to first take control of Algeria and then attack France itself.

What can be considered the result of the OAS actions was most likely to have succeeded in killing moderates on both sides in order to make negotiations between the two sides impossible, but soon it would have obtained very different results from that they were hoping for.

5.2 Social and political impact of the OAS in the conflict.

The OAS actions began on May 3, 1961, when a leaflet was distributed in the city of Algiers announcing; "a great partisan army is being organized, listen to us and everything will be saved. Do not hand over your weapons, regroup in small sections, kill anyone who tries to arrest you, burn government offices; kill traitors, the small and the great ones."

In the same days the walls of the city were filled with posters and writings: "the OAS strikes where it wants and when it wants." and again "the OAS sees everything".

On May 19, the eve of the opening of the Evian negotiations, the OAS caused 19 explosions in Algiers, all targeting French liberals and Muslims, these terrorist actions were called "strounga" in pied noir jargon and soon became everyday life in Algiers.

A war soon broke out with the French police forces, especially after the first "operation ponctuelle" in which Commissioner Gavoury, who was in charge of managing the fight against the organization, was killed by two OAS militants.

On August 5, the OAS obtained its really first success, by interrupting a television transmission during the visit of minister Joxe in Algeir and the majority of Pied Noirs was following the visit on the television. In the meanwhile, the transmission was interrupted by the OAS general Gardy, who incited people to riot against the Gaullist dictatorship, people started to believe that the OAS had a real chance to take the power so thousands of them reversed in the streets and started several demonstrations.

A few days later, a second televised speech, this time by Salan, called on the population to join a three-day demonstration to demonstrate their willingness to contribute to the OAS cause. Immediately, thousands of people began shouting the movement's slogans from their windows for five hours, clanging pots and pans; black and white OAS flags began to fly from public buildings, and at the same time the OAS raided the port of Algiers, seizing a total of 80 million francs. These rapid successes of the movement meant that the OAS took over entire areas of the city and that the French government seemed to leave control of them to them.

Like any organization of its kind, the OAS could count on several contacts abroad, the most famous and discussed of which was the relationship with the CIA.

According to some unconfirmed rumors whose origin seems to be Jean Jacques Susini himself, in 1961 the CIA offered Salan weapons and materials for an army of 50 thousand men, in exchange for preferential treatment in access to Saharan oil if the OAS won the battle.

Although the 1975 Senate inquiry into CIA activities denied any contact with the OAS, Salan himself vaguely confirmed to Alistair Horne, author of the book *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*, that he had been approached by CIA agents on November 8, 1961 in Algiers.⁷⁵

As for the OAS campaign in France, the methods and results were extremely different. First of all, the operations were carried out in a much more rudimentary manner than those conducted in Algeria with military precision, the leaders even went so far as to prohibit the use of explosives in their homeland because they realized that public opinion could turn against them at any moment.

Even the fundraising campaigns in France did not yield the desired results as the few extortion letters such as the one to Brigitte Bardot did nothing but fuel the scandal in the newspapers.

following a series of attacks involving several innocent people who did not represent a political target for the OAS, such as the attack on Minister Malraux, which, because the

⁷⁵ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 541-568

explosive was placed in the wrong place, led to the injury of a 4-year-old girl, the left managed to ride the wave of popular discontent that arose around these events and started a series of counter-demonstrations.

As Adèle Momméja argues, the social and political consequences of the OAS are very detailed and exhaustive, but can be summarized in a few points.

First of all through planned and systematic violence, the OAS's primary objective was to make life impossible for Muslims in Algerian cities of European character.

The main means of conducting this struggle was not only the initial recruitment of soldiers disappointed by de Gaulle's political turn but the involvement of the working masses and the lower middle class of young people often without political and military experience but who came from marginalized contexts in the cities and were united by the fear of living with the Algerians because of the conflict.

We can affirm as well that the OAS played a role of "vigie de l'ordre colonial" by trying through its actions to fuel racial segregation between the two groups of Algerian citizens, thus punishing those European and non-European people who transgressed this order. It was therefore a violence that was more territorial and symbolic than ethnic.

Although only a small percentage of the colonists actively participated in the violence, a significant portion of the European population showed passive complicity: silence, protection of the guilty, and indifference towards the victims.

to conclude the result of the OAS campaigns of violence led to nothing but a definitive rupture between European and Algerian settlers and the collective awareness that French Algeria had now become a utopia, giving way to the subsequent exodus of the French and deep scars that remained even after the war.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Adèle Momméja. "Les Origines Coloniales de La Violence. Le Cas de l'Organisation Armée Secrète." HAL (Le Centre Pour La Communication Scientifique Directe), 1 Dec. 2020. Accessed 24 Mar. 2025.

6. How the Algerian War Changed the French Political Landscape.

6.1 The 1958 crisis.

French fourth republic was characterized by several institutional problems due to parties' activities, for this reason fear and anger rapidly grew up in the army and overall in the pieds noirs community in Algeria, due to a lack of proper support to the military effort. The crisis and political instability of the fourth republic substantially increased popular discontent and the feeling that Algeria could become a second defeat similar to Indochina.

On 15 April 1958 the fall of Felix Gaillard officially started the political crisis, the fall of the current government immediately obliged president of the republic René Coty to give the task of forming a new government to Pierre Pflimlin (Mouvement Républicain Populaire), who was seriously criticized by the generals and overall by pieds noirs community on May 9.

The reason for which Pierre Pflimlin was so criticized was his intention to immediately open the negotiations with Algerian rebels to end the war as soon as possible.

Coincidentally, on May 9, 1958, when Algiers was already in the throes of riots over the possibility of a government led by Pflimlin, news reached the city of the execution of three French prisoners by the FLN.

The spontaneous reaction of the pieds noirs was obviously to take to the streets shouting; "these are the murderers with whom Pflimlin wants to negotiate!"

On the same day, General Salan broke his silence, deciding to send a long telegram to General Ely, Chief of Staff of the French Army. The telegram expressed the army's deep frustration in the face of a political crisis that seemed to be inconclusive and since the press reports were suggesting a possible abandonment of Algeria, General Salan made it clear to General Ely that the army was not willing to accept an abandonment of that land, nor to make useless efforts and sacrifices if the government did not show any intention of defending it.

The telegram concluded with an invitation from Salan to bring the above news to the attention of the President of the Republic, urging the formation of a new, strong government determined to keep Algeria French.⁷⁷

It was clearly an ultimatum, what is important in this event is that for the first time since the Napoleonic coup the army intervened in French politics.

On May 13, general called a demonstration in the square in front of the war memorial, which was attended by between 20,000 and 100,000 people, according to sources, once at the monument the crowd made way for the entrance on stage of Lagaillard, accompanied by the military and other leaders of the 7 (political group of the main supporters of the return of De Gaulle), accompanied by shouts of "l'armée au pouvoir".

The Group of 7 was composed of prominent figures in Algeria and French politics in general; Jacques Soustelle (key figure, former governor of Algeria and convinced Gaullist), Georges Bidault, Pascal Arrighi, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Léon Delbecque (involved in the Algiers revolt), Michel Debré (later Prime Minister under De Gaulle), René Capitant. These politicians belonging to the Gaullist wing will become key figures in the process of dismantling the fourth republic and the birth of the fifth, thanks above all to the support of the army obtained in a short time.⁷⁸

Shortly after, the military and the crowd broke into the General Government building, overturning it and destroying everything, thanks to the fact that the governor from Paris had given orders not to shoot at the crowd at all.

Once the palace of the general government was taken, the people warmly greeted General Massu, the hero of the moment for the *pieds noirs*, who shortly after, conferring with Salan, began to ask for names to form the committee of public safety.

The names of the committee members were chosen by Massu by taking the people who most distinguished themselves as representatives of the crowd during the demonstration; the only two high-ranking military men present, Colonels Trinquier and Ducasse, were also included.

⁷⁷ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 303-330

⁷⁸ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 303-330

According to Massu's statements, the gesture of creating the committee should not be interpreted as a coup d'état but only and exclusively as a spontaneous gesture of the people to send a signal to the government so that Algeria would not be abandoned to itself.

Shortly after the announcement from the windows of the government palace of the members of the committee, a telegram was sent to President Coty, signed by Massu, in which it was explained that the committee had been formed not to shed blood but to maintain order, and it also requested the formation of a government of public safety in Paris as the only solution to keep Algeria under the fatherland.⁷⁹

During the night, a second appeal was sent to President Coty, this time from Salan to renew the call for the formation of a government of public safety, in the meanwhile another message was sent personally to De Gaulle.

Gaillard granted full powers to General Salan in the Algiers area, the government, forced into a corner by pressure from Algiers, quickly gave its confidence to Pflimlin's government with 280 votes in favour against 126 against.

Pflimlin immediately showed himself hostile towards the generals of Algiers, only to regret it later as Salan had tried to act with moderation until then, surely the announcement of the appointment of the new government was a hard stroke for the committee of public safety, but Salan remained cautious.

Feeling lost in the face of the unfolding events, Pflimlin undertook a highly controversial policy by confirming Salan's powers but cutting communications between Algeria and France.

Cornered, Salan uttered the words that officially began the political change, exclaiming in a speech from the General Government Palace: "Vive la France, vive l'Algerie Française et vive De Gaulle."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Gagnon, Daniel A. *Algeria, de Gaulle, and the Birth of the French Fifth Republic*. 1 Jan. 2013. Accessed 28 Mar. 2025.

⁸⁰ Gagnon, Daniel A. *Algeria, de Gaulle, and the Birth of the French Fifth Republic*. 1 Jan. 2013. Accessed 28 Mar. 2025.

When Pflimlin, deeply outraged, telephoned Salan to ask for explanations, his answer was clear and simple, the French army and people believed that only De Gaulle could save Algeria and France.

Meanwhile, in Paris, General Challe put pressure on Deputy Minister Guy Mollet, pointing out that the situation was almost irreparable, that the Algerian army would soon intervene and that in that case he personally would never give the order to shoot at his brothers in arms.⁸¹

Taking advantage of Salan's speech, General De Gaulle ended his neutrality and publicly declared that in such a situation he was ready to assume the powers of the republic, although he did not specify how or when.

In the following days, General Salan's popularity grew exponentially and De Gaulle's return to power seemed closer than ever. Salan then decided to send two messages threatening Pflimlin and De Gaulle that if De Gaulle himself did not take power as soon as possible, the Algerian high command might not prevent a military incursion into French territory.

Preparations were thus begun for a direct military intervention in France, which became known as "Operation Resurrection", on May 24, the French people learned of the occupation of Corsica by General Massu's paratroopers.

Pflimlin, outraged by such a gesture, considered a possible military reconquest of Corsica, but when he called to ask where the fleet was, he was told that it was en route to an unknown destination.

On May 28, Pflimlin resigned, Maurice Schumann was heard to exclaim: "We have won! France has won!". That same evening the left's response was not long in coming, more than 100,000 people led by Mitterrand and Mendès France took to the streets. However, at the executive level, three days later, the left split with the socialists supporting De Gaulle, leaving the communists in opposition as Mollet argued that this was the only way to avoid a civil war.⁸²

⁸¹ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 303-330

⁸² Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 303-330

Initially, things were not easy for De Gaulle within the Senate, who found himself besieged by a thousand objections from the opposition, in particular from Troquer, president of the assembly, who raised countless objections regarding the unconstitutionality of De Gaulle's return, comparing his possible government to Vichy France and finally threatening to personally provide for the formation of a new government.

The turning point came quickly, shortly after President Coty received a further ultimatum from the command in Algiers which threatened to proceed on French soil with Operation Resurrection if De Gaulle did not receive the nomination by three o'clock on 29 May.⁸³

On the morning of May 29, Coty finally invited De Gaulle to form a new government and threatened to resign if the assembly opposed it. The next day, De Gaulle accepted the task.

6.2 The rise of the fifth republic and role of Charles De Gaulle.

On June 1, De Gaulle appeared before the assembly for the first time since 1946 and dictated his conditions for accepting command. First, he asked for full government powers by decree for six months, a four-month forced vacation of the assembly, and the mandate to submit a new constitution to the country.

As Horne argues: “after president Coty red the communication the disorder started, the communists were beating the benches and shouting: le fascisme ne passera pas!”

As for Algeria, the main cause of his political comeback, De Gaulle did not offer any formula or solution at least initially. In the end, power was conferred on him with 329 votes in favor and 224 against; the crisis of 1958 was finally ended and the Gaullist era was started.

First of all, De Gaulle defined the objectives of his government: to reduce Algiers under the authority of Paris, to show the rebels that France was striving for peace but to

⁸³ Gagnon, Daniel A. Algeria, de Gaulle, and the Birth of the French Fifth Republic. 1 Jan. 2013. Accessed 28 Mar. 2025.

reinforce the French military presence so that no events on the ground could interfere with decisions.⁸⁴

To make an informed analysis of the facts that led to the Gaullist era, we must first start from the fact that this situation arose for a very simple reason: politicians were aware that no matter how much effort they made, no military solution could put an end to the conflict.

No political force believed it had the authority to impose the only plausible solution, namely peace negotiations, on an army that was totally opposed to it, on the European population of Algeria and, above all, on a public opinion that was totally uninformed about what was really happening.

Since no majority could be identified, the impasse was total and above all since the division between supporters of French Algeria and supporters of negotiations passed right within the parties, it was almost impossible to identify a majority on this basis.

So since the fourth republic had proven incapable of adapting to modern times, the introduction of the fifth was seen as a result of necessity.

The Fourth Republic, reproducing the scheme of the Third, attributed a pre-eminent role to the legislative, depriving the executive of the means to act. The head of government had no means to impose his will on the deputies, this weakness of the executive contributed to make the Algerian problem nearly unsolvable.

It was not even the first time that an armed conflict had caused an institutional change in France: the Franco-Prussian War had led to the fall of the Second Empire, the defeat in 1940 had led to the establishment of the French state and then the Algerian War to the establishment of the Fifth Republic.⁸⁵

It must be recognized, however, that in hindsight the rise of the fifth republic and the new institutions did not contribute so decisively to the conclusion of the Algerian conflict which, as we know, ended a good 4 years later in 1962. Certainly a

⁸⁴ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 333-348

⁸⁵ Olivier Wieviorka. 1958 : Rottura O Transizione? 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 33–51, <https://doi.org/10.1400/180608>. Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.

strengthening of the executive power allowed De Gaulle to overcome with more certainty many of the problems of the case, in particular the putsch of the generals in 1961. However, although it was believed that a centralization of powers in the hands of the executive would have led to a rapid solution to the conflict, this was not the case.

It is equally illusory to believe that the establishment of the fifth republic had provided a solution to the problem of decolonization. Since 1960 many states have claimed their independence by breaking away from the community and tying themselves to France only through bilateral agreements, this shows how in reality the institutions following the Bandung conference were easily bypassed. If the government believed that the new institutions responded to the needs of the colonized peoples, the reality is that they saw in them a means to facilitate their separation from France and their emancipation.

In the subsequent elections in November 1958, the Gaullists obtained an indisputable success, with 198 elected members and 20.4 percent of the votes, supported by the good result of the classical right (133 deputies and 22.1 percent of the votes), while the Communists saw their consensus collapse to 19.2 percent compared to 25.8 percent in the two previous years.⁸⁶

Thus the great political change that France saw in 1958 reflected first and foremost the impotence of a regime incapable of taking a strong position in the face of a war that had been going on for 4 years, confirmed the autonomy enjoyed by the army, increasingly emancipated from civil protection, and translated the exasperation of the French people who, although inclined to find a solution to the conflict, were less and less attached to a republic in whose institutions they no longer believed.

A new political system emerged, marked by the decline of radical socialism and communism, the preeminence of the right and the appearance of a Gaullist formation.

However, once he took power, General De Gaulle did not intend to abide by the wishes of the army nor to implement the Algerian policies desired by the ultras.

⁸⁶ Olivier Wieviorka. 1958 : Rottura O Transizione? 1 Jan. 2010, pp. 33–51, <https://doi.org/10.1400/180608>. Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.

The new president acted promptly. He offered symbolic guarantees, appointing Jacques Soustelle, a symbol of French Algeria, to the Ministry of Information, promoting Jacques Massu to the rank of major general, and often uttering words of reassurance.

However, at the same time De Gaulle worked to reassert his control, by placing a civil administrator alongside General Salan, as of 7 June 1958, before transferring him to the metropolis, gradually delegating to the prefects the powers that had until then been attributed to the military.

In other words, de Gaulle's success in containing the power of the army was initially based on a cleverly fueled misunderstanding. The military establishment postulated that de Gaulle would conduct the Algerian policy that it hoped for, while the latter limited himself to building a balance of power that was useful to him, subduing the army and freeing himself from its influence, leveraging the growing legitimacy that the referendum on the Constitution (28 September 1958), the legislative elections (23-30 November 1958) and the election to the Presidency of the Republic (21 December 1958) gave him.⁸⁷

Obviously, in order to secure his powers, De Gaulle also had to deal with the political forces, with whom he made extensive use of threats, exploiting their fear of a possible military intervention and therefore of the outbreak of a civil war.

Even today, historians still debate a great deal about De Gaulle's behavior during the crisis and what his real intentions were when he came to power.

As Lucia Bonfreschi argues, it is agreed that, although facilitated by the pressure exerted by the army, de Gaulle wanted to return to power in compliance with republican legality, he presented himself and, once he had received the investiture as Prime Minister, acted as a representative of the State with respect to the parties. Finally, it is now recognized that it was above all the practice of power and the subsequent reform of 1962 that shaped the institutions in a "semi-presidential" sense, institutions that on

⁸⁷ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 333-348

paper left open a more parliamentary reading, as hoped for by the political forces that had founded the Fourth Republic.⁸⁸

Because of the multiplicity of roles played by the Gaullists and the plurality of directions - not always convergent - in which they moved, all historians distinguish de Gaulle from the groups of his followers. The question that everyone asks is whether de Gaulle played the role of a third party peacemaker with respect to the politicians of the Fourth Republic and the supporters of French Algeria (army and ultras), or whether he supported the Algerian revolt to force the "regime" to capitulate.

The answers given by historians are obviously varied; according to some, for example, De Gaulle was convinced of the importance of his return to legality but would not have disdained military intervention if the circumstances to guarantee it had not existed.

In essence, the "resurrection" operation represented the real winning card in the hands of the general to guarantee his power, that is, not to use force directly but to leverage the fears of both politicians and public opinion of the possibility of a military intervention and a consequent civil war, in some ways very similar to the strategy of the March on Rome.

Obviously, beyond their willingness to reform the institutions, the political forces that supported De Gaulle's return were clearly driven by a series of strategic calculations such that they believed they had no other choice to avoid a conflict far worse than the Algerian war; even the Socialists, although politically distant from him, had to come to these conclusions.

To conclude many historians tend to consider 1962 as "the end of a cycle", with the passage to the opposition, on the occasion of the referendum on the direct election of the President of the Republic, of those political forces that had contributed to the success of the transition. Through the "cartel des non", that is, into an ambiguous alliance against the move implemented by de Gaulle to further strengthen the presidential character of the new institutions, they were severely defeated by the General's maneuver.

⁸⁸ Vodovar, Christine, and Lucia Bonfreschi. "La Transizione Francese Del 1958 Nella Storiografia Degli Ultimi Anni." *Ventesimo Secolo*, vol. 9, no. 23, 1 Oct. 2010, pp. 107–123. Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.

The political elections of the same year thus marked the definitive decline of the party system inherited from the Fourth Republic and the appearance of a lasting phenomenon of the French political system, bipolarization.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Vodovar, Christine, and Lucia Bonfreschi. "La Transizione Francese Del 1958 Nella Storiografia Degli Ultimi Anni." *Ventesimo Secolo*, vol. 9, no. 23, 1 Oct. 2010, pp. 107–123. Accessed 27 Mar. 2025.

7. Evian accords and war consequences.

7.1 The accords and their implications

After an initial attempt failed the previous year, the French and Algerian delegations opened a second conference in Evian to end the conflict.

The Evian Accords were 93 pages, of which we will analyse the salient points. Clearly the agreements opened with the immediate obligation of a cease-fire and the mutual release of all prisoners. In the following chapters, Algerian sovereignty is officially recognized in its territorial integrity in accordance with what was established by the referendum on self-determination of 1961. At the beginning of this last chapter on self-determination it was also recognized the right of French citizens to enjoy equal protection and all the privileges granted to Algerians for a transitional period of 3 years at the end of which they would have to choose definitively between Algerian and French citizenship.

The rights of this transitional period for the French included: respect for private property, fair and genuine participation in public affairs, non-discrimination with regard to language, culture and religion. The same protection was given to Algerian citizens, who were also not subject to sanctions as a result of acts committed during the war and before the ceasefire. So the question of *pieds noirs* was regulated at least on paper.⁹⁰

The military chapter gave France a twelve-month period to reduce its armed contingent to 80,000 men and an additional twenty-four for the total repatriation of the army. Mers-el-Kebir was leased to France for a period of 15 years, which could be increased by agreement at the time of expiry. In addition, France was guaranteed the use of military installations deemed necessary by it for periods not specified.

Another chapter worth noting was certainly that relating to economic and financial cooperation, which committed France to provide for three years or more after agreement on aid of a level equivalent to those already in place. In addition, Algeria remained in the Franco area and Algerian workers were free to stay in France.

⁹⁰ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 569-600

Even more important, if not the most important, was the chapter on oil rights, a complicated agreement granting French oil companies concessions to exploit existing bases and preferential treatment for new exploration and development over a period of six years.

For the three-year transition period, it was to be presided over by a provisional executive composed equally of Algerians and French who had the task of establishing the estate within about six months of the ceasefire of a referendum ratifying the Evian.

The agreements were concluded with a declaration of principles, which provided that any dispute that arose later would be resolved between the two countries in a peaceful manner. This also meant that in case of non-compliance by Algeria the French soldiers were unable to intervene.⁹¹

Clearly the Evian agreements were nothing more than the exact implementation of General de Gaulle's plans, a figure without whom it would have been difficult to reach this compromise.

De Gaulle despite being aware of internal resistance (army, OAS and pieds noirs in particular) chose to conclude a compromise that ended the French colonial rule in Algeria and recognized its full sovereignty.

Obviously this led to the opening of a new front, as we will see better later the response of the OAS will not delay and the victims will rise in the following period.

We can say that in this scenario De Gaulle acted using a calculated duplicity, although he presented himself as the savior of French Algeria (just think how he came to power and the speech by Mostaganem) In reality, he did not miss the opportunity to totally change his plans and reform the country according to a completely different vision.

Obviously the design of De Gaulle, as much as he did not like the Pieds Noirs and the army was definitely not made to make France lose and just. First of all, we must remember that the agreement was not made by France in a position of need but in a dominant position; Although the consensus and enthusiasm for war in France had

⁹¹ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 569-600

collapsed, it must still be remembered that in military clashes France had always succeeded well or badly to prevail over the Algerians.

So De Gaulle decided to obtain an agreement that on the one hand sanctioned the loss of a territorial possession, but on the other kept alive the French economic interests because as mentioned was made a chapter on the oil rights of France.

De Gaulle acted with extraordinary political pragmatism: he set aside the pressures of the *pieds-noirs* and the army, accepted the loss of Algeria as a necessary price for the stability of France, and carried out a process of controlled decolonization, while safeguarding France's more strategic interests, such as energy and military.⁹²

7.2 Consequences of Evian accords.

On the night of March 18, 1962, President Ben Kedda declared the victory of the Algerian people, thanks to his tenacity and resilience the FLN had achieved all the military and political goals declared at the Soummam conference in 1956. In France the newspaper "La Grande Enchainé" wrote on the front page: "A De Gaulle from the country grateful, once and for all: thank you". Obviously, having long since collapsed the confidence of the French in the victory of the war the general feeling was more of relief than joy. The left protested that the clauses of the agreements left the torturers of the army unpunished with an amnesty.

Many criticized the fact that the agreements did not provide real guarantees for the safety of the *Pieds Noirs*, which General de Gaulle had sold in a hurry.

Other criticisms concerned questions of legitimacy, since the agreements had been concluded with representatives of a certain body and not of a legitimately recognized government, while France felt bound by them, the same could not be said of a future Algerian government which would repudiate such agreements.

⁹² Nouschi, André. "De Gaulle et La Fin de La Guerre D'Algérie." *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, vol. n° 251, no. 3, 7 Nov. 2013, pp. 163–170, <https://doi.org/10.3917/gmcc.251.0163>. Accessed 15 Apr. 2025.

In the cities with a strong presence of Pieds Noirs the news was received with disbelief, the streets of Algiers in that bright spring day emptied suddenly. The reaction of the OAS did not take long to make itself felt, they began by ripping off the posters and Salan declared the general strike declaring the enemy from that moment also the French army. In the following week the OAS tried everything to frustrate the agreements.

In the following days, military actions, executions and bomb attacks against the Islamic population increased exponentially. For the first time, the French and Algerian armies collaborated to keep citizens away from revenge cravings. In the days that followed, OAS militants carried out a series of attacks on French soldiers, causing casualties. Salan's orders had been carried out but the consequence of this was a radical transformation of the army's behavior, until then passive towards the OAS, wanting to avenge fallen comrades.⁹³

On all fury, the general Ailleret ordered to besiege Bab-el-Oued, a stronghold of the OAS which was besieged by twenty thousand French soldiers and conquered within a short time. But it was not over, on the 26th the OAS organized a mass demonstration to protest against the siege of Bab-el-Oued. The demonstration was banned by the prefect who sent the army to stop everything but the pieds noirs demonstrators were not discouraged, shortly after shots were fired by unknown persons and the soldiers responded to the fire killing 46 people and wounding 200. A subsequent investigation led to the conclusion that it was an OAS shooter who had orchestrated the thing to speed up the collapse of order in Algiers.

De Gaulle's order was brief and clear, "act immediately to crush the criminal action of the terrorist gangs of Algiers and Oran". In a short time the most important leaders of the organization were arrested, Edmond Jouhaud was the first, followed by Degueldre and in less than two weeks even Salan was arrested and his successor was designated George Bidault but by now the OAS was practically decapitated and in disarray.

On 8 April, the Gaullist referendum calling on the French to vote in favour of the Evian agreements received 90% of the votes.

⁹³ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 569-600

A few days later, in revenge for the capture of Salan, the OAS killed twenty-four Muslims, the organization was sowing terror in the streets of the cities and on May 2 the explosion of a car at the port of Algiers caused sixty-two deaths and one hundred fifty serious injuries.

Following a week that cost the lives of 230 Muslims, the FLN until then passive against these actions started reprisals hitting bars and places frequented by the OAS, for several days was a succession of punitive expeditions between the two forces.

As the first thousands of Pieds Noirs had begun to leave Algeria, the OAS seeing that everything was now lost implemented the policy of burnt land or they began to destroy any palace, building and institution built by the French during colonialism including the library of the university of Algiers and hospital services.⁹⁴

From prison, Salan and Jouhaud called on the OAS to cease all military action in order to avoid unnecessary massacres, so on 17 June the peace pact between the OAS and the FLN was signed. Shortly after, the Algerian referendum for the evian agreements was held on 1 July won by 5,993,754 votes against 16,478 no, two days later De Gaulle recognized the Algerian independence.

At that point, the famous exodus of the Pieds Noirs began, by early August, of the 250,000 Europeans of Oran there remained 40,000 and in total it is estimated that about and it is estimated that by September about 900,000 French had already left Algeria. However, the anarchy that the French government thought would take possession of Algeria did not exist, Algerian soldiers maintained public order in the streets, they were trained technicians able to operate and maintain gas plants, electric water and sewers, war was over and a new order was established.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 569-600

⁹⁵ Horne, A. (2006). *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books 569-600

8. The chorus of the humiliated and offended

The Algerian war has seen a whole series of associations developed as a consequence of veterans and fighters, certainly among the most famous we can mention the FNACA (Fédération nationale des anciens combattants en Algérie, Maroc et Tunisie) whose task was not only to allow the creation of a group that gave an identity to all classes of combatants involved in the conflict but above all to fight for the rights and recognition that veterans did not have before the 1990s.

The Algerian war has been described as a nameless war, beginning with the fact that it was never declared and that in the evian agreements there is no mention of armistice but of unilateral cease-fire. Until the summer of 1999, the most disparate terms were used to define this conflict; "events" (after the start of the FLN's armed operations in 1954), "police operations" (after the 1955 Constantine riots) "actions of maintenance of order" (after the vote of the special powers of 1956), "operations for the restoration of the civil peace" (during the battle of Algiers, 1957) and to conclude "pacification" (for the remembrance years of the conflict).

Although opposed by all the French political authorities, the term war is used for the first time by the newspaper "Le monde" in 1955 when the government decreed the sending of classes called to military conscription in Algeria, entitled the first page "Une guerre impitoyable", in the same year he titled a double issue "arretons la guerre d'Algérie" and was not the only newspaper to use it, even "La voix du combattant" did the same.⁹⁶

If the Indochina War had seen the mobilization of about 120,000 soldiers, the Algerian War was a real mass mobilization with as many as two million soldiers mobilized between conscription and volunteers in total. For this reason the generation of the Algerian war began to be defined as the "third generation of fire" (the first two belonged to the two world wars) This symbolized the experience that united so many soldiers during the period of the conflict to become a generational trauma.

⁹⁶ Brazzoduro, Andrea. *Soldati Senza Causa*. Gius.Laterza & Figli Spa, 23 May 2012.

When the first associations of fighters (FNAA, federation nationale des anciens d'Algérie) were formed by merging three pre-existing groups: Groupement des rappelés et maintenus (GRM) of socialist sympathy, the association des anciens d'Algérie (AAA) Created in 1957 and the association nationale des anciens d'Algérie (ANAA), close to the Communist Party.

Giving a political overview of these associations is fundamental to understand their fragmentation, in fact the great issue of this conflict is that if the first two world wars were shared as vision by veterans, There were huge political divisions in Algeria that prevented a shared sense of the country. The experiences were too different from each other and lacked the clarity of a front line that separated friends and enemies as well as the homeland from the foreigner.

The FNAA fought in the front line after the conquest of the long-awaited peace to conquer what was really the ambition of the associations or the recognition of veterans' status as ex-combatants. In the 90's it gets to gather among its ranks about 350,000 veterans, which makes it the main association. Precisely because of political differences, the great antagonist of the FNAA became the union nationale des combattants, a pre-existing organization (founded in 1918) that immediately at the outbreak of the war stands for the maintenance of French Algeria.⁹⁷

So, if the goal of the FNAA was to give a face to a generation that had fought a war with an unclear cause that often even those who fought it did not really understand, The UNC tried to gather the veterans of all wars, making them feel solidarity with each other and was united around the myth of the Great War, using it as a key reading also for the Algerian war.

In an atmosphere of total mobilization, the UNC began to realize how much the associations of veterans would take on a fundamental role in the years to come, reason why he did not hesitate to seek alliance and union with other associations that had the same ideas to counter those contrary, among the possible allies certainly was the Union

⁹⁷ Brazzoduro, Andrea. *Soldati Senza Causa*. Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 23 May 2012.

nationale des anciens d'Afrique du Nord (UNAAN) and the Association nationale des décorés de valeur militaire (ANDVM).

A turning point in the role of veterans' associations was certainly when, in 1974, the FNACA obtained the recognition of the combatant's card in "conditions of strict equality with the combatants of previous conflicts". The law in question stated that all those who had taken part in operations in North Africa from 1952 to 1962 were entitled to the combatant card. From that moment the contradiction of the existence of a conflict, which was not recognized as such, entered officially into the institutions.

However, it was a very important achievement for veterans, not only in terms of the right to retire at age 65 and in some cases 60, or for the 250 euros semesters but because to possess that card of fighter meant having finally a tangible sign of belonging to a generation fighter. To be more precise we could define it as a sign of recognition of the debt that the community had contracted with the soldiers of Algeria, it was a fundamental condition to make so that the veterans could reintegrate into civilian life in time of peace, reconciling them with the indelible experience of war.

However, for all these war veterans there was no commemoration introduced by the government to commemorate the end of the conflict. This was precisely the reason for the proliferation of associations that found a further ground of conflict in the choice of commemoration days that were different for everyone.

As mentioned, until 1999 the French government carefully avoided using the term "war" when talking about the Algerian war, but from now on, Thanks to the numerous pressures and initiatives of the various Redoubt associations, a series of parliamentary debates led to Law No. 99-882 of 18 October 1999. From that day the French state not only replaced the term "war of Algeria" to the previous "operations for the maintenance of order in North Africa" but he was involved in a series of recognitions among which in 2003 we can mention the establishment of the day of remembrance for those who died for France in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco on 5 December. In 2001, a circular made it easier to access historical archives on the Algerian war.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Thénault, Sylvie. "France-Algérie. Pour Un Traitement Commun Du Passé de La Guerre D'indépendance." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue D'histoire*, vol. 85, no. 1, 2005, pp. 119–128, <https://doi.org/10.3406/xxs.2005.4341>. Accessed 10 Dec. 2021.

Conclusion

To sum up, this thesis started by telling the story of Algeria represents a very particular case of colonialism because of the external introduction of European settlers who went to form a not negligible part of the population of the country and this meant the creation of a link between this country and the French deep and difficult to break compared to all other colonial possessions.

Then going to look at what France has achieved in practice on the Algerian soil and the resulting disparities we were able to tell how it came to the war of independence through the formation of the various rebel factions with their divisions and political colors. Moreover, the part of the thesis that required most attention was precisely the one that allowed us to explain how Algeria, despite numerous failures on the battlefield, brought France through a game of alliances and relations with different countries (USA, Italy and Switzerland especially) to lose the support it previously had from the UN countries that gradually chose to recognize Algeria.

As we have shown, Switzerland has played a key role as a bridgehead for the FLN in Europe and it is there that the movement concentrated its headquarters and its activities at the diplomatic level while the real clandestine struggle took place on the French territory. Italy thanks to political figures of a certain thickness as Enrico Mattei that in this affair was certainly one of the protagonists has tried on the one hand to keep a certain distance from the conflict but on the other to enter into it trying to put favorable bases in the case of a victory for the independentists. Finally, we can say that the United States proved to be the real diplomatic operating base of the insurgents who, thanks to a series of personalities able to relate to each other, were able to enter and get in touch with the highest political recognition of the cause at the United Nations Assembly.

We also talked about how important the export of the fight in France by the FLN which acted clandestinely and the great political and institutional changes that took place in

France with the coup d'état of the generals, the acclaimed return of General de Gaulle and the birth of the fifth republic.

Certainly the return of General De Gaulle marked a turning point in the conflict because on the one hand it served to restore political order through the great institutional transformation and the consequent birth of the fourth republic and on the other to contain and mend the the split between the government and all those elements of the army that without a figure like him could surely have resulted in initiatives far more serious than the attempted coup d'état with which the general had come to power.

We also tried to get into the detailed dynamics of the two factions, studying what was the FLN and its internal struggles between opposing factions as well as the birth of the OAS and the consequent internal struggles to the French state caused by a deep division between those who could not imagine an Algeria separated from France and those instead chose to look in Face the reality and open up to a possible independent Algeria.

Finally we have been able to address the most sensitive issues such as the question of veterans, since this conflict caused the creation of the so called “third generation of fire” after the first and the second belonging to world wars but because of the censorship of the French state on the conflict lasted about thirty years this generation ended to fight a second war with its own country only to obtain the recognition of being veterans.

The war of liberation of Algeria is still today an almost unique case for the incredible resonance that it had within the international chessboard to allow this nation to free itself gradually from foreign domination.

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