
Timothy Scott Johnson

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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HISTORICAL ANALOGY AND THE LIMITS OF FRENCH HISTORICAL REASON

By

Timothy Scott Johnson

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by

Timothy Scott Johnson

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Richard Wolin, Distinguished Professor of History, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Date

Helena Rosenblatt, Executive Officer, Professor of History, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Executive Officer

David Troyansky, Professor of History, Brooklyn College and The Graduate Center, CUNY

Gary Wilder, Professor of Anthropology and History, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Camille Robcis, Associate Professor of History, Cornell University

David Schalk, Professor Emeritus of History, Vassar College

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT


by

Timothy Scott Johnson

Advisor: Richard Wolin

This dissertation examines the use of the French Revolution as an explanatory device for discussing the French-Algerian War (1954-1962). Anticolonial intellectuals in France invoked the French Revolution to explain their reasons for supporting colonial reform as well as their solidarity with Algerian nationalist aims. Through an examination of intellectuals’ public interventions alongside French and Algerian historical narratives, I examine the ways in which historical alignment signaled political and cultural distance between France and Algeria. Making an independent Algeria analogous to eighteenth-century revolutionary France lent political and conceptual legitimacy to Algerian claims to an independent national identity while also reinforcing the basic tenets of France’s colonial claims to historical and cultural universalism.
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I still remember the lunch in the spring of 2005 when Michael Behrent first explained to me what intellectual history was. It was then that I realized I could place the entirety of my academic interests under one umbrella and I have not looked back since. This project undoubtedly is the tree from the acorn he planted over a decade ago.

Lastly and most importantly, I owe incalculable debts to my parents, Nathan Johnson, Cheryl Carano, and Mark Carano as well as my wider family, among whom Josh and Gretchen Kinlaw count as well. Their emotional and material support has made this possible. To my family I dedicate this dissertation.
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Introduction

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language.

Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte* (1852)¹

Throughout the French-Algerian War (1954-1962), anticolonialist intellectuals invoked late eighteenth-century words, images, persons—namely, by speaking about the French Revolution of 1789-1799. In some instances this practice certainly was semantically strategic, aligning the foundation of the modern French Republic with anti-imperial goals to bolster the latter. However, this phenomenon also moved from simple simile to assimilation, even catachresis.² This study examines the uses anticolonialist francophone intellectuals made of the French Revolution during the French Algerian War and the assumptions lurking behind this analogy.

The French Algerian War has become established as a privileged topic of historical analysis, and for many good reasons. The war begun on All Saints Day, 1 November 1954, when members of a newly-formed National Liberation Front (FLN) attacked a series of targets


² *Catachresis* is the misapplication or improper extension of one word or phrase to another context. It is, in other words, a bad metaphor.
throughout Algeria’s three departments, exacerbated metropolitan fears of global French decline and in three and a half years brought down the government of the Fourth Republic. When the Fifth Republic arose, it did so under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle, the Free French and World War II resistance hero. Yet while Algeria’s one million settlers of European descent thought de Gaulle would once again be their savior, metropolitan opinion increasingly favored peace in Algeria, even if that position also meant recognizing Algerian nationalists’ claims.

Larger transformations in France’s place in the world served as the backdrop of the war. The war began scarcely a decade since the end of World War II, when both France and its North African territories suffered defeat and Nazi occupation. France aligned with the capitalist west in the postwar international order, but its imperial holdings throughout Southeast Asia and Africa continued to be sites of contention. The new postwar Fourth Republic renamed these territories part of a French Union comprising overseas territories like Martinique and New Caledonia and overseas departments, like Algeria. The government discussed prospects for greater political autonomy and equality in these overseas territories, but to many, including metropolitan French, this was still the empire bequeathed by the Third Republic. Many of those unsatisfied with France’s global territorial possessions still spoke in anti-imperial terms. The apparent contradiction between the need to liberate the world from the Nazi and Japanese yokes and the will to continue French overseas domination was also not lost on contemporary observers. The French-Indo-Chinese Wars (1945-1954), for instance, were already underway even before the war with Germany and Japan had ended. While the communist east would vie for influence in colonized and newly-independent territories, those territories themselves would also assert their own role in the global order, most notably through international congresses, beginning in 1955

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3 Since 1848, Algeria was made up of three legislative departments, juridically the same as metropolitan departments.
with the Bandung Conference in Indonesia. Continued threats of widespread rebellion in Tunis and Morocco forced France to abandon its claims there in 1956. By the end of 1960, decolonization would largely be a foregone conclusion for French Africa, with the United Nations’ Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, as well as the newfound independence of 14 African countries that had been parts of the French Union.

The war in Algeria took place in this context, crystalizing and exacerbating existing tensions. Most critics of French Algeria saw the territory as embodying the worst aspects of colonial society. A larger than normal settler population (comprising about one-ninth of Algeria’s total population) dominated local politics and controlled Algeria’s economic capital. While there were very few extremely wealthy colons, and most of the settler population lived under a lower standard of living than the metropole, even the poorest of the poor settlers lived much more comfortably and with greater political and social rights than the rest of the population, collectively referred to as indigènes (indigenous peoples) or Muslims. Thus, despite the legal fact that Algeria comprised 3 legislative départements of the Republic, and pro-French Algerian supporters would take “l’Algérie, c’est la France” as their mantra, in practice it was a colony, through and through. Like all boundaries, these social and ethnic divisions could be porous, and writers like Albert Camus saw French Algeria, despite its problems, as capable of

\[\text{4 The terms indigènes and Muslim referred to the totality of the non-white population of Algeria. These terms of course comprised a variety of ethnic and religious groups, including various Berber nationalities, Arabs, and Sephardic Jews. There were atheist and Christian as well as Muslim Berbers and Arabs. By 1954 the settler population numbered about 984,000 and the population designated “Muslim” numbered 7,860,000. Benjamin Stora, Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History, translated by Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 22-26.}

\[\text{When approaching any type of colonial history, it is important not to reify the very historical categories produced by the colonial encounter, especially since they more often than not encoded problematic assumptions about race and authority. I have done my best to avoid this. However, when translating the sources used I have kept the contemporary terminology used at the time.} \]
being a model Mediterranean society, inclusive of all populations. But plans at reform, integration, and economic development from the 1930s onward never amounted to much, due in large part to the staunch resistance to reform from the *colons* themselves. Camus’ dreams of Mediterranean inclusion remained fantasy. The result was colonial retrenchment and increasing support for nationalist calls to separate from the metropole.

Over the last twenty years the literature on the war has expanded beyond cursory treatments in fruitful and important directions. Studies focusing on the diplomatic strategy of the FLN highlight the international nature of the war and have shown that Algerian nationalism was about more than simply guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and counter-terror. While the war was often conducted according to binary categories—colonizer versus rebellious colonized—a number of studies have added important nuance to this analysis. There were certainly many ethnic backgrounds represented in both categories, and there were plenty of cases where identities sat in the middle of these divisions. The war’s experience and aftermath furthermore provoked (and continue to provoke) numerous negotiations of personal and collective memory. Other studies...

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have shown the ways in which the war, or experience of decolonization more generally, redefined the French Republic, from legislation to everyday cultural practice.\footnote{Todd Shepard, \textit{The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Kristen Ross, \textit{Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture} (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).}

Just as the French nation and its identity were reformulated in the wake of decolonization, a number of studies have shown decolonization’s effects on French and francophone intellectual history and the role intellectuals played in the process of decolonization itself. The French-Algerian War exacerbated older divisions in France’s intellectual communities and in some cases created new rifts. Intellectuals took public positions over the course of the war. While some intellectuals clearly took anticolonial stances and others defended France’s claim to Algeria, many occupied the spectrum between these two poles, critical of the one without fully endorsing the other. The postcolonial situation in France after the war has influenced key themes in contemporary French intellectual debate, such as the negotiation of cultural and religious difference.\footnote{Jane Hiddleston, \textit{Decolonizing the Intellectual: Politics, Culture, and Humanism at the End of the French Empire} (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014); Cathérine Brun and Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, \textit{Engagements et déchirements. Les intellectuels et la guerre d’Algérie}. Les éditions IMEC (Paris: Gallimard, 2012); James D. Le Sueur, \textit{Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria}, Second Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005 [2001]); David Schalk, \textit{War and the Ivory Tower: Algeria and Vietnam} (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska University Press, 2005 [1991]).}

This study builds on many of the insights of this growing literature on the war and how French and francophone intellectuals talked about French history over this time of national crisis. During the war, but especially after large-scale military and terrorist campaigns were underway in 1956, both colonial and metropolitan intellectuals frequently referred to France’s own revolutionary past when explaining their positions on the French-Algerian War. Whether these statements were sincere representations of intellectuals’ motives or simply part of a rhetorical
strategy was dependent on the speakers and writers of such analogies and was always tied to specific contexts, both public and private. The intellectual left in France and its audience inhabited a conceptual world in which such connections had significant meaning. At precisely a moment when the intellectual left in France turned their focus from Europe to a non-European “other” these intellectuals drew upon a very European—very French—political imaginary to make sense of Algerian revolutionary violence and the colonial conditions that caused it. Understanding the importance the intellectual left placed on the French Revolution offers a window onto their commitments to Algeria’s revolutionary moment as well as their understanding of France’s own political identity.

Of course, that French people would rehearse the core tenets of their nationalist identity is nothing new or surprising. Many of the intellectuals active in the French Algerian War came of age in the interwar Third Republic where educational curricula emphasized symbolism and history related to the Revolution.\(^9\) The Bastille was a symbol of liberation and the antithesis of oppressive government.\(^10\) The battles of Valmy, Fleurus, and Jemappes reminded citizens of their power as a reserve of national defense. The red Phrygian bonnet symbolized popular political participation. The famous members of the National Assembly and Convention offered heroes suitable for a wide array of ideological dispositions. Radicals had Robespierre, Saint-Just, Hébert, and Babeuf. Moderates could lay claim to Danton or Condorcet. And of course conservatives had any number of Bourbons to mourn.\(^11\)


\(^11\) On the historical image of Robespierre, see Marc Belissa and Yannick Bosc, \textit{Robespierre: La fabrication d’un mythe} (Paris: Ellipses, 2013); on the memory of the Bourbon
Beginning in the interwar years, claims for colonial independence were often structured by turning French patriotic rhetoric on its head, and studies by Peter Dunwoodie and Michael Goebel provide a useful prologue to the history told here. Many Algerian nationalists, like Ferhat Abbas, for example, studied and organized their political movements in Paris (often mingling with other international anticolonial leaders like Ho Chi Minh). In some cases, they imbibed those aspects of French culture they thought worth salvaging, and in others they simply found those aspects of the French national identity they could wield to their advantage. If the ideal image of France entailed assertions like article one of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789: “all men are born and remain equal in their rights”), then anticolonial activists could show the world how far from this ideal the actually-existing France in fact was.\textsuperscript{12}

While referring to the standards of the Declaration of the Rights of Man could point to the need for reforming the colonial relationship as much as it did ending it, anticolonialists mobilized revolutionary symbols in more straightforwardly radical ways. The year before war broke out in Algeria the pro-liberation contingent of Algerians in the French labor union’s (CGT) annual Bastille Day demonstration embodied this strategy. Like Paris’ residents in 1789, Algerian nationalists saw in the government oppression and tyranny that necessitated violent destruction, even if only symbolic at first. While previous demonstrations had marked the national holiday in Algeria (14 Juillet celebrations in Algeria went as far back as 1880), the police brutality that followed and the outright calls for Algerian independence and national resistance made this event a sign of things to come. The French national holiday, July 14, was

now directly associated with the prospects of colonial independence. As Pierre Nora has remarked, in the French republican imaginary, the Bastille itself remains something of an empty signifier that is readily applied to diverse causes.

By the start of the French Algerian War, references to the French Revolution of 1789 only increased among the French left’s discourse on the political potential of developing nations. Parochial references to French history coexisted with international concerns. As the Soviet Union ceased to be the model for the socialist future, the left looked elsewhere for revolutionary inspiration. With the dual blows of Khrushchev’s 1956 denunciation and admittance of Stalin’s excesses and the defeat of the Hungarian anti-Soviet rebellion later that year, the European industrialized proletariat appeared to be in very sore shape indeed. The escalation of military and terror campaigns in Algeria the same year, however, drew increased attention to Algerian revolutionaries, whom many leftist intellectuals saw as members of a pre-industrial global third estate, suggesting the world’s next revolutionary development would occur where even Marx


had been pessimistic of its future.\textsuperscript{16} The growth of third worldism as a revolutionary ideology, however, coexisted with recourse to the ideals of the French Revolution; at times the two revolutionary referents combined. For those of the radical left disaffected by the Soviet model for revolution the French Revolution provided material that was always available and unimpeachable.

The application of the French Revolution of 1789 to subsequent historical events was also by no means new in the decades surrounding World War II. Though the revolutionary trajectory from Rousseau to Robespierre to Lenin described by Jacob Talmon draws skepticism from modern academics, the desire to see the French Revolution as a political “heuristic,” “paradigm,” or “model” in twentieth-century France was largely the rule, not the exception.\textsuperscript{17} It rather fits into the process Michel Vovelle called “the game of analogies” and Sophie Wahnich described as an ever-recurring “concatenation of presents” that “200 years after the fact, these [Revolutionary] questions put men from the present into a condition of having to take part in the historical condition of 1793.”\textsuperscript{18} The concatenation Wahnich describes shows that the Revolution itself could exist as a metaphor for other historical times and places, the Revolution literally standing in the place of subsequent revolutions. This description gets to the heart of what made

\textsuperscript{16} Marx’s sentiments toward pre-industrial areas such as Ireland and India are well known. Marx stayed in Algeria for a short period toward the end of his life and during this time his attitude toward Algeria was negative, though not quite as derisive as his attitude toward similarly occupied areas with a large nonindustrial peasant base like Ireland or India. See his letter to Laura Lafargue, 13 April 1882, in Marx/Engels Collected Works, Volume 46 (New York: International Publishers, 1992), 238-243.


reference to the French Revolution so powerful for modern francophone audiences. The metaphor’s durability partially resides in its experienced matter-of-fact purchase on the truth. However, to understand references to the French Revolution from the standpoint of intellectual and cultural history, it is perhaps better to follow Vovelle and examine the references as analogies. While claiming the French Revolution was foundational to the modern world, the process of applying the French Revolution to other times and places required applying the logic of the French Revolution to other historical moments.

In this regard, examining the “plasticity” of using the French Revolution as an analogue referent that could be applied in multiple ways gives us access to the ways the Revolution provided a conceptual horizon for the meaning of political possibilities during the French Algerian War. Simply put, it mattered whether someone did or did not think there was a

19 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* [1790], translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 225-227. The line between analogy and metaphor is perhaps not as clearly defined as I would like it. And, according to Kant’s analysis, the French Revolution as analogy is at the same time “schematic” and “symbolic.” Much of what Kant discusses as analogy Hans Blumenberg would later treat as metaphor. See Blumenberg, “Introduction,” *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* [1960], translated by Robert Savage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 1-5.

20 Dan Edelstein and Keith Michael Baker have recently approached the French Revolution as a “script.” By looking to the ways historical subjects have related to the revolutionary model created in France, they see a new way of comparing political moments across time and space. In their view, “Once known and enacted, the script can be replayed indefinitely; but it can also be changed, adapted, or even subverted by the introduction of new events, characters, or actions. The actors—or even the audience—can take over the stage.” This comparative approach is certainly promising, but we should be vigilant against naturalizing the what and how of translating revolutionary scripts from one historical moment to another, even if the historical subjects are themselves doing the translating. The historical question pertinent to me is that such a script would or could be staged in the first place. Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, eds., *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 3.

21 I take my cues here from Reinhart Koselleck’s approach to *begriffsgeschichte*. I do not mean to say that there is a unified concept of the French Revolution. Rather, the French Revolution acted as an umbrella term under which many concepts sheltered. On changing conceptual horizons, see Reinhart Koselleck, “Time and History,” *The Practice of Conceptual*
fundamental similarity between the French Revolution and Algerian nationalist aspirations. It also mattered why they might think so in the first place.

This study proceeds on two interrelated fronts. First, Chapter One charts the various ways in which the analogy French Revolution-French Algerian War appeared from 1954 to 1962 among anticolonialists. Initially, for intellectuals like Henri Marrou the analogy was a way of advocating for national reform by holding the illegitimate colonial practices in Algeria against the idealized first French Republic. As the war brought down the Fourth Republic the French Revolution became a rallying cry to fight the conservative forces advocating for the status quo in Algeria to remain in place and to fight the perceived threat of a fascist resurgence amongst French-Algeria’s supporters. This was no more apparent than among the contributors to the short-lived journal 14 juillet. Finally, the analogy was a way of expressing support for Algerian nationalists via what I call a “revolutionary confraternity.” This sentiment was an important motivation among those who took direct action in support the Algerian cause. One had to support the FLN (or their rivals, the MNA) because the FLN embodied the same historical situation as the heroes of the French Revolution. The French Revolution thus indexed many political and historical positions at the same time. The second line of enquiry examines why and the how the situations in both metropolitan France and across the Mediterranean made the analogy to the French Revolution seem natural and compelling.

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22 I use the term index according to the middle period of American pragmatist logician Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory. I interpret the index to mean any third term (physical, symbolic, or conceptual) that unites an array of other terms based on causal connections and relevant context. In Peirce’s terms, this form of index is a representation that corresponds to some fact of the object represented. While some strict adherents to Peirce’s theory might think this an overextension of the index, I nonetheless find it useful, especially given Peirce’s claims that experience and thought are never-ending semiosis. See Albert Atkin, “Peirce’s Theory of
The following two chapters examine the key assumptions behind the statements examined in Chapter One. These recourses to the French Revolution in the 1950s and 1960s assumed it was sensible to relate it to both contemporary France and contemporary Algeria. While these connections may have seemed obvious to francophone anticolonialists, we need not take their claims to obviousness at face value.

Chapter Two examines the role historians of the French Revolution gave to the Revolution’s contemporary relevance and the potential dangers of anachronism. Education policy under the Third Republic (1871-1940) emphasized Revolutionary imagery as a way of enforcing French patriotism in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War and World War I, treating the Revolution as a living heritage. After the Vichy government and Nazi occupation openly contested the legacy of the Revolution, the postwar government again reinforced the Revolution as the true marker of French identity. While both institutional insiders, such as the historian Georges Lefebvre, as well as institutional outsiders, like activist-turned-historian Daniel Guérin, thought the French Revolution was invaluable to contemporary French politics, there nonetheless existed an undercurrent of unease about this sort of politically-charged anachronism. Many historians regarded the historical distance they took from their objects of study—their recul—as essential to their trade. Forcing their subject’s contemporary relevance risked historical malpractice. The up-and-coming historian of the Revolution Albert Soboul defended this

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23 Siegel, *The Moral Disarmament of France*; Jean Leduc and Patrick Garcia, *L’enseignement de l’histoire en France: de l’Ancien Régime à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003), Chapters 7, 8, 9. Leduc and Garcia note that the Vichy regime was “neither rupture nor parenthesis,” because there were longer-term trends in place (Chapter 8). However, in terms of Revolutionary symbolism, Vichy was a clear counterpoint to official Third and Fourth Republic imagery.
position forcefully, despite an affinity for both the French Revolution and the cause of Algerian nationalism.

As Todd Shepard has convincingly argued, “The Algerian Revolution was at the same time a French Revolution.” In some respects, this statement was as literal as it was figurative. The second direction in which the French Revolutionary index pointed was across the Mediterranean toward Algeria. The French Revolution was an important referent in historical, sociological, and demographic studies of Algeria. Historical and social scientific knowledge also directly influenced French governmental policy during the French Algerian War. This chapter, however, addresses a slightly different question: in particular, how did the terms of debate around Algeria and its relationship to France shift so dramatically in the first place? It was one thing to invoke the French Revolution in the context of metropolitan crisis and republican ideals. It was another to recognize Algerian nationalists’ claims to political and historical difference and still apply the French Revolutionary analogy to them as well. The Revolution was a marker of political, social, and historical modernity. For the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century Algeria was anything but modern in the French imagination. Such an assumption was one of the foundations of the civilizing mission’s logic. From the 1930s through the 1960s, the historical assumptions about Algeria’s historical place changed. During the French-Algerian War, many now viewed Algeria as modern or on the verge of modernity. Chapter Three tracks this change in Algeria’s historical description in the writings of historian Charles-André Julien,

24 Shepard, 1.
sociologist Jacques Berque, and demographer Alfred Sauvy. All three wrote innovative studies on Algeria that challenged older orientalist assumptions of its historical place. They appealed to a wider public beyond a select field of specialists. They wrote and spoke publicly on the French Algerian War. And all three carried significant institutional power in their respective academic fields.

In broad outlines, the historical narrative Julien and Berque constructed for Algeria posited the following. On the one hand, the French presence disrupted a different, yet still important and coherent civilization in Algeria, creating economic and social instability. On the other, the encounter between the non-European Algerian population and the European newcomers transplanted aspects of the French Revolution’s ideals to Algeria. This occurred both in intercultural exchanges back in metropolitan France and the continual repetition of the civilizing mission’s universalism. Sauvy’s narrative differed in providing a demographic analysis of the colonial encounter. France’s presence in Algeria increased life expectancy but failed to provide improvements to standards of living that would curb an imbalance between decreased mortality and heightened fertility. If France was unwilling to ameliorate this imbalance, then Algeria needed its political autonomy to do so on its own. Sauvy, like Julien and Berque, tied his analysis to particularly French referents, describing the demographic situation in Algeria as that of France at the end of the ancien régime. The analogy to the French Revolution in Alfred Sauvy’s seminal article “Three worlds, one planet” is often downplayed in favor of its Cold War overtones, or these days simply forgotten. However, the formulation of the third world in Sauvy’s article succinctly summarized a major strand of French anticolonial rhetoric that had long been in existence, and readers easily fused it with Marxist revolutionary politics.²⁶ The third

world was analogous to the pre-revolutionary French third estate. Like the third estate, economic and social inequalities in Algeria placed it on the verge of national revolution.

Chapter Four tracks the role of the French Revolution in the genesis of Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophy. Previous work has shown the connections between Sartre’s thinking about postwar politics and his commitments to fighting racism and colonialism.\(^\text{27}\) My reading of Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, preface to Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, as well as unpublished manuscripts from the 1950s demonstrates the key role the French Revolution played in his philosophy. Sartre used studies of the history of the French Revolution as a model for revolutionary praxis and historical change. They provided a building block for his political thought during the French Algerian War. In this context, Sartre’s postwar existential third worldism emerged as another form of revolutionary confraternity. The place of the French Revolution in Sartre’s thought furthermore highlights some of the more contentious aspects of Sartre’s positions on Algeria as well as later revolutionary movements, namely his treatment of violence and the potential legitimacy of political terrorism.

The use of the French Revolution as fundamental referent in the French Algerian War (or for anything else, for that matter) relied on key assumptions about its universal purchase on history and politics. This claim to universal validity is important not only for what it captured, but also for what it could not and did not capture. The conclusion, in turn, explores some of these limits and examines a set of critiques contemporary French anticolonialists raised against this use of French historical reason.

In what follows, contemporary students and historians of the French Revolution may be somewhat (or very) surprised to read the descriptions of French history cited herein. The history of the history of the French Revolution (sic) has been quite tumultuous, often swinging back and forth like a political pendulum. Today’s historical consensuses and debates concerning the Revolution are not those of the mid-twentieth century. However misguided the reader may find various understandings of the French Revolution, they should remember the important point is to work outward from the subject’s worldview and leave the privilege of hindsight for other studies. One particular aspect of this exercise, however, bears a little more elaboration.

The label Jacobin in French can mean many different things, and sometimes it can mean many different things at the same time. First, it can refer to the political club formed in the French Revolution whose members, like Robespierre and Saint-Just, are often seen as the cause and the leaders of the bloodier phases of the Revolution, the deposition of Louis XVI and the Reign of Terror. Secondly, it can refer to politicians who see their own political positions as radical or otherwise faithful to the essence of the Jacobin Club, however they might have construed that essence. And thirdly, the term can designate a specific set of political and state characteristics attributed to the Jacobin Republic: economic controls; centralized state bureaucracy; and a general adherence to natural rights, or to the rights in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in particular. Recent studies have shown that it is both unfair and unproductive to reduce these negative parts of the Revolution solely to the members of the Jacobin Club. However, as will be evident in Chapter 2, this was largely the view of historians

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28 For a more in-depth examination of the history and use of the label “Jacobin,” see Michel Vovelle, Les Jacobins: De Robespierre à Chevènement (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 1999).

29 For recent scholarship addressing the Jacobin Club’s place in the Revolution, see Marisa Linton, Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution
in the first half of the twentieth century. For many of these historians, too, these were not necessarily negative associations. Likewise, contemporary readers may be puzzled over any connection between Robespierre and the 1789 Declaration, yet it is a connection many made without thinking twice. Over the course of the French-Algerian War, the designation Jacobin variously referred to all three meanings. Sometimes, the intended meaning would shift over the course of the same breath. However important such nuances and context are to understanding each individual statement, my main point throughout is that in each case the referent hearkens back to the end of the eighteenth century.

The French Revolution in the Metropole and Algeria

Intellectuals invoked the French Revolution during the French-Algerian War in three waves, generally correlating with the course of the fighting in the war as well as with intellectual activism and engagement. While the first years of the war saw limited public interventions, as revelations of torture and repression became known and the French Army conducted large-scale offensives such as the Battle of Algiers in 1957, public debate increased. From the fall of the Fourth Republic in May of 1958 through the end of 1959 fears of a fascist resurgence led by pro-French-Algeria military officers brought the conflict to the metropole in an unavoidable fashion. In the war’s last three years the main events revolved around the presence of rightwing terrorism and public support for those who refused to serve in the military and others who gave direct support to the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). More often than not, speaking about the French Revolution was a way of mediating the relationship between abstract national values and the violence of the war. In this regard, fears of the return of a fascist fifth column, never fully expunged from French society after the purge following World War II, motivated this way of thinking. In terms of the volume of associations, the high point of the French Revolution’s entanglement with the French Algerian War is undoubtedly 1958. Not only was this year the 200th anniversary of Maximilien Robespierre’s birth, it was less predictably the year in which the Fourth Republic fell and the Fifth Republic was born. By the end of the war, however, it became common to not hear the French Revolution invoked to speak about metropolitan France, but rather to speak about the process of forming an independent Algerian nation.

Though these often anachronistic references to the French Revolution might appear sporadic at first glance, they are almost all bound by two clear logics. As far as the French Revolution served as a founding myth for the integrity and trajectory of the French Republic,
especially amongst members of the left—whether it be a revolutionary, international, or state-bound institutional left—it provided a standard point of reference when other contemporary guides appeared untenable. The French Revolution worked as an indexical marker that could bridge a glorified French past with hopes for uncertain French and Algerian futures. Secondly, these invocations followed the narrative arc of the French Algerian War’s unfolding. As the war began on the heels of defeat in Indochina and amidst general conflict in North Africa, from Morocco to Suez, the French Revolution was more often than not used as a surefire reference point for navigating these crises within the French Union. However, as the political questions posed by the war changed so too did the ways in which anticolonial intellectuals discussed the Revolution. This chapter reads the French Revolutionary analogies according to the rhythm of the French-Algerian War.

Although any foundational myth lends itself to continual reflection and invocation, the three primary ways French intellectuals drew on the Revolution during the French Algerian War highlight the historical specificity of their respective moments. First, intellectuals looked back to the beginning of the first French Republic to act as a guidepost for individual commitments and political action on the level of personal introspection and reflection. If the French Revolution was a reference point for the values of the Republic and its institutions, its individual chapters and protagonists could also suggest proper individual courses of political engagement. Second, intellectuals relied on the French Revolution to understand the crises of the Fourth and Fifth Republics. While some on the center-right, and especially those interested in keeping Algeria French, saw De Gaulle’s May 1958 coup as a sign of hope, many from the center to the far left saw the event as the return of fascist rule. But along with a reflexive anti-fascism many on the left responded to De Gaulle’s return by drawing on revolutionary imagery. Thirdly,
anticolonialists also grafted French Revolutionary images and identities onto Algerian nationalists, seeing them as revolutionary analogues removed by a century and a half. If the French Revolution had caste the mold from which all revolutions afterwards were formed, then certain logics prefigured the revolution in Algeria and could be used to make sense of the war’s events. In extreme cases, references to the French Revolution’s reign of terror justified Algerian nationalist terror.

Defending the Purity of the Republic

During the first year of the war, fighting occurred mainly in the Algerian countryside, split three ways between the FLN, the rival Mouvement National Algérien (MNA), and the French army. Among the FLN’s goals early in the war was recruitment and solidifying support among rural Algerians. This often involved forced recruitment and the enforcement of strict codes of conduct, forbidding alcohol, tobacco, and other activities deemed to be immoral western actions.³⁰ As the FLN grew in strength they moved into urban areas where French targets, such as police officers, cafés, forms of civilian transportation, were more easily available. As attacks in large cities like Oran, Constantine, and Algiers increased, so did the attention of intellectuals and the French media. The most dramatic of these incidents was the Phillippeville massacre of August 20, 1955, where FLN forces killed 52 Muslims and 71 pieds noirs around the northeastern city of Constantine. In turn, the pied noir community killed at least 1,273 Muslim Algerians, though the post-independence Algerian government claimed the number is closer to

12,000. By 1956, the attacks on civilians prompted Albert Camus and others to call for a truce forbidding attacks on any civilians. The truce did not come, and following the execution of FLN prisoners later that year FLN leaders declared that “For every rebel guillotined, 100 French will be slaughtered without distinction.”

As the war entered its fourth year, the number of public demonstrations and scandals increased. Furor over the disappearance of the young Algerian mathematician and Communist activist Maurice Audin and the torture of Alger Républicain editor Henri Alleg, to take two incidents from 1957 as examples, only contributed to the momentum leading up to the crisis of May 1958. The journal Express and publishing house Éditions de Minuit helped ensure these stories would have wide public attention. Selections from Pierre Vidal-Nacquet’s 1958 L’Affaire Audin that were printed in Express painted a picture of a repressive colonial government willing to sacrifice its best and brightest. Though La Question was the first book to be banned in France for over 150 years, Henri Alleg’s account of his torture in an Algerian prison sold over 60,000 copies before being banned and carried a preface by Sartre that also appeared in Express.

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31 Claire Mauss-Copeaux, Algérie, 20 août 1955, Insurrection, répression, massacres (Paris: Payot, 2011), 126-128, 177. “Phillippeville Massacre” is a title that refers to the initial attack conducted by the FLN, and not the reprisals that claimed more victims. This is in part due to the way pieds noirs reported the events as well as the way the events have been preserved in French memory of the war.


During the first three and a half years of the French Algerian War most intellectuals, even many intellectuals who were in favor of ending French colonial holdings elsewhere, did not actively seek the establishment of an independent Algeria, but rather supported reforming the relationship between France and its North African holdings. The numbers of intellectuals with anticolonial sympathies who saw no common future between Algeria and France were small at the beginning of the war. For the most part, intellectual engagement reflected a desire to effectively implement Republican values of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* in Algeria, and reform its civic and political structures to end racism and discrimination. The civilizing mission of French colonialism did not necessarily need to end, for many of these critics; it simply needed to be practiced consistently. Even when an end to de facto colonial rule was called for, most assumed there were a host of solutions available that did not involve severing ties with Algeria.34

The view that the Republic was in danger and needed to draw from its deep patriotic past to regain control of Algeria also existed from within the government in the early years of the war. President René Coty openly proclaimed in a speech at the town of Verdun—a site of military contestation in both 1792 and 1917—that “Down there, the nation is in danger, the nation is fighting.” When in the same year the Minister of the Armed Forces, Max Lejeune, began drastically increasing the number of soldiers in Algeria, it is telling that he named the directive “Opération Valmy.” What France needed most of all, he reasoned, was a citizen army ready to defend the territorial integrity of the nation just as they had done at the Battle of Valmy in 1792 against an invading Prussian army. Whereas critics of the government’s actions in

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Algeria would draw from the Revolution in order to critique the actions of the nation from within, Lejeune continued to see the Revolution by way of France’s civilizing mission, directing Republican values at the unruly “nationalists who aspire to an unrealisable independence.”

One of the first forms of intellectual engagement during the war was the formation of the Committee Against the Pursuit of the War in North Africa (Comité d’Action des intellectuels contre la Poursuite de la Guerre en Afrique du Nord), formed 5 November 1955, just a year after the FLN’s first attacks. A small group of intellectuals formed around Gallimard writer and editor Dionys Mascolo and sociologist Edgar Morin. Mascolo and Morin had known each other since their days in the World War II resistance and many who joined their group came from the same circle. They founded the committee out of the conviction that wars in North Africa represented a fundamental threat to the ideals of the French Republic, and these ideals were firmly rooted in the French Revolution. By January of 1956, the group had collected signatures from hundreds of intellectuals who agreed with their cause. The Committee’s early heated exchanges with the new Governor General of Algiers, Jacques Soustelle, set the Committee’s initial public image. Soustelle characterized the Committee as out of touch, and he claimed there was no actual war in Algeria, just a series of attacks carried out by fanatics. In turn, the

35 Coty and Lejeune quoted in Evans, Algeria: France’s Undeclared War, 163.
36 The Committee’s first meeting occurred on 5 November, but as early as 19 October Edgar Morin and Dionys Mascolo had begun soliciting support for their venture. Those listed on the initial “Committee in Formation” were Roger Martin du Gard, François Mauriac, Irène Joliot-Curie, Frédéric Joliot-Curie, Louis Massignon, André Breton, Jean Wahl, Jacques Villon, Charles Vildrac, Raymond Queneau, Georges Bataille, Brice Parain, and Jean Cassou. See Edgar Morin to Daniel Guérin, 19 October 1955, and “Pour la formation d’un comité d’action contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord,” Fonds Guérin F delta 0721.91/2, BDIC. There were, of course, a number of other anticolonial groups that predated the Algerian War, such as the Comité France-Maghreb.
Committee countered that their members were specialists who were not only qualified to discuss the situation but also bound as citizens of the Republic to diagnose the ills of French rule in Algeria and suggest steps forward.  

The Committee’s sheer size and the fact it united persons from such diverse positions attests to the concern events in Algeria caused, and perhaps not since the anti-fascist committees of the 1930s had there been such a large umbrella organization. However, such a large umbrella also caused a good deal of dissension. On the one hand, radical anticolonialists like Jean-Paul Sartre and André Mandouze saw the goal of a completely independent Algeria as a foregone conclusion while the majority of members were not willing to go so far early in the war. Even with the staunch decolonizing bloc, some members like Edgar Morin and Daniel Guérin balked at the Committee’s support for the FLN over its rival MNA. On the other hand, with the Soviet Invasion of Hungary in 1956 and the Suez Crisis, it was unclear whether the Committee should be defined by broader international goals or if it should keep its focus squarely on North Africa. Even in the case of the latter option, the Committee could not agree whether crisis in Algeria was part of a broader universal struggle for emancipation or limited, particular conflict. After the Soviet Union invaded Hungary as a way to reign in anti-Soviet reforms, the Committee became even more divided. Those critical of the Soviet Union such as Edgar Morin and Dionys Mascolo thought it would be impossible to remain quiet about Soviet oppression and denounce oppression in Algeria. Mascolo initially asked Communist supporters in the Committee to leave. When it became clear they would not, he resigned from the


Committee in November 1956.\textsuperscript{40} Amidst this dissension, however, the Committee did clearly assert the status quo of Algeria’s relationship to France was inadequate and a risk to the ideals of the nation. What the Committee wanted through the end of its activity in mid-1958 was an end to the war, an end to repression in Algeria and France, and a negotiated peace between the FLN and the government.\textsuperscript{41}

The constellation of ideas linking the French Revolution to fears of fascism and the aims of Algerian nationalists were apparent as early as the beginning of the Committee. A number of the adherents to the Committee expressed their fears of the threat colonial wars presented to the existence of the Republic and the contradictions between the war and French universalist ideals.\textsuperscript{42} The historian Maurice Vaussard agreed to support the Committee, but noted his unease with certain aspects of the Algerian nationalists’ actions. He explained to Marguerite Duras that he “felt solidarity with the legislative work of the French Revolution, but not with the Terror, nor even the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette,” adding, “I feel the same faced with the situation in North Africa.”\textsuperscript{43} Revolution in North Africa was a worthy cause, but as the French Revolution illustrated, there were real dangers associated even with the most noble of causes. Others on the Committee were less measured in their appreciation of the Revolutionary verve of the moment. Dionys Mascolo, for example, referred to the atmosphere of the first meeting of the

\textsuperscript{40} Le Sueur, 50-61.
\textsuperscript{41} Le Bureau du Comité to Daniel Guérin, (Committee circular), 2 April 1958, Fonds Guérin F delta 0721.78/7, BDIC.
\textsuperscript{42} Jacques Danos to Chers Camarades, 6 November 1955, Claude Bourdet to Dionys Mascolo, no date, Etiemble to Dionys Mascolo, 20 October 1955, Simone Signoret and Yves Montand to Marguerite Duras, no date, Fonds Mascolo MSC 8.4 “Lettres de signataires adhérents au Comité d’action contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord” IMEC. See also “Communiqué du Comité des Intellectuels du 31 Mars 1956,” Fonds Guérin F delta 0721.78/7, BDIC.
\textsuperscript{43} M. Vaussard to Marguérie Duras, 27 October 1955. “Lettres de signataires adhérents au Comité d’action contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord,” Fonds Mascolo, MSC 8.4, IMEC.
Action Committee against the Pursuit of the War in North Africa as “very 1793,” likening the Committee to the Revolutionary Committees of the First Republic. Such a comparison is perhaps not surprising coming from Mascolo given his favorable treatment of the writings of Saint Just he published just after the liberation.

Other members of the Committee also continued to refer to the Revolution over the next two years. Among them was Committee Member and anticolonialist lawyer Pierre Stibbe. In a meeting at the Centre du Landy in Paris in 1957, he declared that in the postwar Algeria had entered the same position as France in 1789. Like France before the Revolution, Algeria had always been ruled by decree. The contradictions between the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and Algeria’s governance were proof that Algeria was a nation unto itself and deserved its freedom.

Few members of the Committee were as provocative in the early years of the war as Claude Bourdet, former member of the maquis and editor of the political journal France-Observateur. Before the beginning of the war, he was already quick to draw connections between colonial administrators and the Nazis. Following the 1951 arrest of Algerian nationalist leader Messali Hadj, who would within the next four years form the MNA, Bourdet wrote an editorial in his paper openly asking “Is there an Algerian Gestapo?” Bourdet claimed the anti-

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46 Pierre Stibbe, “Le Régime de l’Algérie depuis 1834,” in La Question algérienne (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1958), 53-78, 54, 64. According to Pierre Vidal-Nacquet, the material published in La Question algérienne was presented at this conference in the second half of 1957—after the disappearance of Maurice Audin—though he does not give a precise date. “Témoignage de Pierre Vidal-Nacquet,” in Henri-Irénée Marrou, Crise de notre temps et réflexion chrétienne (de 1930 à 1975) (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1978), 197. The Centre du Landy, located a 14 rue du Landy, was the headquarters for the Centre de Coordination pour la Défense des Libertés et de la Paix.
nationalist sweeps made by colonial police and the military as well as the torture and beatings of prisoners were all-too reminiscent of the Gestapo’s tactics. Though he thought these Messaliste militants were only signs of a nascent uprising, the courts made much of their possession of weapons and short history books on the French Revolution. By January 1955 Bourdet argued the answer to this question was regrettably in the affirmative. Authorities in Algeria kidnapped, tortured, and assassinated members of the insurrection as well as those suspected of supporting them. Following a barrage of articles that hammered home this stance, Paris authorities arrested Bourdet for “demoralizing the army” and raided the offices of France-Observateur. Bourdet’s lawyer noted in one newspaper account that it was poor timing on the part of the government, since it was nearly exactly 12 years since the German Gestapo had thrown Bourdet in jail during the Occupation.

Directly following Bourdet’s arrest, Henri Marrou, the chair of Christian History at the Sorbonne, wrote an extended editorial in Le Monde addressing the French government’s reaction to rebellion in Algeria. Marrou was one of the few professors at the Sorbonne sympathetic to prospects of North African reform and later decolonization amidst a highly conservative faculty. Though he was normally not as publicly vocal as some other intellectuals, within academic circles he was resolute in his anticolonialism. In the newspaper article Marrou intervened by speaking in multiple registers: as a man of faith, as an ancien résistant, as a citizen of secular

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47 Claude Bourdet, “Y a-t-il une Gestapo Algérienne?” L’Observateur (6 December 1951), 5-6.
France. The very existence of rebellion in the Maghreb meant that France had failed, at least partially, to fulfill its moral duty to work for the improvement of its colonized. Asking if the French presence in North Africa “had been, is today, an authentically French presence,” Marrou claimed it did not appear France was living up to its ideal image. No Manichean classification of peoples could ever capture reality because, as the “Berber” Saint Augustine had noted, all civilizations are a mélange of the City of Good and the City of Evil. As the gap widens between the ideals these civilizations proclaim and the actual measures these civilizations take to realize them, the closer these civilizations move to their death. Marrou echoed the provocative early analyses of Bourdet, by making a direct connection between the extraordinary renditions, torture, and concentration camps of the Nazis and their correlates in Algeria. The “laboratories of torture” and “electric shock baths” were a “disgrace to the country of the French Revolution and the Dreyfus Affair.” Quoting Péguy’s dictum that France is “the patron, witness (often the martyr) of freedom in the world,” Marrou concluded with a warning: “Before we are further committed to the infernal cycle of terrorism and reprisals, each of us must understand the most profound, most sincerely heartfelt cry of our fathers: ‘The patrie is in danger!’”

Bourdet and Marrou’s statements were prescient in many ways. They not only indicted the French government and military’s willingness to resort to state terror tactics, even before the later cause scandals surrounding Henri Alleg and Maurice Audin, they also connected the anticolonial cause to the maquis’ resistance to the German Occupation and accused the militant pro-colonialist supporters of being fascist, of working against the tide of history, and of being

antithetical to the values of the French Revolution. These arguments would continue throughout the end of the war, if anything only increasing in intensity.

The government’s reaction to Marrou’s article was swift—and perhaps unwittingly lent even more support to Marrou’s claim that France was looking more and more like a police state. Police raided Marrou’s home after the article appeared, looking for any evidence that he was provided direct support to anticolonialists in North Africa. Unfortunately for them, the only references to North Africa they found amongst his personal papers were references to Saint Augustine. Police also interrupted Marrou’s lectures at the Sorbonne and searched his office. The Minister of Defense, Bourgès-Manoury, responded to the article in the National Assembly, decrying the lack of support being offered to the young French troops fighting in the war.⁵² Despite the government pushback, Marrou stood by his opinions. Three days after the article appeared, amidst a “respectful and apprehensive silence” in Parisian university circles, Marrou explained to a student, “I had to say it. I said it. That’s all there is to it.”⁵³

By the end of the year Marrou would give a talk explaining that one could not understand the situation in Algeria without first of all understanding the history of Europe since the beginning of the age of expansion. Marrou’s text exhibits all of the features of a well-intentioned colonial humanism that marked many members of the French left through most of the war. Though one could be against the war, this did not necessarily mean one was against the civilizing mission tout court.⁵⁴ Yet coinciding with the often patronizing and orientalist tone of its

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observations of Muslim Algerians, Marrou’s views also illustrated the belief that these Algerians were on the verge of a political-historical equivalence with modern France.

Marrou argued that over the last five centuries, France, like other European countries, was marked by technical and industrial innovations at the same time it advanced outwards beyond its native continent. The French presence in Algeria became an amalgam of all of the best and worst aspects of this expansion. While the French presence included the export of French citizens to the colony and a desire to improve the land and infrastructure, French Algeria was also a colony of exploitation whose Muslim populations resisted assimilation. Marrou maintained that despite France’s inability to go beyond its civilizing ideals and put them into perfect practice, the colonial venture in Algeria was not a total failure—“the colonial universe was not a concentration camp universe.”55 Of colonialism’s successes, perhaps the most instructive for Marrou was the transplantation of French Revolutionary ideals: “From this infant we have made read and asked to admire the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and we wish that he could not remember these prestigious words… ‘Men are born and remain free and equal under the law.’”56 Given the wave of countries throughout the world that were newly-formed out of former colonies, the desire to end the war in Algeria is not simply a sign of French decadence. “Why not see,” reasoned Marrou, “that on the contrary [Algerian insurrection] consummates the very mission that we gave to ourselves, and constitutes its justification.”57 Algerian nationalism was the logical result of colonialism.

Marrou displayed the same sense of decisive duty displayed in his Le Monde article amidst revelations of the torture and the 21 June 1957 disappearance of the Algerian

56 Ibid., 23.
57 Ibid., 28.
mathematics professor Maurice Audin. Pierre Vidal-Nacquet, a former student of Marrou’s and one of the most important figures in the investigation into Audin’s disappearance, noted that Marrou joined the Maurice Audin Committee immediately, attending each meeting and supporting their cause with “an unfailing solidarity.”

The publication of Henri Alleg’s story of imprisonment and torture in Algeria followed quickly on the heels of Audin’s disappearance. Alleg, editor of the nationalist Alger Républicain newspaper, had been arrested and detained in Algiers on 12 June 1957 in Maurice Audin’s home. Audin and Alleg were friends, and Audin had just been taken the day before. For a month the French Army tortured and interrogated Alleg without ever bringing former charges. After it was determined he would not break, Alleg was transferred to a military hospital where he began composing the account of his treatment. When Alleg’s story was published in February 1958 it was certainly not the first accusation that the government tortured its prisoners, nor was it the first time such accusations made the comparison between government tactics and those of the Nazis. It did, however, have perhaps the biggest impact on the French public. Even though copies of the book were seized and its publication was banned, numerous copies were purchased before the seizures and its contents were summarized and excerpted in the French press, including an essay written by Sartre, which would eventually serve as preface for later editions of the book.

At the beginning of the war, the French Revolution as the idealized version of France was a privileged vehicle for highlighting the inconsistencies and limitations of actual French practices

58 “Témoignage de Pierre Vidal-Nacquet,” Crise de notre temps et réflexion chrétienne (de 1930 à 1975), 197.
in Algeria. The stability of the Republic was in danger, but whereas procolonial advocates saw suppressing the FLN as key to keeping the integrity of the Republic intact, those against the war took the opposite position. Anticolonialist and pro-reform intellectuals feared that the continuation of a repressive French presence in Algeria was a sign of the worst episodes in recent French memory. On one side stood the ideals of the French Revolution and on the other counter-revolutionary fascism. By 1958, however, both fears—of republican crisis and the specter of fascism—would only intensify. These heightened experiences of crisis pushed the French Revolutionary analogy into a new register. Metropolitan France needed to recommence the Revolution.

**Dual Revolutions**

Judging by military and police statistics, 1958 would seem to mark a temporary de-escalation of the war. After all, the anti-terrorist offensive in Algiers (1956-October 1957) immortalized by Gillo Pontecorvo’s film, *The Battle of Algiers*, concluded with the dismantling of the FLN’s network in Algiers and the death and capture of multiple FLN leaders. The military offensive in Algiers and a similar one in Constantine caused a decrease in the FLN’s presence in urban centers, while incidences of terrorism also dropped by the beginning of 1958 and remained low through 1960. The 1959 Challe offensive, too, all but neutralized the power of the ALN (the FLN’s military wing) in the countryside. However, the battle was a turning point in the FLN’s favor in a number of other ways. First, the special powers act of 1956 not only legitimized prison camps and emergency measures, it also formally transferred power to combat terrorism

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from the urban police to the military. Secondly, a number of *causes célèbres* resulted from the capture of FLN militants involved in the battle, such as the trial of Djamila Bouhired, accused of detonating a bomb in the Milk Bar restaurant in Algiers. Trials such as this one gave the FLN and its supporters a very public and largely uncensored platform to expose military atrocities. Despite military success, by 1958 for these two reasons the public focused a great deal of its attention on Algeria, and this attention had already eroded confidence in the government’s ability to find a solution to the conflict. By May 13, the government of the Fourth Republic had lost the confidence of the military. Generals Raoul Salan and Jacques Massu took power of Algiers and formed Committees of Public Safety while openly declaring their support for Charles de Gaulle. Within the next two days de Gaulle publicly affirmed he was willing to take control of the government. De Gaulle promised a referendum on his presidency and the formation of a new republic, which eventually took place in September. The referendum confirmed popular support for his leadership and gave hope to many that the only person capable of resolving the situation in Algeria was in power. The return of de Gaulle, however, did not automatically gain the universal confidence of intellectuals or the far left; for reasons discussed below his return potentially symbolized a terrifying right-wing escalation in the war’s prosecution.

By spring 1958 the effects of three years fighting Algerian nationalists and the critiques of the French government’s handling of the situation fed into an overall climate of national crisis. The happenstance alignment of government crisis with Revolutionary commemoration only furthered the entanglement of the French and Algerian Revolutions. 6 May 1958 was the bi-centennial anniversary of Maximilien Robespierre’s birth. The chance alignment of this

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anniversary with governmental crises only encouraged the public to think the two phenomena in common. By 1957 leftist members of the National Assembly moved to publicly celebrate Robespierre’s 200th birthday in order “to organize, in his honor, a solemn homage.” Explaining their reasoning, the group of Assembly members who proposed the celebration explained that “Whether we wish it or not, we agree to see Robespierre as the most important man of the Revolution.” According to these members of the Assembly, Robespierre as man and as myth was of national importance and a man on whom the people of France could model their actions: “At a moment when the country has such a need for its youth to be or to become patriotic, idealist, enthusiastic for the public good, it seems to us that Robespierre might be a hero from whom we can gain knowledge and respect.” Not only was the hero of the Revolution seen as a beacon for France, Robespierre was also viewed as a reference point for the rest of the world. The proposal explained, “At a time when men of all countries question their fate, question the value, the meaning, the content of the word Revolution, when they reclassify their feelings and admiration for France, it seems that the French could remind the world that when Revolution had a French face it should remain moral and that the military and political necessities of the Terror, with Robespierre, never [sic] violated the rights of man.”

Though this image of Robespierre as an

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64 Messieurs Robert Verdier, Edouard Daladier, Edgar Faure, Antoine Pinay, Maurice Schumann, Léopold Senghor, “Proposition de résolution tendant à inviter le Gouvernement à célébrer officiellement le deuxième centenaire de la naissance de Maximilien Robespierre,” *Journal Officiel*, Documents Parlementaires annexes aux prôes-verbaux des séances (November 28, 1946-June 3, 1958), annexe n° 4455, 1747-1748; *Journal Officiel* 32 (Séance du 8 Mars 1957), 1414. Robert Verdier was a close socialist ally of Léon Blum and was active in the Resistance. Daladier and Faure were members of the former Radical Party. Daladier served as colonial minister and a minister of war in the 1920s and 30s. Edgar Faure was Prime Minister from 1955-1956, until he was voted out of office in large part due to the Algerian War. Antoine Pinay held several high ministerial positions in the Fourth and Fifth Republics, including Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1955-56. Maurice Schumann was a founding member of the Gaullist Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP). Léopold Senghor was a Senegalese minister.
unvarnished hero might appear strange, it was not abnormal to the left in 1950s France. In a 1956 study of Robespierre’s journalism, for example, Michel Eude portrayed him as a political pragmatist and staunch defender of the French constitution in the face of overwhelming adversity.  

Jean Ratinaud’s 1960 popular biography of Robespierre came to a similar conclusion. What remained of Robespierre was above all “an image, an example,” of the “virtue” of a man who held to his beliefs even though “the times were tough.” The motion in the Assembly was voted down, though the Assembly did agree to put Robespierre’s image on a postage stamp. An independent committee that included historians Albert Soboul, Georges Lefebvre, and Marc Bouloiseau coordinated and promoted unofficial celebrations.

The celebrations of Robespierre lasted from May to July of 1958, including academic conferences, radio broadcasts, television documentaries and docudramas, special museum exhibits, and newspaper and magazine editorials reflecting on the importance the man and the myth held for France. Tributes appeared in academic journals like the Annales historiques de la Révolution Française (AHRF)—itself run by the Society of Robespierrist Studies— and the

initially in favor of colonial integration, then later an advocate of African independence. He served as Minister of State under Edgar Faure.


Bulletin of the Society of Modern History. At the Society of Robespierrist Studies’ 1958 commemoration, Maurice Domenget, declared that “the cause of Robespierre… is tied to the causes of all other great revolutionary figures… the cause of the French Revolution in particular and all other revolutions in general which are embodied in the persona of Maximilien.” On television, special broadcasts aired during prime time spots in May in commemoration of Robespierre (followed by one on Saint-Just, for which Dionys Mascolo provided commentary). These broadcasts were in addition to the usual celebratory emissions aired on the 14 July for the fête nationale as well as the popular Le procès de Marie-Antoinette and retelling of the diamond necklace affair. The print coverage of the bicentennial was no less exhaustive, with essays and editorials detailing Robespierre’s life and legacy. The overwhelming consensus in these

68 Bulletin de la Société d’Histoire Moderne 57, no. 6 (1958); Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française 152 (1958). The 200-year anniversary of Gracchus Babeuf followed in 1960. Though academic groups like the Société d’études robespierristes dedicated conferences and journal volumes to the event, it was less-widely publicized than Robespierre’s anniversary. The Société, for example held a special celebration at the Sorbonne, 20 November 1960. The co-presidents of the Society, Ernest Labrousse, Albert Soboul, Marcel Reinhard, and Jacques Godechot, presided over the event.


70 See the television and radio program announcements in Le Monde, 2 May 1958, 6 May 1958, and 8 May 1958, as well as Annuaire du spectacle: Théâtre, Cinéma, Musique, Radio, Télévision XIV (1959), 824. Maryline Crivello-Bocca has shown that in the years 1950-1964 55% of the television programs dealing with the French Revolution focused on the years of the Terror (1793-94) and largely matched the pro-Republican sentiments of the Third Republic’s civic education missions as well as the social interpretation represented by Lefebvre and Soboul. 70% of the viewing public tuned in to Le procès de Marie Antoinette. Maryline Crivello-Bocca, L’écran citoyen. La Révolution française vue par la télévision de 1950 au Bicentenaire (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998), 53, 68, 79. The diamond necklace affair, or “l’affaire du collier de la reine,” was a pre-revolutionary scandal involving a prostitute imitating Marie Antoinette. The public disgrace implied by the imposter as well as the crown’s handling of the incident added to the monarchy’s decline in public opinion before the Revolution.

71 See the two-page spread dedicated to Robespierre written by François Furet (under the name Antoine Delcroix), Denis Richet, and Augustin Picot in France Observateur “Il y a 200 ans naissait Robespierre,” “Les Historiens et Robespierre,” and “Robespierriste et Léninisme” (8 mai 1958), 10-11; and Jean Massin, “Pour Saluer Maximilien Robespierre,” L’Humanité (7
commemorations was that Robespierre was an exceptional figure who was responsible for
defending the Rights of Man and Citizen as well as opposing war, and when the war came
anyways, he did what was necessary to save the Republic. As Robert Escarpit wrote on the front
page of *Le Monde*, despite admitting being more of a Girondin and admirer of Danton: “But
Robespierre is Robespierre. It is only of the rarest of men in our history who we might say that
for a brief instant he was France, and, perhaps even more difficult yet, he was the French
people.” If there was a fault with Robespierre’s history, it was with the Republic itself—only
mediocre men get to live on to old age, the Republic is destined to devour great men.72

These celebrations did not go uncontested, however. Robespierre’s image as an
indomitable French hero quickly combined with contemporary political concerns, including the
French Algerian War and the *coup* that brought down the Fourth Republic just a week after
Robespierre’s anniversary.

From the very beginning, the celebration of Robespierre was entangled with
contemporary concerns. The National Assembly’s proposed celebrations, for example, seemed
dead on arrival precisely because of worries that fêting Robespierre might be interpreted as more
than nationalist pride. It was rumored that then-Prime Minister Guy Mollet felt uneasy about
supporting the celebrations since he, like Robespierre, was also a deputy from Arras
(Robespierre’s birthplace and government constituency) and in the current political climate he
did not want to associate himself with the man of the Terror.73 While members of the MRP, the
PCF, and Radical Party supported the proposal, independents and conservatives decried a motion

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1958).
devoting the nation’s energy to celebrating Robespierre. Georges Bidault, a resistance hero and eventual OAS supporter, was confounded by what he saw as the audacity of such a proposal. Aside from his indignation at the suggestion that Robespierre was a defender of the Rights of Man and not its ultimate enemy, Bidault thought celebrating Robespierre was merely a coded way of defending contemporary terrorists. Among those who wanted to celebrate Robespierre, Bidault surmised, were also those who criticized military and police operations in Algeria for mistreating the terrorist rebels. Bidault claimed Robespierre was a force that weakened the Republic, his antiwar stance betrayed the Revolution’s true glories. The Revolution’s high point came in its military successes, particularly those that followed Robespierre’s downfall. 

Historical and contemporary events merged even closer, however, when on May 13 colonial generals seized governmental control of Algiers, forming their own committee of public safety, and backed Charles De Gaulle’s return as the President of a new Republic. Maurice Duverger quickly noted the strange perversion of a military putsch on the 200th anniversary of Robespierre’s birth, claiming the mantle of a committee of public safety. This had to it “the bitter taste of a mockery, because the true Committee of Public safety did not trifle with the subordination of military to civil power and knew how to maintain the discipline of its generals.

74 Georges Bidault, “Pour ceux qui se figurent que Robespierre est un héros national…” Carrefour 656 (10 April 1957). Typescript copy found in Fond Soboul. Georges Lefebvre wrote a veiled response to what he thought was a wrongheaded take on the Revolution’s history in L’Humanité and Jean Dautry wrote a more direct attack on Bidault’s position in La Pensée. Georges Lefebvre, “À la mémoire de Maximilien Robespierre,” L’Humanité (2 May 1957); Jean Dautry, “Robespierre Parmi Nous,” La Pensée 76 (November-December 1957), 111-117. A revised version of the original proposal that tried to clear Robespierre of any negative associations with the Reign of Terror was submitted to the National Assembly 13 February 1958. The revised proposal said admiration was not have “closed eyes. The true admiration is not idolatry and the true justice … is to make who they were known.” “Rapport fait au nom de la commission de l’éducation nationale sur la proposition de résolution (n° 4455) de M. Verdier et plusieurs…” Journal Officiel, Documents Parlementaires annexes aux procès-verbaux des séances (November 28, 1946-June 3, 1958), annexe n° 6599, 907-908. This proposal did not work, either.
with the most energetic means.” Duverger’s analysis moved between ancient, contemporary and Revolutionary historical registers: the generals had crossed the Rubicon like Caesar’s legions marching towards Rome; the generals represented a fascist menace reminiscent of the fascist demonstrations of February 1934; and the crisis meant the nation had entered into a “revolutionary phase, where events occur rapidly and according to a relentless logic”—a coming civil war threatened the existence of the Republic. Duverger’s fears were not extraordinary, nor was his linkage with the ideals of the early Republic of the French Revolution. Similarly, militant Communist Roger Garaudy described the political crisis and colonial wars as part of a long chain of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary moments since the Revolution of 1789. The May 29 cover (the day following President René Coty’s abdication to De Gaulle) of the magazine *L’Express* carried a cartoon of a Marianne in a Phrygian bonnet guillotining herself. (See figure 1.) Over the coming months many on the left occupied positions between apprehension at the prospect that France could once again fall into the grip of fascism and revolutionary expectations of retring *maquisard* and *sans-culottist* identities.

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76 To take one example, a “Guilbert de Tours” wrote in to *L’Express* following 13 May that he agreed with Robespierre’s statement of 12 May 1791 to let the colonies perish at the expense of the *colonists*’ interests. “L’Express cette semaine,” *L’Express* (28 May 1958), 17.
PARIS, MERCREDI 28 MAI,
« En raison des circonstances, le mot « impossible » peut redevenir français. »
(Jean Giraudoux - pouvoir.)

Figure 1. Cover. L’Express (29 May 1958).
By the time of the fête nationale, two months after the putsch, associations between the French Revolution and contemporary events had only increased. On the one hand, pro-gaullists wished to cast events as the road toward preserving the ideals of the immortal Republic. On the eve of 14 July, De Gaulle declared in a radio broadcast destined to the overseas territories that “never before had the men who live in these territories and those who live in the metropole been as morally close to each other. Distance, climate, racial diversity, differences of condition, so many causes of separation which are each day reduced.” De Gaulle’s proclamation of a “vast and free community” likely convinced very few that everything would be fine. Writing, in L’Humanité, Yves Moreau bridled at such statements, which were to him so clearly “denied by the facts.” There was only one way forward that would guarantee any measure of hope along the lines De Gaulle described: “that which, condemning the Bastilles of the colonies, would comply with the nation’s aspirations.” Just as Robespierre had denounced the moneyed interests behind the Club Massiac during the French Revolution, what was needed was a challenge to French Algerian colons and their spokesperson in De Gaulle. Moreau reasoned that De Gaulle’s actions, despite his address, were in fact the exact opposite of the National Convention’s 17 December 1792 declaration that proclaimed the nation’s duty toward the defense and support of all people looking to recover their freedom. The fact that this declaration also coincided with the beginning of the trial of Louis XVI is not likely to have escaped Moreau, nor perhaps his readership. What clearly needed to happen in the wake of the May 13 coup was to realize the nation’s new symbols of despotic oppression were in the colonies. The way forward involved razing these new Bastilles, and perhaps a new regicide as well.78

During the official celebrations, a demonstration of 6,000 French *ancien combattants de la Résistance* marched to the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. The demonstration’s goal was to persuade public opinion that de Gaulle in fact did not represent a return to fascism and that brotherhood could exist between all members of the French nation. Muslim and colonial soldiers were therefore prominently on display for the television cameras. As André Malraux declared in his address to the veterans present, eulogizing the soldiers of the Revolutionary battle of Fleurus, “those who believed in defending the Republic of Year 2 know that since then no one has fought for France without fighting for the people of France.”

The event wished to reinforce the themes in De Gaulle’s radio address and tie De Gaulle’s return to a renewal of the French Republic, not its demise. A near-mirror-image of the event was held at the Place Forum in Algiers, with Generals Salan and Jouhaud presiding. Yet an editorial in *L’Express* was left to conclude that Malraux was nothing more than the regime’s cutout man, and it lamented that even conservative British publications like *The Sunday Times* were taken aback by the contradictions between recent events and the ideals of the *fête nationale*.

In the wake of the putsch, former members of the Committee Against the Pursuit of the War in North Africa drew from the confluence between Republican history and upheaval to present a political position amalgamating the two. The writers Dionys Mascolo, Marguerite Duras, and Jean Schuster formed *14 juillet*, named after the date of the storming of the Bastille in

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1789. Its first issue appeared in time for the fête nationale on 14 July 1958. While left-republican imagery that referred to the French Revolution had been merely an undercurrent of the earlier Committee, in 14 juillet it was placed front and center. Prominently displayed in the margins of each issue of the magazine were quotes by philosophes and Revolutionary icons such as Saint-Just and Robespierre.

At points, contributors to the magazine went beyond symbolic affinity and made direct comparisons between the Algerian crisis, De Gaulle, and the French Revolution. The first issue’s cover explained that “We are the inheritors of a people who held regicide in honor when they acted to establish liberty.” Later, Jean Schuster elaborated on this sentiment, claiming phantoms from the past were haunting France. He explained, “The head that had been cut January 21, 1793 was nothing more than the head of a man [Louis XVI]. There had been neither victim, nor executioner, but a monstrous and absurd edifice that collapsed because the [national] spirit had taken conscience of the fact that such a power was no longer real. This fall was definitive and perfect; similarly, all subsequent attempts at restoration of the throne were only caricatures… de Gaulle’s attempt is the same.” Gérard Legrand echoed Schuster’s analysis of De Gaulle as reincarnation of absolute despot. According to him, “France had never been forgiven for guillotining Louis XVI. In a tour of religious legerdemain, the King simply picks his head up and walks away.” Though De Gaulle’s return seemed to have been far from anyone’s mind two years

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82 Similarly, L’Universities [sic] and Left Review Club declared 14 July 1958 to be a day where Republican values should be reinvigorated against the authoritarian threat posed by the “crise française.” France Observateur (10 July 58), 2.

83 Dionys Mascolo and Jean Schuster, “Résistance” 14 juillet 1 (14 July 1958), 1; Jean Schuster, “Entrée des fantômes,”14 juillet 2 (25 October 1958), 5. Copies of each issue held in Fonds Mascolo, MSC 2.5, IMEC. While De Gaulle’s return was often referred to in bonapartist terms, Schuster chose to draw on the symbolism of royal restorations.
earlier, “Again such a symbol leads the nation, and what a symbol at that!” By contrast, Edgar Morin surmised that rather than being a counterrevolutionary force, or the ghost of regicide, De Gaulle was emblematic of French conservative reaction. Recent French history differed from Great Britain’s tradition of slow reform: “Since 1789 France has evolved much more through swift mutations.” “The heritage of bonapartism” holds sway over France and any revolutionary potential to counteract De Gaulle qua Napoleon “is completely blocked by Stalinist mythification.” In his own journal, Arguments, Morin offered an expanded version of this analysis. French history since the Revolution was dominated by the two leitmotifs of a weak parliamentary system and the real dangers of a military coup. Since the end of the Second World War, France began to face two antagonistic forces—prospects for greater European integration and neo-nationalist regeneration. Put otherwise, “the Algerian War tends to regress the French political situation to the classic models of French political struggle and class struggle.” Whether it was the perpetual presence of French Republican symbolism or the regression of fundamental tensions within modern French history, the war in Algeria and the May coup were viewed through late eighteenth-century lenses.

The journal 14 juillet also gave further voice to the earlier fears of fascism’s creeping influence in France as well. According to Jean-François Revel, France was paying for its failure to fully purge all fascist elements from its society after World War II. An increasingly fascist Republic had turned into a fascist dictatorship. Mascolo and Schuster agreed, claiming De

84 Gérard Legrand, “Réponse de Gérard Legrand,” 14 juillet (18 juin 1959), 10-11. Legrand’s text was a response to a questionnaire distributed by 14 juillet asking for an analysis of the May 58 coup.
Gaulle’s military supporters had corrupted him and a fascist government in Paris was the next step. Claude Lefort’s assessment differed slightly, denying the weight that the French distant and recent past had on the present, but maintained that fascism was the threat of the day.

In advance of the September referendum on the new constitution, 14 juillet published a special issue that affirmed, “France is openly violating the fundamental principle of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which postulates that men are born free and remain free and equal under the laws.” The journal declared de Gaulle’s government illegal and recognized “the combat of the Algerian people for their independence and freedom” as a just war. In the hexagon, the only thing to do was repeat the same resistance that was carried out under Vichy. For contributors of 14 juillet the way forward following De Gaulle’s return was clear: speak out against the new republic, encourage revolutionary action, and end the war in Algeria.

Even critics of the tendency of anticolonialists to project false referents onto the French Algerian War were readily afraid of De Gaulle’s return and feared the resurgence of fascist elements in French society that had either lay dormant since Vichy or had found ways of sneaking in under alternative guises such as the military. Guy Debord of the new Situationist International, for example, characterized the group 14 juillet as “lunatics” for being out of touch with political realities. Yet from the beginning of De Gaulle’s return, Debord agreed with the

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89 Claude Lefort, “La magie et l’histoire,” 14 juillet (1 July 1958), 9. Though current events had many of the hallmarks of classic fascism—“collective hysteria, shock troops, a will to aggression”—really this was a new kind of fascism, one that was devoid of all history. For the left, as a result, “An historical reality is substituted by an historical imaginary,” but the left should take care because “the phantoms of the past do not haunt the present.”
90 “Envoi Spécial—avant le no. 2” 14 juillet (21 September 1958), 1-2.
91 Guy Debord to André Franklin, 8 August 1958, in Correspondence (June 1957-August 1960), translated by Stuart Kendall and John McHale (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 151.
group: De Gaulle and his supporters represented a real and credible fascist threat and the proper remedy was revolutionary insurrection: “Here we are in a battle against military fascism. Its chief is de Gaulle [sic], who has the army with him, not only in Algeria, but in France, Germany, and the Mediterranean… Only revolutionary war could destroy the power of French fascism.”

By the end of 1959, most on the left seemed to reach the consensus that De Gaulle’s government did not in itself represent a fascist threat. In response to a questionnaire distributed by 14 juillet for what would be its final issue, many contributors, even those who had originally believed France was in the grip of a fascist coup, had moderated their opinions on the matter. According to Daniel Guérin, the events of 13 May had not been under estimated, but rather they had been over-estimated. De Gaulle’s return was nothing more than “a banal palace revolution.” The situation was politically serious, for sure, but the government was not fascist. As Guérin clarified elsewhere, “there had neither been a spontaneous movement of rebellion nor a ‘Revolution’ of the fascist type.” Guy Mollet’s lack of response had been as influential in the fall of the Fourth Republic and mollification of the left as had been De Gaulle’s return. Maurice Blanchot conceded that “the colonial reaction is a movement of despair… a collective despair brought together in collective unrest giving rise to movements of agitation that one could at times call racist, at others fascist.” However, despite all appearances, De Gaulle’s reign was no dictatorship, and there was nothing behind his symbolic presence as messianic leader of the republic. De Gaulle’s leadership was by definition inactive and empty symbolism. By 1963, a

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92 Guy Debord to Giors Melanotte [Giorgio Gallizio], 23 May 1958, Correspondence, 115-116.
study of the history of fascism in France could even conclude that antifascism was a much more
real phenomenon in France than fascism itself. Despite having certain affinities with fascist
ideology, neither De Gaulle’s return nor his military or paramilitary backers could be interpreted
as fascist.\footnote{Jean Plumyène and Raymond Lasierra, \textit{Les fascismes français: 1923-1963} (Paris: Seuil, 1963), 11, 21. Anticolonial militants Micheline Pouteau and Janine Cahen, discussed below, were also quick in the war’s aftermath to declare that the left was blinded by premade slogans: “there had been no fascism in the classical sense of the term.” Janine Cahen and Micheline Pouteau, \textit{Una resistenze incompiuta: la guerra d’Algeria e gli anti-colonisti francesi 1954-1962} Volume 1 (Milan: Il saggiatore, 1964), 392.}

As the war entered its final years the emergence of the clandestine, far right terrorist cell
the Organisation armée sécrète (OAS, founded January 1961) appeared as the precipitate of the
most fascistic military elements backing De Gaulle. The subsequent OAS putsch attempts and
attempted assassinations of De Gaulle and left-wing intellectuals kept the feeling of existential
danger ever present, but at least this fascist threat could be distinguished from the new
government. As the fears of general fascist takeover subsided, so too did many of the invocations
of the ideals of 1789 as corrective for a broken Republic or call to revolutionary insurrection.
Supporters of French Algeria, however, also continued to use their understanding of the
Revolution’s legacy to argue their cause. At one meeting in Algiers in September 1958 a pro-
French attendee declared that they needed a new Charlotte Corday (the person who assassinated
From 13 May 1958 to the end of war, if the ideals of the Republic were invoked, they were just
as likely to be invoked from an OAS member or supporter of French Algeria.\footnote{See, for instance, Massu’s letter to an unspecified \textit{para} on the day of the putsch where he talks about making “triumph in Algeria the ideas of a generous France which since 1789 have shaken the world.” “The hour is grave,” Massu warned, but also concluded that he was “counting
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Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen invoked in the metropole, pro-French Algerian militants invoked Committees of Public Safety and the revolutionary citizen army. In some instances, however, writers transferred to the OAS the fear of a fascist government, or a despotic monarch. De Gaulle was no longer the reincarnation of Louis XVI, but the King’s counterrevolutionary supporters still existed.  

**Revolutionary Confraternity**

In March of 1958, Maurice Papon, a former Vichy administrator who had overseen elements of anti-rebellion programs in Constantine, was appointed head of the Paris Police Prefecture. Papon’s direction of the Paris Police resulted in the importation of repressive colonial measures that culminated in the massacre of protesters on 17 October 1961. While many of the police tactics used were not new, the scale to which they were used and the media coverage of the outcomes visibly brought the war to the metropole. As the prospects of an independent Algeria increased, the OAS launched numerous high profile attacks in France. From January to February 1962 alone there were over 50 OAS bombings in France. The Foreign Office, President De Gaulle, and many supporters of Algerian independence were prime targets. Jean-Paul Sartre’s on you and I am certain you will uphold your duty as a Frenchman.” Fonds Guérin, F delta 0721/91/4, BDIC. Todd Shepard has shown that it is precisely at this moment that the OAS began invoking France’s Revolutionary history when they described their quest to preserve French Algeria as the only constitutional and legal option available to the government. Invention of Decolonization, 90-94.  

98 Casamayor, “Justice Politique,” Esprit 29, no 7 (July 1961), 88-97. Here, the connection is between Robespierist views of justice and the recent capture of OAS commander General Challe.  

home was bombed twice, on July 19, 1961 and January 7, 1962. The offices for *France Observateur* and *Les temps modernes* were also targeted. When, on February 7, 1962, the bomb targeting André Malraux’s home disfigured his four-year-old neighbor, Delphine Renard, the PCF, Unified Socialist Party (PSU), and trade unions protested at the Bastille. Eight people caught inside the nearby Charonne metro station died from police beatings.\(^{100}\) For those on the anticolonial left, the OAS represented a clear enemy to both a newly-formed Fifth Republic and soon-to-be formed Algerian Republic.

In the midst of the May 58 crisis and through the end of the war more and more anticolonialists began to see the struggle for Algerian independence not only in terms of a relationship between the metropole and the French Revolution. Associations between the ideals of Algerian independence and the French Revolution of 1789 also grew into a revolutionary confraternity. Like other historical moments presented as the analog of the French Revolution (like the Russian Revolution), the growth of a new national consciousness in Algeria was at times modeled on the French Republic’s foundational moments. In the final years of the war the alignment between France’s Revolutionary heritage and the revolutionary ideals of Algerian rebels became the most pronounced.

Even before the beginning of the war, many anticolonialists, particularly of Marxist and syndicalist leanings, had been engaged in debates on the nature of Algerian worker- and class-consciousness. Some, following Lenin’s analyses, stressed the importance of seeing the Algerian struggle as part of an international struggle of an underdeveloped proletariat (or lumpenproletariat).\(^{101}\) Others, such as the group *Socialisme ou barbarie*, saw the workers’

\(^{100}\) Martin Evans, *Algeria, France’s Undeclared War*, 308-309.

\(^{101}\) V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* [1917], in *Selected Works, Volume 1* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963); Irwin Wall, *French Communism in the Era of*
consciousness in Algeria as part of a distinct and newly-formed national consciousness that needed to be thought on its own terms (though for *Socialisme ou barbarie* these new terms often went hand in hand with a critique of bureaucracy and desire for workers’ self-management). However, the sort of revolutionary confraternity that made the French Revolution its point of reference went beyond the general third-worldist framework where the industrialized proletariat of Europe was replaced by the struggles of the underdeveloped sub-proletariat.

The demographer Alfred Sauvy’s invention of the term “third world” in 1952 to describe the position of underdeveloped countries vis-à-vis Cold War geopolitics was an influential moment in the rewriting of hitherto “backward” territories into a narrative of political progress. A wide range of developmental theorists including Georges Balandier, Kingsley Davis, and Simon Kuznets echoed Sauvy’s analyses. But Sauvy also meant the new term to evoke the historical situation of the third estate in pre-revolutionary France. Other historians, labor organizers, and sociologists of North Africa had noted the ways in which a new political

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104 More on Sauvy and this rewriting of social science narratives is found in Chapter 2.
consciousness appeared between the two world wars, amounting to what has been described as a *peuple-classe* populism that supported assimilationist politics in the interwar. From the twenties through to the fifties though it became possible to imagine an Algerian future analogous to the trajectory of the French Republic, the momentum of this narrative still remained on the side of fully incorporating Algeria into the French Republic and not on the side of divorcing Algeria from France and forming its own state. Yet by the crisis of May 1958 the momentum clearly seems to have shifted to the latter proposition amongst anticolonial intellectuals.

Greater geopolitical factors involving the rise of decolonized and decolonizing nations throughout the world certainly played a part in this political imaginary as well. According to testimony in the French journal *Présence Africaine*, after the April 1955 Bandung summit (at which unofficial Algerian representatives were present) it was no longer tenable to caste a blind eye to the world-historical potential of these developing nations: “Though imperialism had denied it, Asia and Africa are coming to reestablish themselves amongst civilization: the creative vitality of peoples, without which there is no real progress. Yesterday’s ‘mutes’ are now going to assume the march of history.” Subsequent international conferences at Accra (1958) and Rome (1959) only reinforced this point, as did the fact that 13 African nations gained independence in 1960 and the United Nations issued their Declaration on the Granting of


Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in December of that year. As the Manifesto of the 121 declared, “The cause of the Algerian people, which is decisively contributing to the destruction of the colonial system, is the cause of all free men.” By the end of 1960 the “sense of history” seemed to be not just anticolonial, but in step with decolonization; even De Gaulle openly spoke of the twentieth century as the one where empires would vanish.

Even within this shift, however, what may appear as provincial references to the French Revolution were not jettisoned. Rather, they shifted registers: from invoking the pure standards of the French Republic and summoning a revolutionary identity to portraying the FLN as conducting a French Revolution of their own.

If there in fact was a discrepancy between the ideals of the French nation, as many had argued, then support for Algeria was a way of rehabilitating this tarnished image. For instance, the Algerian-born poet Jean Daniel explained in 1961, “it is through a uniquely French culture, the teaching of French masters, and in the name of French values that I have discovered the misfortune of the people amongst whom I was born.” Gathering support for Algerian nationalism provided “the best means of being faithful to the French heritage.” Daniel’s friend and fellow French-Algerian writer Jules Roy agreed, adding, “This is why I will use all of my powers to campaign for fraternity between the two independent states.”

According to Jean-Marie

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Domenach, France had for too long defined its relationship to developing nations in terms of “assistance.” Now was the time to move toward “solidarity.”

This emphasis on revolutionary confraternity was apparent in Frantz Fanon’s and Jean Amrouche’s views on colonial identity and Paris courtroom proceedings of metropolitan FLN supporters. Fanon’s writings on colonial identity and the double standards of French universalism have in many ways stood in as an avatar for the struggle for Algerian independence. Though FLN leaders were wary of many of Fanon’s formulations and it would be wrong to automatically associate his writings for the FLN’s journal *El Moudjahid* or his book *The Wretched of the Earth* with the FLN’s views, his work is an interesting limit-case for interrogating French anticolonial thought. Though Fanon was interested in destroying the French colonial system and in the ways in which French colonialism failed to live up to its own self-proclaimed values, his own thinking was firmly rooted in mid-twentieth-century French intellectual currents. The French Revolution appears fleetingly in Fanon’s published and unpublished writings, in references and asides easily missed, but the references point to the shift in thinking about different postcolonial futures, from one where continued association with France was assumed to one that demanded a radical break. Amrouche, too, is an interesting figure in this regard. Like Fanon, he would die before peace in Algeria. And, as in Fanon’s work, questions of cultural identity are a running theme throughout his poetry and prose writings. As a Catholic Kabyle who had been fully “assimilated” to French culture, Amrouche was ideally positioned to interrogate the relationship between French and Algerian identities. Neither French

111 “We would like to avoid getting caught in this western problematic of ‘the society of opulence’ and rather confront our questions with those that are beginning to be posed in decolonized nations; to do this we will try to approach under-development, not in itself in relation to western ‘advances’ but ‘in mirror,’ which is to say by searching for reflections, mutual requirements, solidarities.” Jean-Marie Domenach, “De l’assistance à la solidarité,” *Esprit* 29, no 10 (October 1961), 356-358.
de souche nor an Algerian willing to distance France completely, he embodied a site of translation between the two diverging worlds.

In his 1952 book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon analyzed the double identity created by the French colonial system. Growing up on Martinique Fanon believed his identity to be French, but when confronted with metropolitan racism in France he had to come to terms with his social status as a racialized other. The power of European racism was such that even a black man in a European society could run the risk of internalizing its racism. The ultimate goal presented in the book was to throw off such chains of the past in order to view people from an ungrounded universal humanity—whether those chains are past wrongs of exploitation or other foundational moments in the formation of a culture’s collective unconscious. Fanon did “not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and my future… And it is going beyond the historical instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle of my freedom.”

Hence, Fanon fiercely criticized other colonial writers, such as Alioune Diop, looking for an essentialized or authentic indigenous identity to combat colonial exploitation.

However, the universal future for which Fanon hopes at times seems at odds with his admission of his own historical particularity and the possible horizons of that present.

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113 “It is not a matter of finding Being in Bantu thought, when Bantu existence subsists on the level of nonbeing, of the imponderable. It is quite true that Bantu philosophy is not going to open itself to understanding through a [European] revolutionary will: But it is precisely in that degree in which Bantu society, being a closed society, does not contain that substitution of the exploiter for the ontological relations of Forces. Now we know that Bantu society no longer exists. And there is nothing ontological about segregation. Enough of this rubbish.” *Ibid.*, 185-186.

114 “The architecture of this work is rooted in the temporal. Every human problem must be considered from the standpoint of time. Ideally, the present will always contribute to the future… this future is not the future of my cosmos but rather the future of my century, my
response to the myth of a singular black nation, Fanon’s indignation caused by this racism did not amount to a wholesale repudiation of the French Union. Rather, the political goal was a more equal and consistent integration. Fanon insisted,

"I am a Frenchman. I am interested in French culture, French civilization, the French people. We [Martiniquais] refuse to be considered ‘outsiders,’ we have full part in the French drama. When men who were not basically bad, only deluded, invaded France in order to subjugate her, my position as a Frenchman made it plain to me that my place was not outside but in the very heart of the problem. I am personally interested in the future of France, in French values, in the French nation."

The desire for Republican inclusion and making France live up to its universalist claims was not unique to Fanon—other colonial leaders and politicians like Leopold Senghor professed similar political visions throughout the end of the French Union of the Fourth Republic. Before armed conflict in Algeria began, the majority of metropolitan anticOLONIALIST intellectuals felt the ideals of 1789 needed only be applied more consistently.

Yet even after the turning point of 1958, when Fanon was undercover working alongside the FLN in Algeria’s struggle for independence from France, these earlier sentiments concerning the relevance of French history remained. What had changed was the shift from believing the French Republic needed to re-embrace its own heritage to viewing Algerian nationalists as taking that heritage into their own hands. The title of his collection of El Moudjahid essays from the first half of the French Algerian War, Year 5 of the Algerian Revolution, purposefully drew on this legacy of “French history and its drama” by mirroring the French Revolution’s country, my existence. In no fashion should I undertake to prepare the world that will come later. I belong irreducibly to my time.” *Ibid.*, 12-13.


calendrical system that reset time at the beginning of the first French Republic. The title might seem innocuous; however Fanon intended it to be a highly-charged political statement, and that was how it was received. Though Fanon’s publisher, François Maspero, had “nothing against the title in principle,” he thought it was too radical and would only lead to faster censure by the government the way other books like La Question were immediately censored. Fanon, however, insisted the title remain unchanged. (The book was censored following its publication in 1959.) The following year, Fanon again described to Maspero the relevance the French Revolution carried for thinking through events in Algeria. Referring to critiques of his writings, Fanon wrote that “the same way [Georges] Lefebvre has shown in his study of the French Revolution, … the fear, the inferiority complex, the resentment, sometimes imparts to events an orientation and form not predicted by a ‘dialectical’ study.”

This tension of uncertainty amidst the scope of potentially-world-historical processes also carried through the work that most defined Fanon’s legacy, The Wretched of the Earth. Critics of

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the book took special exception to the first chapter, “On Violence,” which ruled out the possibility of a non-violent process of decolonization. Since violence was constitutive of the colonial encounter, its inception and the maintenance of its relations, decolonization could only be achieved through an equal or greater measure of violence. Jean-Paul Sartre’s bombastic preface certainly amplified the shock of the first chapter’s claim for the necessity of violence since it refused to let readers imagine decolonization’s violence could be confined to the colony.120 But if Fanon seemed certain about his eschatology of decolonizing violence, the rest of the book makes it clear that for a newly-decolonized nation, little else could be certain. Revolutionary violence does not act as a panacea, and violence remains in independent regions, especially as these new nations find their places within the framework of the Cold War. The examples of decolonized nations in Latin America, for example, showed the apparent ease with which a colonial oppressor could be replaced by former nationalist leaders seduced by western bourgeois trappings. The people, the vital source of decolonizing energy, could thus be shut out of the revolutionary process.121 “In 1789,” Fanon noted, “after the bourgeois French Revolution, the humblest French peasant gained substantially from the upheaval. But it is common knowledge that for 95 percent of the population in developing countries, independence has not brought any immediate change.”122 As for Algeria, Fanon remained hopeful of the potential for popular action, especially in the Algerian countryside, though the danger of an aborted revolution is ever-present in the text. “Only underdeveloped countries led by a revolutionary elite

120 “Europe leaks like a sieve. What then has happened? Quite simply this: we were the subjects of history, and now we are the objects. The power struggle has been reversed, decolonization is in progress; all our mercenaries can try and do is delay the completion,” and even worse, “Terror has left Africa to settle here…” Jean-Paul Sartre, “Preface,” The Wretched of the Earth, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), lx, lxi. See also Chapter 4.
121 Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 118-119.
122 Ibid., 35.
emanating from the people can today empower the masses to step onto the stage of history. But once again on the condition that we vigorously and decisively reject the formation of a national bourgeoisie, a caste of privileged individuals.”

The broad outlines of Fanon’s fear of how easily the revolutionary process could be perverted certainly resonate with the dynamics of revolution outlined one year earlier by Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, with which Fanon was familiar, and which also relied heavily on analyses of the French Revolution’s events. But it also fits a familiar narrative of the French Revolution (going back at least as far as Michelet) in which *le peuple*, the driving force behind the Revolution, are betrayed by the Revolution’s leaders. Danton’s plea, “let us be terrible to relieve the people of being terrible themselves,” ends in a new form of tyranny under the Committee of Public Safety. The role the French Revolution played in Sartre’s own theory was crucial, and given that Fanon read Lefebvre and Sartre at the time he wrote *Wretched of the Earth*, the similarity in the contours between French Revolutionary and decolonizing narratives is hardly surprising.

Fanon was certainly aware of the ways in which colonial domination sought to control the whole of a colonized society’s history, past, present, and future. The result is a “cultural alienation” that needs to be supplanted by the retrieval of indigenous cultures. The “bards of negritude,” for example, in contrasting “old Europe versus young Africa” reached beyond

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124 For instance, see the same letter in which Fanon discusses Georges Lefebvre. Frantz Fanon, using the pseudonym M. Fares, to François Maspero, 20 July 1960. Fonds Fanon, Fanon-Maspero 1960, MSP 135, MSP B02-13, IMEC. For more on Sartre, see Chapter 4.
126 Danton, “Sur l’établissement du tribunal révolutionnaire” (10 March 1793).
127 On the role of the French Revolution in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, see Chapter 4.
combatting one nationalism with another. But Fanon also saw that so-called colonized intellectuals are in many ways trapped. Having “thrown himself headlong into Western culture,” it is nearly impossible to be rid of western points of reference after the colonial relationship ends. Though the contents of the French Algerian War were different, and though the struggle pointed to the foundation of a new national consciousness, the contours of French history remained.

Those who criticized Fanon’s political analyses as not revolutionary enough, certainly saw much in his continued interest in the French Revolution to dislike. The FLN member and historian Mostefa Lacheraf claimed that even in the early years of the French Algerian War (between 1955 and 1956), Fanon remained an “assimilated” intellectual. As Fanon’s biographer David Macey notes, Fanon’s idea of a free and independent Algeria was substantively different from Lacheraf’s vision, though both Lacheraf and Fanon were products of French higher education. Lacheraf was a graduate of Louis-le-Grand in Paris and afterward worked at the Institute of Oriental Languages. He, too, also saw the cause of Algerian nationalism as tied to the legacy of the French Revolution. Certainly, by the time Year 5 was published Fanon’s position had changed and the charge of assimilationism would have been a hard one to make in earnest. Fanon’s insistence on the analogy between the Algerian and French Revolutions suggests that the spirit of the French Revolution continued to hover in the background of Fanon’s work. This orientation in political theory no doubt lent much to such differences between Fanon and Algerian FLN supporters.

128 Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, 151.
129 Ibid. 156.
Jean El-Mouhoub Amrouche embodied similar tensions. He was born to Christian Berber parents in Soummam, Algeria in 1906, but eventually the family settled in Tunisia and Amrouche attended French schools. By the end of World War II he had made a successful career as a poet, helped found the literary journal *L’Arche* and regularly appeared on French radio programs commenting on great literary figures like Mallarmé. He was thus as assimilated—or in the language of the time, *évolué*—as a North African with *indigène* status could be. In his iconic formulation, “France is the spirit of my soul, but Algeria is the soul of this spirit.”

Amrouche was in Tunis for most of World War II and during this time he frequently referred to the French Revolution as a guide for worldwide political renewal. During the Axis powers’ occupation of Tunis, it was difficult for Amrouche and his friends to “maintain and affirm French values.” Nonetheless, he believed the Free French would overcome the Italians and Germans and would be the leaders in a postwar world. According to his hopeful outlook, France was the “spiritual reserve” of the entire world, and

For a country whose destiny is to create exemplars in all aspects of human activity, a national revolution is nonsense. The principles of 89 have fertilized the world, and it is not possible to conceive of a political order outside of their application imposing a revolution on the planetary level.

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131 Jean Amrouche, “Quelques raisons de la révolte algérienne,” Jean Amrouche: *L’éternal Jugurtha*, (Marseille: Archives de la ville de Marseille, 1985), 114. This speech was originally given at the salle Wagram meeting of the Committee Against the Pursuit of the War in North Africa, 27 January 1956.


133 17 August 1943 entry, Jean El Mouhoub Amrouche, *Journal, 1928-1962*, edited by Tassadit Yacine Titouh (Paris: Non Lieu, 2009), 110. In a journal entry just a month later, Amrouche noted the anniversary of the battle of Valmy and reflected, “If I had to write an article on this subject, it would, I think, lack warmth.” He had been reading Bertrand Russel’s intellectual history of the 19th Century and wondered if Russel’s avoidance of France was due to his British outlook or if the role of France in the world was only a “myth.” He concluded that France “should place the guiding role in the civilization to come” (115).
French civilization was the key to a future universal civilization. This civilization to come, one of which other anticolonialist intellectuals spoke in the postwar, would move beyond current political oppression, including that of the colonial variety.  

From the end of World War II through the beginning of the French-Algerian War, Amrouche remained hopeful of the prospects for this universal French project, but thought the reality of modern France grew ever-increasingly distant from its ideal image. In the colonial world, then, Amrouche thought the universal principles of 1789 would be realized by the various anticolonial actors arguing for a separation from France. In 1948, he described France’s relation to North Africa as an “initiator who has lost the sense of its true mission… The North African peoples do not exist. But they are gaining consciousness—class consciousness—national consciousness—moral and psychological consciousness.” The May 1945 revolts against French rule in Algeria and then the beginning of the FLN’s armed struggle confirmed that Algerians had rejected the French with whom they interacted in their everyday lives. But in so doing, they embraced another France. At an early meeting of the Committee Against the Pursuit of War in North Africa in January 1956, Amrouche explained,  

For me it is thus not a question of rejecting and still less of hating France, the country of my spirit and at least part of my soul. But there was France, the France of Europe, the France full stop, and the other—the one out of which colonialism had made a simulacra that is properly the negation of France.  

Earl in the War, Amrouche still believed in the possibility of a reconciliation that would allow Algerian autonomy without a complete break from France, but by 1957 this was no longer a

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possibility. By refusing the false image of France, it was Algerians’ job to fulfil the ideals of the true image of France.

As Amrouche’s support for the FLN grew, so did his critiques of other intellectuals who failed to lend their support. Amrouche took extreme exception to ethnologist Germaine Tillion’s study Algeria in 1957. Tillion, in Amrouche’s reading, had reduced the French Algerian War to questions of underdevelopment and poverty, with the implication that economic amelioration would solve France’s crisis. Tillion could only see the Berbers of Kabylia as ancient and a counterpoint to the modern world. This blind spot meant she fundamentally misunderstood the war:

It is true that one can hardly recognize these hungry souls demanding the destiny of free men and being inhabited by spiritual needs. ‘Liberty or death’: it was good and true for the great ancestors of 1793 and the barefoot of Year II. Who could imagine the fellagha of the Aurès, Oranie, Soummam, or the clandestine actors from the towns or villages of Algeria, have discovered in their desperation the only path towards the light by proclaiming themselves free and sovereign over the land of their forefathers?

Amrouche found it tragically ironic that Tillion could not see the same political dynamics at work in Algeria that were essential to the core of the French Revolution. He repeated similar sentiments in the pages of Le Monde in early 1958. French universalism ran the risk of denying Algerian particularity. Because the only true patriotism for many French was French patriotism, they were blinded to Algerians’ claims to their own sense of national identity.

Like Fanon, Amrouche saw the legitimacy of the Algerian nationalist cause through the prism of the French Revolutionary ideals he had come to embrace. The ultimate end of this

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137 See the unedited fragment from 1957, “Une certaine image de France,” in Jean Amrouche: L’éternel Jugurtha, 118-119.
journey was a divorce from France. But the actual distancing from France happened at the same time Algeria dealt with the revolutionary dynamics of French history. Also like Fanon (as well as Mouloud Feraoun and Albert Camus), Amrouche died before Algerian independence was realized. Both Fanon’s and Amrouche’s deaths leave the question of whether in their eyes postwar Algeria would be a realization of the idealized versions of France or ultimately a total renunciation of French civilization.\textsuperscript{141}

The very visible presence of the French Revolution in the French Algerian War even beyond the far left shows that the meaning of the Revolution was far from stable, but also that it held a great deal of import for what was to be done in relation to Algeria. While some on the left felt the French government’s use of police oppression, state terror, and torture were a betrayal of the ideals of 1789, others went as far as to see the Revolution as a means of rationalizing and even defending Algerian terrorism. The analogy between an Algerian Revolution and the French Revolution of 1789 had perhaps its most public incarnation when such radicalized French supporters of the FLN were brought to trial in 1960.

The trial of French métropole and colonial supporters of the Jeanson network from 5 September to 1 October 1960 highlighted the ways in which French and Algerian national identities were aligned over the course of previous years. Trials of Algerian militants and draftees who had refused to fight in the war had been common in the years preceding the trial, with capsule summaries presented in the newspapers and longer court testimonies covered by

\textsuperscript{141} Here, Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the tragic hero is fitting: “The tragic hero has only one language that is completely proper to him: silence. It has been so from the very beginning… In his silence the hero burns the bridges connecting him to god and the world, elevates himself above the realm of personality, which in speech, defines itself against others and individualizes itself, and so enters the icy loneliness of the self.” Benjamin, \textit{The Origin of German Tragic Drama}, translated by John Osborne (New York: Verso, 2009), 108. Like Benjamin, too, in Amrouche and Fanon’s deaths we are left with a fungible empty signifier that readers could likely turn to multiple purposes.
intellectual journals like Les Temps modernes.\textsuperscript{142} However, the Jeanson network had gone further than mere civil disobedience by aiding the FLN in France through the laundering of money and goods and by helping FLN members stay clandestine.\textsuperscript{143} Furthermore, of the various court trials and legal scandals publicized, the Jeanson trial most directly invoked the French Revolution when positing that aiding Algerians was not a betrayal of France, but rather the best way to remain faithful to both.

The network’s leader, Francis Jeanson, was one of postwar France’s models of a politically-engaged intellectual. After gaining his baccalaureate in philosophy in 1940, Jeanson taught philosophy and became involved in the resistance, eventually making his way to North Africa—via a series of Spanish prison camps—to join the Free French Forces in 1944. According to his biographer, Marie-Pierre Ulloa, for Jeanson, “Resistance appeared to be a categorical imperative” in the Kantian sense. After being refused to take exams for his agrégation in philosophy after the war, Jeanson wrote a number of articles popularizing the philosophies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre. Jeanson’s 1947 study, \textit{The Moral Problem and the Philosophy of Sartre}, elevated him to the top rank of existentialist intellectuals and gained him entry to the journals \textit{Esprit} and \textit{Les Temps modernes}.\textsuperscript{144} In 1952, Jeanson played


\textsuperscript{143} There were other such networks operating in France, but for the most part they were overshadowed by the public prosecution of the Jeanson network to the point where the story of the “porteurs de valise” eventually came to stand for all FLN support in France.

a pivotal role in Sartre’s break with Camus over the latter’s critique of revolutionary violence in
*The Rebel* by staging a full personal and ideological attack in *Les Temps modernes*.\(^{145}\)

For Jeanson’s 1948 honeymoon he and his wife, Collette, stayed in Algiers. While his
time in North Africa was dominated by the concerns of World War II, his postwar return
highlighted the extreme racism and extreme impoverishment present in Algeria. The result was a
series of articles in *Express* and *Les Temps modernes* from 1949 to 1952. After the French
Algerian War began he connected with nationalists associated with the FLN. In 1955, Francis
and Collette published *Outlaw Algeria*, one of the first books to come out in support of Algerian
independence.\(^{146}\) After Guy Mollet’s government passed special police powers to fight the FLN
in 1956, Jeanson concluded that intellectual engagement in the form of books and articles was
not enough: direct action in coordination with Algerians was necessary.\(^{147}\) What began as acting
as a taxi driver for Algerian nationalists in 1956 soon expanded into a network of money
laundering, transport of weapons, and manufacture of falsified documents, lasting until the
majority of the network were arrested in coordinated police operations in February 1960.

While Francis Jeanson himself had opposed any attacks on French civilians in the
métropole, not all members of his network shared his reservations. In the public’s eye, at least,
the relationship between his network and the FLN was one of absolute commitment. For

\(^{145}\) Francis Jeanson, “Albert Camus ou l’âme révoltée,” *Les Temps modernes* 79 (May
1952), 2070-2090; Francis Jeanson, “Pour tout vous dire,” *Les Temps modernes* 82 (August
1952), 354-383; Ulloa, *Francis Jeanson*, 103-123; Ronald Aronson, *Camus and Sartre: The
Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel that Ended It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
2004), chapter 7, 131-153.

\(^{146}\) Francis Jeanson, “Cette Algérie conquise et pacifiée I,” *Esprit* 4 (April 1950), 613-
634; Francis Jeanson, “Cette Algérie conquise et pacifiée II,” *Esprit* 5 (May 1950), 841-861;
Francis and Collette Jeanson, “Le tournant algérien,” *Esprit* 10 (October 1951), 528-554; Francis
Jeanson, “Logique du Colonialisme,” *Les Temps modernes* 80 (June 1952), 2213-2229; Francis

\(^{147}\) Ulloa, *Francis Jeanson*, 155.
example, after the police arrested members of the network, the newspaper Paris-Presses l’Intransigeant covered the story with a headline purportedly from one of the Algerian members of the network, Haddad Hamada: “The French You Have Arrested Are More FLN than I.”

Le Monde’s trial correspondent, Jean-Marc Théolleyre also noted the Muslim defendants’ willingness to “‘fraternally’ salute [French network members] as men and women who ‘are not of the FLN but are of the French who know how to put into action their ideas of peoples’ liberties.'”

Members of the non-Communist left were also quick to see the cause of the Jeanson network as a surrogate for Algerian solidarity and the right to refuse military enlistment. Intellectuals such as André Mandouze and Claude Bourdet publicly declared solidarity with the accused and some gave testimony in the courtroom. Even though Sartre was away in Brazil during the trial, he gave his editorial team at Les Temps modernes full rights to draft a statement in his name, knowing the amount of media attention his name would enlist.

Though Jeanson himself was absent from the proceedings he was nonetheless tried with 25 other members of his network. Fourteen of those tried, including Jeanson, received the maximum penalty of ten years in prison, three received lesser sentences, and nine were acquitted. In the trial, the most vocal of the accused used the trial to explicitly state the ties behind French Revolutionary identity and the imperatives of Algerian anti-colonial terror.

Jeanson’s published writings on Algeria interestingly steer clear of any reference to the French Revolution. While many of the members in his network had a strained relationship with the Communist Party and were suspicious of its dogmatic Stalinism, Jeanson remained uncritical of the party and even tried courting direct PCF support after the party recognized the FLN as

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148 Quoted in Ulloa, Francis Jeanson, 182.
150 Annie Cohen-Solal, Sartre: A Life, 422.
Algeria’s legitimate representatives in 1958. So while his analyses of the war portrayed Algerians as a legitimate proletarian force, his analyses displayed a Marxism not concerned with the French Revolutionary tradition. It was everyday workers’ (French and Algerian) experience that pointed towards the right socialist action, not analysis of ideology or previous revolutionary struggles. Jeanson’s stance, however, was quite different from that of those members of his network who were placed on trial. All of the members, including Jeanson, did see the struggle of the FLN as analogous to the French maquis resistance against the Nazis in World War II, a claim frequently made in the courtroom proceedings.

Appeals to France’s Revolutionary past were in part a key piece of the strategy designed by the French and Algerian legal defense teams. As Mourad Ouessedik, lawyer for the Algerian defendants, later explained, French defendants were encouraged to focus their testimony on appeals to “the defense of the principles of 1789,” appeals to “the honor of France,” and “common combat with the French.” Instead of being viewed as domestic outlaws, the goal of the French defendants was to present themselves as defenders of an idealized France associated with the French Revolution and anti-Nazi resistance. Algerian defendants were likewise portrayed, in their own testimonies and through their lawyers’ arguments, as representatives of a separate Algerian nation in the midst of a revolution worthy of comparison to the French Revolution.

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152 “Because the underground combatants do not need to have read Marx to understand their own necessities and to comprehend that they themselves will face them through their own self-organization and by beginning to refuse the costly ease of any capitalist contribution. It’s the ABCs of socialism; and if the French left regains consciousness of itself it will be very quickly convinced of this.” Francis Jeanson, *Notre Guerre* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1960), 112.

Among the most controversial of the defense team’s lawyers was Jacques Vergès, who three years earlier had defended Djamila Bouhired. Vergès’ hallmark trial strategy throughout his career was one of legal rupture. Rather than find a legal means for proving the innocence of his clients, Vergès’ method was to put the government itself on trial. For Vergès, a revolutionary trial politics based on rupture had important historical precedents, such as Louis XVI’s trial in the French Revolution. Indictments of France and its leaders were not meant to be a wholesale critique of the French nation, but rather were designed to hold up an idealized version of the French Republic against current deviations from that ideal. In his explanation of his defense of Djamila Bouhired in 1957, Vergès claimed Bouhired’s actions belonged “to the tradition of Abd-el-Kader,” but that this “is by no means an anti-French tradition.” This method of defending Algerian militants was meant to deflect any possible guilt of the accused onto France itself, making the trial more about France’s public image than legal culpability of the defendants. Thus, on multiple occasions in the Jeanson network trial, Vergès questioned to what extent André Malraux, then Minister of Culture, had any contact with Francis Jeanson. Surely, he speculated, the author of The Human Condition could sympathize with the efforts the accused made in the service of French values. The novel, after all, dramatized Cambodian

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154 And my point here is not to reduce the whole defense strategy to Vergès, or the tactic of “rupture,” but to highlight Vergès’ general theory of legal rupture. On the complexities of legal strategy during the Algerian War, see Sylvie Thénault, “Défendre les nationalistes algériens en lutte pour l’indépendance. La « défense de rupture » en question,” Le mouvement social no 240 (2012), 121-135.


156 Georges Arnaud and Jacques Vergès, Pour Djamila Bouhired (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1957), 94.
revolutionaries’ efforts against Imperial China. After the President of the court reproached Vergès for referring to Malraux as “an old terrorist,” Vergès explained that as a child raised in a French colony he admired the protagonist of the novel, Kyo, since “having to choose between his European parents and his colonial parents, he, for the sake of dignity, chose the latter and the Revolution.” According to Vergès’ logic, it was out of respect that Malraux was referred to as a terrorist. However, despite numerous pleas on the part of the defense, Malraux never appeared in court to state his position on the case. And throughout the war, though he denounced the use of torture, Malraux never made any public overtures in support of Algerian independence. As Vergès concluded after the trial, though Malraux had once been an opponent of Chiang Kai-Shek and Franco, since he was a government minister he was now those dictators’ de facto ally. His absence from the trial was a refusal to confront the ideals of his youth and the distance between the ideals of France and the French government.

Though Vergès’ antics in the courtroom drew a good deal of the press’ attention, he was not the only one to directly link French identity with Algerian terrorism. During defendant Jean-Claude Paupert’s interrogation and closing declaration he tied both current existentialist anti-colonial discourse and his understanding of the Revolution’s legacy to the Algerian independence movement. When Paupert was called up to fight in Algeria in April 1956, he made a conscious decision not to desert or resist his duties. This, however, was despite his personal reservations toward French colonialism and his participation, first in the Nouvelle Gauche, and

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then the PSU (the newly-formed Unified Socialist Party). Once back in France Paupert’s views and actions grew increasingly radical as the French military intensified their campaigns in Algeria and police in France increased repressive tactics as well. He and fellow soldier Claude Jouannais publicized their military experiences for the journal *Esprit* just before the May 1958 crisis.\(^{160}\)

The return of De Gaulle and continued military intensification only radicalized Paupert further. Claiming, “I’m no revolutionary hothead… I always incline towards reform,” Paupert contemplated joining the Jeanson network for months before actively participating in clandestine activity in 1959. According to his much later interview with historian Martin Evans, Paupert never saw himself as a member of the FLN, but rather a defender of French values.\(^ {161}\) Despite his insistence that he was not prone to extremism, Paupert went perhaps further than any of the other accused members of the Jeanson network in justifying Algerians’ use of violence via reference to French national identity.

Under examination, Paupert defined the “colonial regime as a form of terrorism,” and this terrorism caused the Algerians to “live in violence”; violence “is their memory and their destiny. They may not leave it—they may only blow it up.”\(^ {162}\) On the one hand, Paupert’s analysis of the colonial world as imbued with violence mirrored elements of Sartre’s essay “Colonialism is a System” and Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*. As a friend of Claude Lanzmann, one of the editorial directors of *Les Temps modernes*, Paupert would have no doubt been familiar with these formulations. Colonialism, being an inherently violent process from its beginning and propagated through psychological domination and institutional coercion, could only be rectified


\(^ {161}\) Jean-Claude Paupert quoted in Evans, *The Memory of Resistance*, 96.

\(^ {162}\) *Le procès du réseau Jeanson*, 68, 221-222.
through other violent processes. On the other hand, his solidarity with the FLN went beyond sympathy for colonial suffering. In his final declaration before the court, Paupert explained, “I have not chosen to help the Algerians because of their mistreatment, but because the struggle of the Algerian people is a just struggle, and I have not chosen to aid Algerian militants in spite of their terrorism, but because terrorism is their destiny.” For Paupert, terrorism was not a pitfall, but rather part and parcel of Algerian national identity, the same as it was of French identity. “Being French,” he continued, “is not a virtue stored in a refrigerator, it is a fidelity one invents. To be French today is to be Algerian… We know well, for both princes and for valets, that fraternity is a terrorist act. My itinerary is clear: from the Algerian army to the Algerians, from the colonizer to the colonized, from the system [of oppression] to hope. I was a torturer. Liberated, I am a terrorist.”163 Algerian independence was part of the same universal history inaugurated by the rise of the modern French nation.

Even though most of the other defendants’ rhetoric did not go as far in the courtroom as Paupert’s, many did make an explicit connection between the Algerian independence movement and the French Revolution. Algerian defendant Haddad Hamada invoked the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, and French defendant Micheline Pouteau testified to “a certain revolutionary dynamism which has been a part of France,” and described her acts as “the gesture of a French revolutionary.”164 In the memoir of the war written by Pouteau and fellow network member Janine Cahen, they explained that each of them wanted to find “the element in the Algerian Revolution that would facilitate a revolutionary movement in France.”165 When making his case for his client, Maurice Gautherat claimed that people had a moral obligation to act

163 Ibid., 221-222, emphasis in original.
164 Le procès du réseau Jeanson, 83, 221-222, 229.
outside of established laws when the course of history demanded. After first referring to Charles de Gaulle’s improvised French government in exile during World War II, he claimed such a scenario had roots in the French Revolution. “Had not the French Revolution,” he explained, “applied to the monarchy these principles of legitimate action? A king rules legally since he himself provided the basis for his rule. He was still guilty, Saint-Just said, for having ruled in the first place.” The French government’s rule in Algeria was, according to its own laws, legal. However, it was still guilty for having ruled. As a result, “One must purify France in order to found a new power on more innocent and humane principles. And, if this is what one calls a Revolution, then so be it, one must make the Revolution [faire la Révolution].”  

Similarly, during her final statement, Hélène Cuénat explained that she never really understood how 1789 could have been a bourgeois revolution. Nonetheless, even if the French Revolution was a victory for the bourgeoisie, “we all know that Algerian independence will not be a victory for the bourgeoisie.” The French and Algerian Revolutions were likely as radical as one another; in the event they were not, the Algerian Revolution at least held the promise of surpassing the French Revolution’s bourgeois outcome.

Interviews with members of the Jeanson network demonstrate that the intellectual climate of the war did matter greatly as political motivators. Members of the network were regular readers of journals like *Les Temps modernes, France-Observateur*, and *Esprit*, and were familiar with Albert Memmi’s and Frantz Fanon’s analyses of colonialism. The courtroom testimony of the Jeanson network shows that the French Revolution’s legacy did matter when justifying

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166 *Le procès du réseau Jeanson*, 213.
167 Ibid., 223.
168 As Evans summarized, “The question of the usefulness of legal opposition; the methods used by the FLN; the idea that through working with the FLN they were stabbing French soldiers in the back: all these issues the interviewees explained, had to be thoroughly thought through.” Evans, *The Memory of Resistance*, 73, 77-78.
support for an independent Algeria. Further, those who most strongly identified themselves in
court with a French Revolutionary motivation found themselves at odds with moderate leftist
platforms on Algeria, such as the official stance of the PCF.169

The revolutionary confraternity expressed in the courtroom also perplexed supporters of
French Algeria for the same reasons it made sense for anticolonialists. The network and its
defenders had portrayed themselves as defenders of the French Republic and their enemies as the
avatars of totalitarian fascism. The prosecution and its supporters did not merely deny the terms,
but reversed them. Writing in Carrefour, Jacques Soustelle asked “why the regime that emerged
from May 13th’s patriotic uprising has not more successfully enforced the politics expected of
it?” The closer the government came to recognizing Algerian independence the more
contradictory such courtroom proceedings would become.170 In its closing arguments, the
prosecution not only claimed the French invasion of Algeria was sanctioned and ushered in an
era of unity and progress, it also claimed “the FLN has followed the totalitarian methods of
Nazism.”171

In February of 1962 members of the Algerian Provisional Government met with French
government officials and laid the groundwork for the coming March ceasefire and Evian
Accords that ended the war and formalized Algerian independence. De Gaulle characterized the

169 See the excerpts on Micheline Pouteau, Jean-Claude Paupert, and Hélène Cuénat in Evans, The Memory of Resistance, 60-64, 93-96, 152-154.
171 Le procès du réseau Jeanson, 168, 174. The prosecution directly referred to Charles-André Julien’s Histoire de l’Afrique du Nord: Des origines à 1830 (Paris: Payot, 1951). However, as we will see in Chapter 2, their interpretation of Julien’s account has to be counted as a willful misreading. Julien responded in an open letter to Le Monde the following week specifying that the French invasion was anything but justified. Charles-André Julien, “Une lettre de M Charles-André Julien,” Le Monde (1 October 1960).
task at hand as “marching together fraternally on the path to civilization.” Jean-Paul Sartre also saw this as a possibility for a new beginning for both the French and Algerian peoples, but one towards which the French had only sleepwalked. If there were any revolutionary fervor in the aftermath of 1958, it was certainly not apparent at the end of the war: “the Algerians have retained their revolutionary strength. Where is ours?” French “defeat” in Algeria, Sartre contended, was not the result of Algerian independence, but rather the inability of the French people to recognize “the most glorious, the most sombre of adventures without ever attempting to take part in it.” While the French Revolution was invoked at the beginning of the war as a standard for actions of the French nation, by the end of the war any revolutionary identity belonged to now independent Algerians.

The different modes linking the French Revolution with Algeria highlight the dynamic of self-understanding and recognition of an independent colonial other, and these invocations reveal the extent to which understanding an independent Algerian “other” was part of a process of self-recognition. One set of standards against which contemporary French actions and the possibility of Algerian independence could be measured was the perceived inheritance of the French Revolution. In this sense, then, the more nationalists in Algeria looked like citizens of the first French Republic, the less tenable it became to claim that Algeria was and must remain French.

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Debating the Revolution’s Legacy

The French Revolution of 1789, and particularly its pro-Jacobin social interpretation, was a prominent touchstone during the French-Algerian War. Intellectuals and activists invoked the Revolution when expressing fears that the Fourth Republic was in danger of losing sight of its republican heritage, dedication to preserving the rights of man, and succumbing to a resurgent fascism in both the colonies and in the metropole. Using the heritage of the Revolution as part of a living tradition was also a way to explain one’s support of Algerian nationalist claims. For some, this eventually amounted to embracing a wholesale Algerian Revolution that meant the end of French Algeria. The third world writ large had inherited the mantle of the ancien régime’s third estate. The memory of fascism’s ability to destroy the French Republic and the heritage of the French Revolution weighed heavily in the French-Algerian War. But these associations are by no means self-explanatory. If the French Revolution could act as such a pliable indexical marker, then it bears examining what historians thought of this promiscuous anachronism. For both those historians most closely associated with upholding the Jacobin interpretation as well as historians critical of it there was no denying the political relevance of the Revolution in the postwar.

From the late 1930s to the 1960s the study of history in France was pulled in two different directions. On the one hand the Annales School gained prominence for studies of long-term diachronic change, leaving history based on studies of political events behind. They held that only through the study of such longue-durée phenomena, such as economic patterns, popular mentalities, or negotiations of local geography, could short-term synchronic analysis be achieved. On the other hand, this period also saw the emergence of the so-called social interpretation of the French Revolution, often sarcastically termed “the Vulgate.” While the
former form of history could seem impersonal and detached from contemporary preoccupations, the latter was invariably wed to fundamental questions of French national identity.²⁷⁴ Though the social interpretation was based primarily on social and economic analysis, these histories were always and already tied to politics since these historical analyses seemed to touch on the very essence of Frenchness.

Beyond the content of the past’s connection to the present, historians of all stripes engaged with the French-Algerian War. The conservative historian of the Old Regime, Philippe Ariès, covered Algerian politics for the rightwing journal *La nation française*; a young François Furet, a decade before his fame as historical provocateur, covered politics and history for the leftwing *France-Observateur*.²⁷⁵ Other historians engaged with the war more directly. Pierre Vidal-Nacquet’s exposés of torture and the government’s responsibility for the murder and cover up of Maurice Audin were some of the most important public interventions to sway opinion against the government’s colonial brutality.²⁷⁶ Some, like Marc Ferro and Henri Marrou, participated in clandestine political resistance during the Nazi Occupation and reprised political agitation during the French Algerian War.²⁷⁷ But perhaps most interesting were the ways in which historians engaged with the standards and practices of their own profession in addressing political action in Algeria.

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²⁷⁴ While *Annales* scholarship may have preserved a veneer of detached objectivity, there is ample evidence why this appearance should not be taken at face value. See Carole Reynaud Paligot, “Les Annales de Lucien Febvre à Fernand Braudel: Entre épopée coloniale et opposition Orient/Occident,” *French Historical Studies* 32, no 1 (2009), 121-144.


The French-Algerian War and the proliferation of anachronistic analogies between revolutionary France and revolutionary Algeria provide a way into how historians of the French Revolution negotiated the proper role of historical distance and the relationship between the French Revolution and modern France. Throughout the 1930s and 40s intellectuals of the left drew on the French Revolution as a way to anchor a sense of French national identity during the upheaval caused by the rise of fascism and the German occupation. While anyone who felt antipathy towards a perceived fascist menace could rely on the image of the Revolution in the face of national defeat from the outside, the problem posed by colonialism was that of an adversary within the nation, or perhaps even the nation itself. If the Revolution could hold importance for understanding French national identity then to what extent could it help decipher the growth of a national independence movement from within its empire? While French historians prized the recul of their profession—the emphasis on historical distance from their subjects—to what extent could this distance be applied to a subject that was part of a living tradition? Teaching manuals during the French-Algerian War simultaneously reinforced the need to avoid anachronism in the classroom and the invaluable insights into the contemporary world that history could offer students.\(^{178}\) If the Revolution was the birth of the modern political era, then what was the relationship between the need to focus on the historical particularity of the Revolution and the universal nature of its claims and legacy?

Georges Lefebvre, Daniel Guérin, and Albert Soboul were three of the most influential and popular authors of the French Revolution in France from the Occupation through the French Algerian War; each staked out different positions on the appropriate uses of the French Revolution in contemporary French politics and illustrated both the temptation to make anachronistic claims about the Revolution and the potential pitfalls of doing so. Although the historical profession prized the historical distance between researchers and their subjects, the experience of World War II led to politically-charged interpretations of the Revolution. Georges Lefebvre, the head of the Society of Robespierrist Studies and Chair of the History of the French Revolution at the Sorbonne, for example, wrote politicized essays on the Revolution’s relevance for the French nation faced with Nazism. In the aftermath of the war, however, it was activist and writer Daniel Guérin who published thoroughly politicized interpretations of the Revolution, ones that met with harsh criticism for, among other things, not respecting historical distance. Though begun in the immediate aftermath of World War II, the debates concerning Guérin’s interpretation of the Revolution highlighted the tension between historical distance and historical politicization present during the French Algerian War. In the postwar, Albert Soboul, George Lefebvre’s intellectual heir apparent, was Guérin’s main critic. While the revisionist debates of the 1970s and 80s would paint Soboul as a vulgar Marxist whose politics had warped his historical work, in the 1950s and 60s Soboul was adamant about constructing barriers between the study of the past and anachronistic analogies with the present. Daniel Guérin, however, argued for the need to interpret the present in relation to the Revolution and the Revolution in relation to present political concerns. Soboul found himself outflanked on the Left.

Debates among historians on the political relevance of the French Revolution provide one of the intellectual horizons for invocations of the French Revolution in favor of Algerian
independence for two reasons. These debates act as a limit-case for the political uses of the Revolution among scholars for whom historical distance was prized. Not only were Lefebvre, Guérin, and Soboul’s interpretations of the Revolution read by anticolonial writers such as Frantz Fanon, Dionys Mascolo, and Jean-Paul Sartre, but these historians’ views on the Revolution’s value coincided with claims for Algerian independence. While none of them took issue with bootstrapping the Revolution to anti-fascist causes, all three were preoccupied with determining which causes merited association with the Revolution; in the case of Albert Soboul, an historian for whom making the connection between the birth of the French nation and the birth of the Algerian nation seemed most likely, there was only silence. Examining the way in which specialists on the Revolution came to terms with claims for Algerian independence highlights the greater symbolic stakes of aligning the foundational myths of the French Republic with anticolonial politics.

**Georges Lefebvre and the Revolution in the wake of WWII**

World War Two transformed the study of the French Revolution in a number of respects. Pétain accorded history a special place in his plan of national rejuvenation as a way to reinforce national and regional pride and identity to a newly-defeated country. Under Vichy, the academy shifted emphases from the study of the virtues of the Republic to studies of regional identity.179 As the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg stated, “the French Revolution of 1789 has been buried under Vichy by the French themselves.”180

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180 Quoted in E. Royston Pike, “‘Back to the Bourbons’ Won’t Save France,” in *The War Illustrated* 47 (26 July 1940), 62.
[AHRF] ceased publication and its parent organization, the *Société des études robespierristes* [Society for Robespierist Studies], suspended all other activities. After being placed on the *liste* Otto, the list comprising works deemed ideologically incompatible with National Socialism, copies of Georges Lefebvre’s *Quatre-vingt neuf*, published in 1939, the 150th Anniversary of the Revolution, were seized and destroyed by the Vichy government.

If the Occupation meant hard times for the study of the French Revolution, after the Liberation interest in the French Revolution swung hard in the other direction. Among graduate studies, for instance, the popularity of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history increased.181 There were also a number of subversive works of history written during the dark years, even though they often had to discreetly camouflage their intellectual resistance. For those historians involved in clandestine resistance activities, their understanding of the French Revolution informed their fidelity to the ideals of the French Republic.

The Revolution had been politicized most in the early twentieth century by the work of historians like Jean Jaurès and Albert Mathiez, offering a way of seeing the French Revolution as part of a larger history of political developments. Though the accounts written by Jaurès and Mathiez differed on a number of points, both set the tone for academic study of the Revolution from the 1930s through the 1970s. Jaurès made social classes the determining interpretive lens for understanding the dynamics of the Revolution, and Mathiez rehabilitated the persona of Maximilien Robespierre and the political projects of the Jacobin club in general. Mathiez’s legacy was particularly important. Though many conservative historians continued to hold minor academic posts after World War Two, virtually all major historians of the Revolution were

members of the Society for Robespierist Studies he founded in 1907 and contributed to the cultural rehabilitation of the Jacobins. Though the academic study of Robespierre’s biography became relegated to the margins after Mathiez, his stature as a positive figure within French Republican mythology only grew.¹⁸²

From the late thirties through the Occupation, the Revolution’s political uses on the left were directed against fascism with the goal of reinvigorating a sense of national pride and the formation of a resistance identity. Resistance pamphlets, public speeches by Free French leaders such as Charles de Gaulle, and even the official rebranding and unofficial silences of the Revolution’s commemoration under Vichy were occasions to reflect on the French Revolution and its relationship to the present.¹⁸³ The predominant narrative of these references was to analogize the threat that counter-revolutionaries and foreign (German) invasions posed to the French Republic in the early 1790s to the state of France under the Nazis. As one speech reasoned, “after Munich began a subterranean undertaking of men selling their Patrie in order to save their own privileges, just as in 1792.”¹⁸⁴ If the threat of foreign invasion and betrayal from within was the same as in 1792, then the answer was a resistance led by a citizen army conducted against the enemy abroad and rooting out the Republic’s internal enemies, à la 1793. Beginning in 1942, Communist Resistance groups emphasized Republican imagery in their propaganda with a celebration of the Revolutionary citizen army that defeated Prussian forces at the Battle of

¹⁸³ Celebrations of 14 juillet, Bastille Day, for instance, were not formally outlawed under Vichy, but they were either restricted, or rebranded as a “day of national unity.” Dalisson, Les fêtes du Maréchal, 92-93, 115, 131-138.
Valmy. A formal proposal for a *levée en masse* was addressed to the National Resistance Council in 1944 and the resistance pamphlet *Après* stated, “Justice will be served in full place of the Republic, to the tune of the Marseillaise. In each village, in each canton, citizens shall form a revolutionary tribunal of the Resistance and Liberation.”

Even Albert Camus, who would come to be one of postwar France’s greatest critics of revolutionary violence, wrote in a 1944 issue of *Combat*, France “does not need a Talleyrand… It needs a Saint-Just.”

From the eve of the War through to the Liberation, Georges Lefebvre’s writings show perhaps the most direct case made for the French Revolution’s relevance for understanding the present. Lefebvre’s initial title at the Sorbonne in 1935 was Chair of Contemporary History and in the periodization of professional history in France in the 1930s this period included everything from the French Revolution to the present. (He would be named to the Chair of the French Revolution in 1937.) Lefebvre embraced this temporalization and viewed his academic and public role as not only faithfully representing the ideas and motivations of philosophes and revolutionaries, but also putting them to use in contemporary debate. While not directly involved in any particular party of the Left, such as the SFIO or PCF, Lefebvre did consider a Left writ large to be the inheritors of the Revolution’s legacy.

Lefebvre was born in 1874, the same year as Albert Mathiez, but lycée teaching and meticulous archival research, combined with finding time for his wife and children, meant that Lefebvre would not earn his doctorate or a university position until after Mathiez had already

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became a well-known intellectual figure. However, once his dissertation on the peasantry in the Nord was completed and he gained a position at Strasbourg (working alongside founders of the *Annales*, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre), when Mathiez died in 1932, Lefebvre was the obvious choice as his replacement at the head of the Society of Robespierist Studies and journal *AHRF*. According to Jacques Godechot, Lefebvre presented himself as the living guardian of the Revolution’s popular legacy: “His manner of invoking Robespierre, his completely Jacobin combativeness, reassured us of the purity of his sans-cullottisme.” For the 150th Anniversary of the French Revolution in 1939, Georges Lefebvre played a key role in national festivities by giving radio addresses, publishing document collections, and acting as consultant for Jean Renoir’s film *La Marseillaise*.188

As war approached in 1939, Lefebvre was convinced that the biggest threat to the principles of liberté, égalité, and fraternité was the European turn to authoritarian regimes, and specifically Fascism, which saw itself as the only authentic corrective to the French Revolution’s mistakes. Lefebvre was a member of the *Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes* (CVIA), the founder of the *Cercle Descartes*, and on the directorial committee of the magazine * Races et racismes*. The CVIA also included politically active historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. Its organ, *Vigilance*, was dedicated to informing the popular masses of the dangers of fascism and the threat it posed to France. However, due to a lack of unified leadership and disagreements on appeasement after the Munich conference, the group only lasted from 1934 to 1938.189 * Races et racismes* dedicated each issue to investigating the racist claims and politics of

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189 Nicole Racine “Comité de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes (1934-1938),” *Dictionnaire historique de la vie politique française*, edited by Jean-François Sirinelli, 208-209
the Nazis. Along with exposés on the content of school lessons claiming to prove the racial superiority of Aryans, the magazine also contained essays on the feudal origins of racism and the racism of the German colonial program.190 The Cercle Descartes consisted of a group of university and lycée instructors who met in the Sorbonne with the aim of disseminating academic ideas to a general public, from 1936 to 1939. The subject matter of the Cercle’s meetings and bulletins spanned a large range of topics, from interpretations of Cartesian philosophy to contemporary political debates. Before the beginning of the war, Lefebvre was even planning a conference on the political situation in North Africa, much to the dismay of the Sorbonne’s administration.191

In January 1939 Lefebvre addressed the Cercle Descartes in the Descartes amphitheater of the Sorbonne to take account of “The Principles of 1789 in the Contemporary World.”192 Lefebvre began his speech by proclaiming that the principles of the Revolution were not mere parochial concerns, but principles that had a global purchase: “it is not only for themselves that the revolutionaries affirmed the rights of man and citizen, but for all men, without distinction:

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192 Georges Lefebvre, “Les principes de 1789 dans le monde actuel,” Cahiers du cercle Descartes no 9 (1939), 5-20. Originally presented to the Cercle Descartes, 22 February 1939, Amphitheatre Descartes, Sorbonne. A talk by the same name was also advertised in the Socialist newspaper Le Populaire (20 March 1939) to take place at the Maison du C.G.T. on 17 April 1939 as part of a series of lectures commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Revolution. I have not been able to independently verify whether this second version of the talk took place.
the value is thus universal.” Placed in a larger context, Lefebvre saw the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen as the “crowning achievement” of the evolution of western thought from ancient Greece through Christianity and the modern world. Its features are the balance between collective security and the maximum of individual freedom that work toward attaining universal human dignity. Far from being abstractions that are void of any real human meaning, they are always situational and act as “a spiritual ideal, a public moral guide” \([\text{règle}]\). While there may be times in which the balance might shift toward public security and limit individual freedoms, as in the case of, say, Napoleon, these moments should be seen as aberrations. After Napoleon’s rule, Lefebvre reasoned, “the French bourgeoisie returned to the principles of 89 which they had never forgotten, and later they forced the liberalization of the Second Empire.”\(^{193}\)

In the aftermath of the First World War, the Revolution’s principles were under serious attack. The material and destruction the war caused led people to favor a strong state at the expense of their political freedoms. However, what made the 1920s and 1930s different from previous eras where counter-revolutionary ideals flourished was their new incarnation in the guise of National Socialism, which has given the counter-revolution “a new life.” National Socialism’s corporatist view of society, its racist view of biology, and its hierarchy of civilizations threaten projects of universal freedom. According to Lefebvre, “Between these principles and those of 1789, this time the opposition is radical.” By taking advantage of the weakened state of European society after war, fascist leaders brainwashed middle-class men. Man becomes “a docile robot” \([\text{automat docile}]\) whose “egoism permits his seduction through promises of material satisfaction and above all the mastery of fear.” The question, according to

\(^{193}\) Georges Lefebvre, “Les principes de 1789 dans le monde actuel,” 5-6, 9-10, 11.
Lefebvre, is whether this is merely a temporary problem or evidence of a “profound crisis of our civilization.” He concluded that it was such a crisis and that its roots were economic and social.  

Since the economic crisis of the 1930s was not simply limited to “our civilization,” that of the west, but was global in nature, it was also necessary to examine global relationships. Offering a modified version of Lenin’s formulation that imperialism was another stage in the history of class struggle, Lefebvre identified the racist competition between competing European nations as the cause of imperial expansion. The bourgeoisie inaugurated imperialist policies for precisely the same reasons National Socialism threatened to dominate Europe. If imperialist projects were allowed to continue, the result would be a state of total war that will leave humanity in a state of “animal naturalism.”

Of course, one of the other main targets of National Socialism, aside from the bourgeois liberalism inspired by the French Revolution, was the threat of global Marxist revolution that seemed all the more real after Russia’s dual revolutions in 1917. In Russia, the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat “terminated at the total reversal of the social organization that the revolutionaries of 1789 believed to conform with the state of nature.” Russia, according to Georges Lefebvre, substituted the French Revolution’s program with communism. Furthermore, Russia’s ability to last 20 years and its continued projects at social reform, like Stalin’s 1936 constitution granting universal suffrage, meant that the Soviet state

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194 Ibid., 13-14.
threatens to remain a long time.” Given that the bourgeoisie is Marxism’s explicit target, Lefebvre thought it hardly surprising middle classes would support authoritarian reaction.  

Although Lefebvre was optimistic about Russia’s future given their new constitution, he nonetheless thought communist and national socialist states governed under the same terrorizing methods and placed too much emphasis on a strong state over individual freedoms. In this way he agreed with many early anti-totalitarian thinkers. After hearing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, Lefebvre would describe it as “the horrible treason of so-called Communist Russia.” In his view, “the social problem remains, and if freedom might be saved, it will be because a third solution is found.” This “third solution” had to be grounded in the principles of 1789. Closing his address, Lefebvre reminded “those who call themselves the partisans of freedom” that “freedom must be earned, freedom must be defended.” In the midst of his address, Lefebvre was repeatedly interrupted by rightwing demonstrators. The summary of the event in Action française’s newspaper, L’étudiant français, happily reported the jeers of the crowd that interrupted the man for whom “the French Revolution was most evidently his property.” According to the reporter, the demonstrators facetiously sang the Carmagnole and “clearly manifested their intention to not sit idly by while someone defended the principles responsible for the ruin of the nation.” Not only did these demonstrators defend their political

principles, but they were also able to ruin the good spirits of an historian of the Revolution basking in its sesquicentennial celebrations.¹⁹⁹

Lefebvre reiterated the necessity of upholding the ideals of 1789 in the contemporary world in the concluding chapter of *The Coming of the French Revolution*, published at the same time as his Sorbonne speech.²⁰⁰ The ideals of 1789 were so powerful they could inspire heroic action.

Freedom is by no means an invitation to indifference or to irresponsible power; nor is it the promise of unlimited well being without a counterpart of toil and effort. It supposes application, perpetual effort, strict government of self, sacrifice in contingencies, civic and private virtues. It is therefore more difficult to live as a free man than to live as a slave, and that is why men so often renounce their freedom; for freedom is in its way an invitation to a life of courage, and sometimes of heroism, as the freedom of the Christian is an invitation to a life of sainthood.

Youth of 1939! The Declaration [of the Rights of Man and Citizen] is also a tradition and a glorious thing. When reading it, listen to the voices of your ancestors who speak to you—those who fought at Valmy, at Jemappes, at Fleurus, to the cry, “Long live the nation.” They made the nation free. Appreciate the noble duty of the present: in all the universe mankind alone may fulfill it. Your ancestors repeat that your fate is in your own hands and that you, you alone determine the fate of society. Be aware of the risk: since it attracts you, it will not recede. Measure the grandeur of your task as well as the dignity it requires. Will you renounce it? Your ancestors have confidence in you. You will soon be the Nation: “Long live the Nation!”²⁰¹

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¹⁹⁹ “Les belles soirées de M. Georges Lefebvre,” *L’étudiant français* no. 3 (April 1939), 2. The Carmagnole is a folk song sung by the *sans-culottes* in the French Revolution.


Lefebvre’s call to the youth of 1939 to seize the patriotic legacy of the Republic’s martyrs who
died at Valmy was a more than adequate reason for its placement on the *liste* Otto.\textsuperscript{202} The
language of the passage is anything but passive and the call to do honor to the citizen armies who
repelled German invaders in 1792 was made with one eye towards an increasingly belligerent
Nazi Germany (and perhaps another towards homegrown fascist sympathizers). The book was
out a year before being seized, and through the end of the phony war and France’s defeat in June
of 1940, the Société d’études robespierristes continued to meet and publish the *AHRF*. As late as
April 1940 Lefebvre seemed optimistic that the French nation and its allies were up to the task of
defending themselves against Nazi advances. When defeat did come it must have shocked
Lefebvre at least as much as other French citizens hopeful for the prospects of defending the
nation.\textsuperscript{203}

During the Occupation, Lefebvre was due to retire from the Sorbonne, but for fear of the
Germans either removing the post of Chair of the Revolution or filling it with a fascist ideologue
Lefebvre remained until July 1945. Despite the stability of his academic post, keeping residence
in Paris meant being under continued threat from Allied bombs. The *AHRF* discontinued their
publications during the Occupation, as did the Commission on Economic and Social History of
the Revolution. By the end of 1941 Lefebvre’s wife died and two years later the Germans
executed his brother, Théodore, a geographer who was active in the Resistance in Poitiers. The

\textsuperscript{202} Davis, “Georges Lefebvre,” 135. Davis’ assertion that Lefebvre was never part of an
organization that advocated violence should perhaps be tempered. The reason for the breakup of
the CVIA, for example, was precisely over the issue of using violence to resist fascism.

\textsuperscript{203} “Public opinion here remains calm, at least on the surface. The majority of people are
kept up to date, as you are over there [England], of what is currently in play. And now that the
Allies seem ready to, and in effect already do, act, it seems to me that in certain respects the most
difficult time has passed.” Georges Lefebvre to J. M. Thompson, 25 April 1940, “Georges
deaths of Théodore and his friend Marc Bloch seemed to mark Lefebvre profoundly. He commemorated their patriotic sacrifice by placing their portraits alongside a portrait of Robespierre in his home kitchen.²⁰⁴ Perhaps spurred to action because of the deaths of his brother and friend, or perhaps encouraged by Allied landings in June 1944, during the last two years of the war Lefebvre composed essays that drew political lessons from the French Revolution in order to direct the actions of the liberation of France.

The first of Lefebvre’s wartime essays, “D’Elle,” discussed the “collective psychology” of the French and its effect on their continued romance with images of revolution. When the historian looks at the Resistance prepare for popular insurrection against the Germans, Lefebvre stated, “Everywhere, imagery floods in” [“De toutes parts les réflexions se pressent”]. The imagery is that “of Her,” the Revolution, the “catalyst” that still animates the French people and forms the basis of the nation’s “mythic power in the sorélian sense of the term.” The main image on which Lefebvre focused in this essay was that of the Parisian barricade. At least as far back as the insurrection of 1588, Parisian masses have been able to make use of this tactic to surprising effect. “What is above all striking to the historian,” according to Lefebvre, “is that the Parisian people, upon deciding on insurrection, resort to the same tactic throughout the ages.” And while it is true that the barricade is only thinkable in a large city, what defies sociological explanation is the fact that “out of all of the large cities throughout the world, Paris is the only one we might call the city of barricades.”²⁰⁵


A popular *mentalité* saved the Republic from itself in 1793, and Lefebvre reasoned that this same mentality animated the spirit of all French men and women. After all, “whoever assembles a barricade is resolved to defend it, and therefore offers to sacrifice his life for a cause he finds just and beautiful.” In this sense, Lefebvre reasoned that all who took up arms against counter-revolutionaries were “barricade combatants and the ancient children of the Republic.” Insurrection was part of a French national essence. Just as it had moved the nation against its enemies in the past, so too would this barricade spirit help drive out the German occupiers.

He extended his readings of the Revolution to offer guidance to the transition from a clandestine insurrection to a formal battle for France involving volunteer and regular armed combatants. The source of the popular enthusiasm that always renewed the French insurrectionary spirit was the subject of his essay, “Le Ressort.” Though the exact ideas that animated the Revolutionary masses of the eighteenth century were lost—either because they were never written down by an illiterate populace or because those who would have written them were killed before they could have done so—what is evident is that the spontaneous and unwritten motivations of the masses have been the driving force behind France’s previous revolutions. The unpredictable and therefore unwieldy nature of popular enthusiasm was also its downfall. Centralization of power in the Committee of Public Safety was followed by the

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206 As Davis observes, this was most certainly an intentional change from Lefebvre’s earlier distinctions between peasant and bourgeois *mentalités*. Davis, “Georges Lefebvre,” 142-3.

207 “Le Ressort” does not translate directly into English in this context. A word that can mean spring as well as resurgence, here it figuratively implies the fountainhead or motivating passion of national enthusiasm. This essay was republished in *AHRF* 41, no. 198 (October-December 1969), 573-576. For a similar use, see Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des lois*, Volume 1, edited by J. Brethe de la Gressaye (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1950), 9: “… c’est la vertu politique; et celle-ci est les ressort qui fait mouvoir le gouvernement républicain, comme l’honneur est le ressort qui fait mouvoir la monarchie.”

At the time of Lefebvre’s essay’s republication the original publication information was unavailable, though the editors of the *AHRF* speculated it appeared in late 1944.
liquidation of its enemies and the backlash of the Parisian sections: “By compressing the spring of the Revolution, they [sans culottes] broke it.” This demise was, however, not inevitable; the Resistance could learn from the mistakes of the past. The main lesson to be drawn, according to Lefebvre, was that “The division of Republicans has been the only thing to cause the Republic to perish.”

In an early 1945 essay for *La Pensée*, Lefebvre argued the clandestine resistance movement should be combined with the Free French Forces that had been active in North Africa. Just as the French Revolution had been able to use an amalgamation of volunteer and professional troops, so too should France unite the elements of its forces in the fight to win back their country. Though the details of the two disparate armed conflicts were certainly different in important respects, Lefebvre thought the former offered necessary lessons for the latter.

Lefebvre also warned against dividing the Resistance and Free French forces from their popular support. The essay was a direct response to calls for moderation and amnesty during the beginning of the purges in France following its liberation from Germany. Intellectuals like François Mauriac urged for amnesty when dealing with potential collaborators. The risk of hastily condemning innocents was great enough to moderate the urge for reprisals and social purges, Mauriac argued. But for Lefebvre, this urge risked destabilizing the revolutionary force of the liberation. “In order for the war to remain national in the full sense of the term, which is to say popular,” Lefebvre reasoned, “its social ideal must not be separated from its conduct since in the eyes of the people this ideal is inseparable, just as it was during the First Republic.” Just as Clemenceau declared the Revolution had to be taken *en bloc*, so too did “The Revolution and its army form a bloc.” The program of national defense was inseparable from the national politics of the Committee of Public Safety. Those who wanted a post-Thermidorean Carnot should be

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reminded that Carnot’s name and not Robespierre’s was on Danton’s death warrant. And even if the Revolution’s internal purges were mired in fears of Catholic plots and personal grudges, this was surely not the case in the purges of 1944.210

This essay was the most radical of the three Lefebvre wrote and both tone and content were quite different from his address to the Cercle Descartes. Instead of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, it was the necessary bloodshed of the Revolutionary tribunals that needed to be remembered. Lefebvre was perhaps naïve to think the purges could be saved from the petty politics of interpersonal quarrels. The main point of the piece, however, remained consistent with the rest of his writings going back to 1939—though aspects of the Revolution may have been imperfect, the Revolution itself remained of the utmost relevance for contemporary France. What remained was to learn from the Revolution’s successes and mistakes and to apply those lessons to the political present.

In the postwar, Lefebvre did not write anything politically comparable to the essays on the Revolution’s bearing on present-day politics. Concerning the major political crises of the last 15 years of his life—the Indo-Chinese War, the Suez Crisis, the first half of the French Algerian War—Lefebvre was publicly silent. This is not to say he was unaware of these political crises or indifferent to them. His letters to his Swiss friend Alfred Rufer and the American historian R. R. Palmer contain moments of exasperation about the direction of French politics, and his working notes from after the war bear traces of the fact he was aware of the various manifestations of student and academic activism surrounding military action in North Africa.211 Lefebvre wrote to


211 “Correspondance d’Albert Mathiez et de Georges Lefebvre avec Alfred Rufer,” 441-442; Dossier labeled “Morceaux pour l’Études Orléanaises” in Fonds Soboul. Many of
Palmer in 1952, “...restlessness has become general regarding the war in Indochina and the rearmament of Germany, without mentioning the financial situation” in France. Four years later, he claimed “Nothing good will come of this war in Algeria, neither for France’s international standing, nor for the republican regime. What is there to do? Only those who survive will find out.” Postwar colonial conflicts clearly exasperated Lefebvre, though he never marshalled the lessons and image of the French Revolution in response to them the way that he had done against fascism in the 1930s and 40s.

The war and Occupation, however, did have transformative effects on Lefebvre’s scholarship and political affiliations. Lefebvre continued to see the history of Revolution as something with pressing importance for France, but the best way to understand this history changed. While Lefebvre’s earlier studies were much closer to strands in early *Annales* scholarship, with its focus on sociological explanations and reconstructions of Revolutionary *mentalités*, after the war his work was increasingly marked by the use of Marxist explanatory frameworks. For example, whereas before the war he spoke of *mentalités*, after the war he was much more likely to refer to class consciousness; instead of the former descriptive sociological characterizations, he opted to speak in terms of economically-driven interests and identities.

Furthermore, while Lefebvre had considered himself an independent socialist in the 1930s, the

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Lefebvre’s working notes in this dossier were written on the backs of student fliers and petition letters concerning the Algerian War.

Lefebvre wrote to Rufer, “I say nothing to you of the Suez affair and the lamentable politics of England and my country. As for Algeria!! [sic] All the same, it seems to me that gun ships [boutefeux] dare not leave for Port Said and bombard Alexandria” (12 August 1956).


213 Davis, “Georges Lefebvre,” 170. Lefebvre had followed Braudel and the *Annales* school from the very beginning. After Lefebvre’s death, some historians, including Soboul, argued for a strong continuity in Lefebvre’s work that placed him as a structuralist historian *avant la lettre*. 

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experience of the Occupation and the image of Communist resisters as the saviors of the nation persuaded him of the virtues of the PCF, though he never formally joined the party. Lefebvre was by no means exceptional in this turnabout in his own political leanings. Beginning in 1944, however, he became a member of the patron’s committee of the party’s journal, *La Pensée.*

At the moment when Lefebvre moved closer to Marxism he also became critical of attempts to tie the Revolution to contemporary events. The earliest example was his review of Daniel Guérin’s 1946 anti-Jacobian interpretation of the Revolution, and similar criticisms carried through the first wave of the revisionist history of the Revolution begun by Alfred Cobban. After Lefebvre read John Hall Stewart’s review of the English translation of *Quatre-vingt neuf,* he wrote to R. R. Palmer that it was emblematic of the “reactionary thought that nourishes the contemporary preoccupation.” Lefebvre continued, “Evidently, the author caught a whiff of Marxism and I was really furious—not at having been added to the list of people who should be refused entry to the United States, because I am too old to make such a voyage—but to learn that one would make you [Palmer] responsible for my own opinions.”

His reaction to the review is striking on a number of counts. First, Stewart’s review was largely positive, and if anything Lefebvre’s previous work had set a high standard in Stewart’s estimation that *Quatre-vingt neuf* could not quite reach. Second, while Stewart did make the rather striking observation that any number of American historians of France (not including Palmer) could have written the same book, only better, Lefebvre’s politics were never mentioned in the review. Instead, Stewart complained that Lefebvre paid too much attention to detail and the book suffered from a lack of

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214 See the inside cover of *La Pensée,* nouvelle série, no 1 (October, November, December 1944).

Lefebvre continued to press the relevance of the study of the Revolution on the French public in the memory and commemoration of Maximilien Robespierre. If there were one popular figure upon whom the French could lean while attempting to recover from the war, it was Robespierre. As early as his 1930 synthesis of \textit{La Révolution française}, Lefebvre described Robespierre as a defender of democracy, someone who was a pragmatic anti-war figure who did his best in the tumult of the Revolution.\footnote{Georges Lefebvre, Raymond Guyot, Philippe Sagnac, \textit{La Révolution française}, Peuples et Civilisations, histoire générale XIII (Paris: F. Alcan, 1930), 212.} He repeated these sympathies in 1932 at a public commemoration of Robespierre in the latter’s hometown of Arras. This admiration for Robespierre only intensified during the 1930s and Nazi Occupation. Madeleine Rebérioux, for example, noted that following the death of his brother, Théodore, Lefebvre lectured the students at the École Normale, Supérieure de Sèvres even more passionately about Robespierre’s virtues.\footnote{Madeleine Rébérioux-Amoudruz, “Georges Lefebvre, professeur à l’École Normale Supérieure de Sèvres,” \textit{AHRF} 159 (January-March 1960), 78. See also Soboul, “Hommage à Georges Lefebvre pour son quatre-vingtième anniversaire,” \textit{La Pensée} no. 58 (November-December 1954), 91-94. Soboul recalled Lefebvre’s fondness for Robespierre’s discourse of 25 September 1793, spoken amidst the beginning of the Terror with enemies feared at home and abroad, calling for courageous defense of the Republic, that “Lefebvre could not help but be choked up when recalling these lines: they equally represent the Incorruptible and his historian.”}
For the two-hundred-year anniversary of Robespierre’s birth, Lefebvre threw his support behind the initiatives of the National Assembly to make the event a national celebration. While the Assembly’s resolution failed to pass, Lefebvre defended the image of Robespierre in the press and coordinated radio, television, and film productions in honor of the Incorruptible as well as museum exhibits. In June of 1958, the Society of Robespierrist Studies held a day-long convocation celebrating both the bicentennial of Robespierre’s birth and the fiftieth anniversary of the AHRF. Lefebvre presided over the event, held in the Amphithéâtre Michelet of the Sorbonne, the very place Albert Mathiez had died mid-lecture. He closed the ceremonies with the same salute to Robespierre he voiced in Arras in 1933: “Health and fraternity, Citizen Robespierre. Long live the Republic, one and indivisible.” Such a proclamation was bound to lead audience members to reflect upon current events—just one month earlier the Fourth Republic had fallen to de Gaulle’s coup. While there are some biographical coincidences to suggest why Lefebvre might have been drawn to see Robespierre as an heroic figure, it would be mistaken to think his sentiments were anomalous, especially amongst historians on the left since the era of Mathiez and Jaurès. After the experiences of foreign occupation and a liberation that entailed purges of the populace deemed traitors to the values of the French nation, if someone

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219 Messieurs Robert Verdier, Edouard Daladier, Edgar Faure, Antoine Pinay, Maurice Schumann, Léopold Senghor, “Proposition de resolution tendant à inviter le Gouvernement à célébrer officiellement le deuxième centenaire de la naissance de Maximilien Robespierre,” Journal Officiel 34, Séance du 8 Mars 1957; Georges Lefebvre, “À la mémoire de Maximilien Robespierre,” L’Humanité (2 May 1957); Davis, “Georges Lefebvre,” 177-184. For more on the bicentennial of Robespierre’s birth, see chapter 1 “The French Revolution in the Algerian War.”


221 James Friguglietti has suggested that such affinities might be partially due to Lefebvre and Robespierre both coming from modest social backgrounds in the northwest of France (Lille and Arras are about 30 miles from one another), as well as the importance of state-sponsorship in their early educations. “Rehabilitating Robespierre: Albert Mathiez and Georges Lefebvre as defenders of the Incorruptible,” Robespierre, edited by Colin Hayden and William Doyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 221-222.
were already sympathetic with Robespierre, then these experiences would have only reinforced these sentiments.\textsuperscript{222}

Though Lefebvre used the past to explain and argue the present, he did stress limits on the professional and public roles of history. Reviewing Louis Halphen’s \textit{Introduction to History}, Lefebvre noted the distinction between historical writing and moralist literature. Though distinguished from the experimental sciences, history was bound by its datum. This did not disqualify history from playing a didactic role, but it also was not capable of providing abstract moral principles on its own. According to Lefebvre, “Human dignity is not solely based on conceiving and proclaiming abstract principles; it is also about making them a reality.” While Halphen warned against the urge to see a valuable future lesson in every moment in the past, Lefebvre was much more open to seeing the possibilities of a future history that was “most intimately related to life.” Such was a task of a future history, one in which historians “must

\textsuperscript{222} If Robespierre was a past figure who might point the way forward, he was also an appropriate contemporary political barometer. After the Liberation, Lefebvre summarized the results of a 1947 Gallup Poll on the image of Robespierre for the \textit{AHRF}. The poll asked French responders if they knew who Robespierre was, and, if they did know who he was, if they held a favorable or unfavorable estimation of him. To the first question 69\% of respondents said yes, while 31\% said no. To the second question 34\% approved of Robespierre, 37\% disapproved, and 29\% had no opinion (of the 69\% who recognized the name). Lefebvre determined that since it was impossible to know who Robespierre was and not have definite opinion on his legacy, at least half of the French public had no idea who Robespierre was. Generally, young urban men of wealthier backgrounds were most likely to know the name, but these were equally represented along the political spectrum. However, approval of Robespierre split equally among those who knew who he was among men and women, urban and rural. However, 68\% of Communists and 50\% of Socialists approved of Robespierre, while only 34\% of the center-right (Rassemblement des gauches), 12\% of Gaullists, and 10\% of the right approved of him. Those in favor of revolution were therefore favorable toward Robespierre. However, for those against any revolutionary impulse, Robespierre was “a dictator, a revolutionary, a terrorist, a fascist, a violent man, a bloodthirsty man, an anarchist, a drinker of blood.” These respondents saw in Robespierre “the ancestor of our Communists,” and Lefebvre concluded the fundamental criterion for these individuals was “revolutionary repression.” Georges Lefebvre, “Robespierre et les français d’aujourd’hui,” \textit{AHRF} 19 (1947), 269-270.
principally rely on themselves.” It is not too much of a stretch to agree that “Lefebvre, at heart a positivist of the nineteenth century variety, sought the rational in a world that had ceased to be so.” Yet the point at which making sense of the past in order to make sense of the future sacrificed the former for the latter was a threshold that Lefebvre believed it imperative to respect. As he wrote to R. R. Palmer in 1957, “the role of history is to search out fact. The physicist who studies nuclear phenomena does not have to ask if his discoveries produce bombs!” Even if the results were ugly, historical analysis was possible and should not be merely a matter of sophistry. At the same time, however, Lefebvre repeatedly concluded the facts of the Revolution coincided with his present moment.

The standards to which Lefebvre held historical scholarship were not simply a matter of scholarly dispute given the immense institutional power and authority he held in the postwar. Though he stopped teaching regularly, until his death in 1959 Lefebvre continued to lead the Society of Robespierrist Studies, give occasional lectures, organize public events relating to French history (including the mainly aborted festivities for the anniversary of Robespierre’s birth in 1958), edit document collections relating to the Revolution (such as Robespierre’s collected works), and mentor student researchers. Lefebvre’s intellectual and institutional output represented the *sine qua non* of what it meant to be an historian of the French Revolution in postwar France. Though it would be tempting to draw a sharp divide between the institutional

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Getting the scholarship on the Revolution correct for Lefebvre—despite his apparently objective and positivist posturing—were not simply matters of historical science. The French Revolution mattered because of its place as a foundational myth for the French nation and modern politics.

**Daniel Guérin’s Anti-Jacobin Revolutions**

Alongside politicized accounts of the French Revolution offered by establishment historians like Georges Lefebvre, Daniel Guérin’s 1946 *Class Struggle under the First Republic: Bourgeois and ‘bras nus’* (1793-1797) presented perhaps the most radical version of a leftist interpretation of the Revolution. While Guérin’s argument for the contemporary relevance of the French Revolution of 1789 in this two-volume synthesis as well as in later essays fit well with the majority of leftist French historians’ desire to keep the ideals of 1789 alive, his resolutely anti-Jacobin message put him squarely at odds with most professional historians’ interpretations of the Revolution and its legacy. The twenty-year attacks on and engagement with Guérin’s interpretation not only offer an interpretive contrast to Lefebvre’s story, they also highlight the importance of the Revolution’s legacy in the wake of World War Two and throughout the French Algerian War, utilizing France’s political past to navigate an uncertain future. In both phases the importance of Occupied France and the confrontation between the Left’s political ideals and seemingly fascist reactionaries set the context.

Guérin was born into a wealthy bourgeois family that owned the publishing house Hachette and was connected to other notable firms of French high finance and industry. Yet, for

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227 For the argument in favor of such a separation, see Antonio de Francesco, “Daniel Guérin et Georges Lefebvre,” 10.
much of his life he seemed to defy the social conventions associated with his given social place. Early in life he was associated with the radical syndicalist and then Trotskyist strands of the Popular Front. From 1927-1929 he toured the French colonies in North Africa and Asia working as a librarian. After finishing the library work he scraped by earning a meagre living organizing factory workers in Paris. He lived in the impoverished 20th arrondissement while other members of his family resided in luxurious homes on the left bank and in the countryside.

Guérin claimed he had thought about becoming a professional historian in the early 1930s, and had even planned to write a study of nineteenth-century railroad magnates. According to him, this study on the capitalist world from which he descended would have been an ideal way to “settle the score with my ancestors.” He never wrote this book; instead he turned his attention toward analyzing the rise and foundations of Nazism in Germany. The former book was an ethnography of the changes instituted in Germany at Hitler’s ascendance and their effect on everyday German citizens. His argument in the latter book, that fascism in Germany and Italy lent overwhelming support to heavy industry and was fundamentally tied to capitalism, carried a great deal of influence for decades. Both studies treated the threat of fascism as not merely a reactionary incident, but as a real threat to modern societies, and which needed to be countered as a matter of everyday class struggle.

By the time the International Workers’ Front [Front Ouvrier International] sent Guérin to Oslo, Norway in 1939 in order to organize anti-war efforts, he had already established himself as

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229 Daniel Guérin, La peste brune a passé par là: A bicyclette à travers l’Allemagne hitlérienne (Paris: Éditions librairie du travail, 1933, expanded edition, 1945); Daniel Guérin, Fascisme et grand capital (Paris: Gallimard, 1936). The pivertiste faction was the Gauche Revolutionnaire. Its members were generally to the extreme left of the party and because of this they were thrown out of the SFIO in 1938.
one of the leading French theorists of Nazism. Guérin quickly found himself in a detention camp in Norway where he was detained from April to December 1940. Only after German authorities allowed select repatriation in 1942 did Guérin return to France and focus his efforts on historical study.

The Trotskyist and syndicalist tendencies of Guérin’s early political life were apparent in his interpretation of the French Revolution. *Class Struggle under the First Republic* maintained that at the heart of the Revolution was the emergence of a working-class movement that would set the stage for all socialist-oriented revolutions of the future. For Guérin, though the objective result of the revolution may have been bourgeois, as most historians asserted, its subjective orientation, represented by the “bras nus,” or working class, was proletarian *avant la lettre*. By drawing on Leon Trotsky’s theory of combined development, and Karl Kautsky’s belief that the French Revolution represented the base line for all modern materialist history, Guérin argued that the victory of the bourgeoisie over the first and second estates coincided with the birth of an “embryonic” proletariat. While even Robespierre’s direction of the Committee of Public Safety protected what Guérin saw as bourgeois interests (private property and secure trade policies), the revolution’s motor force was the peasants, manual laborers, and radical politicians like Babeuf and Hébert whose goals were purely communist. To see the Revolution as only the culmination of the Jacobin state was to miss its anarchist orientation towards the elimination of such a

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state. By associating the heart of the revolution as proletarian, oriented towards a diminished state and not towards Jacobinism, Guérin indicted the tradition of the leftist Republican view of the revolution enshrined by previous historians and currently defended by the Society of Robespierrist Studies.

Alongside his interpretation of the Revolution, Guérin also polemicized against what he viewed were the limitations and blind spots of the Revolution’s historiography. According to Guérin, any book about the French Revolution needed to account for the historiography of the Revolution, which he saw as belonging to two major camps. On the one hand there existed a clerical and counter-revolutionary account of the Revolution that still found support among the upper bourgeoisie and high functionaries. In France, this history of the Revolution saw 1789 as the beginning of the downfall of the French nation; abroad, dictators and fascist propaganda indicted the Revolution for the world’s problems. At the other end of the spectrum were the “moderate democrat” historians of the nineteenth century like Michelet, Quinet, and Aulard, as well as the more “advanced democrats” like Jaurès and Mathiez. Whereas Aulard idolized Danton, Mathiez created a veritable “cult” around Robespierre. Since the choice of revolutionary heroes was not simply “a matter of taste,” these preferences “correspond to a political position, a class attitude.” Citing Raymond Aron’s *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, Guérin claimed there was no such thing as historical impartiality. By extension, Guérin

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argued, all history was political; the proper history needed the right politics. While both moderate and advanced democratic historians had “the merit of not presenting the Revolution as the work of Satan,” both—even the most Marxist and scientifically-oriented historians—defended positions that reinforced class domination in France. By defending the bourgeois Jacobin Club’s direction of the Revolution and emphasizing the collaboration between the bourgeoisie and sans-culottes, Marxist historians missed the truly radical elements of the Revolution; their dedication to the Jacobin state only reinforced an historical narrative that kept the working masses subordinate to the bourgeoisie and corporate bureaucracy. According to Guérin, “Only proletarian historians, with the help of the dialectical materialist conception of history, are capable of understanding the objective necessity” of each stage in the evolution of class struggle.

Guérin’s distinction between subjective and objective perspectives in history provided the backbone to his arguments about the true direction of the Revolution’s historical potential development as well as his indictments of other historians. This distinction is perhaps best accounted for as a creative misreading of Raymond Aron’s theory of history. While Aron did believe that the world of the historian necessarily becomes inscribed in her object of research, the subjective-objective distinction out of which Guérin formed his historical theory is not readily apparent in Aron’s book. Aron did think that historical inquiry was bound by “a decision with a view to the future and understands others only with reference to the subject,” but this was a decisionism that had to necessarily bracket questions of an absolute historical truth. The historian

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\textsuperscript{234} \textit{Lutte de classes}, II, 368.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., 392.
“does not know the goal or goals of history.” Guérin, by contrast, had no doubt the truth of history’s movement lay with lower classes’ struggles for emancipation. The bras nus were evidence of future class struggles to come. By describing the political projects of the bras nus in antibourgeois and antistatist terms Guérin could dismiss the “objective” end of the Revolution in the Jacobin dictatorship and directory as a deformation of the Revolution’s truth.

Throughout his Introduction and Conclusion, Guérin hedged against criticisms that he created an anachronistic portrait of the Revolution by reading nineteenth and twentieth-century class concerns into the past. He maintained that the present had legitimate bearing on the past, and not simply because historical objectivity was a chimera. Even though the past could not be mechanically transposed to the future, present and future events could verify the historical processes at work in the past. Modern Marxist class struggle was a vindication of a bras nus proletariat in formation.

Since Guérin’s assessments of the historiography of the Revolution emphasized the personal commitments of historians, it should come as no surprise that Guérin undertook his study of the Revolution as a very personal venture. Upon his release from the Norwegian prison camp, Guérin began his study of the French Revolution, first in the Norwegian National Library, then, after Germany allowed the repatriation of French civilians, he finished it in France from

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236 Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 282, 283. Aron’s point is close to Giambattista Vico’s notion of the *verum factum*, whereby historical truth is the product of human enquiry.

237 And here as well Aron’s theory of history is quite different from what Guérin is getting at. Following Hartmann and Dilthey, when Aron spoke of objectified/objective Geist, he meant the physical presence of artifacts on which traces of historical subjects were inscribed. *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 71-74. Instead, Guérin reiterated one of Trotsky’s interventions from the *History of the Russian Revolution*: impartiality in history is impossible, but an historian might claim to be objective insofar as their particular vantage point was representative of historical universality. *Lutte de classes*, II, 386; Trotsky, “Preface,” *The History of the Russian Revolution*, xix.

238 *Lutte de classes*, II, 396-400.
1942 to 1946. The reasons for choosing to write on the French Revolution which Guérin gave throughout his life varied, but they all centered on the needs of the present. In his autobiography, Guérin stated that “In 1941 the Revolution had haunted me for a very long time,” and at least as far back as his trips to the Middle East and Asia in the late 1920s when Guérin witnessed firsthand France’s overseas empire and the contradictions of universal French values. Even though he categorized his wartime studies as a way to “turn my back” on the War, Guérin withheld the original preface to the book from publication, written in 1944, precisely because he felt it was not balanced enough and strayed too far from the historical particulars of the Revolution. Like many others, Guérin was caught up in what he saw as the “pre-revolutionary atmosphere” of the resistance and this attitude showed in the original preface. In 1947 he confessed to Marceau Pivert that his study of the Revolution “is an introduction to a synthesis of anarchism and Marxism that I would like to write one day.”

Though Guérin may have felt the particulars of the war loomed too large in his original preface, it is clear that for him the Revolution held key insights for contemporary politics. As it did for Georges Lefebvre, the French Revolution provided a source of political stability at a time when the future of France was anything but stable.

Despite the fact that Guérin’s book only received a second edition in 1968, it received a wide range of sustained critical attention over the next decade. Given the at-times mocking tone of the discussion of the Revolution’s historiography, it should come as no surprise that the

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240 *Feu de sang*, 137.
majority of the attention received from the historical profession was critical. Not only did Guérin reproach the most celebrated recent historians of the French Revolution, he did so from outside the established historical profession. On the more generous side of the reviews, Henri Calvet noted that with the intensity of its documentation and liveliness of the book’s arguments, “One might, one should, discuss it, but one should not neglect it.” Still, Calvet was an economic historian of the Terror, author of a study of Robespierre, and collaborator on Robespierre’s Collected Works, i.e., exactly the type of historian against whom Guérin directed his critiques. Calvet thought Guérin’s polemic against the French historiographical tradition from Mathiez onwards was composed mainly of conjectures and false dichotomies. Even if the goal of complete historical objectivity was impossible, why should one automatically embrace complete subjectivity? Though it is true some politicians on the left and the right have distorted the Revolution, why is a position somewhere in the middle out of the question? And most importantly, Calvet thought Guérin’s indictment of the politics of historians was misplaced. Calvet believed the examples of Jaurès, Aulard, Mathiez, and Georges Lefebvre displayed the ability to be politically-active historians without conflating the two separate roles. On matters of

241 While Guérin did at times state his admiration for professional historians, he nonetheless described archival researchers as closed off within their “ivory tower” and therefore unable to understand the social tensions at work in the Revolution. As a result, all these historians are able to achieve is a caricature of the Revolution comprised of economic charts and tables. La lutte des classes, II, 403.


historical accuracy, Calvet thought Guérin mischaracterized the level of a unified class-consciousness among the working classes in France and above all distorted the image of Robespierre. By denying the circumstances under which Robespierre conducted the Terror, Guérin completely misunderstood the reasons for the halt to social reform: “All of those who, from 1793 to the present, have denounced Robespierre as the most dangerous of revolutionaries (for the adversaries of political and social democracy), they have judged better than D. Guérin.”

Other reviewers echoed Calvet’s criticisms and added to the list. Georges Lefebvre noted that although Guérin was careful to call the working classes “bras nus” or “plebeians,” recognizing there was nothing like a Marxist proletariat at the time, he nonetheless still spoke of a proletariat and even labeled the Commune of Paris “proletarian.” Since Guérin examined neither the economic structure of France during the Revolution nor the viewpoint of the peasants, he had no grounds for describing the Revolution as proletarian in any sense of the term. In private, Lefebvre expressed his opinions of Guérin’s scholarship more directly, explaining in passing that, “in order to properly understand” Bras Nus, “one must always read Stalin where he writes Robespierre.” For Lefebvre, it wasn’t that the Revolution could not be political. Rather, the wrong politics were driving Guérin’s interpretation of the Revolution.

Other reviews were less sympathetic and outright publicly polemical. Lucien Febvre’s review in Annales was incredibly scathing; he took the attack on the Jacobin interpretation personally and openly lampooned the idea one should trust an amateur historian, whose book was “champing at the bit” [“un livre piaffant”] to make a political point, rather than engaging the

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244 Henri Calvet, “Une histoire « Nouvelle »,” 227.
245 Georges Lefebvre, “La Révolution et l’Empire (1re Partie): période révolutionnaire,” Revue historique 205, no 1 (1951), 89-91. Lefebvre’s reference is to the geo-political entity, not the Parisian uprising of 1871.
professional work of Jaurès, Mathiez, or Lefebvre. Like Calvet, Febvre rhetorically asked “And what if I am a Trotskyist, or Stalinist, or Papist, or Buddhist?… When I write history I am an historian.” At the end of his review, Febvre begged the pardon of his readers, suggesting that perhaps Guérin’s mode of historical writing was the way of the future: “I am an old ridiculous historian. Good luck to our successors if this sort of tone should become the rule.”

The PCF’s journal *La Pensée* also carried criticisms of Guérin’s Trotskyist version of the Revolution. Georges Rudé and Albert Soboul, still at work on his dissertation on the sans-culottes of Paris in 1793, wrote extended essays on the true nature of class struggle and the workers movement during the Revolution. Soboul, in particular, echoed Lefebvre’s critique in an essay on the history of the term class struggle. “Rarely are social classes, even dominant ones, homogeneous,” Soboul claimed. For Guérin to “make the sans-culottes a proletariat” misses the fact that many sans-culottes actually defended traditional economic positions and much of the rest supported the bourgeois policies of the government.

The nearly-universally negative professional reviews of Guérin’s book would seem to have destined it to the dustbin of history. For Guérin’s reviewers, he had committed four cardinal sins: he had questioned the legitimacy and worth of the Jacobin state, he had denied the separation between the academic process and contemporary politics (indicting some of France’s

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most celebrated recent historians in the process), he had seen a revolutionary proletariat where there was none, and he had questioned the viability of the historians’ critical distance from the Revolution.

It was on this last count that at once made Guérin’s arguments upsetting to professional historians and dovetailed with the invocation of 1789 during the French Algerian War. The conjuncture of the war and the publication of Albert Soboul’s thesis on the Parisian *sans-culottes* kept Guérin’s controversial interpretation of the Revolution alive and highlighted the continued relevance of the image of the Revolution had for postwar France. Guérin’s insistence on the relationship between academics and politics was not wholly out of joint with postwar concerns. The work of Lefebvre clearly demonstrated that politics and the history of the Revolution were not separated by an ekphratic caesura, and yet Guérin’s version of history had certainly crossed a line. The history of the Revolution was not deforming contemporary politics. Contemporary politics, in the eyes of Guérin’s critics, risked deforming the Revolution.

During the French Algerian War, Guérin’s insistence on the contemporary relevance of the Revolution appeared most visibly in the months following De Gaulle’s return to power in May 1958 and less visibly, perhaps, regarding his position on political allegiances to Algerian nationalists. Guérin’s anti-colonial activities had pre-dated the French Algerian War by decades, and they were largely inspired by the trip he took to the Middle East and Southeast Asia in 1927. During the Popular Front, Guérin became involved with North African labor and nationalist movements. Following a trip to North Africa in 1952, Guérin befriended a number of prominent nationalists, including the first president of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba.\(^{249}\) Guérin’s personal connections, his involvement with François Mauriac’s France-Maghreb Committee, and his

\(^{249}\) See the correspondence in Fonds Guérin, F delta 0721/91/1, F delta 0721/21/2, BDIC.
critical study of French colonialism, *In the Service of the Colonized*, published in 1954, made him one of the leading critics of France’s colonial system at the onset of the French Algerian War. During the War, Guérin was highly critical of French intellectuals’ partisan allegiances with the FLN. However, while his friendship with Messali Hadj, the leader of the FLN’s rival nationalist group, the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA), led him to support the MNA, he maintained a public stance in support of Algerian nationalism, no matter which party might win out over the other. Guérin also lent his support both to multiple committees of intellectuals and individual causes.\(^{250}\) Guérin joined the 1955 Committee against the Pursuit of the War in North Africa and at one of the Committee’s meetings, Guérin countered François Mitterand’s claim that Algeria was an integral part of France with a speech titled “Algeria has never been France.”\(^{251}\) He was also a signatory to the 1961 Manifesto of the 121, supporting the right of French men to refuse military conscription.

When pro-French Algerian generals restored de Gaulle to power in May 1958, Guérin’s anti-fascist, anti-colonialist, and pro-Revolutionary tendencies fused. Like many others at the time, Guérin saw de Gaulle’s return to power with the support of Poujadists and pro-colonial military leaders as signs of a re-emergent strand of French Fascism. Only two years earlier in

\(^{250}\) For example, Guérin corresponded with Frantz Fanon as early as 1955 and wrote to journals and newspapers on his behalf in order to get his articles published. See the letters, Fanon to Guérin, 26 November 1955, Fonds Guérin F delta 0721/91/2, BDIC, and Fanon to France Observateur (delivered by Guérin), 26 February 1956, Fonds Guérin F delta 0721/90/2, BDIC. Guérin and Fanon parted ways in 1957 after, while in the course of a conversation, Fanon said he wanted “Messali [Hadj] to burn in hell.” Daniel Guérin, *Quand l’Algérie s’insurgeait, 1954-1962* (Claix: Pensée Sauvage, 1979), 106-107.

\(^{251}\) Guérin, *L’Algérie n’a jamais été la France*, self-published pamphlet (Paris, 1956). Copy found in Fonds Guérin, F delta 0721/91/2, BDIC. The thesis that Algeria was in fact not French might seem to run counter to the importance of understanding the French Revolution in order to properly assess Algeria. However, inasmuch as Guérin viewed the dynamics within the French Revolution as archetypal, the Revolution’s lessons applied to the whole world, and not just France.
March of 1956 he had given a talk to 800 people for the Union des étudiants juifs de France on the fascist elements of Poujade’s supporters. A group of Poujadist supporters interrupted the talk by shouting “To Moscow! We already have enough communists here,” as well as the *colon* chant “Algérie française!” The next month “fascist bandits” repeated their interruptions at a meeting where Guérin and other intellectuals discussed media censorship and Claude Bourdet’s recent arrest for articles published in *France Observateur*.

Fascism appeared alarmingly alive and well in France at the beginning of the Algerian War and its supporters’ interests appeared to be directly aligned with those of supporters of French Algeria. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that in the first months of de Gaulle’s return Guérin viewed the situation through the lens of the Nazi Occupation. On May 26, 1958, Guérin wrote an open letter to the director of the newspaper *Le Monde*, Hubert Beuve-Méry, predicting what would happen should fascism actually return to power in France. He assured Beuve-Méry, “The day would not be far away when the people would enter into a new Resistance, when the best of her sons would once more take to the underground... when, for all republicans, according to the formula of 1793, *insurrection would be the most sacred of duties.*” The inflammatory letter was never published, nor was Guérin’s similar, shorter telegram to President René Coty. However, the letters do not appear to merely be moments of political posturing, either, but rather

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252 *France-Observateur* (29 March 1956); *Midi Libre* (22 March 1956). See also “Communiqué du conseil d’Administration de l’Union des Étudiants Juifs de France sur les événements du 21 Mars à Montpellier,” Fonds Guérin F delta 0721/53/1, BDIC. In this statement the Union claimed that the same tactic was used on that night during a talk at the Sociétés Savantes in Paris.

253 Guérin, *Quand l’Algérie s’insurgeait*, 94-95.
attest to his state of mind in general. In a letter to his mother on June 2, Guérin felt the need to use the Revolutionary calendar system in the letter’s heading.\textsuperscript{254}

Like many others, after de Gaulle’s referendum at the end of 1958, Guérin revised his fears that de Gaulle’s return was a definite sign of fascism back in power. Instead of underestimating the power of de Gaulle, in 1959 Guérin argued that his power had perhaps been “over-estimated. Instead of a major regime change, I see in it a banal palace revolution.”\textsuperscript{255} However, at the height of OAS rebellion and the attempts on de Gaulle’s life, with no definite end to the war in Algeria in sight, he doubted whether de Gaulle, though not a fascist himself, could in fact regain control over those who brought him back to power in the first place.\textsuperscript{256}

In the midst of Guérin’s personal invocations of the spirit of the Revolution he returned to arguing that the Revolution was important for understanding contemporary politics. For the inaugural issue of \textit{14 Juillet}, Guérin contributed an essay titled “Parachronism” that brought his historical presentism directly to bear on the crisis posed by de Gaulle’s return to power. Contrary to modern usage, Guérin argued that there were two sides to anachronism. Anachronism proper was the importation of something of the present into the past. Parachronism, by contrast, was the persistence of something from the past in a non-synchronous present. The supporters of French

\textsuperscript{254} Letter, Guérin to Hubert Beuve-Méry, 24 May 1958, emphasis Guérin’s; subfolder “telegrammes”; and letter, Guérin to “chère pétite maman,” 19 Brumaire (2 June) 1958, Fonds Guérin F delta 0721/91/4, BDIC. Also compare to Guérin’s message registered with the BBC as well as this message’s handwritten draft with references to the Terror, the Revolution of 1848, and the Paris Commune of 1871 crossed out. Fonds Guérin F delta 0721/90/2, BDIC. Guérin helpfully transcribed the Revolutionary calendar system into the standard one for his mother.

Whereas Guérin tended to sign political statements “Daniel Guérin, écrivain,” in his telegram to President Coty he chose “Daniel Guérin, Historien.”

\textsuperscript{255} Daniel Guérin, “Reponse de Daniel Guérin,” \textit{14 juillet} no. 3 (18 June 1959), 4.

\textsuperscript{256} Guérin to [Mc]George Bundy, 4 August 1961, Fonds Guérin, F delta 0721/91/1, BDIC. McGeorge Bundy was National Security Advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Guérin’s letter was meant to convince Bundy that De Gaulle was not in control of the situation in Algeria and that America should intervene.
Algeria and the military were, above all, parachronic: they represented not only the torture and fascist violence of decades earlier, but also Old Régime despotism. The way to rid France of these parachronisms was to remember that France in 1958 was still a republic and its future was “revolutionary and libertarian socialism.”\textsuperscript{257} The kernel of this libertarian socialism was, of course, to be found first in the French Revolution.

Even looking back on the French Algerian War some 15 years after it ended, Guérin drew on the French Revolution. Boumedienne’s 1965 coup and the failed promises of socialist revolution in Algeria did not necessarily mean the French Algerian War was a failure. Even though the French Revolution ended in the Directory and Napoleon it still transformed the entire world. Likewise, Algeria was still free, socialist in orientation, and anticolonialist.\textsuperscript{258}

Although Guérin was decidedly anti-colonialist, it would be wrong to see him as a simple apologist for violence, let alone terrorism. From a relatively early age Guérin was suspicious of violent forms of radicalism, though he was not pollyannaish about the ways in which revolutionaries effected change. Guérin’s stance on violence appeared to follow a formula from his personal notes: “If one hates war and imperialism, then one also knows to only use violence appropriately.”\textsuperscript{259} And importantly, by attacking the Jacobin narrative of the French Revolution he had also suggested that Robespierre’s political terror was at the very least far from necessary—at most it was a betrayal of the Revolution itself. Yet during the crises of 1958 surrounding De Gaulle’s return, Guérin’s invocations of the French Revolution’s continuing legacy relied on a violent rhetoric found elsewhere among the radical left.

\textsuperscript{258} Daniel Guérin, \textit{Quand l’Algérie s’insurgeait}, 186-187.
\textsuperscript{259} Fonds Guérin, F delta 0721/22/5, BDIC. Guérin’s notes in the same folder dated December 1929-February 1930 also criticized the revolutionary theorist Georges Sorel for “placing syndicalism in the service of violence and not violence in the service of syndicalism.”
Guérin’s anti-fascist reaction to May 1958 was certainly not out of the ordinary. However, when it came to the Algerian nationalist groups whom he supported during the Algerian War, he was in the minority among the anticolonial left. While the majority of main anticolonial figures lent their open support to the FLN as the true organ of the Algerian nation, Guérin supported the minority MNA. The MNA was a reincarnation of Messali Hadj’s earlier organizations—including the Étoile Nord-Africaine (ENA), the Parti Populaire Algérien (PPA), and its successor Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques (MTLD)—formed in response to the creation of the FLN and beginning of the Algerian Rebellion in November 1954.²⁶⁰ Whereas the FLN believed the MTLD’s moderate nationalism and reformist goals were insufficient when confronted with France’s control over Algeria, the MNA claimed to be the true representatives of Algerian nationalism, the inheritors of the struggle begun by Abd el-Kader’s nineteenth-century rebellion. Since Guérin’s exposure to North African anticolonial movements stretched back to the late 1920s, he was first of all exposed to the older Algerian nationalist groups.²⁶¹ He first met Messali Hadj in Paris in 1934, during Popular Front and anti-fascist demonstrations. Guérin met ENA activists and demonstrators throughout the thirties and claimed that they were present not only at demonstrations in favor of North African workers’ rights and colonial equality, but also at all of the major anti-fascist demonstrations, including the Bastille Day rallies of 1935 and 1936.²⁶² In the postwar Guérin strengthened his ties with Messali’s

²⁶⁰ At the very beginning of the war, the government and press even assumed that the 1 November attacks had to be the work of Messali Hadj and his supporters, and not the actions of an autonomous nationalist group.

²⁶¹ On Guérin’s ship voyage from Marseille to Beirut in 1927 he met Emir Khaled, grandson of Abd el-Khader and himself a prominent interwar Algerian nationalist leader.

movement in a 1952 trip to North Africa. His support of the movement was clear even before open rebellion in Algeria began.\textsuperscript{263}

By early 1956, Guérin’s public stance was to remain neutral between the two competing nationalist groups, and encouraged other intellectuals to do the same, for fear of weakening the Algerian cause by dividing opinion. This appeal, however, seemed to have little real effect amongst Guérin’s peers.\textsuperscript{264} It was also clear two years into the war that reconciliation between the FLN and MNA was not going to come easily, if at all: agents from both groups brought the fight against each other to France, killing the other side’s representatives and coercing Algerian laborers to choose allegiances. To Guérin this had all the makings of a repetition of the revolutionary deviations begun initially in 1793. While the MNA represented the interests of Algerian workers and a true revolution from below, the FLN were no more than bourgeois nationalists. Guérin’s descriptions of the factional conflict between the MNA and FLN read like a repetition of his theses on the divisions between the “bras nus” and the Jacobin leaders under the First Republic: “As with the Great French Revolution, the Algerian Revolution turned the arm of terror on its own people and devoured itself.”\textsuperscript{265} The FLN was unable to discern the

\textsuperscript{263} Guérin, \textit{Au service des colonisés}, 230: Messali Hadj is “the leader of Algerian nationalism.” Guérin also participated in the Comité France-Maghreb from 1953-1955, but left because he felt they were not active enough. David Berry, “‘Un contradicteur permanent’: The Ideological and Political Itinerary of Daniel Guérin,” in \textit{After the Deluge: New Perspectives on the Intellectual and Cultural History of Postwar France}, edited by Julian Bourg (Lexington, KY: Lexington Books, 2004), 160-161. By 1955 François Mauriac also shared in this sentiment. Mauriac to Guérin, 18 May 1955, Fonds Guérin, F delta 0721/91/1, BDIC.

\textsuperscript{264} Berry, “‘Un contradicteur permanent’,” 161; Daniel Guérin, “Lettre ouverte aux membres du Comité d’action contre la poursuite de la guerre en Afrique du Nord,” 29 January 1956, Dionys Mascolo to Daniel Guérin, 3 February 1956, and Daniel Guérin to Dionys Mascolo, 6 February 1956, Fonds Guérin, F delta 0721/91/3, BDIC.

\textsuperscript{265} Guérin, \textit{Quand l’Algérie s’insurgeait}, 99. Compare to the 1956 MNA tract signed by André Breton that claimed “the actions of the pseudo-patriots called the ‘FLN’ are anti-national. Their ranks weaken the Algerian resistance through terror, bloodletting, and killings.” MNA, “Le peuple algérien se souviendra. Les exactions abominales des pseudo-patriotes dits ‘Front
appropriate use of anticolonial violence and repeated the mistakes of revolutionary dictatorships from Robespierre to Lenin and Stalin.

**The Strange Silence of Albert Marius Soboul, soi-disant “Africanus”**

The polemics surrounding Guérin’s interpretation of the French Revolution also continued throughout the French Algerian War, coinciding with his anticolonial efforts, with responses to his critics in *Les Temps modernes*. In 1957 the journal *Arguments* organized a roundtable between the sociologist and philosopher Edgar Morin, Daniel Guérin, and Albert Soboul that highlighted the criticisms the left leveled against Guérin’s attack on the French Jacobin legacy. At the outset, however, the introduction to the exchange affirmed one of Guérin’s basic positions:

> Whether we like it or not, we project ourselves into the history of the French Revolution. However lightened, these are our current concerns, which attach themselves to the great ghosts of the first revolution. In one sense or the other, our current experiences, as do the experiences of the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th, enrich our vision of the Revolution. With each new historical experience the history of the Revolution gains more depth and flesh.

Much like theological positions regarding continuous revelation, the historical canon remained an open and living entity whose character more fully emerged in subsequent historical moments.

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266 Daniel Guérin, “La Révolution déjacobinisée,” *Les Temps modernes* 134 (April 1957), 1519-1546; Daniel Guérin, “Sartre, Lukacs et la Gironde,” *Les Temps modernes* 142 (December 1957), 1132-1137. These essays were republished two years later in Daniel Guérin, *Jeunesse du socialisme libertaire* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivièrè, 1959). The latter of these essays responded to what Guérin thought were Sartre’s attacks on his interpretation of the Revolution. Sartre responded to Guérin claiming that *Class Struggle* was “an excellent book. His best, by far.” “En voici la réponse de Jean-Paul Sartre,” *Les Temps modernes* 142 (December 1957), 1137. Sartre’s reading of Guérin as well as his use of Lefebvre is discussed in Chapter 4.

267 *Arguments* 5 (December 1957), 9.
Guérin’s position in the debate remained the same as it had since his publication of *Class Struggle*. Historians like Mathiez and Lefebvre had “beatified” Robespierre beyond all reproach. Furthermore, Guérin claimed, the “cult of Robespierre” had gone hand in hand with support for Leninism and Stalinism, and Robespierre’s vision of the purified state still infected present-day politics. Soboul, however, countered by saying that transhistorical comparisons between the French Revolution and other revolutions, such as the Russian Revolution, could be useful and help to clarify aspects of the former. The problem, Soboul claimed, was that Guérin had not compared the two, but transposed them, and in doing so he risked “a false perspective.”

Morin’s contribution staked out a position between Soboul and Guérin. While Soboul may have been correct to reproach Guérin for seeing too much of the Russian Revolution in the French Revolution, he did not think the problem of Robespierre was the false conundrum that Soboul claimed it was. The figure of Robespierre presented one with political and psychological internal contradictions that could not be dissolved by going back to their historical context. The French Revolution contained an essential dynamic present in all subsequent revolutions.

Soboul concluded the roundtable by suggesting Guérin and Morin “lift the veil” and recognize that, “for some, behind Robespierrism it is Stalinism that is at work… the problem of revolutionary power is not posed in the same terms for the bourgeois revolution of the 18th century, supported and driven by the sans-culottes, and for the proletarian revolution of the 20th century. To negate the specificity of historical facts is to falsify, to deform reality.” Soboul reiterated this position in the introduction to his 1958 thesis, *The Parisian Sans-Culottes in the* 

268 Daniel Guérin, “Comment interpréter le Robespierrisme,” and Albert Soboul, “Robespierrisme ou Antirobespierrisme?” *Arguments* 5 (December 1957), 9-11, 11-16.

269 Edgar Morin, “Robespierre, est-il seulement un cas dialectique?” *Arguments* 5 (December 1957), 16.

270 Albert Soboul, “Pour Conclure?” *Arguments* 5 (December 1957), 16-17.
Year II. In an overview of the Terror’s principal historians that mirrored aspects of Guérin’s positions, Soboul argued that, yes, the French Revolution set in motion a long series of processes that brought the bourgeoisie to power in the modern world. And yes, the working classes—particularly the sans-culottes of Paris—had not been properly understood in the Revolution’s historiography. However, to see them as a unified proletariat would miss the specificity of the different working-class groups, and would “transpose to the eighteenth century the problems of our time… it is to take away from the popular movement under the Revolution all of its specificity.”  

Far from being either the slaves to bourgeois Jacobin policy or the beginnings of an industrial proletariat, the sans-culottes’ policies followed their own logic, which at times could even defend pre-Revolutionary feudal practices.

By the mid-1950s, Soboul had become one of Lefebvre’s heirs apparent as gatekeeper of the social interpretation of the Revolution, in both scholarly practice and institutional presence. Of the man Soboul addressed as “My Dear Master,” Soboul thought he was the consummate model historian. Soboul’s revised short précis of the French Revolution followed the general narrative of Lefebvre’s Quatre-vingt neuf; and his dissertation’s project of viewing the Revolution from the neglected vantage point of the sans-culottes was a continuation of Lefebvre’s approach to the revolution from below begun with his study of the peasantry of the Nord and the dynamics of the Great Fear. Upon Lefebvre’s death, Soboul assumed the role of copresident of the Société d’études robespierristes and made certain to publish Lefebvre’s last work, Études orléanaises as well as continue the production of Robespierre’s complete works.

272 For example, see the undated notes from Soboul to Lefebvre, Fonds Soboul, Le centre de documentation-bibliothèque Albert Soboul, Musée de la Révolution française, Domaine de Vizille; Albert Soboul, “Georges Lefèbvre: historien de la Révolution française, 1874-1959,” La Pensée no 88 (November-December 1959), 7-19.
Despite the differences in historical interpretation between Soboul and Guérin, it would still have been conceivable in the intellectual climate of 1950s France for Soboul to draw lessons or comparisons between the Revolution and contemporary politics. This, however, he did not do—at least not publicly. Even though Soboul was born in Algeria to a pied-noir family, and showed interest in both Algerian political history and support for the Algerian cause, he did not enlist the French Revolution to either support or justify these positions, despite personal connections to Algeria.

Soboul was born in Ammi Moussa in 1914 and lived in Algeria until 1922 when his mother died and he moved to Nîmes to live with his aunt.\textsuperscript{273} His early years in Algeria left an imprint on the rest of his life. In letters to friends, Soboul often used his middle name, Marius. At times he would portray himself as a Roman, adding “Africanus” to his signature.\textsuperscript{274}

Like Lefebvre, Soboul was also a scholarship student, attending the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and then the Sorbonne where he passed the agrégation in history in 1938. His first book was a short study of Saint-Just’s political and social ideas and at the time of the events marking the 150\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Revolution he was beginning doctoral research, following PCF activities, and working at the Museum of History at Montreuil. When the war began, he was called to serve in the military, gaining the rank of military officer, but saw no real action. He taught at the lycée in Montpellier until involvement in an unauthorized Bastille Day celebration in 1942 briefly landed him in jail and barred him from teaching. He wrote tracts for the

\textsuperscript{273} Like Camus’s father, Soboul’s father, Lucien Soboul, died early in the First World War. Claude Mazauric, \textit{Un historien en son temps: Albert Soboul (1914-1982)} (Aubenas: Éditions d’Albret, 2004), 12-15. Both Richard Cobb and Claude Mazauric view moving in with his Aunt, Marie Soboul, as one of the defining moments of Soboul’s life. Marie was a militant communist, Professeur and then Directrice of the École Normale des jeunes filles, and wartime resistance organizer.

\textsuperscript{274} Mazauric, \textit{Un historien en son temps}, 138n.
Communist resistance in the Ardèche until the Liberation and said of the Bastille Day parade of 1945, “that was truly my apogee.”

At least when it came to the struggle against Nazi Germany and the Vichy regime, for Soboul there was no disentangling the French Revolution from political commitment.

During the Algerian War, Soboul attended talks on Algerian political history given by the historian of North African politics Robert Ageron and was a signatory to the 1955 Action Committee against the Pursuit of War in North Africa. And Soboul’s surviving library attests to a continued interest in Algerian affairs after the war ended. However, Soboul forbade marshalling the French Revolution in favor of Algerian independence on two fronts. First of all, while the study of the French Revolution and support for Algerian independence could coexist, the two could never interact. And second of all, outward support for the PCF required not publicly contradicting the party line on Algeria. By the beginning of the Algerian War, Soboul had removed himself from militant PCF activities, deciding he could not continue to be both a PCF militant and professor at the same time. Although he continued to write for La Pensée his whole life, and never renounced his PCF membership, in later interviews he noted that by the


277 Though currently uncatalogued, Soboul’s library is held at the Musée de la Révolution Française in Vizille. Therein are copies of the Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer (August 1967), the special issue of Études Maghrébines dedicated to Charles-André Julien (1964), a special issue of L’Algérie dans le monde (April 1964), among other works on Algeria and North Africa.
time the first draft of his dissertation was complete in 1956, the triple threat of destalinization, the invasion of Hungary, and the PCF’s reluctance to support Algerian independence caused him to remove himself from the militancy of his previous years.278

Soboul’s reproach of Guérin was furthermore representative of his general distaste for future historians of the Revolution, like François Furet.279 Throughout Soboul’s career, he never hesitated to criticize historians whose work appeared amateurish as well as those whose success did not conform to the traditional career plan of French academia.280 However, even though by the 1970s revisionists like Furet would attack Soboul as the ultimate avatar of Marxist


279 In many ways the debate between Guérin and Soboul is the ideological inverse of the polemic Furet initiated with *Interpreting the French Revolution*. Not only did Furet claim that the Jacobin nature of the Revolution provided the basis for leftist totalitarianism, he also claimed the commitment of Marxist historians of the Revolution had fundamentally warped the political nature of 1789 by grafting Marxist class dynamics onto a political crisis. Just as Soboul claimed Guérin had transposed past and present, Furet charged Soboul with the same historical crime. François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, translated by Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 [1977]), especially “The French Revolution is Over,” 1-78, and “The Revolutionary Catechism,” 81-130.

280 See, for example, Soboul’s review of Albert Ollivier, *Saint-Just et la force des choses* in *Annales Historiques de la Révolution française* no. 142 (January-March 1956), 81-93; Richard Cobb, *People and Places*, 71. See also Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s memory of Soboul accusing Furet and Jean Popeno of using Guérin (“guériniser”) to attack Soboul from the left. Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *Paris-Montpellier: P.C.-P.S.U., 1945-1963* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 48; Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left*, 237, 261n44. A notable exception to this rule, however, was Soboul’s friend Madeleine-Anne Charmelot, a sometime contributor to the *AHRF*. Charmelot wrote a number of pieces on Saint Just but failed to secure book contracts with large publishers because of her lack of advanced degrees. Soboul, nonetheless, encouraged her independent research. See Charmelot’s deposited correspondence and extracts of her work in Fonds Soboul, Le centre de documentation-bibliothèque Albert Soboul, Musée de la Révolution française, Domaine de Vizille.
historiography, during the 50s and 60s Soboul’s critics were to his ideological left. As Yannick Bosc and Marc Belissa have observed, the first (1948) edition of Soboul’s *Révolution française* gave a good deal more attention to the actions of the Hébertistes than the second edition of the work or his dissertation. The downplaying of their influence in the 1951 edition was a way of distancing himself from Guérin and possible accusations of *gauchisme*.\(^{281}\) Aside from Guérin’s critiques of Soboul, in 1952 Jean Poperen reviewed Soboul’s textbook *La Révolution française* in *Les Cahiers du Communisme*, accusing Soboul of being a “bourgeois” historian, instead of a practitioner of authentic proletarian science. The fact that this attack came in *Les Cahiers du Communisme*, a publication directed at everyday PCF members, and not *La Pensée*, a journal that focused on an intellectual audience, meant that the review was meant as a thoroughly political and ideological attack.\(^{282}\) In the 1950s, Soboul’s critics were from the left; they did not see his work as too far to the left, but rather not far enough.

The position taken by Soboul, in effect, relegated the usefulness of analogy between the French Revolution and the present to a very minor position. In order to save the historical integrity of the French Revolution, it was necessary to not invoke its name in the company of potentially suspect causes. According to Richard Cobb, a longtime friend of Soboul, “for him there had been only one Revolution, and that a French one.”\(^{283}\) More surprisingly, however,

\(^{281}\) Marc Belissa and Yannick Bosc, *Robespierre*, 223.


Soboul’s position was one that tried to maintain a *cordon sanitaire* around the Revolution. If the historical legacy of the Revolution could be tied to contemporary debates and concerns, one would run the risk of deforming the historical record. Up through the 1950s apologists for the USSR had drawn on the Committee of Public Safety as a model showing the revolutionary necessity of centralized state violence. But by the time of Krushchev’s Party Speech and the 1956 invasion of Hungary, such arguments quickly lost purchase in France. Better to divorce Stalinism from Jacobinism than risk losing both. The dangers, however, could run the opposite way as well. Insofar as Guérin’s attack on Jacobinism also acted as an attack on the French Communist Party, it is plausible that Soboul believed it was in the best interests of French Communism to renounce Guérin’s thesis in order to keep the image of international communist projects tied to the foundation of the modern French nation. The PCF may have been Stalinist, but to suggest a necessary connection between Robespierre and Stalin was unthinkable.284

Despite other intellectuals’ invocations of the French Revolution in reference to Algeria, in the context of the historical profession in postwar France, the range of politicization of the Revolution from Guérin and Lefebvre to Soboul was part of a general ambivalence toward the treatment of historical subjects with seemingly obvious historical relevance.

Professed emphasis on preserving historical distance was far from unusual among professional historians, but whether or not this was a viable position was another matter. Raymond Aron’s 1938 treatise on historical theory wagered that “The historian is to some extent

both a spectator and an actor,” and the historian’s very search for something in the past implicates his own motives in the study. When Aron illustrated the ways in which historians’ preferences ultimately influence the narratives they tell, he of course indicted the “so-called scientific historiography of the French Revolution,” whose operating principle was to oppose the author’s heroes against their enemies.285

Questions of personal political engagement and historical interpretation in the wake of World War II were by no means restricted to the study of the French Revolution, either. Henri Michel, former member of the maquis and historian of the French Resistance, presided over the closing ceremony of the March 1961 International Historical Conference in Milan, “The Allies and the Resistance in Europe.” Michel argued the conference had shown that the extent to which resistance was carried out was directly related to the belief that fighting against the Nazis constituted a just war. And yet he found the discussion of just causes to be a potential pitfall when researching the resistance since it presupposed a moral value in the history that might not necessarily coincide with the motivations of the historical subjects. Was the just French struggle against the Nazis comparable to the Nazi-backed anticolonial rebellion of Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, for example? He concluded that in the end the conference participants were divided about the proper role of historical inquiry. On the one hand, participants thought history “is a living force integrated into the present, and which shapes the future.” Other participants, however, viewed history as “a conjectural science, which might only lead to modest results. The historian’s prime directive is to prevent the preoccupations of the present from entering into the past.” Though the two antithetical sides attempted to engage one another at the conference, no successful resolution

285 Aron, Introduction to the Philosophy of History, 48, 81, 104.
to the dilemma was agreed upon.286 Those historians and historical theorists who believed some form of objectivity was ensured by either recul or impartiality toward the subject at hand had to at least concede that the present inescapably interacted with the study of the past.287 Even though the success of political histories like Marc Bloch’s Strange Defeat would suggest certain current events could be covered successfully by the right historian, Bloch’s exhortation, “Robespierrists, anti-Robespierrists, we beg of you, for Pete’s sake, simply tell us who Robespierre was,” indicated the messiness of historical politics.288

Despite attempts to distance the historical past from the present, the French Revolution’s presence was unshakeable during the French Algerian War. As vexing as the potential for corrupting the history of the Revolution by connecting it to present concerns may have been for the university establishment—even if these worries only appeared when the Revolution’s image as the forebear of socialist progress was questioned and not when used to rally the republic against fascism—others on the left were not as shy about casting the past into the present and future (and vice versa). As Georges Duveau noted, “Many men seem[ed] less pressed to cut the Gordian Knot than to revel in the internal tensions created by the responsibilities they assume.”289

The tensions within this possible catachresis—application of one set of criteria to an unrelated context—are certainly multiple. But most importantly, even if those tensions are set aside, an underlying question still remains. Even if the French Revolution were a living heritage for the French nation, what about its status for Algeria? Legally and symbolically Algeria was a part of the Republic: three metropolitan departments that happened to be across the Mediterranean. But in practice and prejudice Algeria was treated differently. It was politically and economically underdeveloped; the majority of its inhabitants, designated variously as indigenous or Muslim, were seen as non-modern. In order for intellectuals to claim the Revolution was being played out in Algeria, Algeria’s historical status needed to be rethought.
Rewriting Algerian History

History unfolds before our eyes… but we don’t understand it. We don’t know what it was all about, about the countries, towns, battles, resolutions, about the future so warmly discussed.


The French Revolution was used in myriad ways to argue about the present and future of metropolitan France and Algeria during the Algerian War. That intellectuals in the metropole referred to the birth of the French nation self-reflexively is perhaps not any stranger than other manifestations of national identity. Yet the act of bringing Algeria into these discussions as something more than the passive object of what the metropole was doing in relation to the heritage of the Revolution is of another order. The political language of modern France is in many ways the product of the Revolution, and only those areas deemed politically modern could be brought into the conversation. In order for Algeria to be connected to the French Revolution Algeria’s history had to be rethought and rewritten.

Social scientists and historians began to use the French Revolution to talk about the social and political future of Algeria in the decades leading up to the Algerian War. While in the nineteenth century it was common for professionals to opine that North Africa was premodern, by the beginning of the Algerian War in 1954 it was possible to describe Algerian nationalist rebellion as analogous to the historical moment of 1789. This conceptual turn began in the early twentieth century with the writings of Charles André Julien. Julien’s work not only claimed North Africa had a history that was knowable; it also went hand in hand with an anti-imperial political program. Following in Julien’s footsteps, Jacques Berque’s historical sociology in the

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1950s and 60s was committed to highlighting the long- and short-term changes in North African society. Berque, more deeply than any other professional social scientist during the Algerian War, interrogated the relationship between the Revolutionary heritage of the French imperial mission and the processes of rebellion against such a mission. Berque’s view of Arab history in general obeyed a metaphistorical typology of world historical progress where North African modernization recapitulated the stages of the West’s development. In demographer Alfred Sauvy’s theories of development the French Revolution lurked in the background of demographic arguments about historical change. Sauvy’s institutional and public intellectual commitments put the language of demographic pressures as political problems in the mouths of French-Algeria’s critics. In all three of these thinkers, Algerian nationalism, born from the internal contradictions of French imperialism, became the vehicle through which Algeria entered an Arab modernity.

This change in the narrative of Algeria’s past and future happened across a wide array of disciplines as well as within the rhetoric of anticolonial activists and Algerian nationalists. While it is important to recognize the latter’s agency, during the Algerian War the former shift informed the ways anticolonialists wrote and spoke about Algeria. Julien, Berque, and Sauvy widely influenced anticolonialists through the ways they constructed Algeria as an object of enquiry. While the facts of Algerian unrest, rebellion, and revolution were largely separate from the writings of these individuals, the new conceptual framework these thinkers provided gave consequential meanings to those facts. After all, resistance to French authority in Algeria existed from the beginning of France’s presence there. But there was no such thing as an Algerian
“nation,” either within or in contrast to the French imperial nation-state.\textsuperscript{291} It was only after World War II that anyone would refer to violent insurrection in Algeria as a revolution, either attempted or possibly successful. By the end of the Algerian War these thinkers had instigated a complete turn from orientalist views of Algeria as ahistorical and set the terms for conceptualizing a newly-independent nation in ways that were translatable to moments in modern French history the likes of which were discussed in Chapter 1.

While the term anticolonialist fits Julien, Berque, and Sauvy to varying degrees, it would be wrong to assume their anticolonialism automatically led to the decolonization Algeria experienced. Even through the Algerian War, Julien did not think a complete break between France and Algeria was in the interests of either nation. And while Berque and Sauvy took a more extreme position in favor of separation, they only came to this position midway through the conflict. All three thought that twentieth-century nationalist movements in North Africa were at least partially due to the influence and importance of France’s own Revolutionary history. If French colonialism was the foundational cause of political trouble in Algeria, then the very same ideals that spurred French empire-building also provided a way out.\textsuperscript{292} In a certain sense, under French tutelage (to use Berque’s term) Algeria learned how to conduct a revolution. Julien saw the nationalism of North Africa as dependent upon a sense of North Africans’ “pride of the past

\textsuperscript{291} As Michael Goebel has noted, Paris intelligence networks never referred to Algerian nationalists in terms of Algerian nationalism. Rather, they spoke of North African or Muslim nationalism. In both cases, Algerian particularity is elided. Michael Goebel, \textit{Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 253.

\textsuperscript{292} Even if we consider the Republican ideals of the Revolution as anti-imperial, with the freeing of Saint Domingue’s slaves as its ultimate imperial refutation, Jennifer Pitts has convincingly shown how liberals in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, like Alexis de Tocqueville, saw the conquest of Algeria as an important part of saving the Revolution’s political promises by resolving its problematic legacy of social fracture. Jennifer Pitts, \textit{A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 189-218.
and their confidence in the future.” Julien’s transmission of this past similarly reoriented French consciousness about Algerian colonialism and the future beyond French Algeria, whatever that future would be. Berque explicitly made the development of North Africa an analog to western European historical development, but he was self-conscious of the perils of navigating the contingencies of the past, present, and future through such metahistorical narratives, trying to find a via media between what he called “the destiny of the gods” and “the freedom of men.” While intended to be colonial policy critique, Sauvy’s insistence on the importance of demographic changes in Algeria and the need to accommodate them led to two different and largely unintended directions: revolutionary third worldism and a concept of decolonization as a naturalized and historically necessary process.

From Frozen to Fluid, Stillborn to Mature

Throughout the nineteenth century, promoters of France’s empire in North Africa justified their expansionist policies in the name of a civilizing mission. In broad outlines, it was not only France’s right to conquer other parts of the world but also its duty to educate and elevate those areas that had yet to experience the universal splendor of French civilization. This remained true not only under the centralized authority of Emperor Louis Napoleon, but also under the auspices of the Third Republic. Despite differences in regimes, France was consistently an imperial nation state. Two views of history loomed in the background of this

imperial ideology: the belief that the French nation was at the vanguard of modern, universal history; and the belief that these conquered areas were either a-historical or non-modern. The light of modern world progress followed the French army into the dark, benighted African and Asian continents. As the height of French nationalism relied on what Benedict Anderson described as unified time common to the whole nation, the depletion of Algeria’s time acted as France’s counterpoint.296

French imperialism was universal by way of exclusion, and so was the brand of history that accompanied it. In 1883 the great voice of spiritual nationalism Ernest Renan addressed an audience in the Sorbonne on the topic of Islam and Science. While just a year earlier he had presented his audacious and prescient thesis that ideas of national identity were historical fictions based largely on an ability to forget inconvenient facts, in this presentation he argued about the essence of Islam and its political incarnations. Moving between the terms Muslim, Islamic, and Arabic without distinction, Renan claimed that Islam was fundamentally opposed to scientific and philosophical thought. By extension, since philosophy and science were the keys to historical progress, Muslim societies were destined to remain in a pre-modern, backwards state. The great Arabic thinkers such as Averroës and Avicenna were only great insofar as they preserved the thought of the Greek and Latin civilizations that preceded them. Even later thinkers like historian Ibn Khaldun were important despite their religious and ethnic identities, not because of them. In Renan’s estimation, “Arabic, which conveys poetry and a certain eloquence so well, is an instrument poorly-suited to metaphysics. Arab philosophers and academics are in general very bad writers… Islam, in reality has always persecuted science and philosophy.” Progress was co-terminus with science, of which Islam and Arab peoples and their

language were incapable. France, on the other hand, had a spiritual project capable of embodying science and progress.297

Renan’s formulations on Muslim culture were by no means as provocative as his musings on nationalism (or Christianity). Most of France’s late-nineteenth-century specialists on North Africa, particularly those employed by the government-supported Arab Bureaus and other military and civilian colonial administrators agreed. The mountainous and desert regions of Algeria were many things—terrifyingly sublime, desolate, havens for brigands and nomadic raiders—but they were not modern. The most relevant North African history for the French was that of the Roman Empire’s presence there.298 Even the “Kabyle Myth,” which posited that the Berbers in Algeria’s mountains were Aryan descendants of Greeks and Romans (as opposed to Semitic Arabs), utilized a still-born historical framework. Though Berbers were supposedly more like their French conquerors than Algerian Arabs, they were still artifacts of a very distant past.299 These elements in the Algerian colonial imaginary were still alive and well in the domains of geography, ethnography, sociology, and history of North Africa through the Algerian War, epitomized in the writings of the orientalists like Émile-Félix Gautier, Professor at the University of Algiers.300

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298 Focus on the history of Roman North Africa was a way of painting continuity and justification for French colonialism to the point that “the preoccupation with Algeria’s Latin past achieved the status of a foundation myth.” Patricia Lorcin, “Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria’s Latin Past,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 2 (2002), 296.


300 See for instance the Foreword to É.-F. Gautier, *L’Algérie et la métropole* (Paris: Payot, 1920), viii-ix: “Yet, if France aborts its mission [in Algeria] there will have been nothing
If Algeria had a future, it was dependent upon France’s prospects for it. Numerous projects of agricultural reform and economic development would move Algeria in the right direction, and European settlers from the greater Mediterranean could hope to fulfill promises of work and independence that escaped them in other parts of the French Empire.\textsuperscript{301} Though promises of progress through assimilation and modernization were at least possible in theory, in practice they were far from realizable. So even if plans for agricultural modernization put Algerian geography on track to escape its supposed historical lapse, the “indigenous” peoples of Algeria and their history remained outside the scope of progress.

After World War II this prejudice began to lose its hegemonic hold. By the end of the French Algerian War, even an ethnologist like Germaine Tillion, interested in the mountain communities of Algeria precisely because of their supposed remove from Western civilization, would conclude that Algeria was “lurching towards the future.”\textsuperscript{302}

Invoking the French Revolution became one way in which this shift toward modernity was embodied. In 1947 philosopher Paul Ricœur, for instance, not only maintained colonial racism was wrong, but that rebellions in Sétif and Guélma had “the same passion that is at the origin of our 1789 and Valmy, of 1848 and 1940.” However “premature” one might judge colonial independence, it would always trump “paternalism.” At least since the end of World War I, critics of French imperialism had used French Revolutionary rhetoric alongside imperial


realities as a way of holding a mirror to French rule. However, statements like Ricœur’s beginning in the late 1930s were of a different sort. Instead of highlighting French inconsistency with a national past, these new statements claimed Algeria was in fact recommencing this French revolutionary past. The formation of an Algerian nationalist consciousness was akin to the birth of the modern French nation.

Coding Algerian nationalist consciousness in French nationalist language happened amongst Algerian nationalists before metropolitan commentators joined the conversation. One possibility is that this was done as a strategy to reform the French presence in Algeria or as a rallying cry to divorce France from Algeria completely in the name of a separate Algerian nation or a greater Arab nation. The utopianism of the language often contradicted the strategic alignments of the various Algerian nationalist groups and the Communist Party with specific political possibilities and negotiating points. Contrasting the Algerian status quo as a deformation of the French Republic’s universalist promises was also a rhetorically strong practice. Another possibility is that the ownership of French Revolutionary ideals is part of the process of what Homi K. Bhabha has called “cultural hybridity,” a process through which a marginalized group reinterprets and restages the past. Jean El-Mouhoub Amrouche’s writings certainly reinforce this possibility. Many Algerian nationalist leaders were, after all, educated in France. Others were the product of the university system in Algeria, modeled on the metropolitan system. These intellectuals and activists usually qualified as evolved (évolués) or

305 See Chapter 1.
assimilated (assimilés) in the eyes of their metropolitan peers. They had successfully incorporated the history and culture of the French nation and adopted its mores as their own.\footnote{Goebel, \textit{Anti-Imperial Metropolis}; Peter Dunwoodie, \textit{Writing French Algeria} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 27-30; Guy Pervillé, \textit{Les étudiants algériens de l'université française, 1880-1962: populisme et nationalisme chez les étudiants et intellectuels musulmans algériens de formation française} (Paris: Éditions CNRS, 1984).} Likewise, nationalist and Pan-Arab luminaries like Émir Khaled and Chekib Arslan spent a great deal of time in Europe, often as intellectuals in exile. (And these are points of which Charles-André Julien and Jacques Berque were well aware.) While this development cannot be reduced to intellectual history alone—since the concerted efforts of colonial reformers and Algerian nationalists alike likely had as much, if not more, direct influence on attitudes towards possible Algerian futures—the major shifts in the ways French scholars conceptualized Algerian history from the 1930s to the 1960s are a necessary part of this story.

\textbf{Recognizing North African History}

It would be hard to overestimate the influence Charles-André Julien’s work had on the study of North African history. While the search for origins is often a gamble, Julien posed serious challenges to the nineteenth-century historical tradition that robbed North Africa of agency decades before any other non-Muslim historian of the French Empire. Julien was born in Caen in 1891, but at age 15 his family moved to Oran where his father was to teach history in the lycée. There, Julien attended high school with Algerians of European descent and, according to his recollection, exactly one Muslim Algerian. His father was a dreyfusard and close friend of Jean Jaurès. In many ways, the way Julien fils looked up to Jaurès reverberated through his views on colonialism through the Algerian War. Like Jaurès, Julien thought colonialism was destined to end along the path toward human emancipation. But for the French colonies, the path toward
human emancipation ran through the enlightened ideals of French civilization, it did not renounce them.\footnote{Charles-André Julien, “Souvenirs et réflexions sans prétensions,” \textit{Le mouvement social} 39 (April-June 1962), 15-18.}

Following his father’s sensibilities, in 1909 Julien joined the SFIO and the Algiers section of the Ligue des droits de l’homme (he would become the president of the section in 1917). At the SFIO’s Tours Congress in 1920 he was named a permanent delegate for all of North Africa and was present at the Third Communist International Congress in 1921.\footnote{Ibid.; Charles-André Julien, “Avant Propos,” \textit{Une pensée anticoloniale: Positions 1914/1979} (Paris: Sindbad, 1979), 11-12; V. I Lenin, “Terms of Admission into Communist International,” translated by Julius Katzer, \textit{Collected Works} 31, 4\textsuperscript{th} Ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 206-211.} At the International he advocated for a concerted effort to compile as much information as possible on the colonial world. Such information had dual purpose. Julien argued the propaganda value of compiling a list of imperialism’s crimes should not be underestimated. And in order to support nationalist movements in the colonial world (and eventually direct them toward international struggles) it was necessary to understand each colonial situation. Despite Lenin’s own claims for the importance of anti-imperial solidarity, French and Russian representatives voted down his motions at the Congress. Back in Algeria, Julien headed a Committee for Colonial Studies that focused on relaying information to the metropolitan press about colonial scandals, administrative repression, and cover-ups. Though there was some support for anticolonialism within the French Communist Party, its leaders were reluctant to embrace a meaningful anticolonial position and Julien distanced himself from the Communist movement in 1926.\footnote{“Intervention de Ch.-A. Julien au IIIe congrès de l’Internationale communiste (12 juillet 1921),” in \textit{Une pensée anticoloniale}, 70-76. On Julien’s work in the Committee, see his articles on the Kenadsa mine in \textit{L’Humanité} (4 May 1922) and (25 May 1922) as well as the article on police corruption, “Le vengeance d’un mouchard démasqué. Encore un complot policier: Cette fois, c’est en Algérie,” \textit{L’Humanité} (6 June 1922). Julien much later remarked that}
intellectual pursuits from the 1920s onward followed in the belief that accurate knowledge of imperialism was one of the best means of combatting it.

In the midst of his schooling, the death of his father compelled Julien to turn down a scholarship at Lycée Louis-le-Grand in Paris and work for the colonial administration to support himself, in the prefecture of Oran. While working as a colonial functionary he experienced first-hand the colonial lobby and its maneuverings, both legal and extralegal. By 1921 he was elected Counselor General of Oran. As Counselor General he acted as a whistle-blower against workplace violations and racism. Alongside these political activities he also taught at the lycée in Algiers and studied history and geography at the University of Algiers where he was agregé in 1920. While the Roman historian Jérôme Carcopino urged Julien to study the Roman history of North Africa, he instead chose the contemporary history of North Africa, earning him the nickname Julian “the Apostate.” Alongside his political activities Julien also taught in the lycée Janson de Sailly from 1926 to 1932 and then at the lycée Montaigne from 1932 to 1940.

During his years teaching, Julien began publishing occasional articles on the history of Algeria and the Muslim world more broadly beginning with a brief note on the forms of sovereignty in the Muslim world. In the midst of the triumphalist celebrations of the one-hundred-year anniversary of the French invasion of Algiers, he took aim at the French military’s...

“Many communists, or those who were known to be communists, and who were ardent in their struggle for justice towards indigenous peoples suffered from a colonialist contamination that went much deeper than you might think.” “De l’Algérie hors la loi à l’Algérie hors la France,” Une pensée anticoloniale, 22, originally published in Front (1969). It is ironic that Julien left the PCF shortly after Moscow strong-armed them into effectively adhering to an anticolonial stance (which they officially did until they wavered under the Popular Front).

greatest colonial hero, *Maréchal* Bugeaud. Claiming there was a “singular amnesia” surrounding the military commander’s legacy, Julien argued that almost no one should in fact herald Bugeaud a hero. One might not be outraged over his costly pursuit of the rebel leader Abd el-Kader, but the brutal tactics Bugeaud honed in Algeria were subsequently put to use massacring Parisians in 1848. This national hero was nothing more than a “sanguinary brute.” Julien claimed the rest of the commemorations were little more than a boondoggle, and the *Historical Atlas of North Africa* published for the occasion was “from a scientific point of view, a pile of junk,” the “most monstrous assemblage of errors, omissions, confusions that had ever been devoted to Algeria.”

The critiques of the 1930 anniversary displayed the seriousness with which Julien took the history of North Africa, but in no way did they accurately foreshadow the scope of his first historical project, *The History of North Africa: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco*, published in 1931. In over 800 pages Julien covered the history of the Maghreb from its pre-Roman origins to 1930, drawing on memoirs, archeological records, anthropology, literature, theology, and histories. And unlike previous histories that prejudiced either points of northern Mediterranean contact or brusque changes in military dominance as the only true historical moments, Julien’s study gave equal weight to periods of stability, internal reform, and development of non-European culture as the main points of rupture. Moreover, rather than portray the beginning of North African civilization as the moment of Roman conquest (as the Kabyle myth maintained), with subsequent cycles of non-European dark ages and European salvation, Julien presented the Maghreb as a unified social and historical totality. The Berber peoples, Julien claimed, were the original inhabitants and their culture was the canvas upon which subsequent conquests and migrations added their marks. Just as elements of ancient Berber culture remained through the Carthaginian


The source base of the book was impressive in its scope, but it also set up an interesting dynamic. By relying on sources from the nineteenth and early twentieth century Julien pulled information from authors sympathetic and sometimes (in the case of Arab bureau writers and soldiers) complicit with French colonialism. He wrote gratefully of the work his predecessors had done, almost presenting himself as a mere bibliographer. In his Foreword Julien quoted Cicero’s adage, \textit{ne quid falsi audeat ne quid veri non audeat historia}: Admit nothing false to the historical record and omit nothing true.\footnote{315 “Ce livre ne prétend nullement à la nouveauté. Son originalité, s’il en a une, réside dans le choix ou le groupement des faits, l’ordonnance des idées et l’unité de la composition qui sont œuvre personnelle.” Julien, “Avant Propos,” \textit{Histoire de l’Afrique du nord}, xiv.} And in summarizing the contemporary literature available, Julien had to manoeuvre through some difficult territory. When discussing prehistoric North Africa, for example, Julien surveyed the then current theories of a Berber anatomical type as well as the findings of craniometrists and physical anthropologists that were so characteristic of the racism in early-twentieth-century anthropology.\footnote{316 See for example, Alice Conklin, \textit{In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology and Empire in France, 1850-1950} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), especially chapters 1 and 4.} But Julien countered theorists such as Broca with works by Joseph Deniker and A. C. Haddon, noteworthy for their dismissive treatment of anything that could be called a unified racial type. After summarizing the various proposed components of Berber physiology, Julien sidestepped any of the racial implications for considering contemporary North Africans. He concluded that at the present time it would be
“presumptuous to do anything but register the measurements gathered.” If there were any sort of unity to the people of the Maghreb, it was a “social unity” or “a certain historical unity.” Race was something to be noted, but not something from which any meaningful conclusions could be drawn.

Julien’s treatment of the pro-colonial political biases in his sources also demonstrates his important, if opaque, textual criticisms. Émile-Félix Gautier, Julien’s former teacher at the University of Algiers, is one of the most cited authors in the text, yet not without accompanying dismissals of Gautier’s pro-colonial biases. For example, to Gauthier’s claim that “Left to itself, the Maghreb could never afford” its own language, literature, state structure, or the luxuries associated with developed capital, Julien countered,

Perhaps. But must we conclude from the failure of certain attempts the very necessity of their failure? And, in this case, in a logically determined fashion would we not have to condemn every foreign occupation to culminate in a catastrophe in the manner of all of its predecessors?... It seems that one would like to justify through science a situation from which one benefits. We must defy an historical metaphysics that seems to be all too easily reconciled with political realism.

Where Gauthier maintained the Arab conquest marked a deep historical chasm from whence any knowledge of North African history was irrevocably lost—“Compared to such a leap into the unknown, our French and Russian Revolutions appear petty,” Gautier claimed—Julien simply turned to the medieval Islamic historians themselves. By virtue of their Arab identity, these


318 Julien, Histoire de l’Afrique du nord, 22-23. And here we can also sense the uneasiness with which Julien would think of the future of North Africa without a French presence. Previous imperial moments may have failed in North Africa, but using Gautier’s logic, the current French presence there would also be doomed: under the right motivations and conditions, Julien hoped France could still leave its mark on the area.

historians did not count for Gautier, who the same year argued that “Oriental” history was unable to grasp universal history in Western terms since it was structured on a particularist, “tribal” level.320

Also noteworthy was the accessible language Julien employed throughout the study. While Julien sought precision in his discussions of archeology and history, his main goal was to provide a book accessible to the non-specialist reader. In the first edition’s preface, Stéphane Gsell remarked that the book was eminently readable, partially on account of the syntax employed: “His style, which does not shy away from familiar expressions, foreign terms, or neologisms, will perhaps in some instances disturb purists.”321 Gsell was perhaps referring to the ease with which Julien characterized medieval and early modern Arab developments in modern European terms. For instance, he characterized the decentralization of power in late-sixteenth and seventeenth-century Tunisia as “a military revolution with a democratic spirit,” portraying in modern western terms a place and time usually deemed synonymous with despotic backwardness.322 Passages such as this one also broke the standards of orientalist history and philology that often left passages in Arabic to highlight their uniqueness and untranslatability as well as the author’s mastery of the foreign unknown.323 Julien did not shy away from presenting Arabic terms for accuracy, but he presented them briefly in order to translate them and then used

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321 Stéphane Gsell, “Préface,” xi. Gsell was a specialist in ancient North African history and the current Chair of the History of North Africa at the Collège de France.
the translated equivalent afterwards.\textsuperscript{324} This practice was likely a product of Julien’s limited abilities in Arabic, but this limitation made the finished history more directly accessible to francophone audiences.

If Julien’s written style was reason to disturb specialists, his treatment of France’s North African Empire was reason to disturb many lay readers and specialists alike. Julien devoted the last fifth of the book to the French empire in North Africa, specifying the pretexts of French expansion and the relations between conquered and conqueror. Though the final chapter covered French expansion into Morocco and Tunisia, these two colonies were presented as afterthoughts to the three chapters covering Algeria. After outlining the flimsy pretext upon which Charles X decided to invade Algiers, Julien echoed his earlier criticism of Bugeaud’s cult by countering the nationalist myths that the first expeditions were driven by quests for prestige, that French commanders had outfoxed the rebel leader Abd el-Kader and that the civilian \textit{colons} had corrected the violence of military rule. The main reason for the invasion, explained Julien, was to buttress support for Charles X’s failing rule. Abd el-Kader had been at least as successful a tactician as his French counterparts, if not better—the main reason for his defeat was tribal infighting. The most violent of the colonial soldiers were not the professionals, but rather “their colleagues from France and above all the militiamen, who, under the guise of their democratic and revolutionary professions of faith, manifested their pathological terror through useless acts of ferocity.” And those same \textit{colons} who criticized military terror “in the name of democratic principles showed themselves to be even more ruthless than the generals in their repression.”\textsuperscript{325}

\textsuperscript{324} For example, after discussing the terms Brâber, Berâber, Amazigh, Tamazight, and Imazighen in Chapter 1—the different Arabic and Berber (Tamazigh) terms used to designate the Berber people—they do not appear again. Julien, \textit{Histoire de l’Afrique du nord}, 2.

Two equally shocking sets of doubles emerged from Julien’s telling: between the zeal of the French military and Algerian rebels, and the military and civilian rulers of Algeria. After noting the religious dimensions of anti-French rebellions, Julien claimed the French generals, too, “made war with a quasi-religious faith in the grandeur of their mission.” War and colonial administration were parallel “dramas,” the latter “just as tragic” as the former, and with brutal consequences. “The problem of government has for a long time been confused with the problem of domination,” Julien claimed. The result of such confusion is a “regime of administrative repression.”

Aside from putting the lie to the nobility of French expansion in North Africa, Julien also explained the very real political relevance for contemporary readers. French presence, just like the presence of previous conquerors, would have an impact on the indigenous inhabitants. The French conquest and colonial administration added to Arab “sentiments of dignity and independence, the sense of interests and rights,” grown from stays in the metropole, syndicalist movements, and revolutionary parties. These Arabs would therefore be “less inert and less malleable than they had been in the past.” Given the space Julien had just given to the numerous rebellions and resistance to the French presence, it is hard to believe the “malleability” he invoked was not at least partially done so tongue-in-cheek. Nevertheless, the result of these changes would in time lead to “problems difficult to resolve.” If these could be resolved, then perhaps only through processes of drastic reform in the manner of the concessions made to the Tunisian nationalist Destour Party.

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Despite the overall indictment of a self-congratulating French empire appearing so close to the centenary of the Algiers invasion, when it was recognized, Julien’s history was generally well received. His dual titles as agregé in history and former colonial functionary no doubt contributed to his bona fides among reviewers. The reviewer at L’Echo d’Alger claimed the book was “a true book of art” and was impressed by Julien’s credentials as someone who had “lived sixteen consecutive years in Algeria,” participating in administrative as well as academic life.328 Though Louis Halphen thought Julien’s own opinions on the errors of French imperialism may “go a little far in this direction” he was nonetheless impressed by Julien’s “original manner of posing problems” and the overall scope of the work.329 Far left commentaries thought Julien’s book served the propaganda purposes he had urged in the Third International ten years earlier.330 André Reussner’s harsh words in La Quinzaine Critique were by and large the minority opinion amongst reviewers, and they are perhaps not surprising given his post as Professor at the Naval Academy and one of the historians involved with the 1931 Paris International Colonial Exposition.331 However, among most specialists in North African history, there was a lack of any

329 Louis Halphen, “Review of Histoire de l’Afrique du nord,” Revue critique d’histoire et de littérature (1 May 1932), 215-217. Raymond Lantier in the Revue Archéologique, Cinquième Série, 35 (1932), 341, felt similarly and also thought the early chapters on archeology and prehistory were not very original, but the work as a whole was commendable.
331 “M. Julien discusses hypotheses with the same juvenile audacity with which he approves or blames men… Some will reproach M. Julien for not hiding the fact he little cares for military and colonial imperialisms.” A. Reussner, La Quinzaine Critique (25 May 1931), 296-297. In Reussner’s contribution to the official history of the exposition he argued for the necessity of the colonies to seventeenth-century France’s economic prosperity and the colonies’ essential place in the present and future French national spirit. Paul Deschamps, Joannès Tramond, Maurice Besson, J. Ladreit de Lacharrière, André Reussner, Georges Hardy, Paul Roussier, and Léon Bérard, Les Colonies et la vie française pendant huit siècles (Paris: Firmin-
serious engagement with the work. Joannès Tramond, Reussner’s colleague and co-contributor to the Paris Exposition, dismissed the sections on French colonization. Julien was French and Algerian, but “like all functionaries was only part-time Algerian and unable to grasp the grandeur of the [imperial] work accomplished.”

Given the fact Julien had spent the majority of his life in Algeria, one could quibble with Tramond’s “only part-time” accusation, but the fact he felt the need to dismiss Julien’s work *ad hominem* is itself evidence of Tramond’s wounded pride.

Among historians in the francophone world, those associated with the early *Annales* movement were methodologically most likely to show interest in Julien’s work. *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale* collaborators greeted Julien’s work with enthusiasm for its ability to combine geographical, archeological, anthropological and other fields to mark the long-term changes and continuities in North African civilization. The economic historian Henri Sée gave a glowing review of the *History* and classical archaeologist Charles Saumagne cited it approvingly in an essay on medieval North African agricultural laborers. Henri Hauser agreed with Sée and Saumagne in approving the work, but was worried that Julien’s at-times polemical tone did him a disservice, however justified his opinions of French imperialism were. He should have aspired to a “*sub specie aeternitatis*” tone that would not be prone to the limits of his own historical moment.

Fernand Braudel, however, seemed unphased by the most politically

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poignant aspects of the work. Julien personally knew Braudel, who at the time was still teaching at the lycée in Algiers and introduced him to the newly reformed Revue Historique where Julien would serve on the editorial board beginning in 1932. Both of them had also contributed to the Revue Africaine (Julien since 1919, Braudel since 1928).

Braudel’s review was in-depth and covered all areas of the book, pointing to places where Julien might have expanded his research, but overall Braudel expressed his admiration. Where Braudel was most critical was Julien’s treatment of French Imperialism, but he did not see Julien’s criticisms as particularly convincing. “A great country such as ours,” Braudel claimed, “extends itself morally and financially in every dimension.” Much of France’s presence in North Africa was a matter of chance, but nonetheless “We have accomplished grand things over there. We think we should regard the past without remorse.”

The first three decades of Annales’ existence were marked by a profound ethnocentrism that often went hand in hand with an apoliticism and tacit procolonialism. In this regard Braudel’s review is perhaps more emblematic than the others, though as the longest of these reviews, it did not appear in Annales, but in Revue Africaine. Though Julien’s claims about the illegitimacy of French imperialism and the possibility of Algerian nationalist and revolutionary movements tracked well with the


Fernand Braudel, “A propos de l’ « Histoire de l’Afrique du Nord » de Ch. André Julien,” Revue Africaine 74 (1933), 37-53, 52, 53. It is worth noting, too, that Sée and Hauser died within years of their reviews and were of a different generation than the then-young Braudel.

actual establishment of Algerian nationalist parties, he was decades out of joint with his fellow historians. The pro-imperialist studies of Émile-Félix Gautier, of which Julien had been so critical in his *History*, for instance, were just as likely to be cited through the 1950s as Julien’s *History*.

Julien’s status as an historical black sheep was confirmed in 1935 when the Collège de France sought a replacement for Alfred Martineau as the Chair of Colonial History. The Chair of Muslim Sociology and Sociography, Louis Massignon, attempted to place Julien in the colonial history chair. At a meeting of the Collège, Massignon rhetorically asked those present, “Why has Julien been criticized? It is because he has integrated the faults you have committed, into the general history of French colonization… we have no right to exclude the grey areas while only admiring the clear ones.” Massignon was unable to persuade the Collège of the merits of Julien’s candidacy.336

If Julien’s positions on the history of French colonialism enjoyed a somewhat muted initial reception, he was soon given an institutional chance to make a larger difference in French colonial politics than he had as Counselor General of Oran. In 1935 the High Committee on the Mediterranean and North Africa was created to manage North African and Middle Eastern colonial and mandate affairs. Julien was selected as the Committee’s secretary, serving from 1937-1939 during the Popular Front administration. Though many in the Committee were dedicated to extending full rights to North African Muslims with hopes of successful assimilation, the Popular Front as a whole was never willing to throw all of its support for reforming the colonies. Only a handful of politicians and activists in France would have agreed.

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with Julien’s conviction that “The only moral justification of colonization is the sincere preparation of the native peoples for independence.” The reform plan created by the Committee, known under the name Blum-Viollette, would have allowed between 20,000 and 25,000 Algerian Muslims full rights as French citizens while also allowing them to maintain their civil privileges provided by previous statutes. In Julien’s eyes, what would start as reform would eventually lead to self-determination in some form or another. Whether at this point Julien thought this would mean a federated system of autonomous francophone territories or separate new nation states is not entirely clear; this vision of colonial reform was still nonetheless more radical than the more frequent and popular calls for Muslim assimilation. Pro-colonial groups also suspected the radical potential of the plan, and for this very reason they effectively sank the

337 Julien, “Front Populaire et Politique Coloniale,” in Une pensée anticoloniale, 100, originally published in Le Populaire (29 May 1936); John Hargreaves, “The Africanist International and the Popular Front,” in French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front, edited by Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1999), 75-77. William B. Cohen attributes this essay to an article in Vendredi (22 May 1936); it was likely published more than once. Cohen, “Colonial Policy of the Popular Front,” French Historical Studies 7, no 3 (Spring 1972), 378. Daniel Guérin, was probably the only member of the Committee as committed to colonial independence in the 1930s as Julien, rather than committed to a weaker form of assimilationism.

338 The 22 October 1830 military directive recognized local Muslim and Jewish courts. The Senatus-Consulte of 14 July 1865 stated indigenous Muslims were French subjects and outlined a possible path toward full citizenship. See Todd Shephard, Invention of Decolonization, xiii, 26-32; France Tostain, “The Popular Front and the Blum-Viollette Plan,” in French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front, 221-223.

339 In the same essay, Julien expanded on his vision of independence: “But might one envision an international and independent form of a mandate system that would effectively prepare the colonies for independence and would mark a considerable progress beyond national imperialism?” What lay beyond national imperialism, Julien did not say, and it would perhaps be too hasty to assume it was the nation state. After the war, the nation state was certainly not the French government’s immediate choice for what would follow the colonial era. Julien, “Front Populaire et Politique Coloniale,” 101. See also Gary Wilder, Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Frederick Cooper, Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
legislation before it was officially presented. What few reforms the Popular Front did manage for the colonies were reversed under the Daladier administration and subsequent Vichy rule. His last political statement over the next five years was an anonymously published tract on Italian claims to Tunisian territory. Julien examined Italian claims based on violations of previous treaties, but concluded that Mussolini’s desire for Tunisian territory had nothing to do with the rights of ethnic Italians in North Africa. Instead, it was simply a politics of force. Julien’s political sympathies and work on the Committee did him no favors after the installation of the Vichy regime and in December of 1940 the government removed him from his post at the Lycée Montaigne. His relationship with his former advisor, Jérôme Carcopino, the second Secretary of Education under Vichy, however, facilitated his placement at the Lycée Condorcet the following year.

Like many other opponents of the Vichy regime, Julien’s research and political output dropped off during the war. However, after the liberation and with the socialist parties back in power, there was a renewed interest in both his historical arguments and his political expertise. The war was in many ways a crucial turning point in both the growth of nationalist anticolonial movements and the desire for historical expertise that could make sense of these developments. For these reasons, Julien’s earlier work was more fully embraced in the postwar as the standard,

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rather than the outlier of North African history. His public and institutional presences reinforced his position as the premier specialist on North Africa. Most importantly, in *North Africa on the Move*, he quickly drew connections between the recent history of North Africa—from roughly where his *History of North Africa* left off to World War II—and its contemporary political situation, making a case for the existence of separate nationalist movements in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. His basic argument formed the basis for claims about Algerian political maturity among Algerian nationalist supporters.

**From Pariah to Prophet: The coming of the Algerian Revolution**

Julien’s institutional involvement in the postwar helped shift momentum in favor of his historiographical and intellectual interventions. After the war, Julien gained a position on the Council of the French Union, which meant full and unrestricted access to government records. Using these archives, he wrote his doctoral thesis, *The Beginnings of French Colonial Expansion (15th-16th Centuries)*, which he defended in 1946. The work, which had a generally favorable reception, also earned him the chair of the History of Colonization at the Sorbonne in 1948. There he oversaw the next generation of graduate students interested in North African history, many of whom, like Marc Ferro and Charles Robert Ageron, were also heavily involved in movements for Algerian independence. When Mohammad V founded the University of Rabat in 1953, he chose Julien to be the first *doyen* of the Faculty of Letters, a position Julien held until 1961.

In 1946 Julien launched a general series on colonial history. The collection *Colonies et Empires* published by the Presses Universitaires de France provided a general survey of the most recent work on the colonial world. In the series’ general preface, Julien explained that “from the
moment when France regained its freedom, colonial questions moved to the forefront of international concerns.” It was therefore “useful to provide for everyone a sincere and exact depiction of French colonies and colonization, free of nationalist or xenophobic biases.” The series produced over twenty volumes from 1946 to 1958, covering French and British colonial expansion from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. In 1951 and 1952, his History of North Africa was revised and republished in two separate volumes. Though the second volume ended at 1830, the year of the French invasion of North Africa, his anti-orientalist interpretations of earlier periods of North African history were reinforced in this second edition.

His position on the Council of the French Union in some ways mirrored his earlier position in the Blum administration, but very quickly he realized that the moment of the Blum Viollette Plan “was perhaps a missed opportunity.” Though in the wake of World War II administrators were eager to implement the suggested reforms of the 1930s, to more honestly and fully politically integrate North Africa into the French Union, those reforms were no longer sufficient to present a real option to Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian nationalists. By 1951, Julien candidly speculated in an article in Foreign Affairs that political reforms granting greater

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345 Charles-André Julien, “La politique française en Tunisie,” Le Monde (19 April 1950). The President of the Central Committee for Overseas France, Charles Roux, responded two weeks later by defending the principles of France’s civilizing mission and asking why colonial nationalisms would suddenly be defendable at the moment Europe was looking towards integration. Roux, “La politique française en Tunisie,” Le Monde (5 May 1950).
autonomy in Tunisia would inevitably lead to greater autonomy in Algeria and Morocco as well.\textsuperscript{346}

With the establishment of the new daily newspaper \textit{Le Monde}, Julien periodically wrote opinion pieces on North African politics. Whereas Julien’s newspaper pieces in the 20s and 30s appeared in far left periodicals such as \textit{Humanité} and \textit{Le populaire} he now had a much wider audience for his critical and at times radical commentaries on North Africa. He was, for instance, not afraid to compare the politics of the French Union to totalitarian characterizations of the Soviet Union. He argued France’s strong-arming of the Moroccan government made Morocco’s status as a protectorate seem like a weak cover for nothing more than a puppet regime. And Julien went as far as to publicly accuse the government of plotting to overthrow the Sultan.\textsuperscript{347}

The commitment to criticizing the practices of the French Union’s politics mirrored Julien’s 1952 study of North African politics from World War I to World War II, \textit{North Africa on the Move}. In the first edition of \textit{History of North Africa}, Julien portrayed the dysfunction of the Algerian \textit{colons’} government and the inadequacies of the Moroccan and Tunisian protectorates. He had also portrayed rebellions as more complex than simple tribal or religious fanaticism. But it was only in the case of the Destour party’s programs in Tunisia that he had discussed an indigenous political challenge to the French state. Even then, his commentary was largely speculative. However, twenty years later Julien was willing and able to survey political developments among North African nationalists. His survey showed both the real influence of pan-Arab nationalist thought from the end of the nineteenth century to the postwar as well as the

\textsuperscript{346} Charles-André Julien, “Crisis and Reform in French North Africa,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 29, no 3 (April 1951), 451.
viability of regional North African political groups to provide political programs motivating local autonomy from France. This local autonomy did not automatically mean a complete divorce from France, but the establishment of federated states that could more directly address local concerns in democratic processes not controlled by private interests. And on this score Julien was equally critical of nationalist movements calling for such a definitive break from France as he was of those colons trying to perpetuate old colonial relationships under new guises.

From the outset, Julien put to rest suspicions that political unrest in North Africa consisted merely of periodic instances of age-old “Muslim fanaticism.” For one, Julien held fast to his belief that a Berber constant provided the sociological basis for all North African society. Berber resistance to the systematic terror of early Arab rulers was akin to resistance to French colonialism. What was new about contemporary agitation were the negotiations of local and extra-local identity that comprised North Africa’s nascent nationalism. “Nationalism, pan-Maghrebism, and pan-Arabism,” according to Julien, “were superimposed on each other without contradiction, each differently articulated according to the moment and location.” But this accretion was representative of the same problem that every nationalism tasks to resolve through local conditions.348

North African nationalism was even more recognizable since it was partially modeled on the French nationalism of the previous century and a half. It first began to coalesce in the late nineteenth century around the general Muslim renaissance, the nahda. The fall of the Ottoman Empire, the creation of the mid-east Mandates, and the first Arab Congress in Paris (1913) also put questions of regional and supra-regional Muslim identity into motion. Arab intellectuals like

Chekib Arslan had an international audience and established close ties with local leaders such as Messali Hadj in Algeria, Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, and El-Hadj Abdessalam ben Nouma in Morocco. Central to their views of a pan-Arab community were the place of seventh to twelfth-century Muslim civilization as a golden age to be reclaimed. But in each instance local movements prioritized regional histories and often pulled from pre-Islamic history to suit their needs. As the next generation of local political leaders gained in influence, they added French republican values to the equation.

Julien stressed the hybridity of French and North African nationalisms by frequently referring to the foundational texts of North African nationalist movements—such as those from the emir Khaled and Ferhat Abbas, in the case of Algeria. The charter of the “Jeunesse nord-africaine,” for instance, founded in 1936 by the Tunisian politician Djebari, self-consciously mirrored the French Constitution of 1793 and adopted communist Common Front platforms. According to Julien, “Paris, even more than Tunis, was the crucible that fused the Maghreb’s nationalisms.” Relations between French revolutionary and syndicalist groups and indigenous elites in Algeria, in particular, were a catalyst for Algerian nationalist action, creating an Arab “who was less inert and less malleable than in the past.” The French settler population, by contrast, had lost touch with its republican heritage. In the colonial crucible, those French who considered themselves “Democratic, even revolutionary in their own estimation, became conservative and traditionalist in the presence of the indigènes.” The takeover of North Africa, while leaving the stamp of French republicanism on the colonized, had reverted the colonizers to an ancien régime mentality: “From the moment [the French] crossed the water, they believed in their divine right. The palaces, the flamboyantly-dressed troops, the crowds gathered along their passages—all these facts led them to think of themselves as oriental sovereigns rather than
republican functionaries.”  

As North Africans became more French, the French, in turn, reverted to Old Regime despotism.

Beyond showing the reality of nationalisms in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, Julien also demonstrated the viability of their political claims by reinforcing his longstanding critiques of French policies and adding that these policies were the best propaganda for nationalist movements. The idea that Morocco and Tunisia could still be conceived as protectorates was a farce. There was no longer any regime which would threaten their territory and France had no policies in place to support and develop their internal interests. Islam was the glue that held all three territories together, but for no good reason France lacked a political program geared toward its Muslim subjects. Tunisia and Morocco should be treated not as protectorates, but as “associated states,” and the Assembly of the French Union should be given federative powers to “decide on questions concerning overseas territories.” Algeria similarly needed to shed its status as a colony masquerading as three départements and take on a more independent position. Rather than realize promised postwar reforms, Algeria had become more autonomous in favor of the non-Muslim population. Nationalist political parties and the ulamas, when they were able to participate in governance, were sidelined through legal means by conservative and liberal colons. By closing off legal channels to reform, French Algerians, Julien predicted, made recourse to a violent solution to Algerian problems a foregone conclusion. Electoral reforms were a possible solution, but only if Muslim Algerians were given their own unique electoral college separate

\[\text{Ibid.}, 16-23, 24, 108, 396, 397.\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, 64-65. Julien singled out Jacques Berque’s reform plans for Morocco: they seemed promising, but all Berque received in response from the government was exile to the Aurès mountains. See below.\]
\[\text{Ibid.}, 403-404.\]
from the possibility of colon corruption. Julien presented the development of nationalism as the history of lost opportunities and hoped the near future would not squander whatever paths beyond the status quo remained. In the thirties, even Algerian nationalist groups argued indigenous emancipation was the only way to build a lasting French Algeria. The Third Republic had been the era of empire-building, and Julien worried that the Fourth Republic was quickly becoming the era where opportunities for moving beyond empire would be forever lost. Within two years of the first edition’s publication, the beginning of the FLN’s war with the French government confirmed Julien’s worries about Algeria.

The thesis that the period from the First World War through the end of the Second marked the birth of North African nationalism quickly became the standard line of interpretation amongst other historians of North Africa. Henri Brunschwig, for instance, one of the pioneers of archive-based African history, readily accepted this narrative. His 1949 textbook on European colonialism upheld many longstanding pro-colonial assumptions, and it was not until the climax of the Algerian War that he placed these biases under heavy scrutiny. In his 1960 Myths and Realities of French Colonial Imperialism, he lamented the fact that there were hardly any serious works on French imperial history after 1885, and this lack only compounded the misunderstandings of recently decolonized nations—a curious statement for many reasons, not the least Julien’s series on colonial history as well as his own published works. However, Brunschwig argued that continental nationalism, part of the driving force behind the French empire’s spread, had after World War I the unintended consequence of finding fertile soil in

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352 Ibid., 338, 406.
353 Ibid., 111, 408.
imperial territories. The colonized turned France’s own universal principles against the metropole and adopted French nationalist rhetoric for themselves. “Exploited or not,” Brunschwig claimed, “colonized peoples have in fact been civilized and westernized… The new states that have since 1947 acquired their independence are nations of the western variety.” The technical progress that had marked western history from the age of exploration to the industrial revolution had made its way to these formerly conquered terrains. What was most striking about this westernization, according to Brunschwig, was “the nationalist passion of those people who today gain access to independence. Impregnated with western nationalism, which is essentially based on History, they will never stop until they construct a past comparable to that of the old metropoles.” These élites should, however, take pride in their colonial projects. 355 The chauvinism in Brunschwig’s formulations is striking (and even more marked in some of his earlier writings). Yet alongside this chauvinism is the clear recapitulation of Julien’s claims: that colonialism incorporated the non-West into the West’s own historical development, an influence that could be felt in the Algerian War, and the birth of colonial nationalism happened in the interwar years. 356

Anticolonialist intellectuals and their organizations quickly put Julien’s assessment of Algerian nationalism to use during the Algerian War. Not only did he provide a detailed account


of many of the different Algerian political groups’ internal transformations as well as the complete governmental obstinacy in response, Julien also portrayed Algerian nationalism as a real phenomenon that transcended stereotypes of oriental despotism, Muslim fanaticism, or Cold War puppeteering. Alongside Daniel Guérin’s *In the Service of the Colonized*, Julien’s book is one of the most cited works on the topic in the first four years of the Algerian War. And despite their different views on Algeria’s future, Julien’s *North Africa on the Move* is one of the most frequently cited books in *In the Service of the Colonized* itself. Collette and Francis Jeanson’s *Outlaw Algeria* similarly relied on Julien’s *History of North Africa* and *North Africa on the Move* for their discussions of North African history, even feeling obliged to begin their book with a brief discussion of the Berbers as the starting point for all subsequent North African civilization. Both Guérin and the Jeansons held more radical positions than Julien, being more readily supportive of an Algeria divorced from French influence, but they nonetheless saw Julien’s work as useful support for their political positions. Contributors to the journal *Esprit* followed the same outline as Julien’s analyses of North African national consciousness, even if his work was not directly cited. François Sarrazin’s early take on the Algerian crisis argued that “for better or for worse, it is difficult not to admit that a diverse mixture of elements in Algeria is

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357 Guérin was more committed to Algerian independence well before the Algerian War began. He openly criticized Julien’s insistence on the priority of maintaining French-Algerian relationships and the benefits of the French presence in North Africa. Daniel Guérin, *Au service des colonisés, 1930-1953* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1954), 8, 16.


359 Just before the start of the war, Marcel Merle also opined that although Julien’s book, “doubtlessly written in a stream-of-consciousness style, had nothing academic about it. He wishes to be and is equally polemic in his statements…” it did provide the facts of the situation needed to form one’s own conclusions. Marcel Merle, “Problèmes d’Afrique du Nord,” *Revue française de science politique* 4, no 3 (1954), 610-612.
well underway, and that, already, we are assisting the birth of a nation.” Jean-Marie Domenach and Georges Suffert likewise saw the combination of French and uniquely Arab elements in the formation of North African nationalisms. This new amalgam, they hoped, would allow these new nations to escape the dangers associated with the French element on its own: among them the Great Fear of 1789 and purges in the Midi in 1944. When responding to Governor General Jacques Soustelle’s indictments of intellectuals supporting Algerian rebels, the Committee Against the Pursuit of the War in North Africa appended a quote from Diderot about telling the truth in politics and Julien’s passage above quoted from North Africa on the Move that characterized the French government as the true oriental despots.

During the war, Julien leveraged his specialist credentials in short essays and editorials that reinforced the legitimacy of Algerian nationalists’ complaints and criticized the bad faith positions of the French government. Echoing Daniel Guérin’s pamphlet “Algeria has never been a part of France,” Julien responded to the official claim that Algeria was part of the Republic. If it truly was, it would not need its special administrative status, nor would the majority of its population be left out of the political process. Domination of Algeria had to be a thing of the past, but a federated system was still possible if the government would acknowledge reality. By even Ernest Renan’s celebrated definition of nationalism, the Algerian nation counted as a

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360 François Sarrazin, “L’Algérie, pays sans loi…” Esprit 23, no 9 (August 1955), 1630, original emphasis.
362 Dated 3 December 1955. “Texte imprimé reprenant les étapes successives de la polémique Jacques Soustelle/Comité d’action,” Fonds Dionys Mascolo, MSC 8.15, IMEC. The Diderot quote is from his “Réponse de Diderot à l’examen du prosélyte répondant aux lui-même,” Introduction aux grandes principes, Œuvres Complètes II (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1754), 94: “Though not all men have the same sentiments, all are obliged to be sincere, and though one is not guilty of being wrong, one is guilty of betraying the truth.” Julien, L’afrique du nord en marche, 396.
legitimate incarnation, and the political processes at work needed to be placed in the same context as France in 1789 or Russia in 1917. And as late as 1961, Julien made a case for an independent Algeria that could still include French cooperation. 364 His status as an unimpeachable historian of North Africa even led one of the state’s prosecutors to cite him in the trial of the Jeanson network’s FLN collaborators. Unfortunately for the prosecutor, who tried to use Julien’s work to justify the French invasion of Algiers, Julien denounced the prosecutor’s improper use of his work in the pages of Le monde. 365

The political ramifications of Julien’s contributions to North African history were not bound only to the metropole, either, but also influenced the self-understandings of Algerian nationalists themselves. André Raymond’s claim that “for a number of Maghrebin nationalists, [The History of North Africa (1930)] aided an awareness of the existence of a Maghreb whose past historical continuity allowed them to imagine a future independent of the colonial episode,” is certainly supported by Julien’s FLN readership.366 Before the beginning of the war, historian and eventual FLN militant Mostefa Lacheraf dedicated his study of nineteenth-century anticolonial rebels like Abd el-Kader to Julien, looking for his stamp of approval.367

367 Mostefa Lacheraf, “Colonialisme et féodalités indigènes en Algérie,” Esprit 22, no 4 (January-June 1954), 523-542. According to the editorial note at the top of the essay, Julien did not agree with all points made, but thought it an important contribution, nonetheless.
Between the destiny of the gods and the freedom of men

The recognition of North Africa’s relevance as a world-historical force begged larger world-historical questions than those broached by Julien’s work. For example, to what extent would the transmission of French history and civilization transform the already-existing realities on the ground in North Africa? How did North African nationalist movements figure into broader contexts of decolonization? While it was first necessary to recognize the agency of North Africans and their ability to make their own history, it was equally necessary to ask in what sense France’s imperial expansion had determined its present historical moment. Rather than seeing the development of North African nationalism and the Algerian war as simply the product of political hybridity, Jacques Berque postulated they were historical moments that recapitulated the history of the modern West in a new key. Whereas Julien’s relevant work largely predated the Algerian War, Berque formulated his views on Algeria’s historical development from within the war itself, ultimately seeing the end of French-Algeria as built into the fabric of French expansion.

Berque’s historical and sociological writings during the Algerian War, as well as much of his later work, bear the marks of an uneasy balance between treating North African history on its own independent terms and placing it within Eurocentric world-historical processes. This tension may seem surprising, given Berque’s critical reputation and legacy in the social sciences. For instance, as critical as Edward Saïd had been of most specialists of the Arab world, Berque was one of the few whose work passed muster. The new generation of sociologists to which

368 Edward Saïd, Orientalism, 326-7.

Berque’s terminological referents often moved between exclusive and narrow geographical frames of study (such as the Maghreb, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula) and over-generalized inclusive ones, such as the Orient, sometimes within the same essay or book section. In what follows, I have done my best to specify which frame of reference he has used at
Berque belonged—along with Maxime Rodinson and the slightly younger Pierre Bourdieu—was certainly part of a broader shift away from previous essentializing, orientalist modes of investigation. Yet the specter of French history haunts the framework of Berque’s views of North African history surrounding its decolonization. Through much of the war Berque was committed to the need for French modernization efforts in North Africa. The French colonial presence was one of tutorship in modernity. Even when he was willing to let this notion pass, he still saw the stages of modern European historical development as a blueprint for divining the future direction of North African history. Like Sauvy and Julien, Berque believed any future for North Africa in general and Algeria in particular would need to rely on the technical and political developments of western history over the previous two centuries. Rather than see Berque’s movements between specific studies of the Maghreb and pronouncements on the larger Arab world as a “slippage of his scientific problematics from the local toward the global,” his writings highlight the embeddedness of the intellectual in a period of dramatic change and ever shifting horizons. His writings on North Africa during the Algerian War demonstrate this self-conscious and self-reflexive tension between the universals of socio-historical development and the particular experiences of Arab cultures, the structural and the not-yet-determined, or what Berque at one point referred to as “the destiny of the gods” versus “the freedom of men.”


370 Jacques Berque, *Le Maghreb entre deux guerres* (Paris: Seuil, 1962), 412. Sacriste qualifies this sentiment as a mediation between Sartrian existential freedom and Lévi-Straussian structuralism. Sacriste, 139. While Berque rarely lays his theoretical cards on the table, this is a fitting description. Berque’s mediation of large structures and individual wills also resonates with Guérin’s distinction between the objective and subjective orientations of history. Though each particular moment. At times the discussion will move between Berque’s observations about larger Arab-world transformations and specific observations about North Africa and even Algeria. When this occurs, it is because observations about larger critical frames have direct relevance for the narrower ones.
Berque’s early life and work were in many ways direct products of the French empire. His father, Augustin Berque, was a second-generation colon in Algeria, a specialist in Islamic law, and served as a local government official. Berque’s mother descended from nineteenth-century Spanish settlers. Berque’s father insisted Jacques study both standard Arabic as well as local Arabic dialects as a child. After first studying at the University of Algiers, he studied for a year and a half at the Sorbonne. His formal studies were cut short, however, after being offered a position as “officier des affaires indigènes” in Morocco in 1934. Over the next twenty years Berque’s position in the colonial administration would serve as the launch pad for an ad-hoc course in social ethnography. In the 1930s Berque published studies on local legal codes, his first forays into the examination of North African social structures. Though unaffiliated with any university, he established contacts with Fernand Braudel and regularly incorporated work published in the journals *Année sociologique* and *Annales* into his studies. When the war came in 1939 Berque served in the military in North Africa until the French surrendered in June 1940. Afterwards, Berque resumed colonial administrative duties in Morocco, under Vichy control through the end of 1942. Following the liberation of Morocco from Vichy forces, Berque became

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the director of education in Rabat and worked on plans to reform property rights in the Moroccan Protectorate. These reform plans received considerable resistance from local *colons* and from 1947 to 1953 he was exiled to a post in the High Atlas Mountains. Following the banishment of King Mohamed V in 1953, Berque resigned his position and worked with UNESCO on mission to Egypt. During his time in Egypt, Berque developed a more favorable position toward anticolonial movements, claiming he became a “third wordlist” there.\(^3^7^3\) He also published his first monograph from his ethnographic fieldwork in the Atlas Mountains, *The Seksawa: Research Conducted on the Social Structures of the Western High Atlas Mountains*.

The reform programs Berque proposed in the postwar called for massive investments in reforming the agricultural base of Morocco. Openly critical of what he characterized as “the myth of progressive reforms” instituted gradually over a long period of time, he called for “nothing less than the refabrication of the Moroccan countryside,” claiming reforms “will either be complete or amount to nothing at all.” Such a program would not only improve the material lives of rural Moroccans—and Berque claimed these rural peasants were, like the rural French, the true *peuple* of the country—but would also be the foundation for social and cultural modernization. According to Berque, this “apprenticeship to modern life” was directly tied to the “majority” of the people, meaning both their democratic will and their legal maturity. Though most changes would be initiated via colonial administrators, local councils would also have a say in reform projects. Via this plan, “the tractor and the threshing machine would become materials for freedom.”\(^3^7^4\) Not only would Berque’s plan have provided a framework for greater political participation within the Moroccan protectorate, implicit in its formulations was the assumption

that the direction of the Moroccan economy should be handled by local Moroccans, and not either the French state or European settlers. While Berque did not yet advocate for Moroccan independence from France, such a proposal clearly threatened French political and economic hegemony in Morocco.

Though many hailed as progressive the reform plans that brought Berque trouble, these reforms nevertheless postulated the violent overhaul of traditional economic systems as the only way forward for Moroccan society. Modern western technology was the key to ameliorating Moroccan poverty and under-development. While he did not want to simply force a European economic standard onto Morocco and label traditional systems “economic nonsense,” France’s mission was still one of tutoring less-developed peoples in the arts of modernity. Though Berque would back away from the rhetoric of civilizational tutorship by the end of the Algerian War, he nonetheless remained adamant that the traditional socio-economic structures of the Orient were insufficient for the modern world. The more and more resistance he encountered among colonial administrators, the more doubtful he became of France’s prospects of successful assimilation and development.  

375 For instance, see Charles-André Julien’s assessment in L’Afrique du nord en marche, above.

376 As early as 1939, Berque outlined a position that tried to see the logic of the remnants of the pre-colonial Moroccan economy while also stressing the need for adapting western industry to Moroccan society. Jacques Berque, “Deux ans d’action artisanale à Fès,” Questions nord-africaines 15 (1939), 3-28, Opera Minora III, 3-24, 8. Sacriste, 126-7. While he did not cite Berque, Pierre Bourdieu’s call for “a non-Keynesian economic theory that would be to Keynesian economics what non-Euclidean geometries are to Euclidean geometry” in many ways reads as a radicalization of this insight. Pierre Bourdieu, “Le choc des civilisations” Le sous-développement en Algérie, edited by François Perroux (Algiers: Secretariat Social, 1959), 64.

377 Sacriste, 131-132. The years from 1950 to 1953 were likely the climax of Berque’s hopes for French administrative reforms. In 1950 he gained certification as a teacher in training (stagiaire) for the Centre des hautes études d'administration musulmane (CHEAM) founded by Robert Montagne.
The resulting exile to the Atlas Mountains proved fortuitous, however, as it provided the basis for his study, *Social Structures of the High Atlas Mountains*. Berque argued against notions of a stable tribal structure to Maghrebian society since tribal affiliations and motivations changed according to historical circumstances. Familial ties were not the only consideration to take into account; one also had to account for needs relating to pasturage and water as well as the changes brought upon by colonial administration. The book was well received when it was published in 1955, earning him a back-door doctorate. Friendships cultivated with Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel secured him a newly-created Chair of Contemporary Islam at the Collège de France and his election to the VIth section at the École Practique des Hautes Études in 1956.\textsuperscript{378}

In between Berque’s departure from Morocco and his installation in Parisian academic circles, he had taken the advice of Charles-André Julien and joined a UNESCO mission in Egypt. While there he interacted with a number of Egyptian intellectuals and became convinced of the emancipatory potential of Arab nationalist movements. Although he was not won over by Arab nationalism at the time, he saw it as a useful intermediary for ensuring the eventual independence of North African countries like Morocco and Tunisia. He would also make subsequent UNESCO trips to Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco in 1958 and 1959 to survey the development of the social sciences in recently independent territories.\textsuperscript{379} Around the same time, Berque began to devote time and energy to understanding the crisis in Algeria. When he arrived in France in 1956 his first lectures at the Collège de France tackled North Africa’s colonial history with an

\textsuperscript{378} Sacriste, 135. The new chair at the Collège replaced Robert Montagne’s Chair of Western Expansion after the latter died in 1955. Jacques Berque had been introduced to Braudel through Augustin Berque, whom Braudel counted as a “friend” and “one of the best servants of France and French civilization.” Fernand Braudel, “Afrique du nord,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 6, no. 2 (April-June 1951), 277.

emphasis on Algeria. From 1957-1958, Berque led the University Committee for the Solution to the Algerian Problem. He described the aims of the committee’s first conference as offering an answer to the question “What is Algeria?”

From 1956 through 1962, Berque’s full-length studies and occasional lectures and essays interrogated the legacy of both colonial projects of modernization and the French social sciences’ understandings of North Africa (and the Arab world in general). In both cases he found the heritage of past projects and studies wanting, yet at the same time an unshakeable point of reference. Though Berque saw previous studies of the Orient as severely limited by a lack of expertise and chauvinistic assumptions, he nonetheless took from them what he could, always beginning with the assumption that those scholars worked in earnest. Even when one granted the validity of nationalist movements, it was not clear that post-colonial emancipation and self-determination should mean anything other than a fulfilment of modern projects begun under colonial rule. Berque’s essay “125 Years of Sociology of the Maghreb” and his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France grappled with the wider import of these traditions’ legacies while he still believed a third way existed as a solution to the war.

Berque’s move to Paris and installation at the Collège de France and EPHE coincided with his personal accounting of the good and bad of sociological studies of North Africa since France’s first expansion there in 1830. Berque’s approach was characteristic of most of his scholarship that followed: he went out of his way to applaud as many positive aspects of the field, his past and still living colleagues, while also delivering devastating critiques of their conclusions and methodologies. The first research conducted in North Africa by the Arab Bureaux attached to the colonial administration was certainly limited, and set up a series of

380 Quoted in Sacriste, 154.

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blindspots and uneven preoccupations that survived to the present. They focused on the tribe as the fundamental social unit to the exclusion of analyzing urban life; they posited a fundamental antithesis between Arabs and Berbers (often forgetting Jews of the region); despite the predominance of personal experience and testimony in their own writings, they hardly ever considered using testimony of the local inhabitants themselves; and they saw the whole project as a grand romantic adventure that could cure them of metropolitan bourgeois life.  

Furthermore, military men who lacked any specific training beyond currents of Saint-Simonianism staffed the Bureaux. Their conclusions were thus largely speculative, provoked more by nineteenth-century metropolitan concerns than adherence to method or data. This was a “Prestigious tradition! But dangerous.” Nonetheless, their research was largely conducted in earnest, and Berque was not willing to reproach them for not working according to contemporary ethnographic standards. The first monographs produced by the generation of specialists following the Arab Bureaux similarly had both the merit of tackling expansive topics such as comparative linguistics and accumulating all of the given sources and data on North Africa and the limitations imposed by earlier Orientalist assumptions and the conflicts that plagued the area’s nascent professionalization—rivalries, polemics, plagiarism accusations.

On the surface, Berque’s account of the genesis of his profession seems quite generous (and not simply from a twenty-first century post-colonial vantage point, either). Without a doubt it is markedly less biting than Charles-André Julien’s stance toward his fellow colonial

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381 Benjamin-Claude Brower has systematically analyzed this last item in A Desert Named Peace, Part IV.

382 Patricia Lorcin’s study of the military officers in Algeria gives further background to what the members of the Arab Bureau did and did not know. Lorcin’s account verifies many of Berque’s suspicions. Imperial Identities, especially Part II, Social Sciences and Military Men.

specialists. Yet with each moment in the development of the profession, Berque’s fellow colleagues could easily ask what might be left of these previous works, of which Berque spoke highly, once all of the particular biases, blindspots, and limitations were taken into account. And it seems, they would have to conclude, not much of substance. To take Émile-Félix Gautier’s work, for example, Berque claimed “The merit of E.-F. Gautier is that he constantly embraced, via his temperament more than any system, the greatest range of facts… It’s a thought capable of making great strides.” But whereas the forms of analysis within Gautier’s work are important, the attempt to reconcile structure with phenomena, mediate context and event, its content did not stand the test of time. His comments on Robert Montagne’s work followed a similar tone. It remains ambiguous whether this sort of analysis is the product of scholarly sincerity or thinly veiled insult. Not all of the scholars in his analysis were treated so ambiguously, though. The late specialist on Hispanic-Arab history Évariste Lévi-Provençal only received praise, as did his contemporaries Jean Dresch and Roger LeTourneau. And as a guiding theme, Berque posited that whenever a new observation is made the collective understanding of that topic grows, however mistaken the theory supporting the observation might be.384

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384 Ibid., 296, 309, 317. Berque cites Montagne’s last two works, L’évolution du Maroc and Naissance du proletariat marocain as having merit, but then notes that they missed the recent innovations of other specialists on urban sociology. It is perhaps telling that current commentators are divided on the overall tone of this essay. On the one hand, James Whidden views it as altogether critical, while Gilbert Albergoni, the editor of the second volume of Berque’s “minor writings,” is adamant that “Berque ne pense pas contre,” and the essay is an example of showing how a “savoir positif s’est construit, malgré et à travers ses errements.” James Whidden, “Jacques Berque,” 26-27; Gilbert Albergoni, “Présentation,” Opera Minora II, v.

Three years later, Berque provided a preface to a reedition of Gautier’s Mœurs et coutumes [1931], expanding his account of Gautier’s legacy. On the one hand, Gautier’s work was built on a commendable “love-drunk sociology of experience,” that prioritized systems of difference, and on the other, “The evolution of the last thirty years does not allow us to accept [Gautier’s] antitheses.” Berque, “En relisant Mœurs et coutumes,” Préface à E.-F. Gautier,
Beyond the individual contributions of specific specialists or schools, Berque did see common institutional limits on the study of North Africa since the 1830 invasion. Because the study of North Africa emerged in a colonial context, it was impossible to separate individual studies from their institutional and political support. This was perhaps most clear in the case of the Arab Bureaux, whose studies were “too engaged, too contiguous… with their object. Their sin was utilitarianism and impressionism.” But even subsequent researchers have been carried away by contemporary concerns and as a result left significant gaps in the historical record of North Africa. Sources for the process of the French conquest, as well as for local social and legal conflict, existed and were accessible. But their research did not meet the political demands of the present. The result had been the absence of a concrete study of the people of North Africa (l’homme maghrébin). Berque believed his own period showed promise of changing this ironic situation, even if it was a period where North Africans rebelled against the French. “After all,” Berque concluded by paraphrasing Renan, “it is possible for the truth to be sombre.”

Later the same year Berque reiterated his views on the state of the field and offered reflections on the political implications of contemporary North African sociology. From the very beginning of the lecture, Berque made a point to align himself with the tradition of scholarship he claimed Robert Montagne embodied, even beginning his lecture by portraying his own academic trajectory as a repetition of his deceased predecessor. It was obvious that any critique of French sociology coming from the outsider, newly-admitted to the home of Renan, risked throwing stones in glass houses. Berque also concluded the lecture on what today appears an overly optimistic note and defense of French tutelage in the Arab world. “I think the alliance

386 Ibid., 324.
between France and the Arab world is old,” he claimed, “too old to disappear so quickly, in one
deft blow from the winds of current events.” This was partly the fact of prolonged encounters
with colonized areas, but also due to the profound merits of French civilization that provided
“the language of the ‘left’ and of missionary education, the mistress of mundane elegance as
much as perversity, the vehicle of a humanism of [mutually] recognized values and of an
inquietude that questions them.”387 Algerian nationalism was certainly the result of the racism of
the colonial system and reification of separate ethnic identities, but even though Algeria could
not honestly be called part of France, France certainly could contribute to the creation of an
Algerian nation.388 Earlier the same year, he had described debates about the Algerian War as
focused on a “false problem.” As the rebellion in Algeria gained public recognition as a full-
scale war, Berque was convinced the only way through the crisis was via French support of some
kind. He saw the all-or-nothing, “kill or go home,” approach of some commentators as overly
simplistic binary thinking that should not be reified. The recognition that Algeria had a national
vocation of its own did not automatically mean France needed to sever all ties. Rather, France
had “yet to construct a national Algeria after the colonial Algeria… in the name of a tradition, a
continuity.”389 The tradition and continuity were both the greater Mediterranean heritages of
which France and North Africa were a product and the more recent inception of French
republican values since its colonial expansion. The current moment carried Enlightenment
potential for all sides: escaping the false dilemmas of pundits would be liberation from France’s

387 Berque also described French civilization’s status as “the Hellenism of the Arab
peoples,” meaning it occupied the same foundational role to the Arab orient as Greece did for the
occident. Berque, “Leçon inaugurale au Collège de France,” 1 December 1956, Opera Minor II,
223, 237-238.
388 Ibid., 710.

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“fetters,” while the continuation of Algerian nation-building meant aiding “the Arab peoples to liberate themselves from their idols.”

But beyond the Inaugural Lecture’s due formalities and hopeful prognoses of France’s future with the Arab world, Berque did offer a series of trenchant critiques of the sociological profession and intellectuals too quick to speak on the Arab world’s behalf. First and foremost was an indictment of the continued tendency to speak on behalf of Arabs without actually speaking to them or immersing oneself in their culture: “It is no longer possible today, if it ever were in the first place, to study what might become of the Arab language or civilization without the cooperation of Arabs.” Though abstract methods of quantification and measurement in fields like economics and demography were more than ever necessary, Berque warned against seeing them as an automatic key for divining the future. Careful attention to local constraints, customs, and habits was needed. Studying the vehicles of modern Arab renewal, such as the unifying force of radio broadcasts or the desires expressed in novels, make evident these previously silent dynamics. At the same time, however, Berque stressed that “This history is not autonomous.”

While it was not appropriate to simply rely on a rhetorical gesture of positing the Arab world as the antithesis of the western world—“alterité, according to our philosophers”—the modern Arab world was looking for its own identity within a world where the industrialized West had already determined the rules of the game. Invoking Octave Mannoni’s then-popular heuristic of colonial

390 Ibid., 703, 710. The idea of Algeria freeing itself from its own idols is an oblique early formulation of the movement Berque would later call the transition from the “sacral” to the “historic.” See below.

revolt, Berque cautioned, “This time, Caliban does not rebel against an enchanting Florentine, but against ‘already-existing conditions.’ In the background a tempest rages that no genie could appease. We invoke Ariel in vain. No contemporary revolt could succeed without being integrated into technical civilization, otherwise known as the merciless dominion of cause and effect.”

The Arab world could neither rely on a notion of radical alterity, cut off from the rest of the world, even in a moment of independence. Likewise, the sociologist of 1956 could not separate himself from current events. “The researcher is a man, of a particular country,” admitted Berque, adding that “Neglecting this fact amounts to a personal fault, hiding it amounts to lying.” Responsible science took the world as it presented itself, neither fleeing nor encouraging conflict.

The colloquia Berque led in 1957 and 1958 showed the type of active engagement called for in the Inaugural Lecture by focusing on the Algerian War. Over these years Berque’s position, like that of many intellectuals who tried to hold out hope for Franco-Algerian reconciliation, radicalized in favor of Algerian independence. In his June 1957 colloquium, he reiterated his belief that whatever position one took, it had to be first of all based on the facts on the ground. Any solution had to take into account the multiplicity of groups in Algeria between the two extreme poles of French Algerians and Muslim Algerians. A position that took the rights of one side over those of the other could not qualify as a solution, but projects for national independence could offer a chance at building a new identity capacious enough to include all groups. Through his November and April colloquia he reiterated the importance of supporting

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national independence as the only viable solution, but he backed away from his language of French tutelage. Independence would have to go beyond proposals for greater metropolitan integration and an independent Algerian would need to be a free and equal partner with France in any future relationships.\footnote{See Sacriste, 154-162, for a detailed overview of the colloquia.}

The conclusions Berque reached in his colloquia had a broader public audience as well, thanks to shorter editorials in \textit{Esprit} and \textit{Le Monde}. In the March, 1958, issue of \textit{Esprit}, Berque agreed with FLN criticisms of French intellectuals who only saw the war in terms of static “ideologies” and “sentiments” that failed to capture the realities of the war. He also presented a position that replaced his vision of French tutelage and continued through the end of the war. “I do not believe,” he stated, “that the existence of these new North African nations represent a disavowal, but rather the continuation and surpassing of the work France has done in these countries.” If Algeria had been a nation of apprentice-Republicans, now they were journeymen on track to overtake the position of their former masters.\footnote{Berque, “Pour la paix en Algérie,” \textit{Esprit} 26, no 3 (March 1958), 491-492.} The May 13 coup and return of De Gaulle only radicalized this position and made Berque less optimistic that the European population in Algeria still had any right to be a part of Algeria’s future. As he explained in \textit{Le Monde}, a divorce from France was now inevitable, but was part of a “natural evolution” that demonstrated “the validity of the French project in this country.” Not so for the Europeans in Algeria, though, for whom the terms “revolution” and “committee of public safety” do not mean the same thing as they do in Paris. The metropolitan French could still see “a number of differences between Robespierre and General Massu.” The French Revolutionary tradition was
alive in the colonies, but not among the European population that coopted its symbols in order to enforce a colonial status quo.\(^{396}\)

This change in attitude toward the future of France’s relations with Algeria accompanied his first major statements on the historical trajectory of the Orient (by which he meant the Middle East inhabited by Arab peoples). First in *Les Arabes* (1959) and then expanded in *Les Arabes, d’hier à demain* (1960), Berque outlined a view of history informed by his earliest writings as a colonial administrator. Now, he supported his vision of the need for technological reform and innovation with a mixture of references to contemporary social theorists and philosophers ranging from Georges Gurvitch, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and François Perroux to Gilbert Simondon, Ferdinand de Saussure, Henri Lefebvre, and Martin Heidegger. In this historical vision, two ruptures punctuated world history: the emergence from the paleolithic era with the institution of agriculture and sedentary societies, and the passage from pre-industrial modes of production to rationalized industry. The latter shift first occurred in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century. The Orient was currently on the verge of going through the same shift; it was torn between a pre-industrial “sacral” orientation and an industrialized “historic” orientation.\(^{397}\)

While on the one hand this schema looks in many ways like orientalist dehistoricization of the Orient, Berque did not intend to claim the Orient had no history, but rather that its history was coded in sacred imagery. The sacral relied on a cyclical vision of time punctuated by ritual, tradition, and natural cycles—rhythms that look a good deal similar to early *Annales* analyses of *ancien régime* France that Berque read in the 30s. The historic, by contrast, displayed a self-conscious version of technical progress. This framework effectively recoded the reigning developmental discourse, outlining a technologically-based Hegelianism. An historical time lag

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\(^{397}\) Berque, *Les arabes, d’hier à demain*, 46
existed between the Orient and Occident, but European colonial projects and western technological norms catalyzed the closing of this gap.\footnote{\textit{…the history of the Orient appears as the inverse of that of the contemporary West. This last fittingly begins by a technical revolution, in order, little by little, to found a national entity, from economic entities, then to pass to perspectives of social reorganization, always moving from the most concrete to the most ideal, and from force to justice. For the Orient, it will be exactly the inverse. It commences through the ideal, or at least through the claim to justice. One might almost say of this Oriental history what Marx said of Hegel’s philosophy: one must turn it over, since it proceeds by walking on its head.” \textit{Ibid.}, 90.}}

Between the Orient’s self-idealized past and the challenges of the recent colonial past and present, Berque argued the West needed to be inserted as a third, mediating “historic” and “philosophical” term. Of course, the West’s imperial expansion had inserted itself into this dynamic and changed institutional and physical environments in the Arab world. But as the avatar of historical progress, the processes of industrialization begun in the eighteenth century, varied and haphazard in their unfolding, existed as regulatory ideals for the Orient. Current anticolonial revolts were therefore not simply a revolt where “the colonial age is simultaneously the object” of revolt, those colonial ventures were “also the motor of their revolt.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 25-26.} This was not an automatic transposition of the West’s economic and technological versions of modernity, nor did it necessarily require further integration into imperialist markets. From this dialectic emerged a new set of possibilities for the Arab world that matched the variation already existing in the various spaces counted under the sign Orient. “Concretely,” Berque reasoned, “the study [of this phenomenon] must distinguish according to psychological stages, geographic zones, the phases of an evolution.” The result is an allochronic map of the Orient’s path toward an appropriated western modernization: these evolutionary phases “may even be observed with an experimental clarity because the diverse Arab milieux reveal the successive stages and put into
play the various themes of modernization.” Berque was perhaps overly optimistic of the international economic rewards of such a process, parrying the pessimism of François Perroux’s theory of economic domination. New nations would place themselves “out of circulation,” [hors-marché] and create economies of “de-domination.”

The development of the Orient, then, sits somewhere between analogy and homology with the West—the two modernizations have the same source in Western technology, but similarities between their developmental stages and outcomes remain at a structural level—evolutionary biologists and psychoanalysts describe as the relationship between ontogenic and phylogenetic development. Each new instance of modernization in the Orient would necessarily undergo the same essential developments as their modern Western predecessors, albeit with local cultures, recent historical experiences, and preserved traditions producing a new species of modernization as a result. Berque’s references to European revolutions certainly show this dynamic at work. For instance, when describing the process of adapting and at times abandoning local traditions and cultures in the process of modernization, Berque opined that “Every society, and perhaps [Arab society] more so than others is today constrained to choose between rival values and at times between mutually-exclusive options.” He then noted that the same drama of

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400 Ibid., 107-108.
401 François Perroux, “Esquisse d’une théorie de l’économie dominante,” Economie appliquée 1, nos. 2-3 (1948), 243-300. It should also be noted that Perroux’s argument relies on different conceptual bases than the ones Berque employs to counter the thesis of domination. For instance, Perroux’s notion of an economic nation is much more heterodox and malleable than the nineteenth-century notion of a nation-state Berque relies on, since the former allows for slipperiness of entities like transnational firms capable of crossing traditional national boundaries. See Michel Beaud, “Effet de domination, capitalisme et économie mondiale chez François Perroux,” L’Économie politique 4, no. 20 (2003), 64-77.
402 Berque, Les arabes, d’hier à demain, 45.
the “liquidation of values” is littered throughout Michelet’s *History of the French Revolution*.

Revolutions in the Orient are therefore only the logical long-term consequence of the West’s imperial expansion, despite the West’s refusal to admit as much: “Europe, and above all France, refuses to acknowledge Arab fidelity to [Europe’s] lessons in their national and social upheavals. Though they are an historical accelerant, they paradoxically, ruinously remain attached to the past.”

Berque’s description of the Arab Orient largely left the Maghreb out of the discussion, but his subsequent study of the Maghreb in the interwar years applied his analysis of the Orient to Charles-André Julien’s basic narrative of the growth in nationalism during the first four decades of the twentieth century. As he explained in a discussion with Jean-Marie Domenach and Louis Massignon, the Maghreb had already differed from the rest of the Arab world before European colonial expansion and its colonial experience were much more extensive than elsewhere in the Orient. “In the Orient,” he explained, “only a few social or confessional minorities had been truly touched by the West… It’s the opposite in the Maghreb, and especially so in Algeria.” He felt he needed to write a completely new book to do the subject justice.

Composed in the final three years of the Algerian War, *The Maghreb between the Two Wars* portrayed the political history of the interwar years as the self-destruction of French imperialism as the self-fulfillment of the civilizing mission.

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404 Berque, *Les arabes, d’hier à demain*, 153, 153n22. Berque specifically calls attention to Volume 1, page 220 of the 1847 edition, the beginning of Chapter V, which discusses the clergy’s break with the people over the National Assembly’s August Decrees of 1789.

405 Berque, *Les arabes, d’hier à demain*, 244.

406 Though there are numerous asides in the text where the Maghreb is mentioned as a comparison, for instance on the potential of a politically energized peasantry. *Ibid.*, 148.

By the early sixties, Tunisia and Morocco had already gained their autonomy, and Berque considered Algeria’s independence a foregone conclusion. In this respect his study was largely an autopsy of the colonial system, looking for the root causes of its death. Elsewhere, Berque was fond of reciting Gautier’s opinion that “Only the past is easy to predict… the future is an ironist.” Regarding the Maghreb, “Now that we know how the system has ended, it is easy, perhaps too easy,” Berque warned, “to say where it led.” But he considered as his goal the reconstruction of the “totality” of the Maghreb’s transformation. Berque’s distance from his topic would be “hardly more than a feint,” especially given his proximity to the events; he nonetheless thought whatever distance he could manage from the interwar years had granted him the ability to discern the “sense” of the history.

The direction of the Maghreb’s history matched the rest of the decolonizing Arab world. Imperialism transformed the sacral orientation of the Maghreb and in the process the French civilizing mission fulfilled its project in its own self-destruction: “the interwar Maghreb, triumph of the colonial project, nourished its own loss. It contained within itself, as the philosopher would say, its own negation.” The Maghreb’s unhappy consciousness in the interwar period grew from the tension built into the colonial project and the subsequent tensions within modernizing Maghrebian society. The former was epitomized between the “conflict between the thing and sign” [de la chose et du signe]. French identity and Maghrebin identity were mutually opaque, and the idealized notion of French values, “the great principles of 1789,” matched neither term. The actions of the French never lived up to their own rhetoric—the colonial venture

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408 Berque, “En relisant Mœurs et Coutumes,” 278. Berque put the same sentiment slightly differently in “Sciences sociales et décolonisation,” Tiers-Monde 9-10 (1962), 1: “It is easy to predict the past. But it is much more difficult… to analyze what the future holds.”

409 Berque, “Preface,” Le Maghreb entre deux guerres, 9, 10.

410 Ibid., 11.
was “just as wasteful of the faculties of the colonizer as of the colonized’s existence.” The only thing saving this historical process from tragedy was the belief that “history carries in itself its own remedy and perhaps its pardon.” In the process of fulfilling French ideals, however, the Maghreb also had to enter into a struggle with itself, an attempt to mediate its past and future orientations. The result was a new *jihâd* in the Maghreb, according to the dual meanings of the term as a struggle against an outside force and a struggle within oneself: “less as a war against the Other than as a war against the self, against a certain sort of self. And it is equally in this sense that one might interpret the title of this book.”

Amidst this admixture of pre-colonial, colonial, and idealized French identities, the French Revolution again carried a privileged position as both referential analogue and revolutionary standard. The new political force of Islam after World War I, for instance, turned from being “a moral reserve and ultimate shelter” to assuming, under the *ulama*, “a rationalism that one would nearly call Jacobin.” Rabat, Tunis, and Algiers were similarly portrayed as new Parises, where the people of *la rue* were the protagonists of a struggle against a corrupt and despotic government.

In retrospect, Berque characterized his stance on the Algerian War as typical of most leftist intellectuals in Paris. None of them planned on taking up arms against France, and only a small minority, such as Francis Jeanson, actively aided the FLN. It was the job of Algerian

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411 Berque, *Le maghreb entre deux guerres*, 66, 68, 412.
412 *Ibid.*, 423. In the two sentences prior to this statement, Berque speculated about the *longue durée* of Mediterranean exchanges: “Carthage, then Rome and Byzantium, [the spread of] Islam then France, and now an Arabo-Berber *reconquista*. From those one only knows too many great pains.”
414 *Ibid.*, 68. The characterization of the *ulema* as proto-Jacobins runs throughout the book.
415 The insight is James Whidden’s, and once the reader looks for it in the narrative “the street” stands out as a character of its own. James Whidden, “Jacques Berque,” 29-30.
nationalists “to make their own revolution.” Berque’s job, as he saw it, “was to make the legitimacy and plausibility of their revolution comprehensible to us [metropolitan French], and to show that it did not necessarily mean a catastrophe for our people.”\(^{416}\) Yet the importance of the French Revolutionary tradition in Berque’s developmentalist history of the third world clearly went beyond simply translating foreign events to known referents. Even when one could agree that Algeria was not, in fact, France, and that it constituted its own state in formation, the history of France’s own technical and political development was the fount from which much of this new nation emerged.

The rhetorical frame that portrayed the fruits of the civilizing mission as finally ripe found echoes in other analyses of Algeria’s future prospects. In journalist Alfred Fabre-Luce’s *Tomorrow in Algeria* (1958), we can see the elements of Berque’s lessons about the result of France’s mentorship in universal ideals and recapitulation of modern politics.

Thus all of the elements of an explosive situation find themselves united. France has even lit the match. In a country where the laws give one ‘French’ voice the weight of eight Muslim voices (and, from the outset, elections are not free), it has celebrated the cult of Democracy. The tribes have felt the grandeur of the Nation. These insecure students, whom homegrown French do not truly treat as their equals, have been given the tales of the Revolution and Resistance to read and they have been taught the art of translating the cries of empty stomachs into universal formulas. To this framework, too, they only bring a portion of their civilization. Because they have not only endured the experiences for which these lessons have provided a model, they have also *assimilated*, and in a certain sense, even *gone beyond* them.\(^{417}\)

For both Berque and Fabre-Luce, the French presence in Algeria destabilized the population and gave them the tools with which to right colonial wrongs.

Berque’s narrative of the war and the future development of Algeria found support among FLN militants themselves. Those located in Paris were frequent attendees at his Collège

While in prison in France, from 1957 to 1961, Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi read Berque’s writings with other FLN inmates. Ibrahimi thought Berque was overly-generous about the positive legacy of French imperialism, but he nonetheless concluded that “Any young Arab of our epoch, faithful to his values and aware of both his potential and of his ‘dangerous stance,’ would recognize himself several times over in your book.” In other correspondence, Ibrahimi’s concerns for the next generation’s need to find an authentic relationship to Western progress matched Berque’s arguments as well. He confessed as much, writing to Berque about reading in *The Arabs from Yesterday to Tomorrow*, that the book “answers to a number of questions on the Arab world and its entry into technological civilization.”

**Malthus, Sieyès, and the Third World**

As influential as Julien and Berque’s theorizations of North African history were during the French-Algerian War, just as important were arguments about the future of France’s presence in North Africa based on demographic analyses. Along with other social sciences such as ethnography and sociology, demographic analysis played an important role in the conceptualization and evolution of French decolonization, both inside government institutions and within the realm of public debate. General overviews of postwar history and specialized

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418 Sacriste, 150-153.


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accounts of the war often cite Sauvy as the economist turned demographer who coined the term “third world” in the 1952 essay “Three Worlds, One Planet,” an essay that made explicit reference to the French Revolution, but Sauvy’s place in changes in thinking about North Africa’s past and future went beyond terminology.  

Sauvy’s influence on the development of demography in postwar France has been well documented, yet the influence of his demographic publications on the writings of intellectuals in favor of an independent Algeria suggest his influence extended beyond this institutional domain. 

Analyses of Sauvy’s contribution to debates surrounding Algerian decolonization tend to fall within two camps, both of which obscure Sauvy’s own position on decolonization and the Algerian War, but grasp the importance of how Sauvy’s demographic theories were received. In one version, Sauvy is assumed to have intended a straightforward anticolonial message synonymous with the aims of the 1955 Bandung Conference.  

And in another version, Sauvy’s demographic analyses of North Africa are assumed to have been constrained by the racist ghosts of Vichy-era population studies and only aided and abetted a functionalist view of decolonization that minimized the French state’s violence and the concerted efforts of Algerian revolutionaries. Like those of Berque and Julien, Sauvy’s analyses of historical change in North Africa relied on the French Revolution as a historical reference. He likewise also held out hope for continued French developmental efforts in Algeria to prevent the radical break we now

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associate with Algerian decolonization before embracing the cause of Algerian nationalism. Despite his own public commitments as well as the emphasis his population theory placed on debunking false binaries and historical fatalism, his developmentalist rhetoric provided a vocabulary that naturalized a decisive break with France as a foregone conclusion.

Sauvy began his career working as an economist and statistician for the Léon Blum, Daladier, and Paul Reynaud administrations. After serving in the Italian Front in 1940, he worked in the Vichy finance ministry and consulted for the Fondation Alexis Carrel. Following the Liberation, he consulted with de Gaulle’s Provisional Government. In the postwar decades Sauvy’s career followed a three-tiered track linking his coordination of French population policy, the development and popularization of his theory of population change, and his involvement with North African demographics.

The problematics of demographic study in postwar France were inseparable from fears of social decline and revolution. When viewed in the context of the history of the study of populations in France, these concerns were certainly nothing new. What changed, however, was the location of the object of study. Whereas population studies from the eighteenth century through the 1940s were concerned primarily with the French population, in the postwar the focus became global. The link between population trends and social vitality is part of the larger history of population studies in France, going back as far as the late Enlightenment. Then, the figure of Malthus’ 1798 *An Essay on the Principle of Population* loomed large. However, despite French Malthusian fears in the early half of the nineteenth century, by the nineteenth century’s end, those who commented on and studied populations were not worried about problems of over-population and material scarcity. Instead, they were predominantly natalists worried about the
steady decline of French fertility that had begun the century earlier.\textsuperscript{424} World War One and the interwar only increased these natalist concerns, and both the Popular Front and Vichy governments were concerned with reversing the trend of an aging non-reproducing nation.\textsuperscript{425}

After the Liberation, the Provisional French Government disbanded Vichy’s population institutions, selectively prosecuting those deemed collaborators. The Institut national d’études démographiques (INED) replaced these institutions in 1946 with Sauvy as the head of the group. The Provisional Government of France placed INED under the purview of the Ministry of Public Health and charged it with “studying demographic problems in all of their incarnations.”\textsuperscript{426} The goal of the institute was to provide information and advice to France in the wake of World War Two, but from very early on the institute and its journal, Population, published a diverse array of inquiries into global populations.\textsuperscript{427} This global focus was partially driven by then-forming Cold War considerations among other major western demographic entities in the postwar. In the eyes of America and its allies, economic development was one of the best tools for combatting Soviet influence.\textsuperscript{428} However, in the case of INED, providing the government with policy advice on the


\textsuperscript{427} For instance, the first issue of \textit{Population} carried a study of agricultural resources in Europe by Paul Vincent, a study of the location of industry and its effects on birth rates by Louis Chevalier, along with a study on immigration by Sauvy. \textit{Population} 1, no 1 (1946), 9-19, 21-34, 91-98.

administration and control of North Africa was a more important driving force behind such a global purview.⁴²⁹

Sauvy arguably carried the most influence in postwar French demography through his appointments within France and the United Nations as well as his general commitment to popularizing demographic knowledge to inform public debate. Outside of INED, Sauvy held the Chair of Social Demography at the Collège de France from 1959 to 1969 and was France’s representative on the United Nations’ Population Commission from its inception in 1946 to 1974. He was convinced, however, that although specialists should play an important role in shaping and directing public debate, the ideas of specialists should not be closed off from the average citizen. In a strong Republic it is the duty of specialists to inform democratic debate.⁴³⁰ In this respect, he published numerous studies of world population trends directed at non-specialist audiences and regularly contributed essays and articles to L’Observateur and L’Express in the 1950s and 60s.

These engagements made specialist accounts of national and international population problems accessible to lay readers and worked to dispel numerous demographic questions mal posées and false dichotomies. Neither the Malthusian approach of merely limiting the number of births in a given population nor the Marxian approach of ameliorating standards of living was an adequate way of thinking about population trends. Rather, both sides of the equation deserved


⁴³⁰ As Sauvy put it in 1958, “The freedom to inform should be matched by the duty to inform… Well informed, men are citizens—misinformed, they are subjects.” Sauvy, “L’économie, La République… et la suite,” L’Express (5 June 1958), 13. Sauvy repeated the latter half of the equation four months later, after the referendum legitimating Charles de Gaulle’s return to power. Sauvy, “Pas de Regrets!” L’Express, (2 Oct 1958), 6. See also his concluding remarks in Le pouvoir et l’opinion: essai de psychologie politique et sociale (Paris: Payot, 1947), 185-188.
consideration. While technological advances and a well-developed infrastructure could raise the
“natural ceiling” of a given population to accommodate greater life expectancy and a steady birth
rate, birth control and other measures which reduce birth rates could also bring the ratio of
annual births to deaths to manageable levels.431 Just as industrialization in Europe correlated with
a lower birth rate and a higher standard of living, developing the industrial and economic
infrastructure of underdeveloped nations would provide a solution to future threats of
overpopulation. As Sauvy put it in his General Theory of Population, every society must choose
who lives and who dies: policy choices lay bare the priorities of any given polity and always
contain moral implications.432

One of the main theoretical approaches embodied by Sauvy’s work and the studies done
under his direction was historical. For demographers, history could provide “a demographic
observatory.” 433 As with Berque’s developmentalist assumptions, periods of demographic
change could be used as guideposts for future demographic development in less-advanced areas.
In order to understand the future of global populations, one needed to first of all cast their eyes
on the development of the modern western industrialized world, since it represented the telos of
global development. Although the choice of historical referents one chose when doing historical
demography depended on the researcher and the specific questions posed, the historical break in
the French past embodied by the French Revolution of 1789 played a particularly important role
in demographic analysis of North Africa from the postwar through the Algerian War.

432 Sauvy, Théorie générale de la population, 2 vols (Paris: Presses universitaires de
433 I take this phrase from the title of chapter 11 in L’intelligence démographique,
“L’histoire comme observatoire démographique,” 215-239.
The French Revolution was always already in the background of these postwar demographic studies. Standards for premodern fertility rates, for instance, were normalized at the birth rate of old regime France. *Population*’s top two contributors to North African demographics, Louis Henry and Louis Chevalier, transitioned from INED to working on histories of the French population in the old regime and nineteenth century. Their writings on France and North Africa shared common assumptions as well: for Chevalier, the connection was between unchecked population growth and social and political unrest; for Henry, both pre-Revolutionary France and North Africa posed methodological problems for accurately measuring population since neither source base had robust systems of data collection.\(^{434}\) Outside of INED, Marcel Reinhard produced the main reference for the history of the world’s population and founded the *Société de démographie historique* in 1963. Reinhard was also Chair of the Institut d’histoire de la Révolution Française (1955-1973) and a specialist on the French population during the Revolution.\(^{435}\)

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Though these three demographers’ specific contributions were far from homogenous, their use of the French Revolution to describe demographic changes in North Africa contributed to the understanding of Algeria as on the brink of revolution. It is not simply that these three demographers associated with INED, or even INED as an institution, were directly involved with Algerian nationalist activities. Rather, their analyses of North African populations corroborated the notion that Algerians were no longer an ahistorical or historically frozen people, but were on an historically modern path with modern political potential independent of French administration. Algeria’s fertility rate was the same as pre-Revolutionary France. Like France at the end of the eighteenth-century, social and economic conditions were ill-equipped to deal with this increased fertility. Lessons from France’s demographic past suggested these conditions lead to social unrest and revolution.

Sauvy’s popular accounts of demographic change built on this consensus about Algeria’s future and formed an important part of arguments in favor of Algerian independence. These discussions brought the specialized and technical reports that researchers such as Henry and Chevalier conducted directly into the realm of accessible public discourse. While Algeria’s future had been tied to the future of France since the beginning of France’s civilizing mission, by the end of the French-Algerian War the future of Algeria would be synonymous with its independence. Demography and French history, particularly with respect to the Revolution, were conceptually, methodologically, and institutionally linked in France.

Both the historical importance of the French Revolution in demographic research and the moral implications of development plans are essential for understanding Sauvy’s views of France’s North African territories, whose steadily-increasing population was a continual touchstone in Sauvy’s popular works on demographic trends. From the very first INED studies
on North African demography, Sauvy connected increasing North African populations to the threat of political crisis and instability. According to Sauvy, if one thing was for certain it was that in order to avoid war or “social instability,” France must “prepare for sensible growth in the [North African] populations and over the longue durée.” 436 France and its North African territories existed in a reciprocal relation with one another: while France’s population declined at a time when it needed an influx of skilled labor, the North African population was growing at a pace which outstripped its available infrastructure. The solution was to push for a more equal and more just French Union and encourage emigration from North Africa to the metropole. 437 While Sauvy’s concerns bore considerable weight with the government, other population advisers set a more pessimistic tone. Matthew Connelly has noted the prevalence of demographic concerns in the French Government in the beginning years of the war as well as the possibility that demographic trends influenced the military’s counterinsurgency tactics, lending them an exterminationist valence. 438 Whereas Sauvy saw a demographic surplus in North Africa as a potential resource, Fernand Boverat, worried that increased North Africans in metropolitan France would destabilize family planning measures. 439

If Sauvy’s early formulation of North Africa’s demographic problems seems less than radical, even in contrast to dominant government worries, Sauvy’s most famous iteration of the

437 This message was also expressed in Alfred Sauvy and Robert Debré, Des français pour la France: Le problème de la population (Paris: Gallimard. NRF, 1946). While it would be wrong to see Sauvy’s immediate postwar population opinions as antinatalist or multicultural avant la lettre, it would also be wrong to assume a direct continuity with prewar attitudes of earlier natalists like Georges Mauco. As Sauvy and Debré stated, “In order to see clearly, we must thus let go of the doctrines born of exasperated nationalist passions like pan Germanism. Those thinkers who defend these doctrines betray science” (125).
438 Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution, 87-90.
439 Connelly, Fatal Misconception, 121.
problem, “Three Worlds, One Planet,” upped the rhetorical ante. The essay appeared in the summer of 1952 in the left-leaning magazine *L’Observateur* and its neologism “third world” soon became essential vocabulary throughout the world. The essay argued that the developing nations of the world constituted a geopolitical power with at least as much importance for the world as the powers of the liberal West and communist East. According to Sauvy, the gridlock between the two world powers contained vitriol reminiscent for the wars of the religion and threatened to hinder any real progress for either side. However, though people were preoccupied with the two worlds of the Cold War, Sauvy argued that “we too often forget there is a third world, the most important one, and chronologically speaking the first one.” Placing the third world as the oldest of the three existing worlds demonstrated demography’s implicit historical understanding that existing non-modern societies could stand in as examples of pre-modern worlds (and vice versa). The communist East and the capitalist West had in the previous two centuries left the rest of the world behind and embarked upon two different paths to modernity. Looking to the future, Sauvy concluded that the third world might just as easily choose the path of the West as that of the East. As the result of imperial interactions, the underdeveloped regions of the world had entered into a new phase of their development. Sauvy presented the third world as not only premodern, but “feudal”; the third world’s birth rate, he noted, was the same as France’s in the eighteenth century. According to Sauvy, this third world was not merely one frozen in time and a relic of the past. For relatively low cost, vaccinations and insecticides had


441 The majority of French writing on North African society in the first half of the twentieth century used the label “feudal.”
the power to save lives. As a result, the third world had the premodern fertility of the *ancien régime* but an increasingly modern life expectancy as well. This greater life expectancy, while increasing economic output in these regions, would ultimately be problematic without proper investments in infrastructure. Political consequences, too, followed from the movement into the new phase in the third world’s development. From one end of the Mediterranean to the other, from the Côte d’Azur to Tunisia and Egypt, the West could already see evidence of the changes Sauvy described. These events furthermore went deeper than simple “palace revolutions or the rumblings of a few ambitious men.” “Because finally,” Sauvy concluded, echoing Sieyès’ pamphlet from 1789, “this Third World that is ignored, exploited, despised like the Third Estate also wishes to be something.” Far from a passive network of impoverished territories, the demographic reality of the third world also entailed a politics beyond the East and West’s opposition—one that had revolutionary potential. In order to avoid political disaster, it was time for the West to pay proper attention to the third world.

The ideological weight suggested by Sauvy’s third world-third estate analogy did not alter his earlier views of French policy in Algeria. In the early years of the Algerian War, Sauvy applied his general analysis of developing nations to popular articles on the state of affairs in Algeria in the weekly magazine *L’Express*. While the analogy of developing nations to the revolutionary masses of *ancien régime* France appealed to anti-colonialist activists eager to use

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442 At the price of 68 (old) francs a person, for example, “a whole region of Algeria was treated with DDT to stave off malaria.” Or, approximately the purchasing power of 1,46 euros in 2014, according to the Insitut national de la statistique et des études économiques’ online currency converter [http://www.insee.fr/fr/service/reviser/calcul-pouvoir-achat.asp?sommeDepart=68&deviseDepart=AncFranc&anneeDepart=1952&deviseArrivee=Euro&anneeArrivee=2014](http://www.insee.fr/fr/service/reviser/calcul-pouvoir-achat.asp?sommeDepart=68&deviseDepart=AncFranc&anneeDepart=1952&deviseArrivee=Euro&anneeArrivee=2014)

the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen against the French Republic, Sauvy’s early political essays in _L’Express_ remained hopeful of the prospects of continued French rule in Algeria until 1957.\footnote{Another anecdotal origin for his use of the French Revolution as an historical reference could be the fact that he simply liked this period in French history. In his memoirs Sauvy makes a point to note that his schoolteacher knew how to sell the 18th Century better than the teacher in charge of covering the 17th. Sauvy, _La vie en plus_, 20.}

The position Sauvy initially held on Algeria mirrored that of many colonial humanists on the left—if Algeria is part of France then it should be consistently legislated as such. In the light of Algeria’s high rate of fertility and the lack of basic infrastructure for the Muslim population, governing Algeria responsibly would necessitate extensive investments in infrastructure as well as a more open policy of worker migration from Algeria to the metropole. Whereas postwar French infrastructure and standards of living steadily increased after World War II, Algeria’s infrastructure was inadequate even for its present population, let alone an increased future population. As early as 1955 Sauvy offered the solution to problems in Algeria in the form of an ultimatum that sounded structurally analogous to the calculus of Bernard Legatte and Raymond Cartier. Legatte and Cartier had begun to publicly weight France’s postwar empire in cost-benefit terms, ultimately claiming that it was against France’s economic interests to maintain so many overseas holdings, particularly in Africa.\footnote{Bernard Legatte, “L’empire, source de notre prosperité?” _Le Monde_ (26, 27, 28 July 1956); Raymond Cartier, “En Afrique Noire avec Raymond Cartier,” _Paris Match_ 383-384 (18, 25 August 1956).} For Sauvy, the choice was clear: either commit to infrastructure development in Algeria that would make good on the French dictum that “Algeria is France” (and not a colony), or embrace an independent Algerian nation. Sauvy’s position in this article, however, was not one meant to support the latter proposition. His stated goal was to advocate for the proper treatment of Algeria. The act of “pleading for the weakest
and worst treated part of France” was far from treasonous, he reasoned, rather it was the “best way to prevent a definitive break.”

As he would put it later that year, dismissing the conclusions of *cartierisme*, “The argument that France should abandon Algeria ‘because it costs too much’ is insufficient.”

French expansion into Algeria had caused its problematic demographic patterns. Yet Sauvy believed, like Julien and Berque in their own ways, that the French state also provided the tools necessary to fix the situation. The problem itself contained its solution.

These early essays for *L’Express* did not have the impact that Sauvy hoped they would, either for the general population or Algerian nationalist supporters. For the metropolitan public, rather than highlight the necessity of proper investment in Algeria, Sauvy’s suggestions for reform characterized the prospects of Franco-Algerian reconciliation and integration as a lost cause. Sauvy recalled overhearing passengers on a train discussing his articles in *L’Express*, opining, “If it’s really like that, me, I’d abandon Algeria.”

Algerian nationalists justifiably wondered why Muslim Algerians should trust the French government to deliver on promises made since the 1930s and speculated that such reform programs would only continue French imperialism under new guises. In an open letter to Sauvy, Charles Robert Ageron, one of Julien’s students, presented a scathing critique of the argument:

Nonetheless, M. Sauvy, you seem generous and revolutionary, because you affirm that one should end at a fusion of the metropolitan and Algerian populations in the name of a sort of reciprocity of territorial occupations… Algeria must be integrated into France because Algeria must be our ‘South.’

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448 Sauvy, *La vie en plus*, 144-145.
Even if Sauvy’s intentions were pure, Ageron reasoned, it was hard for him to believe that the controllers of French capital would ever agree to make such massive investments in order to raise the standard of living for Muslims.\textsuperscript{449}

Two years later, in the midst of the public scandals around the French military’s use of torture and suppression of pro-nationalist dissent, like many other intellectuals originally in favor of French reform in Algeria, Sauvy reversed his position. At a conference held at the Centre du Landy, Sauvy argued that not only did Algeria become an underdeveloped territory by virtue of France’s colonial domination, as he had argued before, but that this underdevelopment was a primary cause of nationalist rebellion and a reason for Algerian independence.\textsuperscript{450} Sauvy’s argument was twofold. First, based on economic projections provided by specialists at INED, it could no longer be said that sufficient development of Algeria’s infrastructure “costs too much,” but rather the costs of development were unrealistic. Even if the population of Algeria ceased to grow at the rate of other under-developed nations and all went according to plan, France would need to spend an estimated FF 507 billion by 1966. Furthermore, Algeria would most likely always be economically inferior to the metropole, whether or not the proper investments could be made.\textsuperscript{451} Secondly, Sauvy referred to the psychological detriment of colonialism as outlined by Albert Memmi’s \textit{Portrait of the Colonized}, published in 1957. The inferiority complex caused

\textsuperscript{449} C. Ageron, “Lettre Ouvert à M. Sauvy,” \textit{Consciences Maghrébines} 5 (1955), np, copy found in Fonds Daniel Guérin, F delta 0721/78/5, Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Nanterre. Ageron’s original underscored the last sentence and used the English word “South.”

\textsuperscript{450} Alfred Sauvy, “Le sous-développement économique et les conditions de développement.” The conference’s talks were published in \textit{La question algérienne}, by Jean Dresch, Charles-André Julien, Henri Marrou, Alfred Sauvy, Pierre Stibbe (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1958), 97-120. For more on this conference, see Chapter 1.

by domination of all types, Sauvy concluded, meant that a prosperous Algeria needed its independence. Even a loose form of federated association with France would only reproduce colonial anxieties under new guises, which would harm economic development. Once free from imperial domination, Algerians would be able to take the necessary steps needed to reform their own infrastructure that the French were unable and unwilling to do. Far from resigning in the face of their demographic difficulties, the fact of the Algerian uprising illustrated that the will to remake Algeria’s future already existed. As Sauvy put it, “Muslims, one often says, are passive [mous], fatalists, and have no sense of organization. Recent events lead us to revise this cliché.”

In a dry and matter-of-fact tone somewhat odds with the rest of his essay, Sauvy concluded, “Thus, from considerations strictly economic and demographic, naturally applied to the experiences of other countries, we are led to recommend an emancipation that oppressed peoples claim for themselves with violence.” His argument was, of course, not strictly economic and demographic, even if he strategically framed it as only a matter of data. From the outset of the essay Sauvy invoked the moral stakes of French rule in Algeria when he ruled out the Malthusian option of simply pulling all investments from Algeria to induce heightened mortality rates and relieve demographic pressure. Sauvy saw the arguments in favor of this approach, most notably promoted by the American William Vogt, as particularly reprehensible. Though he cited Vogt in his text, Sauvy undoubtedly knew that this theory held sway in some corners of the government, particularly those who used demographic analyses to support resettlement camps in Algeria and encourage as much military destruction as possible.

454 Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution, 89.
Invocations of North African demography were ubiquitous in discussions of Algerian independence during the Algerian War and attest to both the power of specialists in post-war France as well as the effectiveness of Sauvy’s commitment to public outreach. INED’s analyses and Sauvy’s own statements on Algeria gained an audience well beyond the chambers of the government. Francis and Collette Jeanson’s *Outlaw Algeria*, one of the first books arguing for Algerian independence once the war began, contained a separate chapter on the demographic state of Algeria and cited one of Sauvy’s essays from *L’Express*. For the Jeansons the demographic trends and lack of the necessary social and economic structures available to support the population were proof that France had treated Algeria as an entity separate from the Republic. Jean-François Lyotard also cited the same article from *L’Express* in his first statement on North Africa in the journal *Socialisme ou barbarie*. Raymond Aron’s two studies arguing for France’s withdrawal from Algeria, *The Algerian Tragedy* (1957) and *Algeria and the Republic* (1958), by contrast, cited demographic analyses and referred to Sauvy’s writings in particular, but did so as part of an extra-moral calculus that saw Algeria as too expensive for France to fight over. By the time a young Pierre Bourdieu began writing reports for the Algerian Gouvernement Général in 1959, it was expected to mention the “demographic upsurge

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brought about by an increase in fertility and a decline in mortality.”

This, for Bourdieu was the starting point: as Sauvy concluded, Bourdieu argued the destruction of indigenous social systems combined with the lack of any development was a prime factor in the formation of Algerian revolutionary consciousness.

The demographic terms in which Sauvy characterized the Algerian War became one of the main touchstones for supporters of an independent Algeria. Beyond the ideological force of characterizing the developing world as a new revolutionary third estate oppressed by both the West and the East, the effect of describing events in Algeria in terms of large numbers added to the overall sense of historical (and mathematic) fatalism hanging over the French Empire. While Sauvy’s arguments coexisted with postwar international arguments about the demographic problems colonial populations posed to colonial powers, as well as the cost-benefit arguments popularized by Raymond Cartier, it should be apparent that Sauvy’s own positions on North Africa are much more complicated than these narratives would suggest. Sauvy’s position was not merely one that theorized Algeria as swept up in the tide of history—making decolonization of Algeria an inevitable outcome and downplaying the active role of Algerian nationalist actions—but stressed the political potential in a changing demographic climate.

Though his change of heart on the future of Algeria occurred before Algerian decolonization was definite, for Sauvy, as for so many other critics of France’s empire, an Algeria independent of France was not an automatic position. Despite the fact that he placed a

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high degree of importance on the effects of population growth that could outpace a region’s infrastructure and resources, his demographic conclusions were not Malthusian. Rather, for Sauvy human agency and economic planning always had the potential to subvert foregone conclusions and supposed Malthusian determinisms. Sauvy was neither caught up in describing the process of a self-destructing imperial domination, nor simply a process in recognizing an Algerian other on its own terms. Rather, the more Algeria looked like pre-Revolutionary France, the less tenable it became to conclude that Algeria should be, in fact, a part of France itself. But the parochial conceptualization that equated the third world to the third estate was not merely a way of disavowing responsibility in the face of impersonal historical forces, or simply reinforcing a sense of development that kept Algeria at arm’s length, since the result of these characterizations of Algeria stressed its close relationship with France. Sauvy’s stance presented a form of Berque’s historical recapitulation with a mathematically-objective veneer.

Neither Julien, Berque, nor Sauvy should be viewed as prime movers of Algerian decolonization. For one, the way “decolonization” played out was at odds with Julien’s longstanding vision of an autonomous, yet federated post-colonial North Africa. Berque and Sauvy only came to embrace an independent Algeria midway through the war, and even then both thought complete autonomy for Algeria was a risky prospect. For another, despite the profound connection between Julien’s politics and historical practices, he tried to maintain a position that did not conflate political idealism with historical idealism. Making up or forcing an anticolonial narrative to combat a colonial narrative would betray any notion of historical truth. And despite their recognition of the political relevance of their work, Berque and Sauvy saw themselves as describing processes

that were already unfolding. The importance of their work lay in the ways in which they reframed historical understandings of North Africa, describing it in ways that were not at odd with the type of history ascribed to metropolitan France and arguing Algeria was at the advent of a modern political existence.

The project of Algerian decolonization certainly had to be invented; these three figures provided some of the raw materials with which the end to French Algeria was constructed. But two key caveats to this conclusion are just as important to remember. First, seeing Algeria as historically, politically, and demographically proximate to modern France did not automatically lead Julien, Berque, and Sauvy to conclude France’s presence in Algeria should abruptly end. Even the analogy with the French Revolution was conceptually capacious enough to entertain the need for a lasting Franco-Algerian relationship. Not every revolution is thought of as a war of independence, nor as a matter of conceptual inevitability. But bringing the French Revolution into conversation with Algeria’s modern potential did shift the horizon possibilities in a direction that gave intellectuals the conceptual tools to think about the prospects of an independent Algeria. As Jean-Marie Domenach put it in 1956, “It’s 1789 that made revolution a historical possibility. It foregrounds the experience of the revolutions currently underway in the world; they know its difficulties, detours, points of weakness.”

As the possibilities ended for first equal assimilation then federation ended, this historical vision that conceptually integrated

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Algeria into French Revolutionary history also justified its independence. While most modes of developmentalist history tend to stress the distance between the West and the rest of the world, in this case the result was proximity.\textsuperscript{463}

Physical proximity and strong intellectual networks also gave legs to these new historical positions. The fact that Algeria was first and foremost home for both Julien and Berque, in addition to their relationships with Algerian nationalists, meant it was less possible for them to see Algerians as a distant other. Their dedication to making the civilizing mission work, and repeatedly seeing it fall short, made them well placed to rethink received wisdom. The institutional and personal networks of all three, on top of their public presence during the French Algerian War, furthered the spread of their new North African historical paradigms.

\textsuperscript{463} For example, what Johannes Fabian has famously coined “allogenic time.” Johannes Fabian, \textit{Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
The Dialectics of Historical Violence

Like other anticolonial intellectuals in the 1950s and 60s, Jean-Paul Sartre occasionally compared colonial repression and racism to the lofty ideals on which the French nation supposedly stood. Before the war began, for instance, he explained to the journal *La République algérienne* that “neither the ‘right of peoples to decide their own fate’ nor the ‘rights of man formulated in 1789’ have been recognized for the colonized by the colonizers.” Yet amidst the direct parallels others made between revolution in Algeria and France’s own revolutionary tradition, Sartre did not make the analogy in his public interventions on the topic. Perhaps the closest Sartre came to using French Revolutionary language in those writings was his essay “The Frogs Who Wanted a King,” following de Gaulle’s May 1958 coup. Yet despite Sartre’s conclusion that de Gaulle was a “constitutional monarch,” the essay’s title was a play on Aesop’s fable of the same name, not a direct reference to the French Revolution.

The French Revolution nonetheless haunts the theory of history and revolutionary struggle Sartre formulated in the 1950s; and through this lens Sartre engaged Algeria via the French Revolution. The French Revolution may have been a subterranean referent in Sartre’s views on the Algerian War, but it was crucial to the genesis of his most complete statements on

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465 Sartre, “Le grenouilles qui demandent un roi,” *Situations V: Colonialisme et néocolonialisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 113-144, originally published in *L’Express* 330 (25 September 1958). Later, he said he was surprised that Patrice Lumumba would make the analogy between the French Revolution and revolution in the Congo, but also opined that Lumumba’s “intelligence and profound devotion to the African cause have made him a black Robespierre.” Sartre, “La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba,” *Situations V*, 209, 219, originally published as “Preface, Lumumba et le néo-colonialisme,” *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963). Another, less likely, possibility is that Sartre was familiar with the use of Jean de la Fontaine’s version of the fable in popular engravings from 1791-1795. If this is the case, however, Sartre leaves no corroborations in his text.

In the 1950s, to think about revolution Sartre often thought through the French Revolution. He was preoccupied with the French Revolution from the postwar through the Algerian War in at least two different contexts, both important prologues to the *Critique*. First, amongst his revolutionary theory sparring partners in the postwar, the French Revolution and arguments over its correct interpretation were frequent points of reference. Differences in interpretation between Sartre and his interlocutors often used the French Revolution as their medium of explanation. Second, amidst Sartre’s statements that appeared *ex negativo*, he worked on a series of eventually abandoned analyses and dramatizations of vignettes from the French Revolution. Within these unedited notes Sartre first worked through some of the concepts that would be central to his revolutionary philosophy in the *Critique*: seriality, the fused group, the pledge, and fraternity-terror.

Sartre thought these three terms—revolution, French Revolution, Algeria—concurrently, even if he did not always explicitly vocalize them together. In order to understand what made the revolutionary struggle in Algeria legitimate we need to make explicit what Sartre himself and much of his audience only thought implicitly. Aside from adding another footnote to the ever-growing commentary on Sartre’s life and work, integrating this dimension of his historical approach also informs analysis of other more contentious areas of Sartre studies, most notably his preface to Frantz Fanon’s 1961 analysis of decolonization, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Like many other postwar French political theorists, Sartre used the historical material of the French Revolution as a laboratory in which he could test his own historical-political theories.
Unless one were an antiquated counterrevolutionary monarchist or an unrepentant partisan of the far right (whom Sartre would not hesitate to call fascist), the credentials of the French Revolution were unimpeachable. If a theory of history and political change could account for the Revolution, then it had purchase as a framework for metahistorical analysis. Like a jazz musician learning the master standards before writing his own music, Sartre’s political and historical theories that emerged in the midst of the Algerian War were fundamentally imbued with Sartre’s understanding of the French Revolution’s structure. There could be no more perfect political standard than the French Revolution for those seeking to reinvigorate historical and Marxist theory, especially after Russia ceased being the obvious standard-bearer for world revolution. And in this regard it is not surprising that so many radical theorists along with Sartre drew on the Revolution’s melodic structure and time signature to form their own compositions. If the bases for the French Revolution were unquestionably sound for radical leftists, then differences in interpretation came down to variations on the theme.

**Sartre and Colonial Revolution**

The end of World War II marked important change in Sartre’s philosophy. After the war, Sartre began to connect his first statements on his existentialist philosophy to its engagement with the world of politics and celebrity. Though he claimed before the war he was apolitical, after 1945 Sartre argued the aim of the intellectual was to engage with a wider public and he quickly looked for avenues to assert the political relevance of the ideas in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). Not coincidentally, his 1946 “Existentialism is a Humanism” moment was also the moment of his explicit political radicalization and Marxist fellow traveling. The need for direct political engagement had become painfully clear for many survivors of the Occupation and
Resistance.\textsuperscript{466} Many of Sartre’s political essays from the forties through the early sixties can easily be charted as a roadmap highlighting where Sartre positioned himself in the postwar leftist political spectrum. Sartre’s theoretical engagements in the postwar have typically been defined by his relationship to Marxism and his position towards the French Communist Party and the USSR, even if those engagements have only recently been systematically examined.\textsuperscript{467} To be sure, Sartre had encountered \textit{The German Ideology} and \textit{Capital} in the 1920s while at university, and his wartime experiences led to his self-aware Marxist conversion.\textsuperscript{468} Though he rebuked the rigid and caricature-like Marxism of PCF philosophers like Roger Garaudy and Pierre Naville, he nonetheless saw the task of his own philosophical program to find a \textit{via media} between existentialism and Marxism, adding a moral and political program to the philosophy of free will in \textit{Being and Nothingness}.\textsuperscript{469} Initially, Sartre placed his political hopes in the third-way political group Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire. After this faltered, he came close to aligning himself with PCF orthodoxy—a move for which he has been criticized highly—only to


rebuke Stalin and Stalinism following the invasion of Hungary in 1956. Sartre then dedicated a large part of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (and especially its posthumously published second volume) to finding a way of critiquing the Soviet Union through an existential-marxist analysis. In the midst of these shifting positions Sartre also engaged, often caustically, with Albert Camus and Raymond Aron’s antirevolutionary stance, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s own shifting positions vis-à-vis Stalinism, and the ultra-leftist position taken by Daniel Guérin.

If the trajectory of Sartre’s communism seems tortuous, his commitment to revolutionary critiques of colonialism at the same time was not subject to the same on-again-off-again rollercoaster. The early editorial decisions for Sartre’s journal *Les Temps modernes* reflect a willingness to offer outlets to critiques of colonial regimes. Sartre himself also quickly extended his analysis of anti-semitism to colonial racism. Well before the Algerian War began, articles on colonialism had appeared in *Les Temps modernes*. Sartre was also on the editorial board for the anticolonial journal *Présence africaine*. In 1953 he came to the defense of Henri Martin, a

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471 Sartre discusses Stalin and Stalinism at length, especially in the notes, in *Questions de méthode* (pages 15-111), yet he only directly mentions them four times in the rest of Volume I (pages 115-755): *Questions de méthode*, pages 29n-31n, 67n, 82-83, 101; the rest of Volume I, pages 141, 485n, 518, 630. The events of 1917, however, are also mentioned separately. Ian Birchall and Ronald Aronson both argue that the true, if scarcely mentioned target of Volume I is figuring out why Stalinism appeared and what its prospects for reform were. The task of Volume II was then to figure out if there was any possible way forward. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism*, 181; Ronald Aronson, “Sartre and the Dialectic: The Purposes of the *Critique, II*,” *Yale French Studies* 68 (1985), 95-97.
French naval soldier who refused to fight in the Indochinese War. During the Algerian War Sartre increased his commitment to anticolonial politics and broadened his interests to Latin America and China, and his philosophy reflected that increased commitment. From the fifties through the seventies, there was no anticolonial or third worldist cause to which Sartre would not lend his name and unequivocal public support.

Many of Sartre’s statements on Algeria were in line with those of other anticolonial intellectuals during the war, initially calling for peaceful negotiations, then recognizing the FLN as the rightful representatives of a new revolutionary political entity. In “Colonialism is a System,” Sartre largely built off of the same arguments offered by Collette and Francis Jeanson. Algeria, like the rest of France’s empire, was the victim of economic exploitation. The Algerian workers had become an “immense agricultural proletariat” caught up in the contradictions of a bourgeois capitalist society. Not even the extension of France’s so-called universalist laws could amend the economic scenario that treated Algerians as “sub-human.” While describing Algeria as the site of capitalist exploitation, Sartre also echoed other strains of anti-colonialist discourse that labeled the relations in Algeria as feudal relations pushed to their limit: “The liquidation of feudal structures, after having weakened the Arab resistance, has the effect of facilitating this adoption of collective consciousness… Algerian nationalism is not the simple revival of ancient traditions, of ancient attachments: it is the singular issue inducing Algerians to end their

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473 Public support often masked private reservations, especially in the case of the FLN (see below), as well as the terrorist actions of the Rote Armee Fraktion. When Sartre met RAF member Andreas Baader, the media portrayed the event as a show of solidarity with the terrorist, but Sartre tried to convince Baader to stop murdering people. Felix Von Bohr and Klaus Wiegrefe, “Terrorismus: Der Alte und das Arschloch,” *Der Spiegel* (4 February 2013).
A diverse group of intellectuals and academics, from Alfred Sauvy to Jacques Berque, Jean-Marie Domenach, Charles-André Julien, and Daniel Guérin, came to agree on the broad outlines of the crisis. French economic exploitation led to the growth of a modern Algerian national identity. After the May 1958 coup that signaled de Gaulle’s return to power, Sartre’s diagnosis of the political situation echoed many others’ on the left, drawing on the image of an attempt at a royal restoration. Sartre argued there were dangers in believing in a heroic de Gaulle who would be able to bring peace to Algeria on his own, not least of all because he was supported by the same colonial officers who were responsible for the worst examples of Algerian violence. Ahead of the plebiscite arranged to confirm de Gaulle’s formation of a new Republic, Sartre reminded readers of Express that sovereignty resided in “the French people themselves,” and that saying no to General de Gaulle would amount to saying no to monarchy and to endorsing a new Constituent Assembly. The Fourth Republic was dead, but the Fifth could only be formed by the will of the French nation. Revolution in Algeria had provoked a potentially revolutionary situation at home. Sartre’s publicly unwavering support for the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), even amidst terrorist campaigns and evidence of war crimes, made him an ideal target for the right-wing Organisation de l’armée secrète (OAS), which bombed his Paris flat twice, in July 1961 and January 1962, along with the offices of Les Temps modernes in May of 1961. For the OAS, attacking Sartre was as good as attacking an FLN leader. As the war entered its final years anticolonialists increasingly discussed Algerian nationalists as brothers

474 Sartre, “Le colonialisme est un système,” 46–47.
from the same (French) revolutionary family. In turn, Sartre gave the editorial board of *Les Temps modernes carte blanche* to use his name in defense of the accused members of the Jeanson network that aided the FLN in Europe. As the Manifesto of the 121 declared in 1960, “The cause of the Algerian people, which is decisively contributing to the destruction of the colonial system, is the cause of all free men.” Sartre contributed his name and the support of *Les Temps modernes* to the Manifesto, though no journal risked printing it.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 416-419. The pages of *Les temps modernes* where the Manifesto was supposed to appear were left blank. Dionys Mascolo, however, mailed over 2,000 copies of the text across France.}

**The Standard**

As we have seen (in previous chapters), each of the episodes during the Algerian War in which Sartre was engaged was imbued with the language of the French Revolution. The Revolution in the forties and fifties followed the historiographical school centered on the Society for Robespierrist Studies. For these historians, Revolution represented the promise of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the overcoming of premodern social structures, the birth of the secular French Republic, the strength of citizen defense forces, and the tragic necessity of the Terror in the face of the Revolution’s enemies. And importantly, most agreed with Clemenceau’s claim that the Revolution could not be taken piecemeal. Rather, it had to be taken \textit{en bloc}.\footnote{This is more fully developed in Chapters 1 and 2.} When applied to Algeria, this understanding of the Revolution played out in often surprising ways. Supporters (and even some detractors) of the Committee Against the Pursuit of War in North Africa referred to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, as did those who criticized the first revelations of the French Army’s use of extraordinary rendition and torture. The coincidence of Robespierre’s 200\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary and de Gaulle’s May 1958 \textit{coup}...
intensified and diversified invocations of the Revolution. By the war’s closing years the left accepted that the Algerian War was really the Algerian Revolution. Being faithful to France’s Revolutionary heritage meant recognizing this and embracing efforts toward an independent Algeria in a spirit of revolutionary confraternity.

Even before the Algerian War began, however, the French Revolution entered into political theorists’ discussions of the shape postwar France should take. For instance, already in 1947, Paul Ricœur noted that all postwar “separatist movements” had “the same passion that animated our 1789.”479 The very structure of discourse on North Africa naturalized the analogy between colonial agitation and late *ancien régime* crisis. North Africa was not only backward, but stuck in a “feudal era” that contained political problems similar to the Third Estate of the 1780s, hence Alfred Sauvy’s claim that the third world was the third estate’s equivalent. As Sartre himself explained in 1956, one of the causes of colonial revolt was the destruction of feudal structures.480 In addition, since many in France saw the Second World War as a struggle to preserve the French Revolution’s legacy against fascist Germany and a counterrevolutionary Vichy Régime, it is not altogether surprising that postwar debates over revolution in France were often mediated through discussions of *the* Revolution. This is no less true for many of Sartre’s main postwar interlocutors.

For a short time, Albert Camus rode high on the revolutionary zeal of the post-occupation purges, claiming in the pages of *Combat*, “This country does not need a Talleyrand. It needs a

By 1951, however, Camus reconsidered the desirability of revolution, opting instead to support the idea of rebellions that recognized their own limits. In *The Rebel*, the French Revolution represented the moment in modern history where such limits were thoroughly transgressed and the era of all consuming revolutions began. “The French Revolution,” claimed Camus, “inaugurates modern times simultaneously with the era of formal morality… Morality, when it is formal, devours.” The death of Louis XVI marked the desacralization of society and the destruction of political limits. The evils of modern revolutionary politics could be traced back to this impulse. When the war began in Algeria Camus remained tied to the notion of a genuinely French community and its civilizing potential for all Algerians, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. He had no truck with the claims of anticolonialists who saw a separate national identity that could counter France’s claims. Those who used the French Revolution justify support for the FLN would not find an endorsement from Camus—they had doubly erred in their reasoning.

Raymond Aron came to similar conclusions around the same time. Aron had already noted the ways in which the Revolution’s historiography was determined by the political

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481 Camus, as quoted in Susan Dunn, *The Deaths of Louis XVI: Regicide and the French Political Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 143, originally in *Combat* (11 September 1944). Dunn ultimately thinks Camus’ rhetoric was overblown and did not match his own opinions. Even if he really did believe the country needed a Saint Just, he certainly would not have been alone.


483 The complexities of Camus’ relationship to Algeria are too fraught to fully unpack here. As David Carroll concludes, for Camus, “To choose to defend his mother before justice was thus not to choose ‘French Algeria’ before ‘Muslim’ or ‘Algerian Algeria’—it was rather to choose human life before an ideal that legitimated terrorist acts against not just his own mother but all other innocent civilians as well, whether French, Arab, or Berber, Catholic, Muslim, or Jewish.” David Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian: Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 104.
leanings of its historians, even among the so-called scientific approaches.⁴⁸⁴ In *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Aron went further to say that the left’s idealized versions of the French Revolution, whatever their bearing on historical reality, served a vital unifying function. Despite the left’s many internal divisions, all parts of the left could agree on the importance of 1789. The Liberation had only re-stoked such revolutionary sentiments. But beyond the Revolution’s role as political myth, it also represented an ideal-type highlighting the dangers of modern politics. By being inherently utopian, all revolutions since 1789 risked justifying all manner of evil in service of their cause. For Aron, this impulse betrayed the essence of the political: reform and negotiation around the ever-changing demands of the present.⁴⁸⁵ Such a stance also drove Aron’s position on the Algerian War. No ideological stance mattered in the face of the material and economic interests of both parties. By 1958 it was clear to Aron that the only political solution meant an independent Algeria.⁴⁸⁶

Even among those more sympathetic to revolutionary politics, however, the French Revolution was the standard history with which intellectuals and ideologues bolstered their political theories. Daniel Guérin’s history of the French Revolution, *Bourgeois et bras nus*, written under the Occupation, made the case for the postwar relevance of the French Revolution, by calling into question the then-dominant interpretation of the Revolution that supposedly favored the Jacobins as its true heroes. Rather, according to Guérin, a nascent proletariat drove the French Revolution towards the goals of economic equality and the dissolution of the state. The *bras nus* working masses bore the subjective character of proletarian ideals, despite the

objectively bourgeois outcome of the Revolution. Then, as in the postwar, a strong Jacobin state was not the political solution but rather the problem. Just as most historians panned Guérin’s history of the French Revolution, his history served as a common punching bag for both Stalinist and anti-Stalinist intellectuals.\footnote{The most caustic early review came from Lucien Febvre, “Un livre sur la révolution,” \textit{Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales} 3, no 2 (April-June 1948), 167-170, republished in \textit{Combats pour l’histoire} (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), 109-113. Guérin’s book did find some support amongst conservative historians, such as Pierre Gaxotte, though this support relied less on methodological or archival prowess and more on the attack on their common Jacobin enemy. Pierre Gaxotte, “Changement d’emploi,” \textit{Figaro} (1950), xii. Philippe Ariès enjoyed the attack on Mathiez-Lefebvre revolutionary orthodoxy, but still thought Guérin’s approach mistook the politics of the historian for the politics of history. Philippe Ariès, “Daniel Guérin: La Lutte des classes dans la première république (1793-1797),” \textit{J’ai lu: le guide de l’actualité littéraire} 2 (1947), 36-40. There were some quarters of the extreme left who did favorably receive Guérin’s work, but they were largely in the minority. See Julien Hage, “Passeurs d’extrême gauche de la Révolution française au vingtième siècle,” \textit{Passeurs de révolution}, edited by Jean-Numa Ducange and Michel Biard, Collection études révolutionnaires 14 (Paris: Société des études Robespierristes, 2013), 39-56.} Largely in response to positions taken by other leftists, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, too, justified many of his views of history by critiquing Guérin’s narrative of the French Revolution. In \textit{Adventures of the Dialectic} Merleau-Ponty harshly criticized those, like Lukács and Garaudy, who would give Stalinists a blank check to do whatever they wanted in the name of a better tomorrow.\footnote{In turn Garaudy organized a special conference illustrating Merleau-Ponty’s false Marxism and Weberian subjectivism. Lukács was absent, but contributed a letter of condemnation which was included in the conference’s proceedings. Roger Garaudy, G. Cogniot, M. Caveing, Jean-Toussaint Desanti, Jean Kanapa, V. Leduc, Henri Lefebvre, with a letter by Georg Lukács, \textit{Mésaventures de l’anti-marxisme: les malheurs de M. Merleau-Ponty} (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1956). Papers were originally presented 29 Nov. 1955 at the tribune de la Mutualité, Paris.} But he also took supporters of the idea of permanent revolution like Daniel Guérin to task. Guérin had presented the \textit{bras nus} of the French Revolution as a proletariat in formation eventually betrayed by the Mountain, who were the guardians of bourgeois interests. The solution was to promote a sense of continual revolution, so that revolutionary energy from below, like that of the working-class \textit{bras nus}, could never be
betrayed by a counter-revolutionary state apparatus. Guérin saw the statist Jacobinism of the Revolution as directly correlative to Stalinism and the PCF, and to a certain extent so did Merleau-Ponty. However, if one were to believe Guérin’s view of history, Merleau-Ponty claimed, then all losers in history are by default the proletariat, all winners the bourgeoisie, and “all of history is only the eve of a tomorrow which is always deferred, the privation of a being which will never be.”

According to Merleau-Ponty, a metahistory built from the French Revolution flattened the historical circumstances and contingencies that form the basis of all political action. In other words, “It is a dream of an ‘end of politics’ out of which one wants to make a politics.” One could and should learn lessons from the history of the Revolution, but those lessons, like all politics, were based on specific contexts and contingencies. It was wrong to replicate the leitmotif of 1789 for every time and place. The Guérin-Merleau-Ponty polemic reflected their positions on Algeria as well. Guérin supported the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA), since he thought they represented the Algerian workers against the centralizing FLN, a position that mirrored his preference for the bras nus over the Jacobin club. Merleau-Ponty, however, claimed there was a breakdown in the left’s stance over Algeria because they had merely wanted to import their Marxist categories into the colonies; the left had forgotten that “revolutionary politics was a project [un faire], a realism, the birth of a force.” This project had to be rooted in the struggle’s specific historical and political circumstances.

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490 Ibid., 218
491 I flesh out this argument more fully in Chapter 2.
It is through these contexts, including the debates surrounding Guérin’s interpretation of the French Revolution, that Sartre engaged the contemporary political relevance of the French Revolution during the Algerian War. In published form, the *Discourse on Method* outlined Sartre’s response to Marxist historical writing and *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* fleshed out the workings of his new theory. The former primarily staked its arguments on historical interpretation in analyses of the French Revolution (with fewer but equally important discussions of Sartre’s later passion, Gustave Flaubert). The perils of colonialism only appear in passing. In the latter work, however, Sartre increased his discussion of colonialism and other historical instances of oppression (e.g., nineteenth-century rebellions, the Russian Revolution, the American South). But the French Revolution still played a key interpretive role. In addition, several of Sartre’s unpublished manuscripts that preceded both the *Discourse* and the *Critique* reveal the French Revolution’s importance in the genealogy of Sartre’s theories of revolution.

As early as the 1940s, Sartre attempted to piece together the implications of his existentialist philosophy for understanding change over time. In his *War Diaries*, he began his first foray into existential psychoanalysis, speculating about the effects of German Emperor Wilhelm II’s childhood and their historical consequences. His 1946 essay “Materialism and Revolution” explained the inadequacy of Marxist explanatory frameworks for history since their extreme mechanistic frameworks were unable to account for the role of human freedom and contingency in historical developments. His unpublished *Notebooks for an Ethics*, composed between 1947 and 1948, continued in this vein, opposing determinist Marxist views of history and existentialist interpretations of history that stressed moral projects. His early vision of an

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existentialist history stressed contingency, the lack of any pre-determined culmination or totalization at history’s end, and the role of individuals working toward their own projects and those shared with other individuals.  

From 1950 to 1955 Sartre began at least three separate studies on material concerning the French Revolution. None of them were published in their composed form, yet all three dealt with material that was central to the Critique and are Sartre’s earliest extant manuscript notes that could be seen as part of the Critique’s creation. Sartre titled the first manuscript “May-June 1789.” It dealt with the political divisions at the Estates General that eventually led to the formation of the National Assembly and the swearing of the Tennis Court Oath and was likely composed between 1950 and 1951. The second manuscript, written from 1951 to 1953 and titled “Liberty-Equality,” dealt with the formation of a bourgeois ideology from the old regime to the Revolution. The last manuscript was an abandoned treatment for a screenplay centering on the Jacobin politician and contemporary of Maximilien Robespierre, Joseph Le Bon (1765-

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495 The caveat “at least” is important here. Three studies are currently accessibile and available in edited volumes with useful commentary. However, a fourth series of manuscripts, « Nature paysanne et nature bourgeoise », is currently in the hands of an unknown private collector. The editorial team Équipe Sartre dates the manuscripts to around 1957, making it contemporary with the Critique I. It reportedly contains further discussion of the French Revolution. See the École Normale Supérieure’s ITEM database listings for the Équipe Sartre under the heading “Écrits philosophiques,” at http://www.item.ens.fr/upload/sartre2/06_Ecrits Philosophiques.pdf.


1795), composed around 1955. In particular, the first two of these manuscripts demonstrate Sartre’s interest in working through the historiography of the French Revolution, with numerous references to historians Alphonse Aulard, Jean Egret, Gérard Walter, Jacques Godechot, Georges Lefebvre, and Albert Soboul. They also demonstrate engagement with primary sources, drawing heavily on the eighteenth-century newspaper *Le Moniteur*, Buchez’s *Parliamentary History*, Robespierre’s correspondence, as well as memoirs from Malouet, Bailly, and l’Abbé de Grégoire. When discussing the genesis of ideologies, Sartre drew heavily from Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* and mirrored many of the analyses Lucien Goldmann was developing at the same time. Sartre made no reference to Goldmann in the manuscripts, but did cite him in the *Discourse on Method*. The manuscripts primarily demonstrate a deep engagement with the French Revolution’s history, and many of the concepts that form the backbone of the first volume of the *Critique* were fleshed out in these manuscripts on the Revolution. Secondly, Sartre developed the most important concepts of the *Critique* in these manuscripts: seriality, the group

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501 *Questions de méthode*, *Critique*, 1, 76.
in fusion, the pledge, and fraternity-terror. Sartre’s thinking on revolutionary struggle in the 1950s began with the French Revolution, and it was the French Revolution that provided the template for understanding Soviet tragedy and the Algerian Revolution.\textsuperscript{502}

By 1957, Sartre would put his studies of the Revolution to use in published writings. Like many historians and political theorists, Sartre directly responded to Guérin’s new challenge to Jacobin narratives of the Revolution, echoing many of Merleau-Ponty’s criticisms. The *Discourse on Method*, first published in the Polish journal *Twórczość [The Work]* with a revised version appearing in *Les Temps modernes* in 1957 under the title “Existentialism and Marxism,” would later act as the introduction to Sartre’s larger *Critique*. Here, Sartre claimed both Lukács and Guérin each presented their own vulgarized form of Marxist history in which individual freedoms did not ultimately matter in the face of metahistorical struggles. Though Sartre partly felt an urgency to respond to Lukács’ criticism that existentialism and Marxism could never coexist, he frequently criticized both Lukács and Guérin in the same breath. Guérin perhaps garnered a slightly kinder treatment—Sartre opined it was one of the better contributions to Marxist thought in recent years—but still went out of his way to elaborate the mistakes Guérin made in his attempts to “force history” into his predetermined molds.\textsuperscript{503} Individuals and their

\textsuperscript{502} And in many ways this is an expansion of James Miller’s insightful assessment that the group in fusion “functioned as something more than an analytic category in the *Critique*. It also functioned as an archetype of social freedom” to the whole of the project. James Miller, *History and Human Existence from Marx to Merleau-Ponty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 180.

\textsuperscript{503} Sartre, *Questions de méthode*, 35n. Each time Sartre complimented Guérin, he also offered the back of his hand. His analyses were “brilliant,” but also “false demonstrations” (37). Guérin, unsurprisingly, was quite irritated at being lumped together with a Stalinist apologist and claimed Sartre was only attacking him in order to get to Lukács. See Daniel Guérin, “Sartre, Lukács, et la Gironde,” *Les temps modernes* 13, no 142 (December 1957), 1332-1337. Sartre appended a short response to Guérin’s essay, claiming that Guérin had misunderstood Sartre’s intentions and said that Guérin’s book was “By far his best.”
free actions simply dissolved “in a bath of sulphuric acid.”\textsuperscript{504} Thus, for Guérin, the actions of the Convention were driven by bourgeois mercantilist interests and not the day-to-day politics or Revolutionary aims of each of its members. Sartre’s reaction was similar to that of professional historians who had criticized Guérin. Reducing key moments in the Revolution to mercantilist economics made little sense—even less so when the result was a picture that painted Girondins and Jacobins as anti-revolutionary. Sartre specified that this sort of historical reductionism was not just a problem for Guérin and Lukacs, however, but for nearly all contemporary Marxists.\textsuperscript{505}

To understand historical individuals, for example Gustave Flaubert, to whom Sartre would later in life devote most of his critical attention, it was inadequate to take ready-formed categories and fit individuals into them. Though much of Flaubert’s life encapsulated stereotypes of French nineteenth-century petit bourgeois culture, a good deal also escaped them. To use Sartre’s later terminology, the task was to find the proper balance between the universal and the particular—a balance that would not reduce the one to the other.\textsuperscript{506}

On the one hand, Sartre made his negative case against vulgar Marxist attempts to write history. But he also put forth a positive framework for thinking about history that he thought would do justice to an existentialist framework of free action and a Marxist view of material conditions and history moving towards a totalizing goal. It was possible, Sartre claimed, to account for both the subjective and objective forces of history, individual will and material conditions, at the same time. As evidence, Sartre approvingly cited Henri Lefebvre’s work on

\textsuperscript{504} Sartre, \textit{Questions de méthode}, 37.

\textsuperscript{505} Sartre also criticized Gestalt psychoanalyst Abram Kardiner and sociologist Kurt Lewin, preferring Henri Lefebvre to the former and Claude Lévi-Strauss to the latter. Sartre, \textit{Questions de méthode}, 51-54.

rural sociology. From Lefebvre’s method of dealing with “vertical” (diachronic) and “horizontal” (synchronic) complexities, Sartre created his “progressive-regressive” method.507

The progressive-regressive method is the tool that allowed Sartre to escape the traps into which he saw Guérin and Lukács falling. Taking Marx’s statement from the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that “Men make their own history but not under conditions of their own choosing,” Sartre insisted that too much emphasis had been placed on the material constraints of history. The former part of the equation needed to be given its due, and this was the task of existential analysis. Humans act as free agents within the material conditions into which they are placed, and it is this freedom that eventually might provide an exit from oppressive conditions.508 Human existence is defined by its *praxis*, or humans’ intentional interactions with the material world. The results of this praxis, both intended and unintended, are

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507 Henri Lefebvre, “Perspectives de sociologie rurale, *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 14 (1953), 122-140; Sartre, *Questions de méthode*, 41-42n. Lefebvre did not quite accept Sartre’s praise or adaptation. Lefebvre thought he had not done anything that Marx and Engels had not done before, and was pessimistic of Sartre’s attempt to align existentialism and Marxism. Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Continuum, 2004), 36-39. Sartre’s division between the subjective and objective resembles Guérin’s professed methodological position. However, if Guérin’s heuristic did influence Sartre, he does not indicate this influence in his text. Further, if Guérin’s fault was with over-emphasizing the objective side of the duality, Sartre’s favor lay on the subjective side, if only as a corrective to the Marxist interpretations against which he wrote.

508 Sartre, *Questions de méthode*, 60-61. Sartre attributes this line to a letter written from Engels to Marx, but it more famously appears in the opening of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. I have not been able to find the letter Sartre mentions, and other textual references point to Sartre engaging with the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, such as his reformulation of Marx’s statement that the revolutionaries of ’89 knew no other way of acting than through ancient Roman ideals. Compare Sartre’s, “To return to our Romans of ’89, their way of *calling* themselves Cato is their manner of *being* bourgeois, members of a class who discovered History and who already wanted to stop it, who purport to be universal and base the proud individualism of its members on competitive economics, at any rate the inheritors of a classical culture” (38-39), to Marx: “Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon—these heroes of the former French revolution, as well as the political parties and massed crowds alike—accomplished the business of the day in Roman costumes and with Roman phrases: the unleashing and consolidation of modern *bourgeois* society.” Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *Later Political Writings*, edited by Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32.
what will lead to an historical totality. The method, according to Sartre, was thus both progressive and regressive: progressive because it acknowledged the objective results of history and regressive because it analyzed human freedom acting within given situations.

To explain how his method could comprehend human freedoms and the projects that arise *in situ*, Sartre again predominantly relied on examples from the French Revolution. The Marquis de Sade, for instance, could neither be reduced to feudal nor nascent bourgeois ideologies. Sadism, so to speak, was the by-product of a person who felt alien to the feudal world in which he was born but used the language of nature and bourgeois universalism in ways foreign to other revolutionaries. The *sans culottes* were similarly tough to pin down in the process of the Revolution. The people were the locomotive force of the Revolution, and yet their political manifestations changed depending on material and ideological circumstance.509

If the *Discourse* set out the stakes for Sartre’s project, then the *Critique* was an attempt to give flesh to the process through which individual goals mediated by the material world become the ends of history. The end result was a general framework encompassing the processes of all revolutionary movements. So, Sartre contended that “man as the future of man” is the ultimate end of historical action, “but the end is always a refashioning of the material order that *by itself* will make man possible.”510 This was not simply a continuation of the arguments in “Existentialism is a Humanism,” though the language is similar, but rather a continuation of Sartre’s response to claims that his account of human freedom in his earlier works was divorced from material reality and historical constraints. If dialectical materialism were to be divorced from the primacy of human history, it would risk losing all meaning. The attempts of the natural sciences to encompass human history within the natural world’s immutable laws and processes,

509 Ibid., 75-80.
510 Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, I, 192.
especially under the guise of biology and structuralist anthropology, lead to an epistemological impasse since they propose a totalizing system which cannot be known by the humans it encompasses. History had to be intelligible through the everyday experiences and desires of human beings operating within the material world.

Throughout the *Critique*, Sartre vacillated between highly specific terminology and very concrete examples of human relations. Human *praxis* interacts with the material world and organizes it into a recognizable totality or system of relations (a passive category Sartre called the *practico-inert*). The material world of scarce resources and competition sets limits upon individual freedoms, but individuals and groups are nonetheless still free to rearrange the world in purposeful ways. Human beings in this system can be both the arrangers of their passive world as well as passive entities themselves as a *collective* (also termed “social beings”), insofar as they may represent a labor resource or obstacle for another person or another group. If an ensemble of individuals is defined by their differences from one another, or a lack of reciprocity, then they are considered as operating as a series. Human seriality is the domain of economic competition and scarcity, and another version of Sartre’s description of the objectifying process of “othering.” In the condition of seriality, humans are defined by an outside agent Sartre labels a “third” and not by this ensemble’s own common aims and ambitions (if indeed they have any). Humans in serial collectives are the stuff of economic exploitation, colonialism, racism, slavery. And we can see this as Sartre’s existentialism-friendly version of Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism. Material scarcity forces individuals and objects to trade positions, with objects gaining life and agency while humans as labor capital are treated as objects.\(^{511}\) If, however, an ensemble is unified in its *praxis* and acts in a manner that respects each individual’s freedom reciprocally,

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then Sartre sees this new group, the group in fusion/fused group, as the way out of exploitation and othering.\textsuperscript{512}

The goal for any successful historical moment is to move from reified, non-reciprocal ensembles taken as a series to groups fused together under the auspices of reciprocity and common goals. Early in the \textit{Critique}, Sartre posed the following quandary: “Existentialism denied the \textit{a priori} existence of essences. At present do we not have to admit that they do exist and that they are the \textit{a priori} characteristics of our passive being? And if they exist, how is \textit{praxis} possible? We once said that one \textit{is} never a coward or a thief. Accordingly, should I not now say that one \textit{makes oneself} a bourgeois or a proletarian?\textsuperscript{513}” Sartre argued that social identities are at once the work of individual actions that affirm (or at least do not deny these) identities \textit{and} identities that are reproduced in social relations. Passive social and material relations, or “\textit{playing this role},” can reaffirm these group identities, and active \textit{praxis} has the power to transcend them.\textsuperscript{514} Out of such series, passive collectives of individuals form—such as

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\textsuperscript{512} The move Sartre makes from his analyses of other-oriented interpersonal relations in \textit{Being and Nothingness} to an other-oriented group dynamic with Marxist overtones in the \textit{Critique} is far from obvious, though it is certainly foreshadowed in the unpublished \textit{Notebooks for an Ethics} and Sartre’s postwar discussions of anti-Semitism and racism. For the tie to the \textit{Notebooks}, see Thomas Anderson’s discussion of “The Group” in Sartre’s \textit{Two Ethics: From Authenticity to Integral Humanity} (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 97. For Sartre’s formulation of “marginal groups,” see Arthur, \textit{Unfinished Projects}, Chapters One and Two.

One can, however, see that Sartre’s moves were not wholly unexpected. André Gorz wrote a number of unpublished essays that tried to anticipate Sartre’s answers to the challenges posed by critics such as Merleau-Ponty and Lukács. Based on the introduction to the \textit{Critique} published in \textit{Voies Nouvelles}, no 3 (Juin-Juillet 58), Gorz anticipated a number of the themes covered in the rest of the \textit{Critique}. “Ce travail a pour but de montrer la continuité philosophique qui relie l’Etre et le Néant…” [The aim of this work is to demonstrate the philosophical continuity that unites Being and Nothingness (to the \textit{Critique})…] Fonds André Gorz 1.1 IMEC. Based on material Gorz references in the text, 1959 appears to be a reliable date of composition.

\textsuperscript{513} Sartre, \textit{Critique}, I, 289, emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{514} \textit{Ibid.}, 293, emphasis in original, and “[A worker’s] attempt to unite with his equals and to oppose exploitation by a practical negation must be made through the projection of what
individuals tuning into the same radio broadcast at the same time. Each individual becomes the same generic object in his or her relation to the broadcaster.\footnote{Sartre, Critique, I, 320.}

In this scenario, violence is present in the world both in the form of direct interpersonal and intergroup relations and dispersed throughout the material world. Here Sartre followed Alexandre Kojève in giving the Hegelian master-slave dynamic a larger social-historical context.\footnote{Alexandre Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, compiled by Raymond Queneau, translated by James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).} Sartre’s version, though, was in many ways more optimistic than Hegel’s for the capacity of this struggle to recognize the freedom and humanity of both groups. Even if the self and other are necessary counterparts, there are “an infinity of different forms” their reciprocal relations can take—there are options available for resolution that do not result in mutual annihilation.\footnote{Ibid., I, 193. Also see Sartre’s statements on the passé nature of the Soviet Revolutionary model: “today, wherever a new socialist régime establishes itself, the already developing socialization of half the world will produce this new revolution in a conjuncture and historical totalization quite different from those that characterized the revolution of 1917” (630, emphasis in original). Paige Arthur also sees this important critique of Hegel and Kojève in the earlier unpublished Notebooks for an Ethics. Paige Arthur, Unfinished Projects, 27.} Even when serialized individuals make the transition to fused groups their pledge of reciprocity is still formed under the sign of violence. When individuals adopt what Sartre termed “the pledge” as an organizing principle of rights and duties within a group they at once affirm the fraternity between the group’s members as well as the threat of terror for betraying the group. According to Sartre, despite the fact that this violence can be subject to illegitimate abuse, “What matters is that no usurpation of violence (or conquest of power) can be intelligible unless violence is initially a particular, real, practical bond between freedoms within common action: in other words, this violence must be the kind of action on itself of the pledged group, in so far as

\textit{he is into his very praxis}” (297). In this formula, Sartre saw similarities with Marx’s stance in\textit{ The German Ideology}.\footnote{Sartre, Critique, I, 320.}
this action is re-created, carried out and accepted by all.”518 It is not a question, then, of denying or refusing violence, but rather choosing between a reified and oppressive violence of the practico-inert or the violence directed towards the formation of historically progressive projects.519 The former violence is aligned with seriality, the latter is aligned with the fused group.

This overly-pessimistic view of human relations remained a consistent thread from Sartre’s early philosophy through the Critique. Sartre cast relations with other people as fundamentally conflict-ridden and pessimistic in Being and Nothingness: “So long as [multiple] consciousnesses exist, the separation and conflict of consciousness will remain; we shall simply have discovered their foundation and their true terrain.” Or, as his contemporary play No Exit

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518 Sartre, Critique, I, 448.
519 See also Sartre, Critique, I, 303n. “Every system of values rests on exploitation and oppression; every system of values effectively negates exploitation and oppression (even aristocratic systems, if not explicitly at least in their internal logic); every system of values confirms exploitation and oppression (even systems constructed by oppressed classes, even if unintended, they do so in the fact they are systems); every system of values, in so far as it is based on a social practice, contributes directly or indirectly to establishing measures [dispositifs] and apparatuses which, when the time comes (for example, on the basis of a revolution in techniques and tools) will allow this particular oppression and exploitation to be negated; every system of values, at the moment of its revolutionary efficacy, ceases to be a system, and values cease to be values: their character was due to the fact that they could not be transcended; and circumstances, overthrowing structures, institutions and exigencies, transform them into transcended significations. Systems are reabsorbed into the organizations they have created and the organizations, transformed by the overthrow of the social field, integrate themselves into new collective actions, carried out in the context of the new exigencies and newly-discovered values.” Recent debate on Sartre’s approach to violence has focused precisely on this dimension of the Critique as an often-passed-over part of Sartre’s work. See Ronald Santoni, Sartre On Violence: Curiously Ambivalent (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Marguerite La Caze, “Sartre Integrating Ethics and Politics: The Case of Terrorism,” Parrhesia 3 (2007), 43-54; Michael Fleming, “Sartre on Violence: Not So Ambivalent?” Sartre Studies International 17, no 1 (2011), 20-40; Ronald Santoni, “Concerning the Ambivalence of Sartre on Violence: A Commentary/Rejoinder,” Sartre Studies International 19, no 2 (2013), 112-128. Fleming argues that in order to grasp the full dimensions of the violence of the practico-inert in Sartre’s thought it has to be delineated into its varied unintentional (economic violence and symbolic violence) and intentional (direct repression) forms (24-25).
summarized his position, “Hell is—other people,” a secular stance that begs the impossibility of a secular salvation.  While the unpublished *Notebooks for an Ethics* pondered ways out of interpersonal conflict, the power of Sartre’s published analyses of anti-semitism and racism attest to the unrepentant pessimism of the system.

Colonial rebellions around the world occupied much of Sartre’s political engagements while writing the *Critique* and it is no surprise that he applied his revolutionary theory to the oppression and racism inherent in colonial systems. In the *Critique*, colonialism acts as a limit-case where the logic of alterity cemented in social relations exists as an extreme that could not be escaped except through violent conflict. As Sartre described the violent relationship of alterity and resistance in the context of colonial Algeria, “for the child of the colonialist, violence was present in the situation itself as a constitutive social force; the son of the colonialist and the son of the Muslim are both the children of the objective violence that defines the system itself as practico-inert hell.” This very reification of colonial violence makes the violence of the colonized a foregone conclusion, since “the colonialist discovers the violence of the native, even in his passivity, as the obvious consequence of his own violence and as its sole justification.” Liberal reforms, as well as any other attempts to defuse the violence of colonial Algeria, Sartre argued, are from the start doomed to fail. Since the colonizers’ justification is in fact the argument that the colonized are inherently violent and subhuman—a status that justifies their exploitation as a sub-proletariat—and any attempts at reform and negotiation are mistakes that will only push the pro-colonialists to further violent extremes.  


Though the French Revolution occupied fewer pages in the Critique than in the Discourse, Sartre refers to the French Revolution at key moments when discussing each of his conceptual tools: seriality and the group in fusion, the pledge, and fraternity-terror. Since Russia and Stalinism are rarely mentioned in the first volume of the Critique, it is not surprising that Sartre does not bring the French Revolution into conversation with these topics the way he had done in his polemic with Guérin and Lukács. However, his discussion of these concepts does form a different constellation of referents, one linking the French Revolution to colonial racism and violence.\footnote{As the unpublished second volume of the Critique more directly addresses Stalinism, the French Revolution is brought into conversation with the Russian Revolution in two key moments. First, when discussing the Bolshevik’s seizure of the country’s economy from an early point in the Russian Revolution, Sartre claimed this move prevented an independent peasant revolt of the variety France experienced during the Great Fear of June-October 1789. Second, Sartre compares the inadequacy of reducing Stalinism to Stalin’s psychology to the inadequacy of explaining the Terror via Robespierre’s personality. For example, reducing the Terror to Robespierre’s personality neglects the elements of \textit{praxis} involving economic scarcity, civil war, and the threat of invasion. Sartre, \textit{Critique II}, New Edition, translated by Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 2006), 69. 223-224. Sartre made the same point on the limits of Robespierre’s psychology as explanatory device earlier in \textit{Question de méthode}, 46.} For each of the Critique’s main sections on the development of revolutionary movements, Sartre used a moment in the French Revolution to explain his argument. The Great Fear illustrated seriality and the formation of collectivities. Drawing on Georges Lefebvre’s book on the subject, Sartre argues that the news and rumor of aristocratic plots against the peasants in the countryside reduced each peasant to the same level of alterity. As the news of one localized incident spread, those who heard the news acted in response in the same way.\footnote{Sartre, \textit{Critique}, I, 340-344. Georges Lefebvre, \textit{La grand peur de 1789} (Paris: Amand Colin, 1932).} The storming of the Bastille differed from the haphazard violence in the countryside by virtue of the insurrectionaries’ concerted goal. What began as a serial action, individuals arming themselves against the King’s troops, ended in the common group aim of overtaking a manifestation of the
regime’s violence. The Tennis Court Oath represented the mediated reciprocity of the revolutionaries. Its affirmation that the National Assembly would never dissolve until the work of the Revolution was done affirmed the group’s united negation of its own external threats.

An institution subsequently formed from this pledge, creating its own organs for action against the mistrust and fear that members of the group may not uphold the pledge. The Committee of Public Safety thus insures the internal unity of the Convention as well as the pledge against foreign enemies. By escaping seriality, the actions of the institution guarantee the promises of fraternity, liberty, and the path toward equality. The institution, however, guarantees the escape from seriality through terror. The future of the fused group and its revolutionary aims is thus a reformulation of Robespierre’s conjunction “virtue-terror”; it is always both fraternity-terror and liberty-terror, terror guaranteeing the former in both cases.

The importance of the French Revolution and the frequency with which Sartre refers to it in the Discourse and the Critique has been attributed to the historical conditions surrounding any French person from the first half of the twentieth century who took political ideas seriously, and

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524 Sartre, Critique, I, 389. See « Liberté-Égalité », 177-178 and Critique, I, 410-411, on the taking of the Bastille as instance of an Apocalyptic moment in the sense in which Malraux used the term in the novel L’Espoir. Sartre sees this moment as the sublimation of seriality into the group in fusion.

525 Sartre, Critique, I, 439-440, 477, « Mai-Juin 1789 », 85-88, and especially 154: “avec le serment du Jeu de Paume: 1) L’individu devient sacré à titre de liberté. Il est une personne. Il revêt un nouveau masque, celui de la liberté pratique. 2) Il devient le défenseur de la Constitution à naître, son chevalier servant” [with the Tennis Court Oath: 1) The individual becomes sacred via liberty. He is someone. He wears a new mask, that of practical liberty. 2) He becomes the defender of the Constitution to be born, its dedicated knight.”

526 Sartre, Critique, I, 576. The whole Joseph le Bon treatment is an extended rumination on the institutionalization of violence under the Committee of Public Safety and its self-destructive impulses, represented by the execution of Mayor of Toulouse, Eulogius Schneider, in 1793, and le Bon’s execution in 1794. Joseph le Bon briefly appears in the Critique as well on page 416.
surely this is one reason.\textsuperscript{527} The wide-ranging polemic against Daniel Guérin’s interpretation of
the French Revolution’s legacy and Jacobin traditions in France is surely another. But perhaps
just as important as these reasons is the fact that Sartre first generated the central concepts of the
Critique in sustained study of the French Revolution.

The Discourse on Method and the Critique demonstrated both an interest in current historiography of the French Revolution and a detailed enough knowledge of the Revolution’s
events to hazard sustained criticism of Daniel Guérin. Throughout, Sartre cites Georges
Lefebvre’s and Albert Soboul’s work as the basis of his interpretations of the Revolution. What
is less obvious from these two texts in their published form, however, is the extent to which
Sartre also conducted his own research into the Revolution while developing the concepts he
would put to work in them.

\textbf{Variations on the Theme: The Revolution and the Algerian Revolution}

Sartre designed his revolutionary theory to take account of all revolutionary processes—
and in this respect he performed in the same universalist key as eighteenth-century French
Revolutionaries themselves. When it came to Algeria, on the one hand Sartre claimed the French
public had failed to understand the aims of Algerian nationalists. On the other hand, Sartre’s
gamble was that a national self-understanding held important keys to comprehending colonial
revolution (just as it mattered for an analysis of the Soviet Union). The French Revolution was

\textsuperscript{527} Specifically in reference to Sartre’s discussions of terror, Ian Birchall rightly reasons
that “The French Revolution remained at the heart of Sartre’s concept of terror,” especially since
growing up as a child in the Third Republic, he would have been reminded by Larousse’s \textit{Grand
Universal Dictionary of the 19th Century} that the Catholic Church had done much worse over the
years than the Committee of Public Safety and that the Revolution had to be taken \textit{en bloc}, as Clemenceau claimed. Birchall, “Sartre and Terror,” \textit{Sartre Today: A Centenary Celebration},
on Sartre’s mind and pen when the Algerian War began and it stayed there through the composition of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

Within the *Critique* there are moments when Sartre’s description of French Revolutionary events connect directly with his observations on colonial violence. As an archetype for all forms of social and revolutionary formation, the basic framework of the *Critique* would automatically apply to colonial revolution as well. Sartre interrupts his discussion of the effects of public opinion during the Great Fear, however, with a three-page note to remind his readers that the same dynamic is at work in the effects of colonial racism. The colonialists used racist stereotypes of the natives to reinforce their own seriality and their racist discourse also objectified native communities. 528 Later in the *Critique*, Sartre moved beyond the objectifying effects of racism and restated his position from “Colonialism is a System”: “In every case, repressive tactics, divisive politics, dispossession of land, above all, rapidly liquidated the feudal structures [in Algeria] and soon transformed this society that was backward yet structured as ‘atomized crowd’ into an agricultural subproletariat.” Despite speaking of the “supposed Rights of Man,” France’s domination of North Africa placed Algerians in a position of extreme seriality. 529

The preface Sartre composed for Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* translated the violence of the colonial situation and the violent means needed for its undoing into common terms for metropolitan readers. The violence of colonialism has come “on the rebound” and the Algerian War represents “the age of the boomerang,” according to Sartre; Fanon is the first since

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528 Sartre, *Critique*, I, 346n-349n
Engels and Sorel to capture violence’s role as the midwife of history. In perhaps Sartre’s most public and straightforward support for the FLN Sartre justified the group’s use of violence and claims that it is the violence of French colonialism coming home to the metropole. Even if ordinary French citizens never felt particularly tied to the Republic’s colonial projects, they were nonetheless implicated in their passive acceptance of the system. Café and airport bombs were the populace’s wakeup call. Either they could choose to heed it or pay the consequences.

Paige Arthur has argued that the Critique speaks mainly of “terror” as such in one particular sense: terror linked to fraternity is a terror against those who would betray the bond of their pledge, which is the sort of terror within revolutionary movements meant to ensure solidarity and prevent treason: in Sartre’s language, a terror that prevents the fused group from falling back into directionless seriality. As such, the emphasis Sartre places on the legitimacy of the FLN’s violence against the metropole appears confusing, as if Sartre has slipped from the usage of terror he established in The Critique to a different sort of terror in the “Preface” to The Wretched of the Earth. Throughout his preface, Sartre avoided discussing this type of fratricidal violence and painted the violence of colonial revolution as unequivocally on the side of historical progress. “Like Achilles’ spear,” Sartre claimed, this violence could “heal the wounds it inflicted.” Since Sartre’s aim throughout much of the Critique is to describe the process of groups in formation and the dynamics at work within these revolutionary groups it makes sense that less attention would be devoted to actions operating between a revolutionary group and its outward political adversaries. In fact, the opposite relation is given much more attention—the actions of the party, sovereign state, colonial authority, or bureaucracy in relation to serialized

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531 Arthur, Unfinished Projects, 93.
532 Sartre, “Preface,” lxii.
groups in formation.\footnote{533} Even if we take the seeming equivocation between the two types of terror for granted, a further worry of attentive readers then becomes whether Sartre was painting an otherwise optimistic picture of a scenario that in the \textit{Critique} he had argued is much messier and perhaps much more pessimistic.\footnote{534}

Three points of clarification bear stating, however. First, it would be wrong to suggest that Sartre, while writing the \textit{Critique}, did not also have on his mind the sort of revolutionary terrorism experienced in the 1950s and used by the FLN, or that Sartre’s comments on violent political action have no bearing on his stance on terrorism directed outside of fused groups.\footnote{535} In the text of the \textit{Critique} Sartre does in passing mention other forms of terrorism, such as “fascist terrorism,” “counter-terrorists,” and “anarchist terrorism.”\footnote{536} But more importantly, because the Terror of the French Revolution formed the basis of Sartre’s conceptualizations, Sartre meant terror to be a bivalent category encompassing both violence directed inwards and outwards. When discussing the concept of the institution via the Committee of Public Safety, for instance, Sartre notes that he uses “the Terror” in a generic sense and that there is no “Platonic ideal” of terror. Rather, the formulation of “the Terror” in any definite sense is a synthetic creation of later historical analysis. Sartre’s own historical understanding of what counted as terror during the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{533} Many commentators rightly point to these discussions as ways of elaborating a critical stance toward Stalinism in the aftermath of the show trials and Khrushchev’s 1956 party speech. Birchall, \textit{Sartre Against Stalinism}, 174-175; Arthur, \textit{Unfinished Projects}, 93.
\footnote{534} Arthur, \textit{Unfinished Projects}, 92-93.
\footnote{536} Sartre, \textit{Critique}, I, 559, 682, 705. Also consider Sartre’s following statement about syndicalist practice: “the employer interiorized his objective bourgeois being when during social disturbances and in particular circumstances the proletariat’s force grows, which is to say when a certain isolated employer becomes the proletariat’s object. This proletariat’s recognizes the possibility of killing in this circumstance; the employer knows as much and he knows that this possibility of killing (implicitly found in all class struggle but never as explicitly as in France and Italy) is only an active temporalization of a by-gone past that the worker carries as determination of his own being (he is a son or brother of those massacred in June 1848 or the Commune)” (705-706, emphasis in original).
\end{footnotes}
Revolution is telling, though. He claims the storming of the Bastille, an event where a fused group’s violence strikes out against the government, is the beginning of terror in the Revolution. Terror occurs and recurs throughout the whole of the Revolutionary process up to Thermidor when Sartre thinks the Revolution has ended:

The plurality of Terrors, even in the course of the revolutionary Terror (from ’89 to ’94), is for me so obvious that here I take one restrained and induced terror as an example (the circular Terror within a homogenous group being eroded by its seriality), whereas the main phenomenon (the Terror as fundamental relation between the French people and the Assembly as government) is produced to fight against indefinite non circular seriality.

Terror’s main function is to counter any threat of seriality, whether that comes from inside the group or outside of it. As a system of relations within all revolutionary movements, it has the possibility of taking the form of violence directed within a group or towards a group’s outside enemies. Sartre’s choice to focus on the Terror of 1793-94 was meant to highlight the extremes to which institutions could inflict violence on the fused group. It also pointed to the possibility of Stalinism, where the bureaucracy of the group’s institutions closes itself off from the group and perpetuates terror indefinitely. The Terror of the French Revolution may not have been a Platonic ideal, but it was a heuristic for interpreting any form of revolutionary terror, one that echoed Sartre’s already-pessimistic vision of human freedom.

Secondly, it would be wrong to assume Sartre’s unequivocal public support for the FLN meant he was a bloodthirsty demagogue. Sartre warned his readers that Fanon “has made himself spokesman for the situation, nothing more,” and Sartre was spokesman for Fanon. Though Sartre was publicly supportive of the FLN, in private Sartre was highly critical of their violent

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537 Sartre, *Critique*, I, 578-579n. See also *Critique*, II, 224: “It was the necessity for a petty-bourgeois government to keep the rich at arms length and, at the same time, to channel and direct towards its own ends a Terror of popular origin which—despite a few temporary lulls—had not stopped growing since the taking of the Bastille.”

538 See, for instance, Sartre, *Critique*, II, 144-145.

539 Sartre, “Preface,” *The Wretched of the Earth*, xlix.
methods and harbored no illusions about the FLN’s role in the massacre of fellow Algerians, such as those in the village Beni Ilmane in the Mélouza region. When the roughly 300 pro-MNA villagers refused to pledge allegiance to the FLN, they were assembled in front of the village mosque and summarily executed.\textsuperscript{540} Despite these reservations, in a 1958 conversation with Jean Daniel, Sartre insisted, “Listen, whatever the FLN is, it is there [in Algeria], the Algerian Revolution, that’s what it is. You’ve got to take it as it is.”\textsuperscript{541}

Finally, and most importantly, within the logic of the \textit{Critique} and Sartre’s public statements about the Algerian war, revolutionary terrorism is inscribed in the analyses of the violent possibilities inherent in anticolonial struggle, especially through Sartre’s uses of moments in French Revolutionary history. Even the dynamic of fraternity-terror fits a good deal of FLN actions during the Algerian War, whether Sartre would publicly admit it or not. All of history moved through a world of violence, and though this means that until the world of material scarcity and oppressive social relations ceases to exist, there is no completely satisfying moment of irreproachable revolutionary process. The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution both resulted in fratricidal terror—but they were still revolutionary movements through which Sartre saw historical progress at work. Achilles’ spear had both violent and palliative qualities. Likewise, the colonized is an “offspring of violence, he draws every moment of his humanity

\textsuperscript{540} Martin Evans, \textit{Algeria: France’s Undeclared War} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 216.

\textsuperscript{541} Printed in Jean Daniel, \textit{Le temps qui reste} (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1973), 251-255. This had also been Sartre’s stance since his 1948 play \textit{Les mains sales}, whose drama comes from the young idealist Hugo and the pragmatist Hoederer, and which was later mirrored in real life in the rift between Sartre and Camus. See Ronald Santoni, \textit{Sartre on Violence: Curiously Ambivalent}, 109-110, 124-138.
Sartre’s stance in the preface was that decolonization could not be reduced to either violence or progress—both were linked.

It should also not be terribly surprising that Sartre’s language and argument from the Critique appealed to some of the FLN’s supporters. By the end of 1960, French police had arrested and tried members of the network led by Sartre’s friend and former Les temps modernes editor Francis Jeanson. Their activities did not include direct violent acts against the French state, but they did participate in an international money laundering system and they helped shelter FLN operatives in Europe. Sartre was in South America while the trial occurred, though he did give Les temps modernes permission to use his name to compose a statement of solidarity with the accused. As we saw in Chapter One, during the trial, one of the defendants, Jean-Claude Paupert, a former soldier who was friends with then editor of Les Temps modernes editor, Claude Lanzmann, openly declared in Sartrean language his rationale for supporting the FLN. Under examination, Paupert defined the “colonial regime as a form of terrorism,” and this terrorism caused the Algerians to “live in violence.” Violence “is their memory and their destiny. They may not leave it—they may only blow it up.” Paupert’s analysis of the colonial world as imbued with violence mirrored elements of Sartre’s essay “Colonialism is a System” and the Critique. Algerian independence was part of the same universal history inaugurated by the rise of the modern French nation.

Sartre’s criticisms of Guérin and Lukács for dissolving humans in the acid bath of history, or reducing historically contingent actors and situations into idealized types, could easily lead to the

542 Sartre, “Preface,” lvii.
544 Ibid., 221-222, emphasis in original.
conclusion that he was on guard against the sort of French Revolutionary anachronism that flourished during the Algerian War. If an hypostatized proletariat and bourgeoisie were not only undialectical but also mistaken for ignoring human beings in their particular situations, then it would also be a mistake to see the third estate reproduced in the third world, the Terror reincarnated in anticolonial revolution. As Sartre explained at length, with both Guérin and Lukács in mind,

The open concepts of Marxism have closed in on themselves. They are no longer keys or interpretive schema. They are presented for their own sake as already-totalized knowledge. To speak in the language of Kant, Marxism creates constitutive concepts of experience from these singularized and fetishized types. The real content of these concept-types is always made from past knowledge; but contemporary Marxism makes them into an eternal knowledge.⁵⁴⁵

Even worse, this ideological dogmatism risked aiding the accompanying totalitarian politics of the eastern bloc. The “terrorist practice of ‘liquidating the particularity’” of historical circumstances went hand in hand with the actual liquidation of historical actors.⁵⁴⁶ However, Sartre’s manuscripts on revolutionary materials as well as the Critique of Dialectical Reason’s use of the French Revolution to generate a template for historical change demonstrate Sartre was guilty of the same formal error. Claude Lévi-Strauss went so far as to reduce Sartre’s whole project to the question “under what conditions is the myth of the French Revolution possible?” While Lévi-Strauss’ remark may be overly reductive, it remains quite accurate. Instead of strictly Marxist tropes, Sartre replaced an eternal struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie with “the myth of the French Revolution.”⁵⁴⁷ This myth went beyond the status of “guideposts”⁵⁴⁸—the

⁵⁴⁵ Sartre, Questions de méthode, 28, emphasis in original. See also Question de méthode, 29n.
⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 28, 28n.
⁵⁴⁸ “indications de tâches,” Questions de méthode, 33.
same status Sartre gave to Marxist analysis—in the ways Sartre reproduced it throughout the *Discourse* and the *Critique*. Within the French Revolution Sartre believed he could analyze the defining characteristics of all revolutionary struggles.

Lévi-Strauss further faulted Sartre for an inability to take Algeria and Algerians on their own terms. The human sciences were designed to analyze, but they were not equipped to perform the totalizing role Sartre desired of them. Sartre saw historical humanity as a function of its historical *praxis* toward its totalizing humanity, but this amounted to claiming groups only counted insofar as they played the game of western revolutions in the mold of French history.\(^{549}\) Though Sartre may have presented Algeria as caught up in a “tide of History” that might “change the world for the better,” it was always going to be a French History with a majuscule H.\(^{550}\) While it may be plausible to discern an anti-historicist logic from Sartre’s insistence on the fragility of social bonds and the near impossibility of historical development toward any one concrete goal for very long (before the retreat into seriality),\(^{551}\) this was not what Sartre expected of his project. No matter how pessimistic the language appears, Sartre kept faith that a better future was possible, even if he wanted to avoid notions of Hegelian or Marxist progress.\(^{552}\)

If the mediation of dialectical necessities found within historical situations was what primarily interested Sartre in the French Revolution as a great historical laboratory in which he could test his hypotheses,\(^{553}\) he would have to do more than assume the same historical

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conditions in other situations. In this regard Robert J. C. Young was correct in suspecting that Sartre was merely rewriting the standard narrative of western historical development.\textsuperscript{554} On the one hand, the extreme pessimism of all revolutionary action gained from Sartre’s analyses of the French Revolution offered a perhaps sobering effect on what for many in the fifties, sixties, and seventies would become a drunken rêverie of third worldism.\textsuperscript{555} Yet on the other hand, by thinking of Algeria through the French Revolution Sartre had already pegged Algeria’s future to a predetermined set of expectations regarding both the justifiability and inevitability of the FLN’s violence. In an interview amidst another wave of revolutionary enthusiasm in the Maoist 1970s, Sartre again returned to the French Revolution and reflected on the Algerian War. Asked by his interlocutor if he was in support of political murder, Sartre opined, “Yes… You can always get out of prison. The Revolutionaries of 1793 had probably not really killed enough and thus unconsciously effected a return to the status quo, then the Restoration.” Sartre further explained that he nonetheless remained opposed to the show trials that occurred in Russia, but still asked rhetorically, “Is it possible to conceive of an independent Algeria without the FLN’s liquidation of [its rival political group] the MNA? And how would we reproach the FLN’s violence, confronted daily during those years with the French Army’s repression, its torture and its massacres?”\textsuperscript{556} The foreign invader and threat of civil war justified terror in the 1950s, just as it had in the 1790s.

Sartre’s example highlights the power the French Revolutionary imaginary had over the anticolonial left during the French-Algerian War. Though he did not seem to refer to the

\textsuperscript{556} “Sartre parle des maoistes,” \textit{Actuel} 28 (February 1973).
Revolution when campaigning for Algerian independence, it was always lurking in the background of his views of revolutionary action and historical change.
The Limits of French Historical Reason

During the French Algerian War, the image of the French Revolution was capacious enough to bring together conversations about economic development, historical theory, and political legitimacy, yet specific enough to demarcate points of contention. The French Revolution as paradigm for historical change and modernity represented not just the Sartrean universal particular, but also a very particular type of universalism. The limits some anticolonial intellectuals saw to this republican language during the French-Algerian War are an important antipode to this story. They also highlight the strangeness in the continued afterlife of this line of reasoning in contemporary discussions of North Africa.

First of all, the analogy with the French Revolution acted as an ideal type, or regulating norm, for France. Like the princely mirrors of the Renaissance, the French Revolution offered not only historical examples, but also moral standards for French politics. In metropolitan France this was even more apparent following the Nazi Occupation and the Vichy government—both institutions that presented themselves as challenges to the Revolution’s legacy. And this “certain idea of France,” to use De Gaulle’s term of art, was one that fulfilled the French Empire’s civilizing mission without contradicting it.557 For some, like many of those involved in the Committee Against the Pursuit of the War in North Africa or colonial humanists like Charles-André Julien and the young Jacques Berque, the legacy of the French Revolution meant fulfilling the duties of the Republic to its imperial subjects and would-be citizens. Being anti-imperial in these terms may sound odd to modern ears. But if the benefits of French civilization were as universal as these proponents believed, empire was a vehicle through which these benefits could

spread. The ultimate goal, of course, would be to remove the imperial training wheels once Algeria’s republican apprenticeship was over.

Early in the French-Algerian War, then, the French Revolution appeared in public interventions first and foremost as a way of criticizing the nation’s conduct in Algeria. Living up to the ideals of the Rights of Man and Citizen meant ensuring an end to colonial torture, terror, and assassinations. The nation and its empire had already waged war against the counterrevolutionary fascist regimes of the 30s and 40s in the name of these ideals. Now they needed to purge the same tendencies from their own ranks.

The constitutional crisis of May 1958 brought on a general feeling of crisis in Algeria as well as the metropole and as a result people were less inclined to look to 1789 as they were to invoke the radical period of the founding of the First Republic and the Terror, 1792-1794. France found itself once again in need of creating a new republic and intellectuals looked to the founding of the First Republic for their bearings. Whether De Gaulle’s return symbolized a new monarch to be dethroned and whether a new Reign of Terror might be needed to purge counterrevolutionary (and fascist) elements from the nation were hotly debated questions, especially among the group involved with the magazine 14 juillet. In this period, the French Revolution went beyond a regulating ideal—it tapped into a nationalist spirit that François Furet would later call a political passion. These thinkers and activists saw themselves and Algerian nationalists in positions similar to those of Revolutionary France. From this point of reference they could draw lessons to direct their own political action in the present.

Of course, this division between 1954 and 1958 was not absolute. For some, like Georges Lefebvre, Daniel Guérin, or Jean-Paul Sartre, the French Revolution was not a heritage worth having unless it were continually mobilized for the present. While both Lefebvre and Guérin disagreed on what the identity of the Revolution truly was, they both saw it as a living political force. The various testimonies in the Jeanson network trial also stressed the connections between the French Revolution as a living heritage and solidarity with Algerian nationalism. In Sartre’s case, the Revolution’s political relevance was not outwardly as apparent, but its dynamics proved the shibboleth for understanding any and all revolutionary action, especially in Algeria. The same was true for many of Sartre’s detractors as well. For Raymond Aron and Albert Camus many of the dangers of contemporary politics were precisely due to the violent legacy the Revolution imparted to modern politics.559

Beyond the ambivalence some writers felt toward the French Revolution’s legacy and their anticolonial ventures, others pushed back definitively against seeing the French Revolution as a viable way of grounding any contemporary politics. When Lévi-Strauss indicted Sartre for merely reproducing the “myth of the French nation,” he was not alone in this general position. From the forties through the sixties a number of intellectuals had already begun pushing beyond the limits of a parochial French universalism—either on the grounds that such a French universal did not exist, by suggesting that such a universalism might be the cause of France’s problems and not merely its way out, or by looking for other, deeper structures behind politics and the human condition. These limits to French historical reason point to changes in larger intellectual trends in postwar France: the rise of structuralism, more firmly-entrenched anti-humanist

positions, and concerns for ethical forms of action that, while not anti-revolutionary, pointed to a different form of revolutionary politics. Examining these resistances to utilizing a French revolutionary memory also highlights exactly what this memory could and could not do.

Lévi-Strauss' biggest position on the problem of historical similarity and difference during the war was his 1952 UNESCO book *Race and History*. The book in part intervened to clearly state that there was no meaningful scientific basis for a category called race. Lévi-Strauss said the science was in and it was clear. In addition, however, it addressed the question of evaluating different cultures and their relationships to one another. It was wrong to assume that modern western historicity was the only standard measurement of historical time. While such cultural standardizing was a way of trying to make sense of cultural diversity, it relied on a “false evolutionism.” If each culture simply manifested a different stage in a singular development, then cultural difference collapsed under a humanity that was self-identical. As a consequence, it was inadequate to line up other cultures who do not meet the modern west's historical criteria and thus label them backwards or ahistorical. Rather, if western historical time's basis was diachronic changes in technological sophistication, a non-western culture’s sense of time might line up on an axis that is tangential or perpendicular to these changes. Lévi-Strauss’ stance further indicted the very discipline of ethnography as “the handmaiden of colonialism.”

A younger generation of intellectuals and activists, such as Pierre Bourdieu and those involved in the group and journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, like Cornelius Castoriadis or Jean-François Lyotard, echoed Lévi-Strauss’ rejection of the type of political historicism the French

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Revolutionary analogy entailed and applied it directly to Algeria. Bourdieu questioned the relevance of using western developmental models to study Algeria. While at the onset of the war he had originally planned on earning a degree in philosophy, his academic studies were interrupted when he was called up to serve in Algeria. He spent two years working with the colonial administration on developmental projects and afterwards decided to shift his studies to sociology. Whereas previous analysts saw the economic plight of Algeria as caused by its maladaptation to western economies, Bourdieu argued that the west should not be the reference point for economic development. Like Berque, Bourdieu argued that colonialism tried to impose a western economy on Algeria but was never able to get Algerians to think like western economic agents. But Bourdieu went further than Berque in distancing the west as a point of reference, whether historical or developmental. In Bourdieu’s estimation, those analyzing Algeria needed to provide “what non-Euclidean geometries are to Euclidean geometry.” Furthermore, for Bourdieu, the violence was not just a war against imperial France, but also a revolutionary reorganization of society. Bourdieu saw more clearly than many that as a social reality for Algerian nationalists, “Decolonization started with the beginning of the war,” and the 130 years of French colonial domination meant that decolonization was not going to be a simple process of subtraction. Rather, it was a total social transformation marked with as many solutions as new problems. While many caught up in third worldist politics saw decolonization as the key to a brighter future for oppressed workers everywhere, Bourdieu was much more measured. The problems posed by unemployment, underemployment, and what shape an independent society should take were real and did not have immediate answers, despite “demagogues who promise radical and magical solutions.”

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Though Cornelius Castoriadis was highly critical of French colonialism, his critiques were much more focused on moves toward socialist worker-management in Algeria than in idealizing a third world proletariat he was not even sure existed. In 1956, Castoriadis was happy to use what he saw as the obvious evils of French imperialism in North Africa as a way to draw attention to Soviet control of the eastern bloc, but he was more concerned with revolutionary movements in Hungary and Poland than Algeria. It wasn’t just that the Algerian War did not fit a French Revolutionary model, for Castoriadis, third worldist movements were not even Marxist: “If Marxists search for the roots of revolution from now on in colonial countries, and the contradictions of capitalism in the opposition between the West and the Third World or even in the struggle between the two blocs, they might just as well stop calling themselves Marxists.” The third world was not modernized, so there was no proletariat. The French who embraced third worldism were simply evading real issues at hand with (an actual) European proletariat. Having been born and raised in Greece, Castoriadis was likely not immersed in the Revolutionary hagiography to which his peers were exposed. Whether the discourse on revolution he favored was any more or less valid is perhaps not as important (or striking) as the fact that he completely sidestepped the dominant discourse on the French Algerian War.

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During the war, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* assigned Jean-François Lyotard to cover events in Algeria. While he embodied a similar pessimism about the potential of third worldist movements his commentary does not stick out quite as anomalously as Castoriadis’. For instance, Lyotard was willing to give the French Algerian War a revolutionary label. By 1957, Lyotard was convinced the war represented a true revolutionary moment for Algeria, having “crystalized” an Algerian national identity, and especially so once the Algerian communists merged forces with the nationalists, “ensuring their place in the martyrrology of the Algerian Republic.”565 At times, he even flirted with using the French Revolution as paradigm for Algeria: the shape of the FLN, for instance, was in his estimation traditionally Jacobin. However, this was a problem for France and the FLN, not necessarily a good omen. The FLN’s Jacobin nature meant it would likely fall prey to the same dangers of political centralization *Socialisme ou barbarie* decried in France and the Soviet Union.566 And even if the war was truly a revolutionary moment across the Mediterranean, Lyotard was not convinced the war held much possibility for revolutionary agitation back in the metropole, despite the movements to refuse military conscription or FLN aid networks like the one led by Francis Jeanson.567

In some cases, when the French Revolution was recognized as a salient political reference point, the Revolution was deemed part of the problem, not the solution. The political philosopher and Hegel specialist François Châtelet viewed fetishizations of Jacobin ideology as inherently


566 The FLN “is revolutionary according to its own historical terrain, which is to say bourgeois according to ours; it wishes to distribute land because at the moment it cannot conceive of any other solution to agrarian misery; it wishes to realize a political democracy because it cannot conceive that the ‘people’ might find an expression of their will outside of the institutional cadre learned from French legalism.” *Ibid.*, 74.

militarist and authoritarian. Jacobinism (and Stalinism) was the left’s problem, not a model for its future. At the end of the war, the reaffirmation of the Revolution’s core values meant that Châtelet’s estimation of French politics would be bleak. Like Lévi-Strauss, Châtelet observed the ways in which the French Revolution acted as a political myth that guided contemporary political thought—and like Aron and Camus he thought this was inherently problematic. The “Jacobin model” of French politics was “more than a mentalité yet less than a philosophy,” and this ambiguous nature made it all the more dangerous since its premises were assumed yet it was still amorphous enough to be continually adapted. If it were formally worked out as a political theory, Châtelet seemed to think, it would be easier to see how maladapted it was for present political needs. According to Châtelet, “in the eyes of the twentieth-century Jacobin, the France that inherited its principal characteristics from 1789 remains, despite the evolution of the world and the unhappy accidents of history, the national project. There is uncontestably a French chauvinism that is at least partially explained by the influence of the Jacobin mentality and its development over the course of the last century.” The Jacobins of the postwar were frozen in the epic of world history. It was even “probable that the stages and style of French colonization in Africa and Asia under the Third Republic and the difficulties the Fourth and Fifth Republics encountered during decolonization… continued to spread under its latent Jacobinism.”

Looking back to the Revolution could not point the way forward for either France or Algeria.

Even supporters of Algerian nationalism would be quickly disillusioned once the war ended when the FLN’s national programs did not match their supporters’ hopes and expectations. This was particularly true after the head of the military, Houari Boumedienne, overthrew President Ahmed Ben Bella. Daniel Guérin, for one, despite his view that the French Revolution

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568 François Châtelet, “Le jacobinisme du XXème siècle,” dated November 1962, Fonds Châtelet, CHT 1.46, IMEC.
held real, positive insights for modern politics, feared that the French Revolution had imparted the wrong lessons to Algeria and these lessons would hinder its future. A decade and a half after the war ended, Guérin still maintained that the Algerian Revolution was comparable to France’s in 1789. Yet as early as 1962 he confided to Mansour, the President of the FLN’s Algerian student group, that he had “no more confidence in [Mansour’s] leaders, such as they are. But I have always had confidence in the profundity and authenticity of the Algerian Revolution.” Algeria’s leaders were repeating the same mistakes as France’s leaders in the 1790s: “I have written a whole book denouncing, in the West’s social movements, the misdeeds of what I call ‘Jacobinism’ or ‘authoritarian socialism.’ The leaders of the Algerian Revolution are Jacobins and authoritarians.” The war had given Algeria seven years’ “apprenticeship” in true democracy and Algerians did not need to be directed by “men of destiny” or an authoritarian government. As with France and the rest of the world, this false socialism had to be replaced by what Guérin saw as true libertarian socialism.569

On the one hand, the French Revolution’s deployment in the war contributed to the feeling that France and Algeria were swept up in the “tide of history,” as Todd Shepard and Matthew Connelly have argued. This surely made it easier for naturalizing the altogether new post-1958 metropolitan consensus that Algeria was not really part of France and that decolonization was inevitable.570 On the other hand, it is telling that the French Revolution, the anchor to which universal history was supposedly tethered, mediated this reinvention of metropole and colony. The French Revolution as myth or conceptual analogue did not

predetermine the outcome of the war, but it did nonetheless shape anticolonial involvement in the war in noteworthy ways.

The extent to which the so-called universal ideals of French civilization penetrated Algerian nationalists during the French-Algerian War, for good or for ill, is by no means an easy question to address. For some, as we have seen with Fanon and Jean Amrouche, the relationship was not straightforward. While both could idealize the potential of the French Revolution’s promises, they also used such potential as a way of stressing how far it was from the reality of France’s presence in Algeria.

Anti-imperial activists and colonial nationalists who came of age before and during the interwar period were much more likely to use the language of French universalism against the empire, from Senegalese activist Lamine Senghor to Caribbean theorist CLR James and the Algerian Ferhat Abbas. Pro-reform Algerian journals bore titles like République algérienne and La République d’alger, highlighting the possibility of some Algerian republicanism after the exit from the colonial relationship. Those nationalists of the next generation, who came of age during and after World War II, were less likely to embrace French Republican imagery when thinking Algerian national identity. Though many of these younger nationalists were either educated in Paris or spent considerable time in the metropole, just like Fanon, Amrouche, or Abbas, the failed Blum-Viollette Plan of the 30s was likely the high point of French-Algerian

cooperation in their lifetimes, not just a failure. And after the massacres at Mélouza and Sétif, cooperation was a quickly vanishing horizon. In the Paris group that formed the journal *The Young Muslim* in the years before the war began, future FLN members such as Mostefa Lacheraf, Ahmed Taleb-Ibrahimi, and Malek Bennabi published articles that tried to embody relevant reference points for their crystalizing national identity. While Taleb-Ibrahimi wrote pieces attesting to the Arab world's contributions to “universal civilization,” the majority of the articles in the magazine stressed the distinct character of Algerian identity, writing on topics such as interpretations of the Quran, the life of Abd el Kader, and the philosophy behind the Muslim Brotherhood's founder Hassan Al Banna.572

Other nationalists viewed French history as foundational to Algerian identity, but this was a relationship defined by oppositions. The poet Jean Sénac unequivocally saw French civilization as the problem, not the answer for Algerian nationalism. His poem “The July Massacres” presented the victims of a repressed 1953 Bastille Day march in Paris as martyrs of a nation distinct from France. While the numbers of MTLD members in the demonstration were small in comparison to demonstrators from the CGT and PCF, they were the main targets of police action.573 The poem presented the contradictions between the symbolism of the *fête nationale* and the racist violence of the police:

> For the national holiday of free men  
> they massacred my friends  
> brown skin on gray cobblestones

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O Paris how sad you are
sad and severe with my race

They massacred my friends
they raised the Bastille
they executed the flames and the scream

O Paris how sad you are
cactus blood covers the Seine
Paris of Beauty of Justice of Misery
how sad and severe you are for the exiles!574

Sénac’s constant insistence that the police—“they”—are different from his friends the victims institutes the distance formalized by the whole scenario. The French Republic refused his countrymen as “exiles.” The Berber dramatist and poet Kateb Yacine, too, saw the goal for Algerian politics (and art) to set itself apart from French influence. After being forced by his parents to attend a francophone school as a child, he thought of himself as an “interior exile,” divorced from the language, customs, identity of his ancestors.575 The goal of his work was to oppose all forms of colonial representation, even the ones purporting to be universalist. Figures such as Abd el Kader were proof for Kateb Yacine that Algeria had its own agency outside of French influence. Asked why, late in life, he continued to write in French, he explained, “I write in French to tell the French I am not one of them.”576 And the Algerian philosopher of Muslim

575 Kateb Yacine, Le polygone étoilé (Paris: Le Seuil, 1966), 182. A sentiment beautifully captured in the penultimate stanzas of Jean Amrouche’s poem, “Le combat algérien”: “We want the patrie of our fathers / the language of our fathers / the melody of our dreams and of our songs / on our prams and on our tombs / We do not want to wander in exile / in the present without memory and without future.” Amrouche, L’éternel Jugurtha (1906-1962) (Marseille: Archives de la ville de Marseille, 1985), 55.
identity, Malek Bennabi, spent much of his intellectual life theorizing what a reborn civilization would mean for the Arab world. In his estimation, it would entail rooting out all corrupting influences since the fifteenth-century demise of Muslim Spain. Bennabi’s mistrust of all things non-Muslim went so far as to criticize the FLN’s internationalist diplomacy.577

Rather than accept this sharp break in us vs. them—French de souche vs. real Algerian—nationalities as a prescient foregone conclusion (since the war’s outcome reflected this position), it is better to see it as a diagnostic of political sentiments. For even the most staunch defenders of a third way between a complete divorce between Algeria and France and continued oppression in a French Algeria, the successive failures at reform from the Blum-Viollette Plan, to World War II promises and half-hearted postwar economic and social development, challenged the idea there was anything civilized about France’s civilizing mission. While Jean Amrouche saw himself as a middle term that could find the best in France and North Africa, by 1955 he admitted to Jules Roy, “I no longer believe in a French Algeria. Men of my type are monsters,

historical errors.” Amrouche’s fellow Kabyle writer Mouloud Feraoun expressed a similar sentiment the following year.

Algerian nationalist agitation during the war also mirrored this insistence on recovering an Algerian identity that could distance itself from France. This dynamic is sometimes hard to gauge based on official FLN publications since they were often written with the purpose of persuading the French metropolitan and international audiences that writers like Bennabi so mistrusted. For instance, Martin Evans has pointed to the discrepancy between the Arabic word *thawra* and its translation into francophone FLN propaganda as *révolution*. Whereas the former most closely means the rather flat “uprising,” the latter has all of the over-determined connotations of *the* revolution of 89. Similarly, because the FLN’s main journal was the official outward-facing presence of the FLN, *El Moudjahid* tried to capture a nationalist spirit recognizable to francophone readers and an ahistorical national identity that looked more French than it was for the FLN’s rank and file. The popular-democratic desires of the FLN under Abbane Ramdane and the laic political structures he wished to build were often at odds with the overtly-religious politics of the *ulema* and rural populations. For these latter, the majority of the FLN’s early supporters, resistance to France had always been coded with religious symbolism.

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579 “When I say that I am French, I give myself a label that each French person refuses me. I speak French, and I got my education in a French school. I have learned as much as the average Frenchman. What am I then, dear God? Is it possible that as long as there are labels, there is not one for me? Which one is mine? Can somebody tell me what I am? Of course, they may not want me to pretend that I am wearing a label because they pretend to believe in it. I am very sorry, but this is not enough.” Journal entry from February 1, 1956. Mouloud Feraoun, *Journal, 1955-1962. Reflections on the French-Algerian War*, translated by Mary Ellen Wolf and Claude Fouillade (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 65-66.
580 Evans, 120.
581 For instance, 38% percent of *El Moudjahid’s* articles covered international affairs while only 17% dealt with Algeria in general and 4.5% dealt with the history of Algeria. While
In this respect, Jacques Berque's insistence on seeing the *ulema* as Algerian Jacobins only conflated these two often-at-odds strands of nationalist sentiment.

Yet, whatever the extent to which the narratives of French civilization guided Algerian nationalists, without a doubt French colonialism left its mark on the post-independence state. For one, much of the infrastructure, physical and bureaucratic, was left over from French rule. Not everything would be built from scratch. By the 1970s heavy industrialization programs of the type projected by French modernizers like Berque were underway as a matter of necessity. Economic hardship following the first year of independence forced Ben Bella to request increased economic aid from France, and French interests controlled much of the capital that entered the new nation, ensuring that French corporations would continue to reap some profit after independence.⁵⁸² Neither of the two governments, either, could exactly determine whether or not Algeria would be included in the Rome Treaty of 1957 (even if Algeria was counted as part of France when the treaty was signed).⁵⁸³ Algerian nationalist interests represented by the FLN would broach no middle ground between absolute independence and some form of federalism with greater local autonomy and continued union to the metropole, despite the wishes of many anticolonialists like Charles-André Julien. Yet in the moment that the FLN obtained a political divorce from France, they created a highly-centralized and bureaucratic state on the Jacobin model. As Samuel Moyn recently observed of the death of the French Union’s federalist

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⁵⁸³ On this interesting issue, see the article by Megan Brown in *Modern and Contemporary France* (forthcoming 2017).
projects, “for the history of federalism to be more than trivia, it has to be shown that it was actually possible and that it might have yielded better results than the nation-state. Neo-federalist historians rarely take it upon themselves to solve what ought to be the central puzzle: why did the nation-state model win out, when the alternatives were supposedly so compelling?”

In the case of Algeria, the lack of political will backing any meaningful attempt to treat Algeria as the three metropolitan departments it legally was supposed to be only fueled nationalist projects that saw a total divorce from the French Union as necessary. But this does not account for the fact that according to many observers the independent Algerian nation-state itself would look so French. The fact that, once in power, the FLN began to construct a centralized state so similar to a Jacobin republic perhaps attests to the civilizing mission’s—and its corollary visions of developmentalism—conceptual and institutional staying power. This would be true even if these legacies were unintended consequences of France’s colonial legacy.

Of course, it is almost always an historical error to see the result of any contingent process as a foregone conclusion. As Todd Shepard demonstrated, “decolonization” in Algeria was an invention, and it was only one of many options available for sovereign and non-sovereign

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586 James McDougall makes a similar point dealing with the postcolonial Arab world more generally: “Across the Arab world, whether the colonial state created its institutions de novo or worked through an existing infrastructure, and whether the ‘transfer of power’ was a matter of ceremonially lowering flags or of fighting a protracted war, the legacy of colonial state-formation lay more basically, and more enduringly, in the commonality of a particular configuration of power and authority common across the various and changing patterns of the state itself and its relation to society.” James McDougall, “The British and the French Empires in the Arab World,” Sovereignty after Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia, edited by Sally Cummings and Raymond Hinnebusch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 59-60.
territories at the end of the colonial era. Yet the view that an Algerian Revolution could also be a variant of the French Revolution did shape the imaginary horizons of persons in France and Algeria. Despite the recent studies that take seriously the postwar push for federalist alternatives in Africa, by the 1930s, much of North African anticolonial rhetoric expressed itself in very western nationalist terms. That anticolonial demands were couched in nationalist sentiment from the very beginning perhaps shows that federal alternatives, as desirable as they may have been, were always going to be Sisyphean projects when it came to Algeria. In the 1960s, the third world may have replaced the industrialized west as the ideological motor force of world revolution, but at least in the case of Algeria it was going to be a revolution according to the French model.

Of course, another, even more pernicious, alternative is that, try as one might, it is still impossible for contemporary observers to un-see and un-think France when dealing with its former colonies in North Africa. This problem goes well beyond Algeria in particular and owes

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588 The case of New Caledonia provides a striking contrast to Algeria. An overseas territory (*territoire d’outre-mer*) with a large settler population (approx. 30%), it kept ties with France through the era of decolonization. This was largely because the colonial administration had actually delivered on their promises of political inclusion and infrastructure development, even if signs of later (post 1970s) independence movements were nonetheless emerging. See Benoît Trépied “La décolonisation sans l’indépendance?: Sortir du colonial en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1946-1975),” *Genèses* 91 (July 2013), 7-27; Trépied, “Des conduites d’eau pour les tribus. Action municipale, colonisation et citoyenneté en Nouvelle-Calédonie,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 58, no. 4 (October-December 2011), 93-120.
much to the application of European ideas of state structures in Africa beginning in the age of exploration. Categories such as tribe, chieftain, native king, and emperor were at best approximations that smoothed over African particularities in order to use European categories as standards. To the extent that nation and state failed to coincide according to Jacobin ideals in the French Revolution, it is even more unlikely they would in postcolonial states. The habit of seeing French-Algeria’s colonial legacy as indelible is only encouraged by the difficulty of conducting historical studies of Algeria after independence. Algeria may have a past after 1962, but according to the Algerian government its only relevant history is its anticolonial struggle and the Revolution.

The French historical reason that permeated demographic analysis in the Algerian War may seem to have waned in some respects, but it has certainly not disappeared. Institutionally, France no longer needed to focus squarely on Algeria’s population after independence. However, Matthew Connelly has noted that the decline in imperialist demographic control also coincided with the United Nations’ family planning efforts at the Population Council. He has little faith that the latter’s programs would be much different from the former’s. Recent studies by INED researchers Youssef Courbage and Emmanuel Todd have rightly pushed back against the


assumptions built into the early demographic analyses conducted by Sauvy and his team at INED, especially the ones that treated large swaths of the global south as homogenous. According to Todd and Courbage, there was no common demographic thread among Muslim populations, or even in the narrower Arab world. Throughout, Muslim societies’ reproductive rates varied and have changed a great deal even over the relatively short period of time since the end of World War II. Yet there persists a strange insistence on the centrality of Europe as a demographic baseline against which the Muslim world should be measured. Despite their insistence in 2007 that “Human societies will never be entirely alike, and it would be absurd—and sad—to imagine a world that was homogenous in every detail,” Courbage and Todd still claimed that “The Muslim world is now at the center of a transition to modernity. The fertility rates of some countries have already caught up with those of Europe.” Even demographic practices in Arab countries have come to emulate French state practice: “All Arab countries are centralizers, like the Jacobins, and tend to blur the ethnic and linguistic dimensions of demography.”

Despite their jettison of Sauvy’s fears that demographic change automatically spurs political crisis, they remain wed to the idea that the Muslim world’s historical progress is tied to transitions to French standards.

The persistence of the French Revolution in anti-imperial discourse and the limits it set and continues to set on our conceptual horizon for Algeria most closely fit J. M. Hobson’s paradox of modern world relations, what he terms “gradated sovereignty.” It has been obvious for some time now to see Eurocentric visions of the world as paternalistic, racist, and imperial. But the anti-imperialism of the last century has not been able to escape many of the paternalistic

and othering elements of this dynamic. In the place of Eurocentric domination came “Eurocentric intolerance.” In this analysis, “all Eurocentric theories of sovereignty explicitly or implicitly invoke a hierarchical conception of world politics that entails the idea of gradated sovereignty.” Algeria gained legitimacy as an independent state by aligning with the French Revolution. Even when sovereign and independent of France it would still be measured according to that standard.  

The same language used in the 1950s and 60s to argue for Algeria’s political maturity resurfaced in the 2011 Arab Revolutions, particularly with regard to Tunisia. Many of these Revolutions, in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, earned the idiom “Arab Spring,” which referred back to the European Revolutions of 1848, the so-called “springtime of nations.” At other points the referent of choice was 1989, when European eastern-bloc countries manifested against communist rule. None of these heuristics seem in retrospect particularly helpful for analyzing the actual dynamics at work. If anything, spectators expecting another 1848 or 1989 could not help but be let down when the results (varied as they are) of these different events did not live up to these models’ expectations. (In some readings, the expectations gleaned from 1848 would be admittedly quite pessimistic.) The most striking analogy, however, returned to a hope that the French Revolution would finally be realized for Arab countries. Almost fifty years after the end of the French-Algerian War the spirit of 1789 had moved on to the rest of the Arab world. Henri Guaino, special counselor to Nicolas Sarkozy, for instance, affirmed that these Arab countries

595 See the dossier “‘I was terribly wrong’—writers look back at the Arab Spring five years on,” The Guardian Online (23 January 2016), http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/23/arab-spring-five-years-on-writers-look-back .
“have nearly the same characteristics of the French Revolution of 1789.” Similarly, the historian of Algeria Benjamin Stora and journalist Edwy Plenel published a series of conversations on the Arab Revolutions titled *The Arab 89*. Their reference pointed both to 1989 and to 1789. According to Stora, the problems of colonialism and decolonization interrupted the historical development of Arab territories. The events of 2011 showed signs that history was again on the move. While there were internal logics to these events that went beyond European influences, the revolutionary dynamics at play still remained influenced by European history. Applying his “game of analogies” rubric to media and intellectual responses to the 2011 Arab Revolutions, Michel Vovelle highlighted the pitfalls of making such rigid comparisons. Commentators had insisted on seeing purely western ideology as motivating events in 2011 and were therefore blindsided by the non-western components of the movements, such as the dominance of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The point, of course, is not that there were no disappointing features of these contemporary revolutionary moments. But the failures also cannot be boiled down to a continued inability of the Arab world, much of it formerly part of the French empire, to live up to the civilizing mission. And choosing a different western revolution as heuristic will not necessarily escape this trap, either—move the (historical) goalposts as much as you wish, you’re still playing the game.

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