

Fractured Fraternity: *Altérité* and the FLN

Chad R. Cussen

Chad R. Cussen is a graduate student from Roann, Indiana. He graduated with a B.A. in History and International Studies from Indiana University in 2008 and studied at the University of Strasbourg's affiliate Institute of Human Rights in France. He wrote this paper for Dr. Beck's History 5400, Imperialism, in the fall of 2008. Chad's research interests include the cultural and political history of nineteenth and twentieth-century France.

...Had I discovered the Algerian nation, I would be a nationalist and would not blush as if I had committed a crime...However, I will not die for the Algerian nation, because it does not exist.²²⁹

Ferhat Abbas

...Par delà la légende politique et les fictions juridiques de l'Algérie « terre de France en Afrique », notre pays est une colonie, dont l'originalité est d'être à la fois d'exploitation et de peuplement.²³⁰

Hocine Aït Ahmed

...Si la peur donne des ailes et fait perdre tout jugement, elle fait dire aussi des bêtises. C'est ainsi que la période héroïque de 1936, au cours de laquelle la conscience nationale a été éveillée par le venue de l'Étoile Nord-Africaine en Algérie, est qualifiée de période de lutte fratricide.²³¹

Declaration by followers of Messali Hadj, spring 1954

In 1954, Algerian leaders of the *Front de Libération National* (FLN) joyously declared independence from metropolitan France and aspired for a unified Algeria. French colonialism, however, created deep divisions within the FLN. These divisions were not formed spontaneously in 1954, but through a long process and relationship with metropolitan France. Algerian leaders, such as Ferhat Abbas, Hocine Aït Ahmed, Ben Bella, and Ahmed Messali Hadj, experienced French colonialism differently, and formulated their own visions of an independent Algeria. Some, like Hocine

²²⁹ Ferhat Abbas, *La Nuit Coloniale* (Paris: René Julliard, 1962), 19.

²³⁰ Hocine Aït Ahmed, *Memoires d'un Combattant: L'Esprit d'indépendance, 1942-1952* (Paris: Sylvie Messinger, 1983), 55. Unless otherwise noted all translations are my own. (Beyond the political legend and legal fictions of Algeria 'Land of France in Africa,' our country is a colony, whose originality is of being both for exploitation and for [French] settlement.)

²³¹ Followers of Messali Hadj, "Le Point de Vue Messaliste: Le Congrès Nationale Algérien," *Le FLN Documents et Histoire, 1954-1962*, Mohammed Harbi and Gilbert Meynier eds. (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2004), 25. (If fear takes flight and makes one lose all judgment, it also makes one say stupid things. Thus, the heroic period of 1936, during which national conscience was awakened up by the arrival of North-African Star in Algeria, was described as a period of fratricide). The North-African Star formed in 1926 under the auspices of Algerian workers in Paris. Messali Hadj became its president in 1927 and "superimposed" proletarian doctrine over the early religious and liberal nationalist movements. This form of popular socialism became a staple component of Algerian politics in the FLN and after independence.

Aït Ahmed, exposed French imperialism and conceptualized perceptions of the “other.” For others, like Ferhat Abbas, *altérité* (otherness) remained a foreign concept and demanded French citizenship status. Still, indigenous leaders came together and formed the FLN on November 1, 1954. Political unity remained ambiguous and Algerian leaders adopted distinct language that worked for, but also against, independence. Algerian political leaders were more fractured than united, partly as a result of the imperial legacy and partly due to an assimilation of ideas, permeated through the adoption of specific language that proved unable to solidify Algerian leadership. This paper seeks to tease out the various perspectives held by the FLN leaders, and in that way to present the viewpoints of the “other.”

Colonial Context: French Imperial Legacies and Nationalist Formation

French imperial authorities entered Algiers in 1830 and promised quiet occupation while respecting indigenous society, culture, and religion. Algerian had, then, two distinct ethnic groups: Berbers and Arabs. Berbers, the country’s indigenous population, constituted roughly thirty percent of the population—Arabs seventy percent.²³² After 1830, Algerians competed with a third group: *piéd noirs*, or *colons*.²³³ A diverse group, the *piéd noirs* settled Algeria under the encouragement of metropolitan French authorities. The *piéd noirs* were not, however, ethnically homogenous. Spanish, Italian, Maltese, and French constituted a large portion of those who emigrated and settled in Algeria. The French imperial army famously coined the term *méditerranéens-et-demi* (half Mediterranean) to describe the *piéd noirs*.²³⁴ In 1841, 37,374 *piéd noirs* occupied Algeria.²³⁵ In only ten years, this number grew to nearly 131,000.²³⁶ Only one European in five constituted as ethnically “French” in 1917.²³⁷ Regardless, the French presence in Algeria supported these colonial ventures and reinforced *piéd noir* supremacy over Algerian Arab and Berber populations. *Piéd noir* settlement coincided with French aspirations and new imperialist values even before the scramble for Africa. Napoleonic war veteran Thomas-Robert Bugeaud stated to the French National Assembly that ‘wherever there is fresh water and fertile land [in Algeria], there one must locate *colons*, without concerning oneself to whom these lands belong.’²³⁸

²³² Henry Jackson, *The FLN in Algeria* (London: Greenwood Press, 1977), 3-5.

²³³ This literally translates “black feet” for French military boots. *Colons* will also be used as an interchangeable term.

²³⁴ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 1977), 51.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

²³⁶ Jackson, 5.

²³⁷ Horne, 51.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

Thus, France proclaimed Algeria an essential component of its empire. While Bugeaud lamented Algeria's strategic and practical value, French authorities immediately recognized Algeria's value as something uniquely "French." In 1848, the French government officially departmentalized Algeria, giving it distinct "French" qualities.²³⁹ The French colonial press antagonized this uniqueness as well. Jonathon Gosnell noted this influence: "the printed word indeed helped to redefine the meaning of the nation as one no longer restricted to one particular geographic body of group of people."²⁴⁰ Colonial newspapers dominated Algeria from 1830 to 1965, and inundated "Frenchness" into Algeria. More importantly, French rhetoric and action signified Algeria as an extension of France itself. Imperial authorities divided the country into three *départements*, thus using distinct metropolitan terms to define Algeria.²⁴¹ French assimilationist policies fomented early Algerian nationalist movements, but these early nationalists sought integration rather than divorce. From 1830 to the Great War, Algerian nationalism remained relatively quiet and undeveloped—partly the consequences of assimilationist policy. This changed by the 1920s and 1930s. In 1938, Rabah Zenati echoed Ferhat Abbas: "it is, in short, inadmissible that it [the Algerian administration] should pretend to continue treating today's native, especially when he has been educated in the great French schools, like his grandfather of one hundred years ago."²⁴² Such sentiment reflected assimilationist legacies, which stemmed from metropolitan legislative measures during the late nineteenth century. The French National Congress adopted these measures *en masse*:

[France should] inspire French sentiments among the natives, to favor French colonization by all possible means, to assimilate the European foreigners [...] [and adopt] a special naturalization compatible with the maintenance of their personal statues (under Moslem law) to those who fulfill certain conditions and offer certain guarantees [...] to become entitled after a delay of ten years to occupy a place in the metropolitan chambers [...] [and] sufficient financial resources should be created [...] [and] accessible to the entire school-age population.²⁴³

²³⁹ Jonathon K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria: 1930-1954* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 73.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁴¹ Horne, 30.

²⁴² Rabah Zenati, *Le Problème Algérien vu par un Indigène* (Paris: Comté de l'Afrique Française, 1938), 31. Also quoted in *A Savage War of Peace*, 15.

²⁴³ Robert O. Collins, ed. *Historical Problems of Imperial Africa* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), 150.

As incipient nationalist forces digested these promises, important discourse resulted that developed, transformed, and permeated various nationalist conceptions of “Algeria.” While other French colonies also experienced assimilation, Algeria represented something unique, at least for the metropolitans. French metropolitan rhetoric exemplified these sentiments. Early Algerian nationalist forces recognized this uniqueness; however, Algerian voices became increasingly emphatic after important international crises exploded during the early twentieth century.

With Franz Ferdinand’s assassination at the hands of proto-nationalist Serbs, Europe spent the next four years destroying one another. In Algeria, French authorities drafted 173,000 *indigènes* into the metropolitan army, and they fought and died as temporary French citizens.²⁴⁴ In 1911, only one percent of the French immigrant population was Algerian. By 1918, Algerian immigration numbers had risen twenty percent, only second behind Spanish immigrants which increased by thirty five percent.²⁴⁵ Others migrated and replaced metropolitan factory workers. Exposed to the propaganda of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, Algerians emerged from war empowered, if only psychologically. Attempts were made, however, to reform France’s imperial system. In 1915, Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and former Overseas Minister Georges Leygues introduced legislation that gave “Muslims [...] a second electoral college and the right to elect half the members of the consultative assemblies.”²⁴⁶ The bill finally passed in 1919. Still, French *colons* retained majority power in the first electoral college, and through incessant opposition gained considerable concessions. Consequently, nationalism strengthened within the French *colon* community. In 1930, centenary celebrations blossomed throughout Algeria with grandiose and copious declarations: if Muslims knew then, in 1830, what they know now “they would have loaded their muskets with flowers.”²⁴⁷ The perfect storm brewed for those native Algerians seeking independence. Future FLN leaders carried these burdens for the next thirty-five years. Metropolitan politicians, unwilling to challenge *pied-noir* obstinacy and confidence, ultimately antagonized and nourished Algerian nationalism.

Nationalist movements erupted during the Interwar period. Various groups displayed deep divisions, however, in their respective visions for an independent Algeria. Three distinct groups formed: Ben Badis’ religious movement, Messali Hadj’s proto-communist movement, and Ferhat Abbas’ liberal movement.²⁴⁸ Ben Badis, born in 1889, created

²⁴⁴ Horne, 36.

²⁴⁵ Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control Between the Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 115.

²⁴⁶ Alf Andrew Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria* (London: Indiana University Press, 1972), 7.

²⁴⁷ Horne, 36.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

the influential *Association des Ulema* in 1931. While Badis himself never directly or personally influenced the FLN, largely because he died in 1940, the Ulema fomented and legitimized pan-Arabism in Algeria.²⁴⁹ This puritanical Islamic force declared ‘Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, and Algeria is my country.’²⁵⁰ Many contemporary Algerian elites ignored Ben Badis’ message, secluding it from mainstream politics. Algerian pragmatists regarded Badis’ religious doctrine as counterintuitive to social and political change.

Messali Hadj created the radical nationalist movement, supported by the *Étoile Nord Africaine*—the first radical socialist organization in Algeria. Born in 1898, Hadj migrated and worked in France after World War I. He briefly studied political theory at the Sorbonne, and while there married a French communist.²⁵¹ Messali had become Algeria’s first true revolutionary by 1933 and called for property redistribution from the *piéd noirs*. After failed reform under Leon Blum’s popular front government, the ENA disbanded; however, Messali regrouped and created the *Parti Progressive Algérien* (PPA), which then dissolved and became the *Mouvement pour le Triomphe de Libertés Démocratiques* (MTLD).²⁵² Many early FLN leaders supported these organizations but often disputed the fine details. Messali’s appeal, however, remained ambiguous because he never embraced violence as an acceptable option. Rather, Messali urged to achieve reform through strict legal frameworks, but he continued to emphasize popular socialism as the preferred alternative to both French imperial structures and the liberal nationalists’ call for further assimilation and integration. In 1947, Messali garnered little support within the MTLD convention on his proposed non-violent reform.²⁵³ Algerian liberals countered Messali with their pro-assimilationist ideology, which ultimately reinforced French imperial policy.

The liberal nationalists’ undoubted leader, Ferhat Abbas, called for increased negotiation between Algerian and French leaders. Abbas’ underlying belief, however, remained pro-assimilationist and aspired for provincial status in Algeria. Educational experience provided Abbas with opportunities most Algerians never realized. Abbas entered regional politics after becoming a pharmacist in the 1920s; moreover, he formed the *Fédérations de Elus Musulmans d’Algérie* (FEMA) in 1929—a group primarily comprised of Algerian intellectual elites.²⁵⁴ Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Abbas, along with R. Zenati, called for “the crystallization of an Algerian national “consciousness” through popular press outlets, like the

²⁴⁹ William B. Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria: 1954-1968* (London: The M.I.T. Press, 1969), 36-37.

²⁵⁰ Horne, 38.

²⁵¹ Jackson, 10.

²⁵² Horne, 38-40.

²⁵³ Jackson, 17.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

newspaper Abbas edited: *Egalité*.²⁵⁵ Printed issues peaked from 1944–45, and produced 30,000 print copies per day.²⁵⁶ Zenati, too, published and edited *La Voix Indigène* from 1929 to 1942. In its inaugural issue, Zenati declared ‘*L’Algérie doit devenir française*.’²⁵⁷ In the September 12, 1929 issue, Zenati acknowledged that “*nous avons le devoir de faire remarquer la contradiction d’un pareil système*.”²⁵⁸ For Algeria to become France, Liberals believed assimilation policies such as education, language reform, and intermarriage, transformed Algerians into Frenchmen. Such egalitarian promises remained political rhetoric for most of the Algerian population. Critics, often future leaders of the FLN, chastised Abbas and Zenati for their refusal to acknowledge a preexisting Algerian identity. While Zenati died before the FLN emerged, Abbas remained a prominent figure and voice for that movement, and legitimized the FLN during the late stages of the Algerian War when he joined the FLN in 1956. Abbas reflected these volatile issues in 1962: “*Ce sont malheurs de notre pays qui m’ont jeté dans l’arène politique. Si la France avait trouvé des solutions équitables aux problèmes qui se sont posés chez nous, il est probable que je me serais contenté de « cultiver mon jardin »*.”²⁵⁹ Liberals never realized their goals, primarily because French authorities never intended Algerians to assimilate into metropolitan society and culture—Algerians into Frenchmen represented a romantic ideal, but ultimately naïve and impractical.

We should not underestimate these variant and often divisive visions. Nationalist movements remained inchoate. Indeed, independence leaders never created monolithic nationalist movements. Early leaders and their ideologies, however, remained paramount in the development of the FLN. French imperial legacies, especially through Algeria’s unique status, created nationalist discourse, but more importantly *transformed* discourse that seemed to represent Algerian solidarity. Algerians never escaped the perpetual *altérité* (otherness) that French imperial legacies ingrained into native society; and neither did the eventual FLN leaders who adopted the same divisive discourse that Baddis, Messali, and Abbas displayed twenty years earlier. Exploring the complexities and dynamics of the emergent FLN will further emphasize these points. By 1954, FLN leaders promoted so called “Algerian” and “Muslim” unity, but remained internally and politically fractured.

²⁵⁵ Gosnell, 105-106.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 113. Translation is in Gosnell: “Algeria must become French.”

²⁵⁸ “La Propriété Indigène,” *La Voix Indigène* September 12, 1929, page 1. Page one is reproduced in Gosnell, 111. (We have the duty to point out the contradiction of such a [French] system.)

²⁵⁹ Abbas, 107. (The misfortunes of our country threw me in the political arena. If France had found equitable solutions to the problems that have arisen among us, it is probable that I would have been happy to ‘cultivate my garden.’) Abbas referenced Voltaire’s short story, *Candide*, as a philosophical analysis of his early ideas. To cultivate one’s garden refers to the daily activities of life, which Abbas would have been willing to do if not for French imperialism.

Sétif and the FLN Perspectives

The Second World War further complicated Algeria's eventual course to independence. France's humiliating defeat profoundly affected the Algerian psyche: were Algerians still "French" or did they owe their allegiance to Germany? What about the national *père de France*, Marshal Pétain? Indeed, Algeria remained officially pro-Vichy during most of the war. Abbas seized this opportunity. In 1943, Abbas declared, 'the French colony only admits equality with Muslim Algeria on one level [being the] sacrifice on the battlefields' in the famous "Manifesto of the Algerian People."²⁶⁰ Abbas appeared to abandon the pro-assimilationist rhetoric; however, he still called for direct peaceful negotiation with metropolitan France. At war's end, Algerian nationalism escalated. On May 8, 1945, demonstrations erupted in the town of Sétif. The day began to celebrate VE Day, but tensions had risen over the treatment of Algerian veterans and the imprisonment of Messali. Algerian workers took to the streets with banners that stated 'Vive Messali' and 'Long Live Free and Independent Algeria.'²⁶¹ Algerians demanded social reform and the release of Messali, who spent numerous occasions in prison for his rancorous behavior. Although it is not clear who fired the first shot, the incident left thousands dead.²⁶² No other event had such a profound impact on the development of the FLN. French imperial authorities subsequently suppressed both Abbas and Messali—Abbas was forced into house arrest and Messali was exiled to the Congo.²⁶³ A small group of young Algerians, many who fought for France in World War II, emerged as the leaders of Algeria through the FLN. Many of these leaders participated in the Sétif incident.

Nine principle Algerian nationalists, ranging from ages 27 to 42, founded the FLN in 1954: Ahmed Ben Bella, Ali Mahsas, Mostefa Ben Boulaid, Belkacem Krim, Omar Ouamrane, Lakhdar Ben Tobbal, Mohamed Boudiaf, Mohamed Khider, and Hocine Aït Ahmed. These members originated from socially diverse backgrounds. Boulaid came from Aurés and was previously employed as a common miller.²⁶⁴ Hocine Aït Ahmed, born in 1926, grew up in a small *Kabyle* village with few opportunities, and where infant mortality rates remained high—Ait Ahmed attributed this to the French colonial system.²⁶⁵ None of the *neuf historiques* supported Abbas' liberal ideology. Rather, most gravitated towards Messali's socialist leaning ideas. Gilbert Meynier noted, however, that the eventual leaders of the FLN carried different concerns and visions for an independent Algeria,

²⁶⁰ Horne, 42.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 25, 41-43.

²⁶² French sources placed the number of dead Algerians at 1,300. Algerian sources noted 45,000 dead. Moderate historians commonly place the number at 6,000.

²⁶³ Horne, 73.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁶⁵ Ait Ahmed, 9-10.

which countered Messali's leftist leaning ideology: "*Indépendantisme et aspiration de classe ne sont donc pas des vecteurs de sens opposés, mais des vecteurs de même sens. Si tout 'nationalisme' est 'transclassisme,' le 'transclassisme' ne doit rien à un commun dénominateur social sur le long terme.*"²⁶⁶ The FLN founders were not, as Meynier stated, unified in ideology for Algeria's future, whether through Abbas' liberalism or Messali's socialism. Moreover, the colonial system affected each in very personal ways, often impending on the family structure. Thus, each carried his respective visions of revolutionary goals, that is, what should and could be achieved through Algerian independence.²⁶⁷

By the late 1940s, one figure emerged who influenced the FLN more than any other: Ahmed Ben Bella. Bella's immediate influence into what would become the FLN proved most important. Born in 1918, Bella grew up in Marnia, a small town west of Oran. His father worked in minor commercial ventures and sustained the family with a small farm. Three of Bella's brothers died early, one of whom died under the French flag during the Great War. By 1940, Bella joined the French army and received the Croix de Guerre. After Germany's *blitzkrieg* and France's subsequent surrender, Bella joined the French Moroccan resistance army. At war's end, Charles de Gaulle personally awarded Bella with the Médaille Militaire, unaware of the young Algerian's future. Dismayed over the Sétif massacre, Bella went underground within Messali's MTLD movement in 1947. With Messali exiled, Bella broke from traditional MTLD doctrines and created the OS (Organisation Spéciale), which claimed to fight French colonialism 'by all means,' violent and non-violent alike.²⁶⁸ Messali's MTLD continued to work within the system; however, Bella represented the first clear break from the old vanguard of Messali and Abbas. Armed confrontation became increasingly inevitable for Bella and his new followers. Indeed, Aït Ahmed and Bella formed an important alliance in 1949 and attacked a post office in Oran. Consequently, French authorities issued outstanding warrants for both. Aït Ahmed evaded capture, but French police apprehended Bella in 1950 and sentenced him to eight years imprisonment. Bella escaped from prison, along with fellow FLN founder Ali Mahsas, in 1952. The period from 1950 to 1954 remained largely chaotic, and the principle nationalist groups (UDMA and MTLD) splintered further into separate spheres. A core group of nationalists broke from the radical side of Messali's MTLD and called themselves "centralists." The most important point with this remained with Bella's call for a third party. By early 1954, Bella, Mahsas, Didouche and Boudiaf

²⁶⁶ Gilbert Meynier, *Histoire Intérieure du FLN, 1954-1962* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2002), 136. (Independence and class aspiration are not therefore the vectors of opposite direction, but the vectors in the same direction. If all 'nationalism' is 'transclassism,' 'transclassism' owes nothing to a common social denominator in the long term.)

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 134-135.

²⁶⁸ Horne, 74.

secretly collaborated in Paris and outlined the FLN's initial formation. This third party unequivocally advocated overt violent action against metropolitan colonial authorities.²⁶⁹

1954: The FLN United?

Detailed information about the inner circles of the FLN remains problematic at best. Ben Bella and Aït Ahmed wrote extensively after Algeria gained independence in 1962; however, both attained principle positions of power (or opposition power) with the newly formed Algerian government. Several other founders were either assassinated or exiled; therefore, our understanding of events must be seen in this context. Official FLN documents must be examined with caution, as these documents emphasized solidarity through FLN propaganda.²⁷⁰ Despite Frantz Fanon's arguments, FLN leaders remained, as they had before and after independence, deeply divided over political, social, and cultural issues. Frantz Fanon argued in *Wretched of the Earth* that leaders unite through "the practice of violence [which] binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain."²⁷¹ Fanon was heavily invested in the FLN cause, primarily as a member himself. Terrorism certainly played an important role, as it often does. This paper attempts, however, to distinguish these perspectives, and echoes William Qaundt's analysis that "contrary to Fanon's prophecy [...] it is simply untrue that the Algerian revolution produced unity within the political elite."²⁷² Indeed, we must deconstruct both early Algerian reactions and official FLN documentation in order to fully tease out and distinguish divergent FLN perspectives. In many ways, *altérité* (otherness) remained an important, perhaps ingrained, concept within the FLN hierarchy. This was not only directed at metropolitan France, but became an important distinction from an internal point of view.

On November 1, 1954 (All Saints Day), the leaders of the FLN officially proclaimed their sovereignty as a political and military independence movement with the following objectives:

Our movement of regeneration presents itself under the label of Front de Liberation Nationale, thus freeing itself from any possible compromise, and offering to all Algerian patriots of every social position and of all parties...the possibility of joining in the national struggle.

Goal: National independence through:

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 74-77, and Bisma Lahouri, "Ahmed Ben Bella (1916-)," *L'Express*, December 18, 2003, 1.

²⁷⁰ See Mohamed Harbi and Gilbert Meynier, *Le FLN: Documents et Histoire, 1954-1962*, "Information et propagande du FLN/ALN," 110-136.

²⁷¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 73.

²⁷² Qaundt, 11.

1. restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign, democratic, and social, within the framework of the principles of Islam;
2. preservation of all fundamental freedoms, without distinction of race or religion.

INTERNAL OBJECTIVES

1. political house-cleaning through the destruction of the last vestiges of corruption and reformism, the causes of our present decadence....

EXTERNAL OBJECTIVES

1. internationalism of the Algerian problem;
2. pursuit of North African unity in its national Arabo-Islamic context
3. assertion, through the United Nations Charter, of our active sympathy towards all nations that may support our liberating cause.²⁷³

The “political house-cleaning” served formal acknowledgment of divided leaders within both the FLN and other nationalist groups. It also offered a warning to those individuals or groups not aligned with the FLN. Only months earlier, the Messalists issued their own proclamation to the National Algerian Congress, which echoed 1930s North African Star ideology that “est qualifiée de période de lutte fratricide.”²⁷⁴ Not all nationalist members agreed with the FLN agenda, thus creating their own internal fratricide. Still, fratricide became an available and conceptualized term which carried both pragmatic and psychological meaning into the formation and fate of the FLN. This concept may be compared, in theoretical framework, to a Norbert Elias idea that “seek[s] the conditions for transformation in psychic economy in changes in ways to exert power and exist in society.”²⁷⁵ Goals of the FLN appear to have retained much of this thinking.

FLN leaders portrayed these goals as the only true, legitimate cause—success depended primarily through violent military actions. For example, early FLN propaganda utilized excessive military idioms. Leaflets issued in November 1955, titled *La Bataille de Djorf vue par Le Patriote*, galvanized the FLN’s intrepidity: “Nous chargeons avec cœur, le choc est irrésistible.”²⁷⁶ Further leaflets, issued in 1955 or 1956 throughout the Oran region, portrayed notions of FLN unity through military rhetoric: “Le moment de l’action nous attend maintenant et nous ne pouvons obtenir des

²⁷³ Horne, 95.

²⁷⁴ Mohammed Harbi and Gilbert Meynier, *Le FLN: Documents et Histoire, 1954-1962* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2004), 25. (...is described as the period of fratricide.)

²⁷⁵ Roger Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 108.

²⁷⁶ Mohammed Harbi and Gilbert Meynier, *Le FLN: Documents et Histoire, 1954-1962* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2004), 110. (We charge with heart, the shock is irresistible.)

résultats [à travers] [...] les méthodes, les objectifs, l'emploi du temps et faisant preuve d'esprit de sacrifice, de courage et de foi."²⁷⁷ However, the FLN remained at the outset, fragmented both strategically and logistically. Propaganda illustrated clear common objectives, motives, and ideology. It serves important evidence that shows perceived, whether subconsciously or deliberately, notions of unanimity with monolithic features, like war or religion. On the contrary, it may prove more accurate to propose that FLN leaders knowingly manipulated these ideas in order to form a broad movement.

The FLN struggled to appeal to Algeria's diverse populations. The popular French news press, *L'Express*, echoed this statement in a 1954 article that discussed how French, Arab, Jewish, Mozabite (Berber), Italian, and Spanish groups lived together, since colonial conception, with much suspicion.²⁷⁸ Diverse ethnic groups interfered with the FLN's "solidarity" rhetoric. Algerian populations became increasingly fragmented and separated. Popular support waned in the beginning, only slowly gaining wider revolutionary participation by war's end. Indeed, Algeria's majority illiterate population could not process the information, which came from Cairo radio broadcasts and pamphlets similar to the noted examples. Broad enthusiasm over FLN actions initially resulted in the Aurès region. Why, then, did Algerians slowly but surely gravitate towards FLN ideas? Alf Andrew Heggoy proposed evidence to answer such a question. Rather than the FLN's attempts to foster widespread violent nationalism, Heggoy argues that native Algerians participated for numerous reasons, but particularly through French rifle restrictions. This "legal" restriction embodied the larger colonial system of inequality. French colonialism assaulted pre-established Berber traditions that included the rifle. Heggoy noted that "Kabyles gladly tell a folk story which illustrates [...] a [...] man, according to this homily, owns a wife, a dog, and a gun. He can dispense with the wife and, if need be, do without the dog. But to have no gun is to have no honor."²⁷⁹ Others, when asked why they joined the FLN, provided no answer.²⁸⁰ This suggests individuals joined for reasons other than stated in official FLN propaganda. An often-overlooked explanation was simply the idea of group conformity, influenced on Algerians through word of mouth. Psychological sociality, that is the nature and tendency to mobilize along socially similar grounds, may have been more important than the FLN. Colonialism, in its much broader understanding, adversely affected native culture and society. Both Heggoy and Pierre Bourdieu noted the importance of the Algerian family structure where "the misery and insecurity have been made even worse by the distress resulting from

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 111. (The moment for action awaits us now and we can not achieve results [through] the methods, objectives, schedule and in showing a spirit of sacrifice, courage, and faith.)

²⁷⁸ "La France peut gagner en Algérie," *L'Express*, November 13, 1954.

²⁷⁹ Heggoy, 131.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

the loss of the group ties on which the individual's psychological and social stability was based in the old communities. One can imagine how precarious family unity must be in such a context."²⁸¹ Is it a coincidence that the term "fratricide" is found in much of the FLN documents and personal writings of the various national leaders? This term implies a complete breakdown of family solidarity within the colonial structure. It seems, rather than a unified FLN message, Algerians participated, if at all, in the independence movement for personal reasons. The grandiose principles of FLN propaganda recruited some individuals; however, this evidence suggests Algerians never thought of themselves within those terms. The FLN leaders, too, brought these different life stories and experiences into the party. Those leaders attempted to create and legitimize its fledgling position in 1954, despite their competing visions for an independent Algeria. Deconstructing this evidence has shown that FLN leaders and many Algerians were not united in 1954—just as they had not been in 1930 or 1962.

Conclusion

The Algerian War increasingly demonstrated intense violence between both parties. For the FLN, internal division plagued its overall efforts. By 1955, the FLN core in Aurès deposed its military general, Bachir Chihani, and executed him. Moreover, Ben Bella remained in self-imposed exile in Cairo in attempts to form broad international coalitions. In 1956, the FLN leadership in Algeria issued an "ultimatum" to Bella: "If you cannot do anything for us outside, come back and die with us."²⁸² Indeed, Bella found little logistical support for the Algerian cause outside of the country. Internal quarrels increasingly divided FLN leadership. Things became so desperate for the FLN that they welcomed Abbas into the party by spring of 1955. Abbas continued his moderate positions—exemplified by his numerous international trips to France and the United Nations assembly. His clarion call for equitable solutions ultimately fell on deaf ears.²⁸³

The war continued with numerous cases of overt terrorism, by both sides, and widespread torture. The Battle of Algiers ensued in 1956, leaving thousands dead and countless more homeless. By 1962, the war ended with Charles de Gaulle's concession and decision to "grant" Algeria's independence. Indeed, the war's conclusion ultimately rested with his decision, influenced, nonetheless, by the growing metropolitan dissent. In Algeria, the FLN emerged victorious and transformed itself from a revolutionary movement into a legitimate, albeit unitary, political party.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerian* Alan C.M. Ross trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 141.

²⁸² Horne, 143.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

²⁸⁴ See Horne, 505-515.

Evidence of FLN divisions quickly formed once again in Ben Bella's new authoritarian government. From 1962 to 1965, Bella utilized the army to remove and oppose the other existing founders of the FLN—Aït Ahmed, Khider, and Boumedienne among others. Bella's excessive authoritarianism could not sustain itself, and he was removed in a relatively non-violent coup in 1965. Houari Boumedienne claimed the presidency and remained in office until his death in 1978.²⁸⁵ Ironically, Abbas, Aït Ahmed, and Bella all fled to France and Switzerland in exile. Abbas retired to a Paris suburb until his death in 1985.²⁸⁶ Aït Ahmed and Bella remain active voices in Algerian politics. Thus, Algeria's immediate post-war history exemplified the same divisions that plagued nationalist leadership in the 1920s to 1940s and in 1954. The imperial legacy created *altérité* (otherness) in which FLN leaders never fully detached themselves, clearly evident in the post-war struggle for stability.

Independence movements, especially in the colonial world, often portray unanimity. This paper has shown, however, the Algerian perspective proved much more dynamic and convoluted. We often understand the colonial system in these terms. The Algerian story is one of deep-rooted conflict, created and nourished by the French imperial system. The process proved gradual, but ultimately chaotic and violent. Liberal and moderate leadership simply could not sustain its call for assimilation. Indeed, not just French authorities invested these ideas into Algeria, but a core group of individuals—initially led by Zenati and Abbas—accepted the assimilation doctrine, including the idea of fratricide. French leadership never intended, however, for Algeria to assimilate French culture and society. It served, rather, an important convenience to apply such rhetoric and facilitate an efficient colonial system. French imperialism applied the concept of *altérité* in order to instill pragmatic and psychological inferiority. This came through the adoption of specific French linguistic ideas that FLN leaders carried and employed during the independence movement. The unintended consequences worked two fold. First, Algerian nationalism strengthened. Secondly, Algerian nationalist leaders never agreed on a monolithic path for Algeria. The evidence presented highlights the intense internal conflict between the original FLN founders; however, these disputes devolved from decades of linguistic assimilation that worked in contradiction. While Algeria achieved its independence, it carried the imperial burden beyond 1954 and arguably to the present. Algerian fraternity proved too weak to sustain the imperial weight; instead, it fractured and divided them. The symbolic power of November 1, 1954 will always represent a better, independent Algerian future. Beneath it all, however, FLN leaders engaged in a storm of ideas, and remained politically

²⁸⁵ Quandt, 234. Also see chapter 11.

²⁸⁶ See Horne, 555-559.

fractured and incapable of shedding one hundred twenty-four years of French imperial domination.

