

The University of North Carolina Asheville

**The Victory Without Laurels: The French Military Tragedy in Algeria (1954-1962)**

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“National Liberation, national resistance, the restoration of nationhood... whatever may be the headings used... de-colonization is always a violent affair.”<sup>1</sup> Fanon said words in references to the French-Algerian War, a Cold War conflict over France’s greatest colony that threatened the nation and its identity. However, unlike America, it came to define a generation of Frenchman who have yet to come to grips with its tragic history and consequences<sup>2</sup> Between 1954 and 1962, the French Army fought across a small strip of territory in North Algeria against the Algerian nationalist movements claiming independence from France. The war witnessed horrific atrocities and bloodshed between people eager to settle old scores; political leaders squabbling for power against parties of deeply entrenched attitudes of suspicion and protectionism; and an army willing to bring down its own government in order to preserve the honor, dignity and glory of France.

After World War II, war became less conventional and transitioned into a stage of unconventional warfare, characterized by the guerilla and increasing political dimensions of consciousness among governments and the citizenry. Likewise, the French Army had to adapt and create new doctrines of warfare, creating the field of counter-insurgency. The French used a set of unconventional tactics, superior firepower and an advanced logistical system to crush the Algerian resistance movement’s military forces while seeing little distinction between soldier and civilian. The Algerian *felleghas*,<sup>3</sup> the *Front de Libération Nationale* or F.L.N. led the struggle for independence and was ultimately defeated in the field, despite their persistence to fight for independent Algeria. Despite the sacrifices of French officers and success of their

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<sup>1</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press Inc.), 1963, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Martin S. Alexander, Martin Evans and J.F.V. Keiger, ed. *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954-1956: Experiences, Images and Testimonies*, [Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY], 2002, 32

<sup>3</sup> Arabic trans: guerilla

tactics, the FLN won the political battle through both forcing the French to maintain an unpopular war on the home front and international recognition of their cause. The cost of victory was the military's isolation from the French Government and public and triggered the collapse of the Fourth Republic. This pivotal event brought Charles De Gaulle to power and the Fifth Republic, having no sympathy for the military's pride and the *colons* that held powerful influence in the previous Republic signed the Evian Accords in 1962.<sup>4</sup> The implications of destroying the F.L.N.'s military while throwing away the political legitimacy of *Algérie française* doomed their efforts to fail.

The Algerian War entered into mainstream historical writing in France starting in the late 1990s and the war in the last seven years. Martin S. Alexander and J.F.V. Keiger, two military historians argue that serious historiographies did not appear on the Algerian war until the successful prosecution of the torture case involving Maurice Papon in France.<sup>5</sup> The foremost written work in English on the French-Algerian War, *A Savage War of Peace* by historian Alistair Horne offers an all-encompassing study of the war, covering its political, social and military dimensions and the savage impact it had on both the Army and the nation of France.<sup>6</sup> It broadly addresses the military conflict between the French Army and the F.L.N. throughout the country. However, it emphasizes the aspects of urban terrorism, as seen in Algiers in 1957 and

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<sup>4</sup> "Evian Accords." <[http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/algerie-accords\\_d'Evian.htm](http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/algerie-accords_d'Evian.htm)>

<sup>5</sup> Martin S. Alexander and J.F.V. Keiger, "France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, V.25, n.2. [Routledge], 2002. 1-32. A court case involving Maurice Papon was a civil suit for collaborating with the Germans during the Vichy Years (1940-42). It parallels the interview of Paul Aussaresses' with *Le Monde* on the subject of torture during the Battle of Algiers (1956-1957).

<sup>6</sup> Alistair Horne, *Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* [New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books, 1987], 12

the implementation of torture as tool for combating the terrorists. The OAS<sup>7</sup> and army-civil conflicts also features prominently because they provide a crucial picture of how the war, overtime deteriorated into a struggle between the government, the F.L.N. and a demoralized army that refused to accept surrender from politicians in Paris.

The conditions of the French Army fighting in Algeria are illustrated in Charles Shrader's *The First Helicopter War*, the only significant piece of American historiography currently known on the conduct of the war. Shrader lays out in extraordinary detail the readiness of the French and the F.L.N. to fight from 1954-1959. He provides an in-depth discussion on the logistical and strategic dispositions of both belligerents and introduces the helicopter as having fundamentally changed the French approach to fighting in the *bled*<sup>8</sup> and mountains. Shrader establishes that the French army, due to a mix of fortunate circumstances; proximity to France and superior force of arms had destroyed the National Liberation Army (ALN) by 1959.<sup>9</sup>

Both Alexander and Keiger published a collection of personal accounts from French officers, doctors, soldiers, politicians and civilians called *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954-62: Experiences, Images and Testimony*. More recently, an article published by Alexander and Keiger called "France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy" describes the emergence of Algeria into the public light as a war, rather than the long held views as a "civil disturbance."<sup>10</sup> Algeria had long been considered conflict whose most observed aspects were not the battles or fighting in the field. At the time of its publishing French

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<sup>7</sup> *Organisation Armée Secrete* (Organization of the Secret Army) was a French domestic terrorist group formed after the attempted 1961 army coup in Algiers to fight against de Gaulle and force an end to the peace negotiations over Algerian independence.

<sup>8</sup> Arabic trans: countryside

<sup>9</sup> Charles Shrader. *The First Helicopter War: Logistics and Mobility in Algeria, 1954-1962*. [Praeger: Westport, CN]: 1999, 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> Algeria was never acknowledged as a "war" until 1999

generals Jacque Massu and Paul Aussarresses, interviewed by *Le Monde*<sup>11</sup> confessed to using torture on combatants during the conflict. The article provides a foundation for understanding the French officers' experience of the conflict, which found expression in these various accounts and later writings by participants, who were now writing together forty years after Evian in 1962. In a shorter piece from the *Journal of Military Sciences*, O'Brien Brown in his article on the Algerian War, "Revolution Unleashed," asserted fourth generation warfare where the F.L.N., regardless of the military result only had to erode the morale of the home front to achieve its goal of independence.<sup>12</sup>

Scholarship covering the specifics of the military conflict is rare and not widely published because of many sources are not available in English.<sup>13</sup> This observation was published in Alexander and Keiger's article in the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, "France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy." Both acknowledge that little literature has been written on the actual fighting because mostly the attention is directed toward torture and the denunciation of the *Harkis*. Understanding the war in Algeria requires a fundamental and thoughtful analysis of the revolutionary war and the roles of the guerrilla and counterinsurgent. *The War of the Flea* by Mark Taber covers the dramatic changes in warfare as they unfolded in 1965. His analysis post-dates the Algerian conflict by two years, but offers insights into the mindset of the participants that was actively being suppressed in both war-ridden Algeria and a guilty Metropolitan France. Roger Trinquier, after his experience fighting in Algiers and other areas of operations, wrote his signature work on counterinsurgency *Modern Warfare: A French*

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<sup>11</sup> Liberal newspaper and most widely read French paper in Metropolitan France.

<sup>12</sup> O'Brien Brown, "Revolution Unleashed," *Journal of Military Sciences*, [2011], 78-80

<sup>13</sup> French historian Benjamin Stora published *Histoire de la Guerre D'Algerie: 1954-1962* remaining the French authority on Algeria. Other published materials include *Histoire Militaire Française*.

*View of Counterinsurgency*. This highly influential military text illustrates the French experience fighting the F.L.N. and utilizing the first tangible theory of fighting a guerilla army. Trinquier was very informative on methods that the army implemented in the field.<sup>14</sup>

The following authors account for most of the combat literature involved in this work, ignored unless stirring the controversial areas of aforementioned topics of interest to French historians. Paul Aussaresses, a retired French general, recounted his experience fighting the F.L.N. in *Battle of the Casbah*, describing the experience of paratroopers in the slums of Algiers, giving us a taste of urban counterterrorism.<sup>15</sup> Maurice Challe published a memoir *Notre Révolte*, dedicated to the last three years of the Algerian war. It also shows Challe's politicization, synonymous with many French officers throughout the war and their personal writings.<sup>16</sup> Standing alongside these works is Pierre Leulliette's lesser-known memoir *St. Michael and the Dragon*, describing his three years of fighting in the Kabylia region. His account describes the behaviors, feelings and performance of the ordinary paratrooper and their struggle with both the F.L.N. and their environment.<sup>17</sup> Although memoirs are great sources for individual experiences, they also tend to be heavily biased toward the writer and reflect only his or her perspective. This presents a particular challenge in the context of Algeria because the army was so highly politicized during the war.

Some availability of Algerian sources provided insights into the F.L.N.'s struggles with the French army. Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* portrays the mindset of the

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<sup>14</sup> Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, [Westport: Praeger, 2001], 1-2. The Americans consulted his text and attempted to apply his ideas to the war in Vietnam, despite very different conditions.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Algeria, 1955-1957*, [New York: Enigma, 2002].

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Challe, *Notre Révolte*, [Presses de la Cité, Paris: 1968].

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Leulliette, *St. Michael and the Dragon: Memoirs of a Paratrooper*, [The Riverside Press Cambridge: 1964]

revolutionary who was fighting to free his homeland from its colonial master. Since Algeria is was the most important colonial struggle in the French Empire, Fanon's analysis is crucial to understanding the enemy the French Army faced.<sup>18</sup> Written works from individuals fighting in the F.L.N. against the French have recently surfaced, although they are not French army specific source work. Saleh's *Fureurs Dans Les Djebels*, is a biographical account of his experience as a secretary in a guerilla unit, recording numerous accounts of engagements with French forces in the *bled*. It provides on the ground accounts of the effectiveness of counterinsurgency operations as they experienced fighting the French in the *bled*.<sup>19</sup> These historical accounts provide a clear picture that the French were successful in their strategies and defeated the F.L.N., an account lost in the annals of Cold War and French history.

Algeria as an entity of the French Empire started in 1830 when colonial troops under Louis-Philippe of France occupied the country. Much like their neighbors, Tunisia and Morocco, Algeria became a permanent colony and saw settlement by French colonists and other Europeans who saw economic opportunities in the new colony. However, Algeria was incorporated as province of France, giving her special status in the French Empire.<sup>20</sup> The colonists or *colons* that came also differed in that they settled the coastlines and built a vibrant European society and engaged in deep segregation of the Algerian population there. By the time the First World War broke out in 1914, *Algerie français* was the most prosperous colony in the French Empire and contained nearly a million European settlers, including Spanish, Italian and Jewish inhabitants.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Fanon, 19-20

<sup>19</sup> Mekacher Salah, *Fureurs Dans Les Djebels: La Guerre de Libération Nationale*, Algiers, Algeria, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie: 1954-1962*, [Paris: La Decouverte, 1993] 4

<sup>21</sup> Gillo Pontecorvo, *La Bataille d'Alger*, DVD, [Algiers, Algeria: Casbah Films, 1966]

The French *colons* or *pied-noirs*<sup>22</sup> as they were called segregated the country along social, economic and political lines. The *pied-noirs* were given the best lands for wine production and given preference in good healthcare, access to good education and jobs. Political power was in the hands of the *colons* that administered the country under the pretense of superiority and rejected any attempts at liberalizing the political system. During the late thirties and period of the Second World War, members of the Algerian liberals began agitating for equal rights in the political arena, including universal suffrage, which was denied to them on the basis of race and religion.<sup>23</sup> Other issues involved included land reform, specifically land owned by the massive wineries and agribusinesses owned by prominent *pied-noir* families that comprised the *grand-colons*.<sup>24</sup> Later, French political leaders, in the time of the Third Republic (1874-1940) and the Vichy Government (1940-1944) had attempted liberal reforms to give Algerians a stronger voice in the governance of the province. Both here and during the Algerian conflict, the *pied-noirs* successfully lobbied (and sometimes violently protested) against any such changes, jealously guarding their status. When the Second World War ended and Algerian soldiers fighting on behalf of France returned, they found a society that was already stirring with revolutionary activity.<sup>25</sup>

After the 8th of May 1945 massacre at Setif, where vigilantes and police massacred 10,000 Algerians, members of the Algerian nationalist groups like Ahmed Ben Bella and Krim Belkacim became political agitators and went on to form the F.L.N. Although the F.L.N. was the major revolutionary party executing the war, there were many other significant parties, such as

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<sup>22</sup> trans: Blackfoot

<sup>23</sup> Stora, 4

<sup>24</sup> The colonial elite

<sup>25</sup> Brown, 80

the Communist Party and the Algerian National Movement.<sup>26</sup> However, it was the F.L.N. that adopted the stance of an independent Algeria by revolutionary war and prepared to carry on a violent struggle for independence. They began gathering weapons and set up a network of guerrilla operatives with jurisdiction over certain areas of the country.<sup>27</sup> When news came in 1954 that the French Army had been defeated at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu by the Vietminh in Indochina, the F.L.N. leaders felt the opportunity had arrived to begin their uprising. Meeting in Switzerland, Ben Bella and other Algerian leaders officially formed the F.L.N. and charged its agents in Algeria to begin the uprising on November 1<sup>st</sup> of 1954 in the *bled*, away from the towns and cities. This move signified a break from the political process, practiced by previous parties and the adoption of a more militant struggle for Algerian independence against the French. From Cairo, on the day attacks began, Ben Bella issued the first proclamation of the FLN, declaring: “After decades of struggle, the National Movement has reached its final phase of fulfillment. Our goal: the restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign, democratic, and... the preservation of the fundamental freedoms, without distinction of race or religion.”<sup>28</sup>

The war in the Aurès Mountains began on November 1<sup>st</sup>, “All Saints Day” in 1954 with a coordinated assault by the F.L.N. on military posts and towns within Wilaya I.<sup>29</sup> French troops were moved quickly from the mainland to occupy the entire stretch of Algeria, incorporating a

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<sup>26</sup> The MNA was largely pro-French and became the chief domestic rival for the F.L.N. throughout the war.

<sup>27</sup> Horne, 78-79

<sup>28</sup> *Proclamation of the Algerian National Front, Liberation Front, (FLN) November, 1954, 1954, An Open Door to the Arab World,*

<<http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?action=read&artid=10>>

<sup>29</sup> “Wilaya” is the Algerian term for district. The F.L.N. had five Wilayas operating throughout the war. Wilaya I encompassed the Aurès; Wilaya II encompassed the region around Constantine; Wilaya III was the Kabylia; Wilaya IV is the Algerios area (excluding Algiers); Wilaya V included the city of Oran; and Wilaya VI encompassed the Sahara Desert. Additionally, the city of Algiers was an autonomous zone, outside for any Wilaya commander.

policy known as *quadrillage*. This policy divided the French army between regions of Algeria, often aligning with the civil administration to maintain domestic security.<sup>30</sup> Since the *bled* was much more hostile than the cities, the French originally deployed most of their combat troops there. The main units to arrive in the *bled* were the paratroopers, who quickly became a hallmark soldier for fighting the insurgents. While the French position in Algeria was strong due to the level of infrastructure development and strength of the logistical network, the soldier on the ground had little knowledge of fighting the F.L.N. insurgents in the rough and sometimes unpredictable environment of Algeria. They were like a dog defending against the flea, “too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with.”<sup>31</sup> The time when overwhelming military power was used against the *felleghas* was still four years off, leaving the initiative with the F.L.N.

The French troops who arrived in the winter were not only inexperienced recruits in the ways of war; they were adventuresome, romantic and confident that it would be a “short war.” These soldiers were first deployed in the most volatile regions of Algeria that included the Kabylia and Aurès, of which Pierre Leulliette, a veteran of the first three years described as cold, desolate and unexceptional. The F.L.N., like their counterparts in Indochina often hid in the *bled*, where they could count on the support of the local population who were often poor farmers and artisans. They would use strike-and-fade tactics, carrying the bodies of their comrades just before reinforcements could be brought up from the rear lines. The targets ranged from French troops, local collaborators and parties that opposed the F.L.N.’s leadership of the nationalist movement.<sup>32</sup>

The French maintained a complex and secure logistical network in Algeria compared to

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<sup>30</sup> Shrader, 31

<sup>31</sup> Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 1965), 20

<sup>32</sup> Leulliette, 19-20

the F.L.N. as opposed to their past conflict in Indochina. The battlefield was situated on the Mediterranean region, locked by the Atlas chain that separates the Sahara Desert from the coastal plains and plateaus. Each city was connected through an interlinking network of roads and railroads, with deep-water harbors at Algiers, Constantine and Oran. There were also two international airports, several regional airstrips and a military airstrip in the Sahara.<sup>33</sup> Due to the wide proliferation of motor transportation, freight cars and locomotives and commercial aircraft, the French army had the capacity to move troops and units quickly throughout the country at the sign of a major incident or insurrection. The major highways, throughout the war never fell into the hands of the rebels for any major period of time.<sup>34</sup> Another important aspect about the logistical situation in Algeria was the country's proximity to the Metropole, France. Unlike Indochina, where they were separated by thousands of miles, it was easy for reinforcements to be flown in or shipped across the Mediterranean within hours or days of an incident.<sup>35</sup> The F.L.N. was already at a distinct disadvantage due to its inability to access transportation networks.

Noting the high degree of logistical supremacy the French possessed, the F.L.N. primarily held to the *bled*, making the Aurès the most dangerous area of Algeria throughout the war. Leulliette described the mountains in his memoirs: "The Aurès have become a vast fortified camp. The rebels are creating more and more impregnable areas among their rocks." When the French identified a column of guerillas, patrolling units would rush to intercept while the air force bombed and harassed them. When the helicopters were present, the paratroopers would be quickly ferried to a choke point in the valleys and the column would be destroyed or

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<sup>33</sup> It was also the site of the French Atomic Weapons testing sites.

<sup>34</sup> Shrader, 101

<sup>35</sup> Shrader, 18-22

dispersed.<sup>36</sup> When the F.L.N. hid in villages, French patrols would search them, interrogate the residents for information and, if no were destroy the village with planes and mortars.<sup>37</sup> One unnamed partisan claimed: "Then the soldiers had a skirmish with the partisans on the road through the nearby forest. They raided us the same day. They were looking for 'proof' and they found it: we were... storing some ammunition. They took my mother and my brother's wife away. They burnt our house down for the third time..."<sup>38</sup>

The helicopter proved its worth in Algeria, becoming a powerful tool for fighting the F.L.N. in the *bled*. The first helicopters arrived in Algeria in 1955 on special request for scout worthy aircraft and troop transport. When the French obtained its first units in 1955, there were only four army helicopters in the entire country. By 1959 when the French fielded on hundred and forty Vertol, Allouette, Sikorsky and Bell H-13 types of helicopters under a single air tactical unit called GALAT 101<sup>39</sup> These units were often dispersed among different operation groups of French paratroopers and army units operating in the *bled*, especially in the Kabylia and Aurès mountain regions, where they needed transport helicopters, such as Vertols and the combat craft, the Allouette.<sup>40</sup> The distribution ensured that every major combat unit had access to air transport at the cost of strategic flexibility.

The first two years of the war were restricted primarily to the Aurès and areas of Kabylia. However, in 1955 the war entered the urban centers with the F.L.N launched a brutal assault on Philippeville, leaving one hundred and twenty-three dead, including seventy-one Pied-noirs

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<sup>36</sup> Leulliette, 120-124

<sup>37</sup> Leulliette, 24

<sup>38</sup> Unnamed partisan interviewed by Assia Djebbar, *Fantasia: an Algerian Cavalcade*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993, 119-120

<sup>39</sup> *Groupement d'Aviation Légère de l'Armée de Terre 101* or 101st Army Light Aviation Group, situated at the city of Setif.

<sup>40</sup> Shrader, 121-123

massacred. Before the Philippeville Massacre, neither Soustelle's government in Algiers or Paris took the war in Algeria seriously. The massacre provoked a major reaction from the government whom under the pressure of pied-noir lobbyists began to transfer veterans from Indochina and major equipment to the theatre of operations. The fact that insurgents penetrated into highly populated areas caused mass panic in the general staff and new strategies were formulated. Roger Trinquier stated in his major publication after the war: "The defense of national territory is the *raison d'être* of an army; it should always be capable of accomplishing this objective."<sup>41</sup> Since Algeria was considered a province of France, the stakes were higher than Indochina. Victory could no longer be achieved by the traditional tactics of seek and destroy in a pitched battle. When Leulliette returned to Algeria in the aftermath of Philippeville, he described the beautiful port city that used to smell of flowers as a fortress with dark barbed wire and packed with soldiers.<sup>42</sup> Colonel Aussaresses, stationed in Philippeville described the situation as being unfavorable and that more would have to be done in order to avoid the same massacre that happened right under their noses.<sup>43</sup>

Aussaresses' assessment was evident as the Algerian War took a different turn in 1956, when the initiative lay with the F.L.N. and dictated by the colonels in control of their Wilayas. In the spring of 1956, the nominal leader of the F.L.N. working inside Algeria, Ramdane Abane called a conference at Soummam in the Kabylia to outline the revolutionary aims of the F.L.N. In the process, Abane also created a political infrastructure inside the organization with the representatives from across Algeria that would endure until 1959. The political émigrés abroad were unable to attend to duplicity on Abane's part, ensuring the primacy of F.L.N. inside

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<sup>41</sup> Trinquier, 3

<sup>42</sup> Leulliette, 148-152

<sup>43</sup> Aussaresses, 13-15

Algeria.<sup>44</sup> The C.C.E.,<sup>45</sup> the central organizing committee for the organization in Algeria and the first Algerian representational body, the CRNA<sup>46</sup> were formed to direct the military operations and represent Algeria abroad respectively.<sup>47</sup> More importantly, the F.L.N. leaders made the crucial decision at Soummam to initiate attacks in the towns and cities, as they had done in Philippeville in the previous year.<sup>48</sup> Abane ordered his colleagues, principally Larbi Ben M'hidi and Saadi Yacef to reestablish the Algiers organization. These actions indicate once more that the F.L.N. was serious about an urban confrontation, even before they had defeated the French in the *bled*.<sup>49</sup> Yacef setup his headquarters in the Casbah, the old Arab quarter of the city, the F.L.N. had the greatest support and resources. The introduction of urban terrorism, although a surprise to both Governor-General Robert Lacoste and Paris, the French reaction was swift and decisive, creating military calamity for the Algerian revolutionaries.<sup>50</sup>

The Battle of Algiers is the most important instance of counterinsurgency operations waged by the French against the F.L.N. in the cities. The *felleghas* faced two opposing parties, the paratroopers and the civilian *ultras*. The latter group was a reactionary faction of pied-noirs who created vigilante gangs to fight the *felleghas* and maintain French support for cause of *Algérie français*. The *ultras* symbolized resistance to compromise with the Arab nationalists and often went to extreme means to keep the government on their side, going so far as to assassinate French officials deemed too soft on the F.L.N.<sup>51</sup> This contradicted the intended mission of the

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<sup>44</sup> Stora, 37-38

<sup>45</sup> *Comité de Coordination et d'Exécution*

<sup>46</sup> *Conseil National de la Révolution Algérien*

<sup>47</sup> Salah, 385

<sup>48</sup> "Declaration of Soummam" *An Open Door to the Arab World*, <<http://www.el-mouradia.dz/arabe/symbole/textes/soummam.htm>>

<sup>49</sup> Ausseresses, 63-64

<sup>50</sup> Alistair Horne, 143-146.

<sup>51</sup> The most famous attempt "*l'Affair de Bazooka*" involved the near death of Salan in 1957.

paratroopers and undermined the civil authority that was being eroded by the army's presence in Algeria. Up until August 1956, Yacef continued to instruct his agents to assassinate civil officials and collaborators, rather than the general civilian population in the city.

This policy changed when, on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1956, members of the *ultras* laid a bomb next to a tenement structure on the Rue De Thebes deep in the Casbah. The bomb exploded and killed seventy-four Algerians, an incident that the *ultras* were not shy in making light of their involvement. “[They] are very proud of it!” says Leulliette in his recollections of the incident.<sup>52</sup> Yacef, acting as operational commander in the city promised swift vengeance upon the Europeans. The infamous episode of three women laying bombs in the Milk Bar, Cafeteria and the Air France Office shocked the military and civil authority into action. In response to the escalation in violence facing Algiers, Governor Lacoste granted Jacques Massu, the commanding military officer in Algiers full authority, military and civil, to crush the revolt. Massu brought his Tenth Paratrooper Division to bear in what Alistair Horne called the “first time in two years of war, France was calling the F.L.N.’s challenge...”<sup>53</sup> Raoul Salan, the Supreme Commander in Algeria approved the transfer of extraordinary powers and the battle was fully underway. The passing of civil authority to Massu showed how serious the French were in combating the terrorists.

The paratroopers were ruthless in their pursuit of members of the terror network that, under Yacef included at least 1, 400 members and operated in autonomous units across the city, directed by the central committee. Ausseresses and others identified that the F.L.N. organization in the city required an advanced level of organization to carry out the high number of bombings. In his memoirs, he notes that the month of November 1956 was particularly savage, involving

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<sup>52</sup> Leulliette, 296

<sup>53</sup> Horne, 183-188

the death of nearly fifty people in downtown Algiers. The F.L.N. terrorist network operated as independent units without knowledge of members in the other cells. This required the French to hunt up the chain of command instead to identify the central committee in charge. Yves Godard, Paul Ausseresses and Roger Trinquier were assigned the mission of dismantling the terrorist network and capturing both M'hidi and Yacef. These men were specifically recruited for their skills and experience in counterinsurgency warfare. Godard served as Massu's second-in-command and an experienced paratrooper. Ausseresses was an intelligence officer who had been present during the Philippeville Massacre and had experience fighting in the early years of the war. Trinquier, an author of counterinsurgency doctrine, was known for his service in Indochina and fought in the *bled* during the first years of the war. The team rapidly transformed the security mission into an all-out counterinsurgency operation.<sup>54</sup>

Massu and Godard determined that the heart of the terrorist organization resided in the Casbah and extended from there into the rest of Algiers. In describing the conditions of the Constantine Casbah, Leulliette said: "where the houses rise one on top of the other, the hovels... are so closely wedged that only a few winding passages make it possible to get through between them."<sup>55</sup> For this purpose, Trinquier and the others set-up patrol units throughout the city that would be involved in police actions while the civil police would carry-on with normal operations. The French would set-up intelligence teams that would question the inhabitants about the long list of suspects and their whereabouts. Some were taken to prisons and headquarters for interrogation while others were simply questioned.<sup>56</sup> Arabs in the Casbah operated as informants, recruited by the French for the purposes of spying on neighbors or patrons. Trinquier

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<sup>54</sup> Ausseresses, 70-72

<sup>55</sup> Leulliette, 154

<sup>56</sup> Trinquier, 37-38

organized them to mark residences, meeting areas and potential safe houses for suspects still at large. The goal was to strangle the organization in the city so that it could not afford to operate at all.<sup>57</sup> Pre-empting those who might have questioned such methods, Trinquier stated in his reflections: “Modern Warfare is a new experience for the majority of our fellow citizens... the systematic conduct of our raids will run into opposition, resulting generally from a lack of understanding... This will often be very difficult to overcome.”<sup>58</sup> He claimed at the beginning that the organization had to be destroyed completely in order to pacify the city. “If not destroyed in total, the remaining part will create a new organization and resume hostilities.”<sup>59</sup>

At the height of the battle, Yacef and M’hidi organized a general strike to coincide with opening session of the UN on January 28<sup>th</sup>, where all Arab businesses would close down. In private conversation between Massu and Ausseresses, the general remarked that the *ped-noirs* were ready to act at a moments notice should the French be unable to quell the insurgency. Such words, hardly hollow given the actions at Rue de Thebes created a sense of urgency to make a public show of force, just as the F.L.N. wanted to bring international recognition through a citywide insurrection. Godard and Ausseresses were both charged with breaking the strike.<sup>60</sup> In doing so, Ausseresses would interrogate the participants of the strike and force them to admit who their leader was. The methods used were left to both him and Trinquier, while Godard played a front role of hunting down the terrorists in the city. Ausseresses secured all the files on suspected terrorists through the police and used the law enforcement to handle day-to-day operations and assistance in prison duty. For housing prisoners, both he and Trinquier set up

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<sup>57</sup> Ausseresses, 92-93

<sup>58</sup> Trinquier, 39

<sup>59</sup> Trinquier, 57

<sup>60</sup> Ausseresses, 77-79

makeshift prisons in the city, where the intelligence officers were waiting to question them.<sup>61</sup>

Colonel Mathieu<sup>62</sup> in the *The Battle of Algiers* and symbolic character for all three men is shown in one scene with a chalkboard and an organizational tree, filling in names as they got new confessions. In his professionalism, he disregarded the politics and told his men to be ruthless, as their enemy had no intention of playing fair.<sup>63</sup>

The primary method of information extraction was torture of suspected F.L.N. agents, which also received the most attention throughout the battle. The use of torture was seen by several officers as a necessary evil invoked only to eliminate an enemy that did not adhere to the rules of war. In his memoirs, Aussaresses remarked “no one would ever have the right to pass judgment on our actions and that, should I have to do extremely unpleasant things... I would never have any regrets.” This was a response to an interview by *Le Monde* where he was asked whether he would commit actions that degraded a person’s humanity to get information or be that officer to tell a family about the death of their children.<sup>64</sup> This argument became the fundamental defense of French counterterrorism actions, which included the use of sleep deprivation techniques, water boarding and electric shock torture. Trinquier remarked in an interview after the war: “Torture is a weapon used in all subversive wars... People involved in a subversive war know they’ll be tortured.”<sup>65</sup> At the same time, it was not clearly known that Massu, as overall commander used great discretion to pick torturers he closely trusted not to use excessive force in their work. Massu himself underwent electric shock, to prove to his men how

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<sup>61</sup> Ausseresses, 85-87

<sup>62</sup> A fictitious character representing aspects of Col. Marcel Bigeard, Yves Godard and Roger Trinquier.

<sup>63</sup> Pontecorvo, 1:10:00- 1:14:40

<sup>64</sup> Aussaresses, 17-18

<sup>65</sup> Trinquier, interviewed by Oliver Todd, (1970), 52:05-53:01

serious he was and so he could talk about it after the fact.<sup>66</sup> There was even a judge present throughout the operation to monitor the interrogations, charged by then Minister of Justice François Mitterrand. Although it is debated whether these acts contributed substantially to the French success, they did go on were without sanction by the government in Paris.<sup>67</sup>

When the strike was broken, many members were taken in for questioning and the Algiers organization began to come under heavy pressure from the French soldiers and intelligence network. In February of 1957, following the bombing of the Algiers Soccer Stadium, Massu pressed Auseresses and Trinquier to track down the remaining members of the network. Abane had ordered the C.C.E. residing in Algiers to depart immediately. Leaving Yacef in charge, M'hidi left the Casbah for a safe house, he was detected by Trinquier's informers and captured by Colonel Marcel Bigeard's paratroopers. The capture of M'hidi, the leader of the C.C.E. and one of the principal rivals in the internal F.L.N. power struggles was photographed by *Le Monde* in Massu's HQ. Ben M'hidi died within a few days of the interview, reported to the media as a suicide while in prison.<sup>68</sup> Many suspected foul play. The truth, in Auseresses recollection is that M'hidi was taken away to a farmhouse, on the edge of the city and hanged by him and his men. Massu covered the incident up in a subsequent interview to the press and a report to Lacoste and Salan. Auseresses claimed in memoir that his death signaled the end of the battle.<sup>69</sup> Before his capture in the autumn of 1957, Yacef in an interview after the war claimed he was not a common criminal, but a soldier fighting for Algerian freedom.<sup>70</sup> In that spirit, Yacef surrendered with his comrade Zhora Drif when his safe house was surrounded by French troops.

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<sup>66</sup> Massu, interviewed by Pierre Dumayet, 53:30-55:12

<sup>67</sup> Auseresses, 127-130

<sup>68</sup> Horne, 194-195

<sup>69</sup> Auseresses, 139-141

<sup>70</sup> Yacef, interviewed by Oliver Todd, (1970), 1:05:10- 1:06:39

Ali la Pointe was killed by a French bomb two weeks later and the resistance in Algiers ended.

There are several reasons why the F.L.N. strategy failed in Algiers. French tactics, including torture did lead to the apprehension of the F.L.N. leadership, which paralyzed the clandestine organization in the city. Journalist Robert Taber noted that the use of torture, however repulsive to society at large was effective against urban insurgencies.<sup>71</sup> In Pontecorvo's film adaptation of the battle, French Colonel Mathieu justified to reporters that if torture was not used, than they would not gain accurate information due to F.L.N.'s 24-hour policy of information disclosure because the *felleghas* could shift safe houses and information to make such interrogations worthless. Mathieu's stance still represents the position of many French officers continue to justify to this very day.<sup>72</sup> Aside from torture, the French use of informants that both infiltrated the ranks of the F.L.N. and residents of the Casbah allowed them to track the terrorists consistently through the last episodes of the battle. The coup de grace of French efforts had been the capture of M'hidi, decapitating the head of the C.C.E. and isolating those still in Algiers from Abane and the rest of the F.L.N. Trinquier noted that, unlike Indochina the F.L.N. had not won a substantial hold over greater Algeria and enclosed the French in the easily defensible cities along the coast. The F.L.N.'s (in this case, Abane's) decision to attack Algiers and move its leadership into the city violated the conditional needs to wage a successful guerrilla war. The F.L.N. was never able to infiltrate the urban areas as effectively throughout the remainder of the war.<sup>73</sup>

The war after the Battle of Algiers moved back into the *bled*, stretching from Oran in the west to the Tunisian border. While the world's attention was focused on Algiers, the French

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<sup>71</sup> Taber, 114-115

<sup>72</sup> Pontecorvo, 1:31:00- 1:35:12

<sup>73</sup> Trinquier, 48-49

Army fought the F.L.N. anywhere and anytime they could. The return of commanders like Yves Godard and elite paratroopers afforded some relief to French units stationed in these regions and placed renewed pressure on the F.L.N. reeling from their defeat only weeks after the death of Ali La Pointe. Until 1960, these areas were never fully pacified, because, despite the strong security presence of the French paratroopers and foreign legion, they could not be concentrated sufficiently to destroy the military and political apparatus' of these areas. The French continued to interdict supplies coming over the borders, straining the Wilaya's who did not have the capacity to make weapons on their own. However, due to the persistence of F.L.N. resistance and inflexibility of the French *quadrillage* policy, the French army was tied down and immobile.<sup>74</sup>

The Battle of Agounennda in 1958 exposed the weakness in the quadrillage strategy. F.L.N. colonel Rabah Zerrari, a.k.a. Azedine led a contingent of *felleghas* to meet up with a larger formation in the town of Medea. Colonel Bigeard was sent with large company of paratroopers supported by helicopters to intercept and destroy Azedine's forces.<sup>75</sup> Bigeard's troops occupied the hills near Agounennda to intercept, but were flanked and separated from their rearguard unit. Using the helicopter and the concept of the Air Cavalry, Bigeard moved his troops into the surrounding hills overlooking Azedine's position and surround him. Within three hours, nearly a hundred F.L.N. troops were dead to thirty-five French soldiers while Azedine escaped to lick his wounds.<sup>76</sup>

The engagement at Agounennda proved both the efficiency and deficiencies of French tactics and execution of said counterinsurgency strategies. Agounennda proved that helicopters

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<sup>74</sup> Brown, 84. By the time of the Evian Accords, a little over fifty-percent of the French Army was engaged in Algeria.

<sup>75</sup> Bigeard served with distinction at Dien Bien Phu (1954) in Indochina and became a symbol of French military prestige in both wars.

<sup>76</sup> Horne, 251-53

could be used for more than just evacuation and scouting purposes. Bigeard's "Cavalry of the Sky" utilized the need for swift, rapid-reaction tactics where troops could be moved in a matter of minutes over rough terrain to otherwise isolated areas. Although the F.L.N. had the advantage of the terrain to shield their movements, a capable French commander, using just a handful of helicopters and trained soldiers to execute a flanking maneuver of rear-guard action that terrain counted for much less. This also speaks highly of the well-developed logistical system and how effective it came to be once it was used to full effect by both the French Army and Air Force. However effective these tactics were, the French failed to capitalize quickly on their success in recovering the weapons of the fallen F.L.N., whom were taken by Azedine during his retreat. This failure, as it happened in other instances allowed the F.L.N. to fight on, even while under chronic shortages of ammunition and weapons as well.<sup>77</sup>

The last important component of the French strategy was to seal off the borders to arms traffic, particularly Tunisia where the largest concentration of F.L.N. troops were present. After the Battle of Algiers, many of the primary leaders who were not already abroad fled to Tunis to coordinate the supply of the Wilayas and direct large-scale operations. In response, the French built the Morice line, a long series of electrified fences, outposts and artillery bases. Army and paratrooper companies assisted by helicopters were positioned to respond to any attack against the line by the F.L.N. From 1958 to 1961, the F.L.N. threw whole bands of soldiers in nighttime raids against the French positions, often incurring heavy casualties in the process. Each time, they would probe the defenses for weaknesses in the Morice Line and each time they would be repulsed. Those that did make it through were tracked by the French and local *harkis* and killed before their intended rendezvous with the Wilaya troops. There were also attempts to bring

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<sup>77</sup> Horne, 253-254

troops and supplies through the Sahara Desert to the south, but this also proved futile due to French aerial surveillance and mobile patrols that intercepted no fewer than seven convoys throughout the war.<sup>78</sup> Because Tunisia was neutral, the French could not attack the considerable F.L.N. formations in the country itself.<sup>79</sup> French frustration led to irregular and unauthorized attacks across the border on F.L.N. positions and bases. One such episode was the bombing of Sakiet by the French Air Forces that demonstrated the determination of French commanders to demoralize the F.L.N. and prove the futility of continued operations against them.<sup>80</sup>

There were many battles where the F.L.N. fielded large contingents of troops in attempts to break through the Morice Line. The most famous of these battles was Souk-Ahras, the largest engagement fought between the French Army and the F.L.N. along the Line. It demonstrates just how effective the defensive fortifications were in guarding the border control and keeping the Wilayas in perpetual blockade. The F.L.N. sent eight hundred and twenty men through a section of the line near the city of Souk-Ahras and breached the alarmed fence. After having fended off the sentries close by, they moved further into the interior, bound for Wilaya 2 and Wilayas 3. Paratroopers were brought up in Vertol helicopters and engaged them over a period of twenty days, supported by helicopters and the local *harkis*. Using tactics perfected by Bigeard, they overwhelmed the Algerians, killing six hundred and twenty *felleghas*. Although they failed to recover all the weapons left behind, the defeat was decisive. Combined with other losses, the F.L.N. never took the offensive again, leaving Chief of Staff Boumedienne, who had replaced Abane after Algiers to hold the bulk of his forces in Tunisia, out of reach for the French.<sup>81</sup>

In late 1959, Maurice Challe was made overall commander of forces in Algeria, tasked to

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<sup>78</sup> Shrader, 206-209, 217-218

<sup>79</sup> By 1959, the F.L.N. formations were bigger than the Tunisian regular army.

<sup>80</sup> Alistair Horne, 266-267

<sup>81</sup> Shrader 216-217

bring about a *paix des breves* in Algeria. In coordination with political efforts to pacify the Algerian population, Challe ended the system of *quadrillage* and created a strong mobile force called the *Réserves Générales*, a collection of regular army, paratroopers, air power and *harkis* units. The intention was to strike at the each Wilaya, destroy their armed forces and eliminate the political apparatus essential to supporting their combatants.<sup>82</sup> As an airman, Challe put emphasis on the mobile air cavalry aspect, effectively tested at Agounennda and combined it with overwhelming force to break the effectiveness and moral of the F.L.N.<sup>83</sup> Starting with Wilaya 5 in Oran, Challe's *Réserves Générales* destroyed the guerilla regulars and weakened the entrenched leadership of these areas. Four other major offensives were launched during this time, disrupting the organizational cohesion of F.L.N and eliminating major F.L.N. leaders, including Wilaya 4's Amirouche and Wilaya's 2's Si Hoader.<sup>84</sup> The most important offensive was Operation *Jumelles*, targeting the Kabylia's Wilaya 3 effectively disrupted the political system that had been in place since Soummam in 1956.<sup>85</sup> In his memoir, Challe recounts that F.L.N organization and unity inside Algeria had been dislodged, despite political indeterminism in Paris and that such efforts were moving France toward political victory.<sup>86</sup>

By 1960, Challe triumphantly claimed, with a large degree of legitimacy: "The rebel is no longer king of the *djebel*; he is trapped there... the military phase of the rebellion is terminated in the interior..."<sup>87</sup> In his memoir, Challe recounted the necessity for French security forces to

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<sup>82</sup> Mekacher Salah, *Plan Challe: Fev 1959- Mai 1960*, 2010, in Mekacher Salah, *Fureurs Dans Les Djebels: La Guerre De Libération Nationale*. (Algiers, Algeria, 2010), 371, See Figure 1

<sup>83</sup> Salah, 345

<sup>84</sup> Alain Bizard, "Isolating the Algerian rebellion and destroying armed bands," Alexander and Kieger, *The Algerian War and the French Army: 1954-1962*, 228

<sup>85</sup> "Jumelles" Capvesprol, <[http://capvesprol.over-blog.com/pages/Saut\\_sur\\_1Akfadou-1497450.html](http://capvesprol.over-blog.com/pages/Saut_sur_1Akfadou-1497450.html)>, See Figure 2

<sup>86</sup> Challe, 183

<sup>87</sup> [Maurice Challe, 337-338]

pacify these regions quickly that, in many cases they did, so that they could begin rebuilding the country.<sup>88</sup> The Army began building roads and infrastructure, regrouping the population into security zones and bringing local governance back to these communities. These policies were militarily successful and the support of the *colons* and *harkis* moderated resistance to these efforts, despite resentment from some groups of the Algerian population in the country.<sup>89</sup> They also brought great pride to the army, who felt even more responsible for the well being of all Algerians, especially the *Harkis* whom they promised to protect. However, as the war dragged on, political events abroad and at home were quickly discount military achievements of both the Challe Offensives and colonial administration's pacification plans.<sup>90</sup>

By 1958, the war had caused serious problems back in the Metropole and carried dire consequences for the stability of Fourth Republic. Former Prime Minister Guy Mollet, before his fall from office on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1957, predicted that the war would be lost “not from a collapse on the military front... but on the interior front in France.” Events in France were directly tied to the continuing and costly conflict in Algeria, especially the slowing economy of the Metropole. France was stagnating due to the strains of war on its industries, which were producing the equipment and munitions for the undeclared war. Algeria, and Indochina previously, had placed enormous strain on the economy as the armed forces were so heavily committed to these overseas wars. By 1958, nearly sixty-percent of the army, navy and air force were on Algerian soil, draining away both France's financial integrity and straining international commitments to NATO.<sup>91</sup> Politically, the war had been a time bomb because the strong *pied-noir* faction of the

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<sup>88</sup> Challe, 121

<sup>89</sup> Salah, 370

<sup>90</sup> Horne, 337-339

<sup>91</sup> Martel, André, *Histoire Militaire de la France: De 1940 à Nos Jours*, v.4, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 340.

national assembly continued to disrupt any attempts by the government to diverge from their vision of *Algérie Française*. The cost to political stability was the fall of eight governments, from Mendes-France in 1954 to Pflimlin in 1958, leaving no coherent plan for either prosecuting the war or finding a suitable arrangement for peace. Finally, the *ultras* in Algiers had defeated or significantly weakened any reforms that would have drawn off support from the local population to the F.L.N. and created a suitable solution for the Algerian question.

The collapse of the Galliard Government as a result of public condemnation of the Sakiet Bombing had serious implications for the French army in Algeria. Staff officers and field commanders suffered from increased demoralization and a realization that every victory they gained, every opportunity for the government to capitalize was untaken by politicians at home. The *ultras* and Lacoste's administration were under a similar impression, despite the small gains made in liberalizing the political system toward Algerians.<sup>92</sup> In May 1958, General Massu and other officers staged a coup in Algiers and formed a Committee of Public Safety. Raoul Salan and *ultra* Pierre Lagailliarde rallied the army and the *pied-noirs* to denounce the Fourth Republic, chanting "Vive de Gaulle!"<sup>93</sup> Under the threat of military intervention by the Army in Algeria, French President René Coty consented to de Gaulle's return and the National Assembly dissolved itself. In response, the plotters in Algiers stood down and carried on the war with full confidence that they had succeeded where the politicians had failed.<sup>94</sup> However, in 1961 de Gaulle announced a national referendum on the independence of Algeria where independence received overwhelming support.

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<sup>92</sup> Horne, 273-279. Throughout the war, the F.L.N. never achieved the popular support of a majority of Algerian Algerians.

<sup>93</sup> Both Salan and Lagailliarde were members of the OAS until 1961 and 1962 respectively. Both were granted amnesty by De Gaulle in 1968.

<sup>94</sup> Brown, 84-86

By 1960, the war on the ground was effectively over and the F.L.N. was never able to match the superiority of arms or troops that French had. For the F.L.N., terrorism was the last resort weapon, because all military options had been exhausted. Yet, when the French failed to deliver the coup de grace in the form of political settlement, the war became a meaningless and costly battle of attrition due to the methods employed that alienated the public. Furthermore, the national referendum demonstrated the inability of the military and government to win the hearts of the people, due to the brutality of their tactics. The war in Algeria was both a military and political struggle and the French lost the latter, making the former meaningless.<sup>95</sup>

The people of France and the international community had become long disenchanted with a war where there was no exit strategy and an army willing to plunge the nation into civil war over national honor. It also flew in the face of the very democratic traditions that were so valued in French society, the values of *l'humanisme française* that were contradicted by torturing enemy combatants. The continuation of the war would have meant the destruction of democracy itself, which the Army was prepared to do in 1958 and 1961. Nevertheless, many officers justified the use of torture because they believed it contributed to the final victory. The successful implementation of these tactics, the integration of the helicopter to counter-insurgency doctrine and use of local troops to fight the revolution not only combated but also discredited the power of the guerilla leaders. These successes reinforced their belief that victory was on the horizon, even as popular opinion at home and abroad diminished. The officers and politicians in Algeria proudly held to their strategies and successes against the F.L.N in the field, even when De Gaulle granted Algerian Independence. The victorious army returned, but was not celebrated with laurels of victory, but nation leaving its colonial past behind.

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<sup>95</sup> Taber, 154

Appendix: Figures

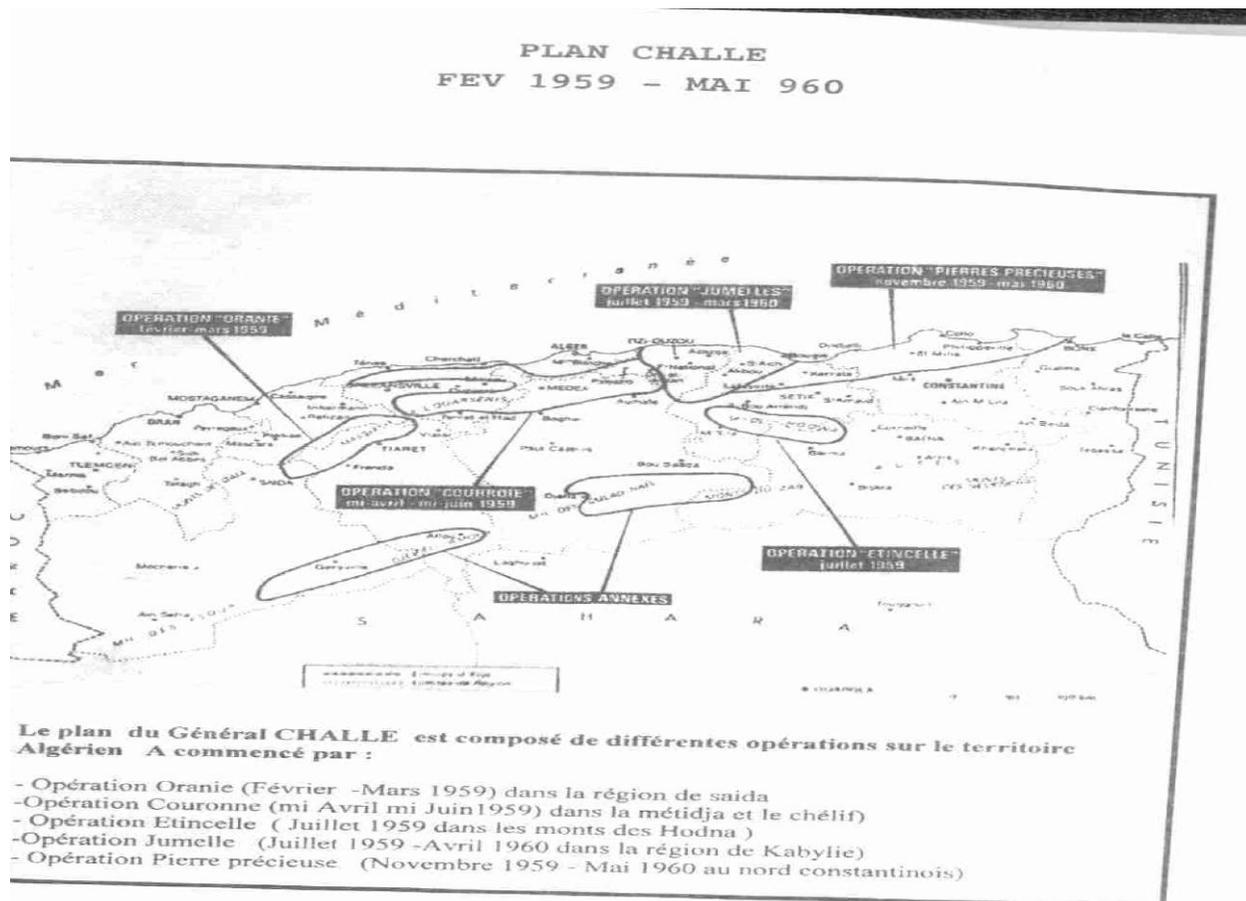


Figure 1: "Plan Challe: Fec 1959- Mai 1960." Makecher Saleh.

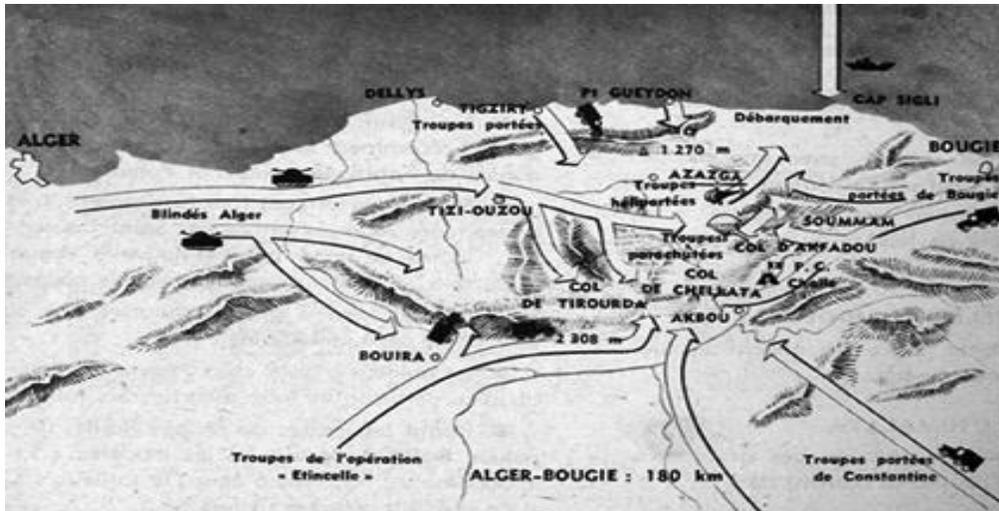


Figure 2: "Operation Jumelles," Capvesprol, <[http://capvesprol.over-blog.com/pages/Saut\\_sur\\_lAkfadou-1497450.html](http://capvesprol.over-blog.com/pages/Saut_sur_lAkfadou-1497450.html)>

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This is a collection of sources from various areas of the French military and civil service, both inside and outside of Algeria. These accounts provide multiple perspectives outside of the higher command structure, such as soldiers, psychiatrists, French Algerian *Harkis*, and Algerian civil services regarding the war in Algeria.

[Anonymous] Partisan, interviewed by Assia Djebar. *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993

Djebar provides an interview from an anonymous partisan who witnessed a French atrocity in the countryside and torture.

Aussaresses, Paul. *Battle in the Casbah*. New York, NY: Enigma Books, 2004.

This work by Colonel Paul Aussaresses describes the efforts of French Paratroopers who fought in the tenement areas of Algiers and the outskirts of Algiers. His paratroopers perfected the art of urban counter-insurgency, but were particularly effective in fighting the F.L.N. during the Battle of Algiers and its aftermath. It describes the victory of the French Army over the F.L.N. and how they destroyed the entire guerilla network of the city for three years.

Bizard, Alain. "Isolating the Algerian rebellion and destroying armed bands," Alexander, Martin S. and J.F.V. Keiger, *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954-1962: Experiences, Images and Testimony*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian, 2002.

Alain Bizard was a staff officer who described his own account of the Challe Offensive. He recorded the deaths of major F.L.N. leaders inside Algeria by 1960.

Capvesprol "Operation Jumelles" Capvesprol. <[http://capvesprol.over-blog.com/pages/Saut\\_sur\\_lAkfadou-1497450.html](http://capvesprol.over-blog.com/pages/Saut_sur_lAkfadou-1497450.html)>

A detailed map of French troop movements during Operation Jumelles at the height of the Challe Plan aimed at the Kabylie.

Challe, Maurice. *Notre Revolte*. Paris, FR: Presses de la Cite, 1968\*

Maurice Challe was Salan's replacement for Commander and Chief of French forces in Algeria. Challe waged the most important campaign against the F.L.N. and drove them to near defeat. His plan, the "Challe Plan" was a strategic military victory betrayed by political collapse at home. Looks at the tactics and operations used in the *bléd*, especially

the Aurès Mountains, Challe's memoirs should shed light on the high water mark of the war.

"Declaration of Soummam" *An Open Door to the Arab World*. <<http://www.el-mouradia.dz/arabe/symbole/textes/soummam.htm>>

Document outlining the war aims of the F.L.N. from 1956 onward, declaring that any negotiations over a cease-fire must include recognition of an independent Algeria.

France. "Les Accords d'Evian." March 19, 1962. <[http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/algerie-accords\\_d'Evian.htm](http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/algerie-accords_d'Evian.htm)>

The peace agreement, which recognized the right of self-determination for Algeria announced the end of French military hostilities in the country.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York, NY: Grove Park Press, 2004

Frantz Fanon was a famous political thinker and psychiatrist who utilized his medical expertise, experience with racism and French education to describe the situation in Algeria. His book provides the justification for the F.L.N. insurgency and the background for why Algeria is fighting for its freedom. By providing the philosophical basis for the F.L.N.'s continued struggle against the French, it provides us with the motivations for resisting a superior enemy in the field, even to the point of total destruction.

Leulliette, Pierre. *St. Michael and the Dragon: Memoires of a Paratrooper*. Trans. John Edmonds. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964]

Pierre Leulliette was a conscripted paratrooper in the first three years of the war and documents his experience in this memoir. His account gives the reader a vision of what fighting was like in the Kabliya and Aurès regions of Algeria, as opposed to the cities. His account covers the engagements and the non-combatant periods of life for a French paratrooper. The focus for this work is primarily on the combat scene and Leulliette's experience fighting the F.L.N.

Massu, Gen. Jacques. "Interview Massu" from *Objectifs*, Interviewed by Pierre Dumayet, Institut National de l'Audiovisual.

Interview with Massu, where the general recounts memories of the Battle of Algiers. He also answers questions regarding the use of torture on F.L.N. operatives.

*Proclamation of the Algerian National Front, Liberation Front, (FLN) November, 1954, 1954*, <<http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?action=read&artid=10>>

This was the first announcement of the F.L.N.'s campaign for an independent Algeria, stating the aim of the war and the intention to establish a free and democratic Algeria.

*The Battle of Algiers*. DVD, Directed by Gilio Pontecorvo, 1967; Irvington, NY: Casbah Films, 2004.

The film is a historical fiction account of the battle between Saadi Yacef's urban fighters and Massu's First Paratrooper Division. Although characters were modified for both privacy and political reasons, using the testimony and personal participation of Saadi Yacef, the movie accurately portrays the events that led to the first urban terror campaign waged in the post-World War world. It describes the experience of French and F.L.N. combatants in the controversial battle that alienated many French over the issues of torture and the vicious campaign waged by the French against the F.L.N. guerillas.

Salah, Mekacher. *Fureurs Dans Les Djebels: La Guerre De Libération Nationale*. Algiers, Algeria, 2010.

Salah writes an account of the fighting in the F.L.N.'s Wilaya III, the Oran military district. As secretary, he reported on the everyday activities of the F.L.N. guerrillas in that area and their engagements with the French military. Seeing the war from eyes and words of a guerilla, we get the perspective of the guerilla fighter, whom fought against the advanced weapons and training of the French military and their experience in the *bléd*.

Salah, Makecher. "Plan Challe: Fev. 1959- Mai. 1960," Salah, Mekacher. (Algiers, 2010.)

The map displays the overall military plan of Challe and the individual targets of the French Army between February 1959 and May 1960.

Taber, Mark. *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 1965.

Taber's study of guerrilla warfare, while it is written three years after the war ended, is the first book to describe the conditions of guerrilla warfare, at the height of the Vietnam War. Taber critically analyzes the relationship of the insurgent to the counterinsurgent and places emphasis on how war is about now winning the hearts and minds of the people, rather than force of arms. As the first study of a guerrilla war and coming so close to the end of hostilities in Algeria, Taber will provide an era-specific study of the combatants and provide context for our understanding of this post-colonial war.

Trinquier, Roger. *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, Westport: Praeger, 2001.

Roger Trinquier published his work on counterinsurgency in the year following Algerian independence, showing a distinctly French view of fighting the guerrilla, in this case being the F.L.N. This work is based on the personal experience of an intelligence officer and Trinquier's role in both the Battle of Algiers and war in the *bléd* from 1957 to 1959. It gives context to French strategies for dealing with insurgencies and how the French utilized these strategies to achieve a military victory in Algeria.

Trinquier, Col. Roger. "La Bataille D'Alger" from Panorama, Interviewed by Oliver Todd. Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, 1970

Trinquier recounts his experience in Algeria, mainly during the Battle of Algiers. He describes his own views on guerilla warfare and justifies that torture is a viable tool against a terrorist. He also describes some of the tactics involved in urban insurgencies.

Yacef, Saadi. "La Bataille D'Alger" from Panorama, Interviewed by Oliver Todd. Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, 1970

Yacef recounts his own experience as the F.L.N. leader in Algiers, along with his motives for fighting the French. Through this, he gives an Algerian perspective on the ferocity of the French counter-insurgency operations in the Casbah.

#### Secondary Source Bibliography

Alexander, Martin and Keiger, J.F.V. "France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, V.25, n.2. [Routledge], 2002

This article from the *Journal of Strategic Studies* focuses exclusively on the French military experience in Algeria. Both authors assert the need to cover the often ignored military aspects of the war in Algeria and look at strategies and tactics by French officers and commanders deployed in the Maghreb from 1954 to 1962. Devoid of the political aspect, it provided great focus for the analysis of military performance against the F.L.N. during all eight years of French involvement.

Brown, O'Brien, "Revolution Unleashed," *Journal of Military Sciences*, [2011]

Brown's short exposé on the Algerian conflict discuss briefly the conflict from 1954 to 1962. However, it discusses the main political events that led up to and dominated throughout the conflict. It pays attention to the considerations of the F.L.N. to fight a war of national independence. Brown also provides short looks at the role of torture in Algiers and the ramifications of De Gaulle's coming to power in France.

Horne, Alistair. *A Savage War of Peace*. New York, NY: Elisabeth Sifton Books, 1987.

Horne provides a comprehensive history of the Algerian conflict, from the events leading up and through the conflict and its aftermath. He also describes the political and economic reason for the war, the events in metropolitan France and the continued instability of the French government and its policies toward Algeria.

Martel, André, *Histoire Militaire de la France: De 1940 à Nos Jours*, v.4, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994.

Martel et al provides information, though context to Algeria, specifically on the military-economic relationship and the pressure France endured to maintain the standing army inside Algeria.

Shrader, Charles. *The First Helicopter War*. Westport, CN: Frederick A. Praeger, 1999.

Shrader looks at the military conduct of the Algerian War. He looks at the logistical and organizational dispositions of both factions and the role technology plays in counterinsurgency operations. The main feature was the helicopter, which brought air superiority closer to the ground and made troop deployments remote areas almost instantaneous. Using Bigeard's paras as a case study, this works promises to provide background to basic tactics used throughout the period of 1954 to 1961.

Stora, Benjamin. *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie (1954-1962)*. Paris: La Découverte, 1993.

A French historian who published the main French history of the Algerian War, looking at the political, military and social ramifications of the war in both Algeria and France. His work gives a French perspective of nearly forty years following the events and complements the work of American and British historians in reconstructing the Algerian War.