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## ***The Impact of French Algeria's Participation during the First and Second World Wars on the Algerian Nationalist Movement***

REIDE PRUNTY\*

The colonial relationship between France and French Algeria reached its boiling point during the Algerian War of Independence in 1954 after more than a century of French imperial subjugation. Before this pivotal year, French Algeria was required to support France through two total and primarily European wars. While Algerians believed that such a sacrifice for their imperial mother nation was cause for equality under French law, France was committed to the continued oppression of its colony. This essay argues that French Algeria's contribution to the French war effort during the First and Second World Wars served as a catalyst to the rising Algerian nationalist sentiment that reached its peak in 1954. Through an in-depth examination of the colonial legacy in French Algeria, this paper aims to establish a pattern of exploitation, manipulation, and intransigence throughout France's imperial administration of the region. Moreover, a thorough analysis of the various factions and leaders of Algerian nationalism demonstrates an intensifying demand for independence from France after the First and Second World Wars. By studying the history of Algeria's continued oppression under France despite attempts at compromise as the root of Algerian nationalists' fervor, the significance of the colonial legacy upon modern international relations and the imbalance of power within the world system becomes evident. The present tumultuous relationship between France and Algeria is a direct result of France's unwillingness to relinquish its colony with an acknowledgement of French Algeria's vital role during the First and Second World Wars, instead mounting a violent counterinsurgency against the region's ambition for independence.

French Algeria was colonized for 130 years, and the French colonizers profited exponentially from its integrated relationship with the colony. This profit came at the expense of the indigenous Berber and Arab populations that were systematically disenfranchised through land appropriation, amplification of ethnic and religious boundaries, resource extraction, European settlement, food insecurity, disease, state-sponsored violence, mandatory Muslim male conscription, and the gallicization of social institutions. With the vitally supportive role served to metropolitan France by French Algeria during the First and Second World Wars, indigenous Algerians began to demand French citizenship in exchange for their momentous sacrifice. However, the harsh and systemically unbalanced military tactics and administrative policies of France that prevailed before and during the First and Second World Wars amplified the Algerians' resolve to unite behind a unique Algerian national identity in order to assert their self-determination and independence. In spite of the atrocities committed against indigenous Algerians during their subjugation and exploitation, French Algeria fulfilled its colonial responsibility to the *l'Métropole* (mainland France) during two distinct and devastating total wars. However, when this sacrifice united Algerians in their nationalist cause and strengthened their resistance against colonial rule, the French government repelled their assertions and affirmed the resolute authority of the French Empire.

Although the Algerian nationalist movement created widespread domestic influence and international support, the French government discounted its peaceful attempts to lessen the disparities between the rights extended to French citizens versus those extended to indigenous

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Algerians and continued to resist as those peaceful attempts turned into feverous demands for national independence. Algerians maintained an unwavering resistance to French colonial rule that eventually incorporated violence as a last resort to finally overthrow imperialism and create an independent state. The colonial contribution of French Algeria to the French war effort during the First and Second World Wars sparked and consolidated the Algerian nationalist movement to pursue its ultimate goal of independence in spite of extreme French opposition and aggression. This dichotomy would serve as the catalyst for the severe acts of state-sanctioned violence, guerilla warfare, and terrorism that occurred during the 1954 Algerian War of Independence and that continues to impede Franco-Algerian relations into the modern era.

Many renowned scholars within the historical community, including David Killingray, Richard Rathbone, Martin Thomas, Neil MacMaster, and Marisa Fois, agree that nationalism surged in popularity among the Algerian population and its political organizations after the First and Second World Wars. Such nationalist surges occurred after French Algeria's participation in the First and Second World Wars because France militarized its colonies unlike any other European imperial power.<sup>1</sup> For instance, France was the only imperial power to implement conscription within its colonies. According to Lizabeth Zack, who cited the supporting works of many other experts, "the nationalist [theory of causality for the Algerian War] points to the repressive nature of French settler colonialism and the common cultural heritage of Islam and the Arabic language in uniting subject Arabs and Berbers in a movement for Algerian national independence."<sup>2</sup> As the Muslim Algerian population was persistently oppressed and denied concessions for their contribution to the war effort, they united in their shared nationalist identity, and Algeria's nationalist movement reached its strongest point.

The causality between mass war mobilization and sentiment for national independence has been neglected by the historical record.<sup>3</sup> This account aims to analyze the contribution of French Algeria to the First and Second World Wars, evaluate the shift in Algerian nationalist organizations' goals from the post-World War One period to the post-World War Two period, and to establish a connection between the mobilization of the French Algerian colony during the global conflicts and the rise of the Algerian nationalist movement. To express the opinions of the Algerian nationalist movement, this essay will utilize the firsthand perspectives of Algerian nationalist leaders, including Ferhat Abbas, Messali Hadj, and Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis, as well as the motivations of nationalist organizations. This essay will evaluate the contribution of French Algeria to the First and Second World War to determine the correlation between the lack of French appreciation for the Algerian sacrifice and the Algerian perception that they were entitled to French citizenship. Likewise, this historical analysis will analyze the policies of French colonial authority to examine how Algerian nationalists were denied compromise until they were seemingly left with no other option.

The history of French colonial rule in Algeria began in 1830 with the Invasion of Algiers, which effectively ended over three centuries of Ottoman rule. As France strengthened its authority throughout French North Africa, it created a system of governance for the Algerian colony. For the administration of colonial affairs, the colony was initially divided into two distinct parts: the North and the South. The administration in the North was divided into the three civil territories of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine in 1845—which were considered integral cities of metropolitan

<sup>1</sup>Carina Schmitt, "The Warfare-Welfare Nexus in French African Colonies in the Course of the First and Second World War," *Historical Social Research* 45 (2020): 218.

<sup>2</sup>Lizabeth Zack, "Who Fought the Algerian War? Political Identity and Conflict in French-Ruled Algeria," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 16 (2002): 56.

<sup>3</sup>Schmitt, "The Warfare-Welfare Nexus," 218.

France—and were governed similar to that of metropolitan France, while the administration of the South was under a *régime du sabre* (regime of the sword), effectively a military rule.<sup>4</sup> This dichotomy mirrored the differential and preferential treatment between the lands that were fertile and populated by European settlers in the North—which was proximally closer to *l'Hexagone* (mainland France) itself—and the sparsely populated, desolate Sahara Desert in the South, which was left for the indigenous Arab and Berber populations to exist under military scrutiny. Moreover, the Government Council was established in 1898 as the central representative body of Algeria. It consisted of three delegations: one delegation was elected by the European settlers, one was elected by the French colonial farmers, and the last delegation was elected by the indigenous Algerians.<sup>5</sup> This system of government favored the political representation of French citizens who settled within French Algeria—the *colons* (colonists).

**Figure 1.** *Algérie: Carte Administrative des Territoires du Sud* (Algeria: Administrative Map of the Southern Territories), 1927.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>4</sup>Herbert J. Liebesny, *The Government of French North Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943), 75.

<sup>5</sup>Liebesny, *Government of French North Africa*, 80.

<sup>6</sup>Délégation générale du gouvernement en Algérie, “Algérie: Carte administrative des territoires du sud/Gouvernement général de l’Algérie,” Algiers: Service cartographique, 1927, <https://catalog.loc.gov/webv/holdingsInfo?searchId=456&recPointer=0&recCount=25&searchType=1&bibId=18540976>.

By 1836, more than 14,000 European settlers had settled in and around the Algerian cities occupied by the French military; by 1847, the settler population in the colony had risen to more than 100,000.<sup>7</sup> To consolidate their power, the French citizen *colons* received preferential representation in the Government Council, such as the power to allocate the colonial budget through the governing body of *Délégations financières* (Financial Delegation), lobbyists who advocated for their interests within the French national government, and enabled the widespread appropriation of land that devastated the cultures of nomadic pastoralist tribes.<sup>8</sup> With the passage of the *Décret Crémieux* in 1870, Jewish Algerians were permitted French citizenship. However, the indigenous Muslim Algerian population was given a second-class status as French subject and was subject to the *Code de l'Indigénat* (Indigenous Code), a series of laws that enshrined the power of the colonial administration, the inferiority of colonial subjects, and the ability to swiftly punish colonial subjects for many different crimes.<sup>9</sup> This systematic marginalization and disenfranchisement caused intense tensions between the indigenous Arab and Berber populations and the European settler population that would inspire anti-French and anti-imperial sentiment among Algerian nationals.

In accordance with its *la mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission), French efforts began in 1890 to educate a select group of the indigenous Algerian population. French administrators promoted gallicization by teaching their curriculum entirely in French rather than the indigenous languages of Arabic and Berber, and Arabic culture was excluded. The omission of the region's cultural past led to the formation of an elite class of Algerians who were conscious of their distinct Maghrebis identity and to the development of the *évolués* (the evolved ones).<sup>10</sup> Members of this group would later become the leaders of Algerian independence. The *évolués* were of a French-educated, liberal, and Muslim class who believed that they could implement the European principles of equality and freedom to promote assimilation with France and eventual indigenous cultural promotion.<sup>11</sup> Later, after their conscription into the French army, the experiences of the *évolués* during the First World War would shape their perspective of the necessary concessions for the French government to offer French Algeria. They believed they had proved that they were Muslim as well as French and that they should receive the same rights as French citizens.<sup>12</sup> However, their opinion was not so radical that such reforms should extend to all Muslim Algerians, but that the bourgeois *évolués*, who were favored by the colonial administration, would receive French citizenship.

The tension between French colonizers and the Algerian leaders continued to influence the creation of an Algerian identity in the early twentieth century. In 1908, the French government proposed to the Algerian colonial administration to extend mandatory conscription to Algerian Muslims due to the threat that Germany's surplus of available, fighting-age men posed. However, the settler population of French Algeria opposed the militarization of Algerian Muslims, because they feared the Algerians would turn their newly acquired military skills and armaments on them or that they would demand French citizenship.<sup>13</sup> However, in spite of the resistance from the *colons*, the proposal was formally inducted into French Algeria's administration in 1912.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Stone, *The Agony of Algeria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997): 32.

<sup>8</sup>Fiona Barclay, Charlotte Ann Chopin, and Martin Evans, "Introduction: Settler Colonialism and French Algeria," *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 120.

<sup>9</sup>Gregory Mann, "What was the Indigénat? The 'Empire of Law' in French West Africa," *Journal of African History* 50 (2009): 333-34.

<sup>10</sup>Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 34.

<sup>11</sup>Marisa Fois, "Algerian Nationalism," *Oriente Moderno* 97 (2017): 92.

<sup>12</sup>Rabeya Khatun, "Analysis of the Causes of the Independent Movement of Algeria," *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 6 (2014): 91.

<sup>13</sup>Metz, *Algeria*, 121.

Consequently, the educated, middle-class *évolués* were emboldened to reinvigorate the *Jeunes Algériens* (Young Algerians) movement in 1913, which had existed since the 1880s. The *Jeunes Algériens* advocated for greater representation within the French National Assembly, increased suffrage, equal taxation, and an end to the *Code de l'Indigénat*. Leaders of the *Jeunes Algériens* believed that if they—the indigenous Algerian Muslim population who were denied the rights of full citizenship—must now surrender their lives in French military service, then they should be granted the same inherent rights as Frenchmen who had dedicated less to France than military service. However, participants within the *Jeunes Algériens* were divided in their end goals; some supported assimilation with France, while others insisted on equal rights and limited integration with France. Others argued for autonomy in the defense of Islam.<sup>14</sup> While this movement was not a formal nationalist organization, it was the beginnings of national unity against imperialism.

An important figure who would later emerge as the initial proponent of Algerian nationalism was Khalid ibn Hashim—also known as Emir Khalid—who was the grandson of the Algerian national military hero Abd al Qadir, or Emir Abdelkader, who was famous for his strong resistance against the early imperial French invasion during the middle of the nineteenth century. He attained his education in Paris and became an officer in the French *Armée de Terre* (Ground Army), later fighting during the First World War. Additionally, Khalid ibn Hasim was an influential member of the *Jeunes Algériens*, but later split from the movement after expressing strong disagreement with introduction of the Jonnart Law of 1919, because it only expanded the suffrage of Algerian Muslims and did not extend to them full French citizenship.

During World War I, French Algeria was the largest producer of manufactured resources and supplier of manpower to the French war effort of all the colonies within French North Africa. Notably, 173,000 Algerians served in the French army, and hundreds of thousands more were employed in factories that supported the French military effort.<sup>15</sup> The North African Zouaves and Tirailleurs regiments of *troupes coloniales* (colonial troops) in the *Forces armées françaises* (French Armed Forces) sustained weighty casualties during the first battles of 1914, because as the war persisted and the participation of African troops increased, *troupes coloniales* fought primarily during the first wave of attack as shock troops on the Western Front, contributing to all its major battles.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, African troops participated in the 1915 Dardanelles expedition and Balkans campaigns.<sup>17</sup> While the statistics of African troop casualties are disputed and range from 12,000 to 100,000 for Algerians, it is evident from the attitudes of French government and military officials as well as French soldiers toward the *troupes coloniales* that their lives were more expendable than the life of a Frenchman.<sup>18</sup>

In letters written by French soldiers, the opinions toward African soldiers ranged from pity to bewilderment. Corporal Louis Barthas wrote in 1914 of the North African soldiers who were stationed at the front immediately after their arrival in Europe: “Hardly anyone of these miserable wretches would ever return to Algeria!”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Second Lieutenant Roland Leighton wrote in 1915, “A company of Turcos has just gone along the road, singing a weird chant punctuated with hand clapping. They all look very Negroid, but are wellbuilt men and march well.”<sup>20</sup> These

<sup>14</sup>Fois, “Algerian Nationalism,” 92-93.

<sup>15</sup>Metz, *Algeria*, 35.

<sup>16</sup>Christian Koller, “Colonial Military Participation in Europe (Africa),” in *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014), [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/colonial\\_military\\_participation\\_in\\_europe\\_africa](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/colonial_military_participation_in_europe_africa).

<sup>17</sup>Koller, “Colonial Military Participation.”

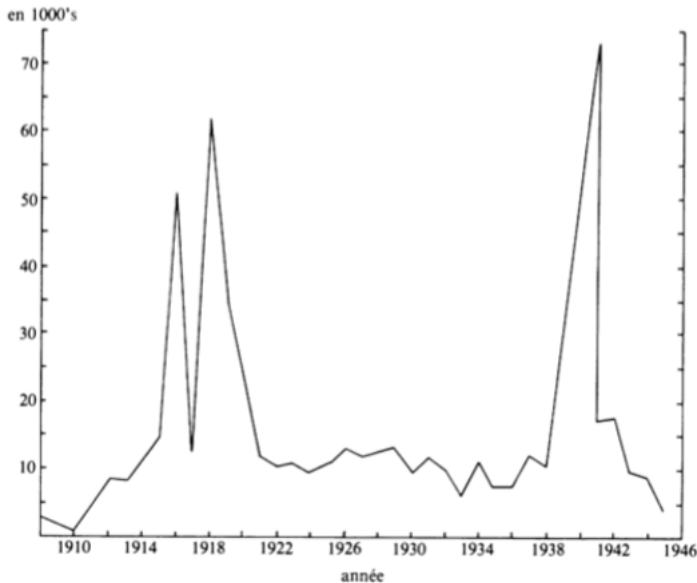
<sup>18</sup>Koller.

<sup>19</sup>Santanu Das, ed., *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 134.

<sup>20</sup>Das, *First World War Writing*, 133.

perspectives provide insight into the mindsets of the French officials and soldiers; the African troops were regarded with belittlement and inferiority and were only considered for their physical contribution, as their lives were regarded as expendable. This attitude toward the African troops demonstrates a pattern of French underappreciation and exploitation of its indigenous colonial populations and explains that France's inability to negotiate with Muslim Algerians was because of its ignorance of colonial agency.

**Figure 2.** Number of Africans Recruited for the French Colonial Army, 1908–1945.<sup>21</sup>



While the French viewed the colonial contribution of French Algeria as supplementary shock troops to spare French soldiers, World War I gave rise to an “awakening of peoples” throughout France’s colonial possessions.<sup>22</sup> As France repatriated colonial troops to their countries of origin, it became France’s prerogative to balance the possibility of concessions to these veterans with respect for the ultimate authority of the colonial administration. The republican values of France closely related service to the state through military service to the rights and responsibilities of citizens, but efforts to naturalize African soldiers were met with resistance from French Parliament and the *colons* community because of their fears of insurmountable racial and cultural differences.<sup>23</sup> Because Africans had given their lives in service to the *l’Métropole*, they believed they were entitled to citizenship as well as equal rights and representation. An Algerian idealism was sparked in response to the colony’s participation in the war, the wave of revolutions across Europe, and the emergence of a pan-Arab nationalism in the Middle East, which caused Algerians to demand concessions from France for the first time.<sup>24</sup> However, the demand to permit limited political rights to those men who had served France was reluctantly and begrudgingly conceded by lawmakers, and they sought to minimize those who would be permitted such rights. It was the

<sup>21</sup>Myron J. Echenberg, “Les Migrations militaires en Afrique occidentale française, 1900-1945,” *Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 14 (1980): 430.

<sup>22</sup>Fois, “Algerian Nationalism,” 93.

<sup>23</sup>John H. Morrow Jr., “Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers’ Stories,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010): 14.

<sup>24</sup>Martin Thomas, *The French Empire between the Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 45.

indigenous male elites to whom France's limited concessions of citizenship, suffrage, and access to junior administrative positions were targeted.<sup>25</sup> "The end of the First World War, the principle of self-determination, and the Russian Revolution contributed to an increased awareness of the cause of Algerian independence. In its essence, the nationalist current found its *raison d'être* in the popular rejection of the colonial order."<sup>26</sup>

In response to the surmounting pressure from newly emboldened nationalist organizations and press, the Jonnart Law, which had been spearheaded by the governor general of Algeria, Charles Jonnart, was passed in 1919. This reform program expanded male suffrage for the *djemâa* election to 425,138 Algerian men, introduced reforms into the *djemâa* election process, and removed those with voting status from the authority of the *Code de l'Indigénat*—thus inadvertently strengthening the grassroots channels through which anti-colonial politics could be shared among rural communities and galvanizing support for nationalistic, anti-colonial politics to a wider audience.<sup>27</sup> However, the Algerian nationalist leaders who had contributed to negotiations for the reform program felt the Jonnart Law fell short of what had been discussed and bolstered their demands. Moreover, the *colons* were horrified by the enfranchisement of such a large proportion of men and sought to resist any further concessions offered to the Algerian community.

The first *djemâa* election after the passage of the Jonnart Law elected Emir Khaled, an advocate for more Muslim representation in Parliament, citizenship with retention of Muslim status, and Arabic to be employed in the Algerian school system; yet the results of this election were annulled after fervent settler protests.<sup>28</sup> While he remained in the political sphere and was elected to the Algiers general council and the Muslim financial delegation, his reformist agenda remained restricted to the participation of elite Muslims in Algerian politics.<sup>29</sup> As the momentum for reform inspired by Emir Khalid began to slow, a political void was evident, as newly politicized rural communities desired a leader to rally behind.

In 1926, nationalist leader Messali Hadj capitalized upon the untapped nationalistic sentiment through his organization, *Étoile Nord-Africain* (North African Star, ENA). Hadj, who had fought during the First World War, had high expectations for Algerian independence after his personal sacrifice and that of his fellow Algerians, yet he was disillusioned by the continued rejection of compromise by the French and desired full Algerian independence. Hadj said:

Imperialism enrolls us by force in its army. In order to enrich a few European failures, it doesn't hesitate to have us massacred in fratricidal struggles, we ourselves unconsciously contributing to the enslavement of our Moroccan and Syrian brothers and, through a fatal repercussion, in the reinforcement of our own oppression. Unite your efforts in order to improve our lot. For the suppression of the *Code de l'Indigénat*, for the freedom of the press and assembly, for the equality of military service, for the freedom of immigration, against the sending of native troops to foreign lands. . . ! Fight against French imperialism. . . !<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Thomas, *French Empire between the Wars*, 24.

<sup>26</sup>Fois, "Algerian Nationalism," 92.

<sup>27</sup>Neil MacMaster, *War in the Mountains: Peasant Society and Counterinsurgency in Algeria, 1918-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 131-132.

<sup>28</sup>Thomas, *French Empire between the Wars*, 247-248.

<sup>29</sup>Thomas, 248.

<sup>30</sup>Messali Hadj, *Fight Against French Imperialism*, 1928, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/messali-hadj/1928/fight-french.htm>.



This quote explains the connection that Hadj had made between French Algeria's participation in the First World War and Algerians' right to an independent and fair country that would focus on the interests of the indigenous Algerian populace.

The ENA, which was initially organized among the *émigrés* (Algerian workers who lived in France), was strongly nationalistic and proletarian, which allowed it to draw upon the nationalistic support that had fermented among the radicalized and disenfranchised rural poor who did not benefit from any of France's concessions. The ENA was the first nationalist organization to demand Algerian independence from France as well as the withdrawal of the French military presence; creation of a national army; confiscation of large, settler estates; and freedom of the press instead of accepting limited concessions to the favored social groups of Algerian society—the *colons* and the *évolués*.<sup>31</sup> However, the ENA was dissolved by the French government in 1929 due to its concerns that the organization was spreading dissent throughout Algeria.

Another significant leader of Algerian independence later in his career, Ferhat Abbas, initially supported equal rights and improved integration with metropolitan France after serving in *Forces armées françaises* during World War I. He and his fellow members of the *Jeunes Algériens* who had become eligible to hold public office established the *Fédération des Élus Musulmans* (Federation of Elected Muslims, FEM) in 1927, which advocated for the assimilation of Algeria into France through reforms such as equal pay and electoral reform during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>32</sup> However, because of its majority *évolués* membership, the goals of the FEM were obstructed by elitist prerogatives to advocate for full citizenship rights to be afforded to the *évolués* without renouncing their Muslim identity as well as the integration of Algeria as a permanent French province.<sup>33</sup>

Another sect of Algerian nationalism that was gaining popularity during this period was led by the Islamic nationalist leaders who were inspired by the modernist reforms of Egypt's Muhammad Abduh. The primary nationalist organization of Muslim reformers, *Association Des Uléma Musulmans Algériens* or the *Association des Oulémas Réformistes* (Association of the Algerian Muslim Ulama or Association of Reformist Ulama, AUMA), was established in 1931 and was led by Abd al-Hamid Ben Badis. At the start of the interwar period, Ben Badis believed that while Muslims must defend their distinct Algerian identity, assimilation with France was in Algeria's best interest; however, after AUMA and its periodicals, *al-Muntaquid* and *al-Shihab*, were censored by the French government, Ben Badis adopted Hadj's rejection of French colonial rule.<sup>34</sup> Ben Badis expressed the distinctiveness of the Algerian nation and thus its incompatibility with French suzerainty:

The Algerian Muslim nation has its own history, marked by great deeds; it has its religious and linguistic unit; it has its own culture, its traditions and its specific characteristics. . . . [We] affirm that this Algerian nation is not France, cannot be France and does not want to be France. It is impossible that it will be France, even if it wanted to assimilate.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Thomas, *French Empire between the Wars*, 258.

<sup>32</sup>Peter Krause, "The Algerian National Movement: The Long, Bloody March to Hegemony," in *Rebel Power: Why National Movements Compete, Fight, and Win*, ed. Peter Krause (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 103.

<sup>33</sup>Khatun, "Analysis of the Causes," 92.

<sup>34</sup>Khatun, 251.

<sup>35</sup>Claude Collot and Jean-Robert Henry, "1936 Extract of the Magazine Edited by Ben Badis, al-Shihab," *Le Mouvement national algérien: textes, 1912-1954* (Paris: Editions l'Harmattan, 1978), 67-69.

This quote conveys Ben Badis's key arguments for Algerian independence from France—that because Algerians possessed a distinct religion, language, and homeland they should exist independently from France as their own unique country.

After the Popular Front Party gained control of the government and Léon Blum was appointed prime minister in 1936, the Blum-Violette proposal was introduced into the Parliament. This law would have extended citizenship to 25,000 Algerian Muslim men along with forcing them to renounce their *statut personnel* (personal Islamic identity).<sup>36</sup> However, this law did not reach the French Chamber of Deputies to be voted upon because of the outrage and backlash from the *colons*. Because the French had once again reneged on their promised concessions and permitted the interests of the *colons* to take precedent, the Algerian nationalists became disillusioned at the prospect of negotiation with France. Ferhat Abbas's opinion shifted from assimilation with the metropole to instead the call for an autonomous state federated with France.<sup>37</sup> Messali Hadj mobilized Algerian urban workers and peasant farmers to improve Algeria's political situation through the *Parti du Peuple Algérien* (Algerian People's Party, PPA) in 1937. This organization, the successor to ENA, completely rejected assimilation with France and demanded an autonomous Algerian state.

By the threshold of the Second World War, the political atmosphere within Algeria, spurred by the colony's participation in the First World War, had intensified to a level that had never been experienced by the colony, and a collective of nationalistic and anti-colonial sentiment against France had emerged. Algerians were already uniting in their shared national identity and demanding their independence from France because of its continued denial of rights to Muslim veterans after serving in the First World War. French Algeria's contribution to the Second World War and its vital support of France would push these political tensions to a boiling point.

The Second World War caused a pivotal transition from the attempts of Algerian nationalists for compromise with France to their demands for independence.<sup>38</sup> After France was defeated and occupied by Nazi Germany in 1940, a new Vichy regime was installed by the French-German Armistice to govern France and its colonies. The role of the French colonies during World War II became imperative during this period of occupation. Under the Vichy regime, French Algeria experienced the repeal of the *Décret Crémieux* of 1870, which permitted French citizenship to the indigenous Jewish community of Algeria, and a series of other anti-Semitic legislation that reduced the rights afforded to the Algerian Jewish community.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the PPA was banned in 1939, and in 1941, Messali Hadj and the other leaders of the PPA were sentenced to prison terms ranging from ten to sixteen years for conspiracy against the sovereignty of France.<sup>40</sup> While Algerians might have considered the installation of the Vichy regime a new opportunity for independence, the introduction of oppressive legislation, weighty export requirements, and the annulment of rights revealed that the Vichy regime was not concerned with improving the Algerian condition but extracting its resources to support France. However the Algerian nationalist movement had regarded the downfall of France and its capitulation to a foreign power, their efforts for independence were emboldened.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, the settler community felt secured

<sup>36</sup>Khatun, "Analysis of the Causes," 88.

<sup>37</sup>Khatun, 88.

<sup>38</sup>Mohamed Khenouf and Michael Brett, "Algerian Nationalism and the Allied Military Strategy and Propaganda during the Second World War: The Background to Sétif," in *Africa and the Second World War*, ed. David Killingray and Richard Rathbone (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 258.

<sup>39</sup>Michael M. Laskier, "Between Vichy Antisemitism and German Harassment: The Jews of North Africa during the Early 1940s," *Modern Judaism* (1991): 343.

<sup>40</sup>Khenouf and Brett, "Algerian Nationalism," 261.

<sup>41</sup>Haley Brown, "French Colonialism in Algeria: War, Legacy, and Memory" (honors thesis, Bucknell University, 2018), 43, [https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/honors\\_theses/456](https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/honors_theses/456).

from the retaliation of the indigenous Algerian Muslim population under the Vichy regime's strict, authoritarian governance.<sup>42</sup> Two years after the establishment of the Vichy regime, the Allies launched the 1942 Operation TORCH, which was the strategic invasion of French North Africa intended to liberate the colonies from Vichy France. The Allied occupation of Algeria brought reinvigorated and international support for the anti-colonialist movement, as President Franklin Roosevelt spread the ideals of the Atlantic Charter and ordered leaflets be distributed throughout Morocco and Algeria that read: "We come to your country to free you from the grip of conquerors who seek to deprive you of your sovereign rights, your religious freedom and the right to lead your way of life in peace."<sup>43</sup>

After the liberation of French North Africa, Algiers served as the headquarters for General Charles de Gaulle's Free France resistance in 1943. Soldiers from French North Africa were the most appealing to de Gaulle because they had the lightest skin of all the *troupes coloniales*, and they best fit the French army's policy of *blanchissement* (the intentional "whitening" of the French army by replacing *troupes coloniales* with white French soldiers).<sup>44</sup> On the side of the Allies, approximately 290,000 Algerian soldiers fought in the French Expeditionary Corps between 1943 and 1945, participating in the Italian campaign of 1943 and the invasion of southern France in 1944.<sup>45</sup> French Algeria directly contributed to the liberation of its mother country from the occupation of Germany. While the feat would be widely celebrated by indigenous Algerians, France would be slow to recognize its colony's contribution.

After the end of the Second World War, the nationalist movement within French Algeria had become more militant after experiencing independence under Allied occupation and contributing to the liberation of France; Algerian nationalists were prepared to fight the *colons* who refused reform.<sup>46</sup> In 1942, Ferhat Abbas began negotiations with the French administration for improved political and economic rights in exchange for Algerians' contributions to the Second World War. After his experience in the French medical corps during World War Two, Abbas's views on independence had become more radical. To clearly articulate the nationalists' demands during these negotiations, Abbas authored the *Manifeste du Peuple Algérien* (Manifesto of the Algerian People), which was signed by fifty-six Algerian nationalist and international leaders and condemned French colonial rule, called for the application of the principle of self-determination, and demanded an Algerian constitution that granted equality to all inhabitants of Algeria.<sup>47</sup> Abbas clearly renounces French colonialism and declares the independence of the country in the *Manifeste du Peuple Algérien*:

The Peace of 1918 was dearly acquired. The sacrifice of combatants, of all nationalities and all religions, was in vain. The lusts of strong peoples and the injustice they engender have survived the supreme sacrifice of the dead. . . . Faced with these responsibilities, the Algerian people, in their desire to serve both peace and freedom, raise their voice to denounce the colonial regime imposed on them, recall their previous protests, and claim their right to life.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 75-76.

<sup>43</sup>Evans, *Algeria*, 77.

<sup>44</sup>Morrow, "Black Africans in World War II," 16.

<sup>45</sup>Morrow, 17.

<sup>46</sup>David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, *Africa and the Second World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 16.

<sup>47</sup>Metz, *Algeria*, 4.

<sup>48</sup>Ferhat Abbas, *L'Algérie devant le conflit mondial, Manifeste du peuple algérien*, February 10, 1943, <https://textures.dutemps.hypotheses.org/1458>.

Yet, the French administration did not heed the demands of the Algerian Manifesto, but enacted a reform program that was founded upon the 1936 Blum-Viollette Plan's proposition of granting French citizenship to 60,000 "meritorious" Algerian Muslims—one percent of the Algerian population in 1943.<sup>49</sup>

The publication of the *Manifeste du Peuple Algérien* represents the final shift in Abbas's perspective toward cooperation with France. His initial 1920s view of assimilation with France, which shifted to the desire for Algerian autonomy with loose federation with the metropole during the 1930s, was finally dashed in the 1940s after the Second World War and France's refusal to extend citizenship to all colonial veterans. In 1944, Abbas formed the *Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté* (Friends of the Manifesto and of Liberty, AML) after the reforms were instated in order to defend the Manifesto and its demands; this political organization garnered widespread support, from the Ulama to the *Jeunes Algériens* to the PPA and even the *Parti Communiste Algérien* (Algerian Communist Party).<sup>50</sup> While the Algerian nationalist movement was at the height of its unification, a violent uprising would halt the momentum of the movement, and nationalist fervor would descend into violent insurgency against French imperialism.

After the Algerian people had witnessed the occupation of France and experienced more independence during the Allies' occupation, nationalist sentiment and unity were at their height. The tensions between Algerian nationalism and French hegemony reached their peak in 1945. During the widespread celebrations of May 8, 1945 (V-E Day), Algerians, too, celebrated their crucial contribution to World War II and the successful end of the war. In the cities of Sétif and Guelma, demonstrators waved newly-created red, white, and green nationalist flags with the symbol of Emir Abdelkader—a red star and a crescent.<sup>51</sup> The police fired upon the demonstrators to quell the nationalist sentiment and harm those who would support revolution within French Algeria. In response, the Algerian protesters then began rioting throughout the city and attacked the *colons*. Responding to an attack on its sovereignty, France authorized the colonial administration to enact a vicious repression campaign of collective punishment. Entire villages were punished for the revolts in Sétif and Guelma through extreme measures including heavy artillery, the use of aircraft, and naval bombardment.<sup>52</sup> It is estimated that 45,000 Algerians were killed by the police as opposed to 100 Europeans who were killed by protesters.<sup>53</sup> However, the French government only accepted responsibility for 1,340 "rebellious nationalists" who were killed by justified police action.<sup>54</sup> France's rapid escalation to state-sponsored counterinsurgency and a campaign of *ratissage* ("raking over" suspected locations of dissidence) to suppress Algerian rebellion initiated a violent pattern of escalated retaliation as the Algerian War of Independence began.

The public unrest before and during the Sétif and Guelma massacres was used as a pretext to dissolve the AML and to arrest its leader, Ferhat Abbas, as well as AML members. A year after its disbandment in 1945, Abbas organized a successor organization to the AML, the *Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien* (Democratic Union of the Algerian Manifesto, UDMA), that would advocate for the independence of Algeria through peaceful means. Moreover, Messali Hadj persisted in his efforts to lead nationalist efforts for independence despite his imprisonment.

<sup>49</sup>Metz, *Algeria*, 4.

<sup>50</sup>Khenouf and Brett, "Algerian Nationalism," 263.

<sup>51</sup>Fois, "Algerian Nationalism," 100.

<sup>52</sup>Joshua Cole, "Massacres and Their Histories: Recent Histories of State Violence in France and Algeria in the Twentieth Century," *French Politics, Culture and Society* 28 (2010): 112.

<sup>53</sup>Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2006), 26-27.

<sup>54</sup>Cole, "Massacres and Their Histories," 112.

While the PPA continued to operate clandestinely regardless of its disbandment, Hadj created the *Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* (Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, MTLD), as well as its secret sister paramilitary organization, the *Organisation Spéciale* (Special Organization, OS), in 1946 to achieve Algerian independence by any means.<sup>55</sup> Although they pursued similar goals, the UDMA and the MTLD competed to solely represent the Algerian nationalist movement in the political sphere. In the 1946 elections, UDMA controlled eleven of the thirteen seats allotted for nationalist parties in the French Constituent Assembly; yet in 1947, MTLD won the majority of the Muslim electorate, garnering 31 percent of the vote, while UDMA won 27 percent.<sup>56</sup>

France's refusal to recognize the mounting nationalism within the Algerian populace and to compromise its stringent and divisive administrative policies with the integration proposals of early nationalist organizations forced Algerians to pursue increasingly radical means for independence. For instance, the transition from offers of assimilation to demands for autonomy to organized and violent attacks against French institutions and settlers is an apparent escalation after continued oppression. After the violence in Sétif and Guelma, many Muslim Algerians began to feel that organized violence was the only option, as all peaceful means for resolving the problems of colonial rule had been denied while all the interests of the settler population remained paramount, which resulted in the severely violent 1954 Algerian War of Independence.

The Algerian War was one of the longest and bloodiest wars of decolonization because of France's refusal to accept the compromise advocated by Algerian nationalists after they believed they had demonstrated their right to French citizenship through their participation in the First and Second World Wars. The First World War offered Algerians a chance to earn their citizenship through duty to the mother country, whereas the Second World War served to reinforce the ideas of a distinct Algerian identity and national independence that had developed during the interwar period. While the republican philosophies of France attributed citizenship to military service, the service of the Algerian Muslims was met the perpetuation of a second-class French subject status and with small concessions of citizenship to limited groups of *évolués*, which reinforced the class hierarchies within French Algeria. In response to the continued oppression and denial of citizenship, the Algerian nationalist movement gained popularity and support by rallying disenfranchised rural communities, and a pursuit of a distinct and autonomous Algerian state emerged. Instead, the colonial administration within French Algeria ramped up its effort to quell rebellion through the collective punishment of suspected insurgent communities.

<sup>55</sup>Krause, "Algerian National Movement," 107.

<sup>56</sup>Krause, 106.

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