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THE UNITED STATES AND THE ALGERIAN WAR



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INTRODUCTION

On 22 November 1944, General de Gaulle, head of the temporary government of the Republic, enjoined the members of the Consultative Assembly in the following terms: “let us rebuild out power, from now on let it be our country’s great crusade! At the heart of this ambition lay the colonial empire, whose new-found unity was to be a condition of French domination for a decade. The clearly nationalistic aspiration to retain the Empire, which even gained the support of the Communism in 1944 -1945 , was nevertheless accompanied by a desire for reform. In his Constantine speech on the 22 December 1943, General de

Gaulle outlined the framework for greater assimilation of the three Algerian regions within the national community, while in January –February 1944 the Brazzaville Conference pointed to Association as the way forward for the remainder of the colonial territories, however, these reforms were based first and foremost on the principle of loyalty, the ‘Great Nation’ alone having the power to determine to what extent it people were to be emancipated. The French State could not allow any form of armed conflict. Such an attitude set little store by the Second World War which accelerated the course of history , the hopes created by the Atlantic Charter and the inevitable movement towards decolonization ,which reached the point of no return at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954.

On two occasions, 8 May 1945 and 1 November 1954, the Republic and its armed forces found themselves challenged by a Muslim. Algeria impatient to throw off the shackles of colonization. How did the civil and military authorities react? The two events were very closely linked: the rebellion of 1954 was a direct result of the failed coup of spring 1945.

The French war to keep Algeria coincided with eight years of cold war history during which much of the world was transformed. The war began in November 1, 1954, more than a year after the death of Stalin and only a few months after the Geneva agreements ending the Indochina war in June 1954. The conflict ended in March 1962, only months before the Cuban crisis of October of that year inaugurated an era of détente. During the Algerian war Britain and France invaded Egypt in an effort to hold on to the Suez Canal, while the Soviets invaded Hungary (1956), and the United States went to the brink of nuclear war with China over the Islands of Quemoy and Matsu in

1959. The European Economic Community began operations in January 1959. An American U2 spy plane was downed over the USSR, disrupting a summit conference in May 1960, while the Berlin crisis, which opened in November 1958, monopolized much of the international news until it was awkwardly settled with the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. This was also a period when North-South questions came to the fore, challenging the placid assumptions of politicians focused on cold war questions at issue between East and West. The Bandung Conference of nonaligned nations met in April 1955, and fifteen new countries entered the United Nations in the same year. By the Algerian war's end, the United Nations had eighty-seven member states, the majority of them Asian and African and passionately ant colonial. The French Republic came to an ignominious end in May 1958 with the coming to power of Charles de Gaulle, while in the United States two years later John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) was elected president of the United States to succeed Dwight D. Eisenhower.

(1898-1968).

The Algerian war had an impact on, and was in turn affected by, all these changes and crises. France regarded itself during this time, and had been courteously permitted to act after the war by the United States and Great Britain, as a great power, one of the so called big three. But the Algerian war consumed all of French energies and dominated political debate in France after 1954, with the result that in international politics France came to count for little. During the first half of the war, until 1958, French troops were withdrawn from NATO (4 April 1949) for use in Algeria while government in Paris displayed characteristic indecision and instability. During the War's second half, from 1958 to 1962. De Gaulle made a heroic effort to reassert France's international position but found virtually every initiative blocked by the "running sore" of Algeria, until he finally recognized Algerian Independence in 1962.

Keywords:

Algeria, FLN, war, political,

policy, United States, international, Cold War, France, French troops. fighters. NATO, U.N.

The United States welcomed the collapse of the Fourth French Republic in May 1958. This is paradoxical in that an almost obsessive concern with its internal political stability had characterized the earlier post war period of U.S.-French relations, while the Americans appear in 1958 to have played a considerable role in undermining the very stability of the regime they had done so much since 1947 to help preserve. Much had changed in the intervening period that helps explain the revised American attitude. The French economy, precarious and dependent on American assistance in the years 1947 to 1952, was now robust and growing, and the threat of the French communist party, which the Americans believed strong enough to seize power virtually at will in 1947, was now much reduced. The French army had been built by Washington into a powerful military force, meant to be the linchpin of European

defense against a Soviet invasion, but it became heavily embroiled in Algeria, and its role in Europe was on the way to being assumed by a restored German army, negotiated on the heels of the failure to construct a European Defense Community in 1954.(1) In the immediate postwar period Paris and Washington had acted as allies. The United States offered extensive military assistance to France under the auspices of NATO in 1950 and was almost fully financing the Indochina War by 1953-54, although the French goal, to preserve their crumbling empire, conflicted with the American obsession to prevent any apparent expansion of Soviet power here. In Algeria, in contrast, the conflict began in November 1954 on the heels of the humiliating French defeat at Dien Bien Phu and withdrawal of French forces from Indochina. In the absence of communism as a salient issue, American anti-colonial attitudes came into play, and frustration grew with the French inability to bring a conclusion to a war that increasingly appeared to play into the hands of Soviet ambitions.

In fact the first shots in what became the Algerian War were fired on May, 1945, in Sétif, when disillusioned Muslims rebellion against French rule. Brutal repression followed; the French called in cruiser and bombarded Muslim villages from the air in order to teach the Muslims a "lesson," although the one they learned was not the one intended. The French counted 300 Muslim dead; the nationalists later counted 45,000, historians have settled on a figure of between three and ten thousand, but either way the Muslim population was greatly alienated from French rule. De Gaulle (1890-1970) presided over this brutal return to French colonial domination; although preoccupied at the time by the armistice and other problems, he was determined not to allow Algeria to "slip through our fingers, It was his government also that created what became the Statute of 1947, under which Algeria was officially governed until January 1958, when it was displaced by a new loi-cadre, or frame-work law. The Statute created two electoral "colleges" of sixty persons each for Muslims and Europeans

in Algeria, and gave thirty representatives to Algeria in the National Assembly in Paris. Unequal though this system was, elections through the 1950s were nevertheless manipulated to exclude nationalists and elect docile Muslim collaborators whom the French called Beni Ouis-Ouis.

American policy toward North Africa must be seen over a broad continuum during the post-war period, except for nuances, the Eisenhower –Dulles policy toward French colonialism was no more indulgent than that of Truman and Acheson. After the war the Americans concluded that preserving French hegemony in the region was the best way to guarantee North African security, but the Americans continuously advocated a liberal approach to Arab demands and the French began to blame the United States for their growing problems, suspecting Washington of wanting to replace French influence in the region with its own. During the Sétif uprising of May 1945, the Governor –General’s Office in Algiers blamed the Americans and the British for the disorders.

(5) Paris was not, however, dissuaded from carrying out its pitiable repression. Washington continually pressed the French for reforms there after, and virtually every subsequent French effort at reform in Tunisia and Morocco until 1954 stemmed from direct American influence. In 1952 the French deposed the Tunisian government, which was too nationalistic in their eyes, and exiled the nationalist leader Habib Bourguiba. Tunisian nationalists brought their complaints against the French to the United Nations; an American abstention on a UN resolution calling for peaceful resolution of the crisis infuriated Paris and contributed to one of the most serious Franco-American crises of the post-war period. The Americans continued informal contacts with the nationalist Istiqlal in Morocco and the neo-Destour in Tunisia despite repeated protests by Paris. After the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, American pressure on the French lessened. The Americans began to finance the French war against the communists in Indochina, and the U.S. desire to place military bases in Morocco led to French

demands that Washington cease its interference in North Africa as a quid pro quo. (6) John Foster Dulles (1888-1959) consequently declined to intervene when the French deposed the nationalist Sultan of Morocco in 1953 despite the disapproval of American diplomatic personnel on the scene. But Washington continued to pressure the French to grant autonomy while at the same time trying to moderate nationalist demands for independence.

At French insistence, Algeria had been included among the areas covered by the NATO alliance in 1949, although Congress excluded the Sahara and declared that nothing in the treaty was designed to ally the United States with French colonialism. (7) The Americans were also aware that Algeria was heavily settled by over one million Europeans who dominated its economy and politics. For these reasons Washington understood that any American attempt to influence French policy in Algeria would inevitably raise charges by the French of direct interference in their internal affairs. The CIA warned as early as 1952,

however, that the situation in Algeria was a potential source of problems for France and the United States because of the unrecognized demands of the indigenous Muslim majority. Washington, like Paris, was surprised by the outbreak of the revolution in November 1954. (8) The Americans never understood, moreover, how much France's sense of identity as a great power was tied to its colonial possessions that adopt its culture and its civilisation. From 1880 to 1895 the French conquered a colonial empire in Africa and Asia of some 9.5 million square kilometres and fifty to fifty-five million inhabitants, the basis of the myth of one hundred million French. (9) A national consensus existed among the French political class in 1954 on the necessity of keeping Algeria French, and this was supported by a large majority of public opinion.

Washington's policy with Algeria was complicated, and its influence limited, by the chronic state of chaos that seemed to characterize internal French politics, governmental instability in Paris allowed cabinets to come and go and

policy to remain paralyzed .Cabinet division and indecision in Paris had exasperated Dulles ever since Dien Bien Phu.

In concluding their own tacit alliance with France in 1954⁵⁵-, the Israelis found French authority fragment, responsibility diffuse, and the execution of policies sporadic, inconsistent, or hesitant. The interior and war ministries were pro -Israel, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not, each ministry , according to Sylvia Crosbie, was virtually a closed institution with a particular outlook.(13)

The same situation very quickly manifested itself in Paris during the Algerian affair. But whereas Washington had once sought to mitigate the effects of instability and division in Paris, now the Americans were content to use these developments to their advantage. The privileged nature of American-French relations characteristics of the earlier post-war period was now gone, but the American ability to gather confidential information on French affairs was not. Internal American accounts of critical political and military events during the French Algerian

War stressed the disarray of the regime: its authority was often ignored on the local level by military and diplomatic officials, and individual cabinet ministers flouted the authority of the premier. Americans were also able to observe the growing interest among French politicians, in a return of de Gaulle to power as early as mid-1957, an interest that, as de Gaulle entered into contacts with them, they eventually came to share. (14)

The unstable Fourth Republic, moreover, as a result of the Algerian War, created serious crises in American-French diplomatic relations, which appeared at times on the brink of collapse. French leaders took their military forces away from the NATO command in order to carry on the Algerian War, and they were willing to threaten the alliance itself when they did not get the support they thought they deserved; before de Gaulle appeared on the scene they had already called into question the whole structure of post-war European politics built in response to the Cold War. The Americans feared that a popular front-type regime might

take France out of the NATO alliance and turn it toward neutralism, if it did not orient itself toward the Soviet bloc in exchange for a benevolent Soviet attitude toward France's colonial problems. Dulles had suspected Mendès France of harbouring such designs in 1954. These fears were perhaps exaggerated, but they stemmed from the constant warnings and even threats that came from the French government itself, and Washington became convinced that it would do better with a stable political order in France, even one that threatened on occasion to clash with American policies, than to continue dealing with the shifting cabinets that were increasingly tempted to play upon irrational anti-American sentiment in order to preserve themselves in power. At the same time, Algeria was certainly the catalyst in convincing the French, even before the advent Charles de Gaulle, of the limited value of NATO for the protection of French interest.

As the Algerian revolution escalated into a full-scale war in 1955, the Eisenhower administration's sources of

information convinced it that the French could not win. The conflict concerned Washington on a number of counts. There was first the anti-colonial heritage of American policy: Dulles told the embassy in France that "we must face the fact that the basic U.S. attitude on colonial problems is displeasing to the French as well as to others of our allies" and therefore it was "unrealistic to expect mutual understanding and confidence (with France) in North Africa." But Washington needed France, it remained the linchpin of Washington's NATO strategy for European defence, it was expected to provide the bulk of the ground troops for NATO's "shield," and its consent and cooperation were needed for German rearmament painfully renegotiated following France's refusal to join the European Defense Community in 1954. As early as January 1955 the American Embassy feared that France might refuse to ratify the London-Paris agreement on German rearmament and integration into NATO if politicians in Paris believed that the United States might reverse its support of the French presence

in North Africa. Theodore Achilles (1905-1986-) warned that if ratification were followed by a more pro-Arab policy in North Africa "the results would be disastrous"; the French would throw every possible roadblock in the way of implementation of German rearmament. The average French person still believed that the United States wanted to subvert and replace French influence in Morocco with its own. Achilles thought "it is essential to our ultimate objectives in Europe to continue our present middle-of-the-road policy in North Africa, and not to take a line overtly or covertly against the continuance of the French presence there." (15) To one extent or another, this injunction haunted American policy in the region throughout the Algerian War.

Washington had bad relations with the Mendès France (1907-1982) government (June 1954-February 1955), resenting its sudden ending of the Indochina War at Geneva in June 1954 and its rejection of the European Defense Community treaty in August. Suspected by Dulles of flirting with neutralism, if not communism, Mendès France

aroused little sympathy in Washington when he asked that the Americans use their influence to moderate Cairo radio's broadcasts of support for the Algerian War; but Washington complied, once again fearing that France would refuse to ratify the London-Paris accords on the rearmament of Germany. On November 27, 1954, Cairo Ambassador Jefferson Caffery (1886-1974-) extracted a promise from the Egyptian to reduce their propaganda on behalf of the Algerian rebels (16) But Washington was still relieved when Mendès France fell in February 1955 and hoped for better from his successor, Edgar Faure (1908-1988-). Faure in fact cooperated readily with Washington, and Achilles was authorized to assure him that the United States recognized that Algeria comprised several departments of France, and supported the French presence in North Africa generally. But the State Department was internally on the Algerian question, with different perspectives emerging from its European and African desks; William Tyler, long regarded as an authority on France, thought the United States

must respond on the aspirations of the Muslim peoples of the region, and he characterized the administration's support for France in Algeria as "politically absurd." However, Ambassador Douglas Dillon (1909-2003-) was undeterred: he was pleased with Faure's appointments at the Quai d'Orsay, where he reported that « We can now work easily and freely with three or four of the top men, » and the prospects seemed promising that Washington could influence French policy along liberal lines. Faure was committed to negotiating the independence of Tunisia and Morocco, which pleased the Americans. (17)

But when Dillon met with Faure and Foreign Minister Antoine Pinay (1891-1994-), he was confronted with a request that in view of "liberal" French policies in North Africa, the United States more actively supported the French position on Algeria. Faure had to play a delicate balancing act between the conflicting demands of the Americans and the French National Assembly, which he did by granting independence to Tunisia and Morocco in exchange for the promise that

he would hold firm in Algeria. Dillon protested that the United States had repeatedly expressed its support for France in North Africa, but Faure complained that the general feeling in France was quite the opposite; many believed that the United States was lending its support to those opposing France. Faure cited U.S. Labour representative's Irving Brown's support for nationalist trade unions, and claimed that Caltex (oil) in Libya hired "anti-French » Moroccan and Tunisian refugees. Dillon demanded that France pursue a liberal policy in Algeria; Faure repeated that such a liberal policy was his intention. (18)

This pattern was to recur again and again. France sought support and the United States parcelled it out in exchange for any sign of French concessions. Not surprisingly, Dillon told Dulles on June 5, 1955, that North Africa was both France's number one problem and the number one sore spot in Franco-American relations. (19) In frustration, Dulles asked State Department North African expert Julius Holmes for the first of several policy reviews on North Africa. Holmes replied

with a recommendation that American policy shift away from support France and toward support for the Arabs, telling Dulles that "France cannot ignore the march of history as expressed by the wave of nationalism that has swept the western world." (20) Dulles rejected this recommendation as extreme; but it was to return on several occasions, eventually strong enough to force itself on the secretary of state as policy.

Thus in September 1955 Washington anticipated that Pinay would ask for American support for French North African policy if the Algerian question came up in the United Nations. The U.S. position was that "we wish to be as helpful as we can," but the extent of American assistance "will depend on how prompt and effective French actions are "in terms of carrying out reforms. The General Assembly of the world body put the Algerian question on its agenda for discussion in September 1955 over French protests. Paris argued that according to its Charter the UN was incompetent to intervene in the internal affairs of its member states; Algeria was part of France.

Simultaneously the Americans pressured Edgar Faure to come through rapidly with a statute on Moroccan independence against the conservative elements in his own and allied government parties, in the hope of warding off international criticism. (21) When French delegates in the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations came under attack for their country's allegedly repressive actions in Togo and the Cameroons, they charged that the United States used the opportunity to criticize France for the lack of economic and social progress in its territories. Aligning themselves with England and Belgium, the French resolved on protesting Washington's "defection" from the side of the administering powers to the anti-colonialist majority in the United Nations. (22)

While in general Washington did try to support the French position in the United Nations, frictions nevertheless occurred between the two countries over tactics. The Americans could not prevent the General Assembly of the UN from placing the Algerian question on its agenda for discussion in

October, which precipitated the first of several French walkouts. Under Secretary of State Robert Murphy explained to René Massigli (1888-1988-) that the United States had tried to be helpful, “but he should realize that the United States could not muster 20 Latin –American votes by merely pressing a button.” (23) In November 1955 the Assembly voted not to take up Algeria after all; but the French remained bitter over what they regarded as a near-defeat in the world body, and were quick to voice recriminations in Washington. The Americans had failed to work sufficiently “in the corridors” in favour of the French position or to use their influence with countries amenable to their views. UN Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge (1902-1985-), in reply, accused the French of an ineffective defence of their policies and a lack of sophistication regarding UN procedures: The United States, he said in what Paris had heard from Washington as tired refrain since 1945, “can only help those who help themselves.” (24) In Algiers the American Consulate reported an explosive growth in anti-American

sentiment; anti-U.S. feeling was growing among all sectors of the European population, extremists played upon known American” anti-colonial tendencies,” and they alleged an American plot to displace French influence in North Africa. Governor-General Jacques Soustelle, an anthropologist Whom Méndes France had appointed for his known liberalism, virtually ceased contacts with the American Consulate, and in Bône the French Secret Service blocked official consular business by “frightening” people the consul had tried to see. (25)

Dillon very early saw North Africa as a “festering sore hidden under the surface that could break open with devastating effect for our policies in Europe. » (26) The Algerian War diverted French troops and material away from the Rhine and NATO’s defences, at which Washington took alarm, as did the Council of the North Atlantic alliance. Initial French troops transfers from the European theatre to Algeria caused trouble in NATO as early as May 1955, and although the alliance’s council approved them reluctantly, Supreme Allied

Commander in Europe General Alfred Gruenther (1899-1983-) complained to French Defence Minister General Pierre Koenig (1925-2004-) that France was not keeping its commitments on the Rhine.⁽²⁷⁾ None of the NATO countries regarded the Algerian War as an issue in the Cold War, although support for the French position varied: Belgium and the Netherlands tended to support the French position fully, the Dutch angry over Washington's support of Indonesian independence, the Belgians concerned over the Congo. Germany did as well, Adenauer (1876-1967-) having made relations with France the linchpin of his European policy. The Italian government was less enthusiastic but equally eager to maintain good relations with France. The Scandinavian countries, however, were opposed to colonialism on ideological grounds, while Turkey and Greece put relations with Egypt and the Middle East above French considerations in Algeria. The British were torn: they had colonial problems themselves, but they also felt constrained to put alliance and European questions ahead

of all others. Again, France was a traditional rival in the Middle East, where it opposed the Baghdad Pact (1955) and favoured Israel, and Britain could not afford bad relations with the Arabs. For the most part, the British tried to avoid controversy with France while urging a liberal policy in Algeria on the French government. But their policy wavered as Britain swung closer to France during the Suez episode, and then back on alignment with Washington by the time of Sakiel crisis in 1958.⁽²⁸⁾

NATO questions again became paramount to March 1956, when the Socialist-led government of Guy Mollet informed the NATO council of its intention to redeploy more French forces to Algeria. Mollet declared his actions were in the interests of alliance, and demanded approval. Algeria was covered by the Atlantic treaty and threatened by nationalists in alliance with world communism. The rebellion thus represented a threat to European security. Alexandre Parodi (1901-1979-), the French representative in the NATO, explained that there had been a necessary

shift in the center of gravity of French military potential from Europe to North Africa that was designed to meet the new threat of a flank attack on the alliance from the south. Algeria represented, with England, one of “two essential platforms upon which the military readiness of the alliance rests” The analogy with the Second World War was clear: England and North Africa had been the bases from which the Allied invasions to liberate Europe had been launched. No objections were raised In the NATO Council, which, however, “took cognizance” of the transfer of French forces taken by France” in the interest of its own security” in Algeria. The Council recognized that Algeria was covered by the NATO treaty, and it understood the importance of the North African region to the security of Europe. (29) But the statement refrained from endorsing the French claim that the rebellion in Algeria was in itself a threat to NATO, and its limited wording barely won it the support of Denmark and Norway, both fearful of offering any blanket endorsement of French colonialism.

The French promptly trumpeted

this statement as a manifestation of the solidarity of the alliance and of “unquestionable political value” to France. But underneath the action was a basic divergence of views between France and NATO; French security was seen, by the Fourth Republic and later, by de Gaulle, as no longer depending on the Rhine and Elbe, but rather running along an axis from the Mediterranean through Algiers to Brazzaville in the French Congo.(30) Moreover, Council members showed obvious irritation when they queried Parodi about the meaning of a statement by Foreign Minister Christian Pineau (19041995-) on March 2 to the effect that behind the rebellion the French had the impression of “ certain powers seeking to reap the heritage of France” in North Africa . Which powers did Parodi mean? The French could not continue to have it two ways, brooking no outside interference in their Algerian problem on the grounds that it was French territory but asserting their right to the full support of their allies with the argument that the Algerian rebellion represented a front in the struggle against

international communism.

Tension was building between France and NATO throughout the period of the Fourth Republic, and it culminated in the partial French withdrawal from the alliance under de Gaulle. French requests for inclusion in what Paris believed to be an Anglo-American condominium in the alliance were repeatedly rejected, French colonial policy received no support from the alliance *per se*, and France was sidelined in U.S. and British nuclear planning (31). France and the United States were on a collision course, which finally helped derail the Fourth Republic. The Americans resented the French redeployment of forces because it increased pressure on themselves to maintain their heavy troop presence in Germany despite growing balance of payments difficulties. In an April 1956 meeting with General Valluy, the French representative in NATO standing's Group, President Eisenhower criticized the French deployment, and the Standing Group agreed to it only "in an appropriately circumscribed form," meaning that they would approve the troop transfer to

Algeria but not one to North Africa generally. In particular, Washington feared that the troops might be used for action against or within the borders of Tunisia or Morocco, which turned out to be the case. On May 10, 1956, Dulles complained to the National Security Council about the lack of solidarity in the NATO alliance, citing the French redeployment and the contemplated withdrawal of British forces from the Middle East. Neither had ever been fully discussed in the NATO Council, which was simply informed of *faits accomplis*.

The central dilemma of American policy toward Algeria stemmed from its need to balance the alliance with France against its concern to use what it regarded as its anti-colonial heritage to solidify relations with the Afro-Asian bloc in the United Nations and to prevent North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia in general from falling under Soviet influence. France could not win; its policy, Dulles said, was characterized by "short-sightedness and lack of realism," and the only solution for Algeria lay in autonomy or independence. The longer the

war continued and Algerian independence was delayed, the more the interests of world communism were served and the greater the danger of a right-wing coup in France itself; with "no early desirable solution in sight," Dulles thought,

"Algiers is moving toward catastrophe." Allen Dulles told the NSC in January 1957 that the CIA had concluded that the French would have to leave Algeria. President Eisenhower, however, expressed his concern for the European population of Algeria if "the French abandoned them."³⁷

The French government reacted sharply, regarding Washington's policy as "unfriendly," alleging that the U.S. Information Services (USIS) systematically supported separation, and the American Free Trade Union Committee, under Irving Brown, unconditionally supported nationalist trade union development in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. American consuls were seen by French intelligence personnel consorting with officials of the Moroccan Istiqlal, the Tunisian Neo-Destour, and the MTLDD-PPA nationalists in Algeria,

all of whom they allegedly encouraged. Standard Oil of New Jersey, mining companies, Coca-cola, even American protestant missions present in North Africa fell under French suspicion as being part of a broad effort to undermine French influence and replace it with that of Washington.³⁸ From the French point of view, France deserved the full support of the United States, a NATO ally, for the FLN was tied in to the international communist movement; if France abandoned Algeria the result would be communist domination of all North Africa. Further, the French were convinced that Washington contributed to a prolongation of the war because the rebels believed that the United States was on their side; Soustelle convoked Consul Clark in Algiers in August 1955, confronting him with rebel boasts gathered by French intelligence that "America was with them."³⁹ If the rebels realized that US power was firmly behind France, they would give up their struggle. The counterpart of this argument was that the FLN believed that Washington was capable

of forcing the French to grant Algeria independence. Finally, the French were obsessed with keeping the war out of the UN, and they once again counted on Washington to use its influence in the World Organization in 1956 to prevent the conflict from being placed on the UN agenda. 40 When the world body decided to discuss Algerian Question in 1956, even if only to vote out a vague resolution calling for a just and democratic peace, Washington took the blame in Paris.

In a more charitable moment, Guy Mollet played with words: Americans were not playing “un double jeu” in Algerian Question but “un jeu double.” Rather than pursuing a devious double game, telling the French one thing and pursuing an entirely different policy with the Arabs, Washington was in fact hedging its bets, tactically supporting the French effort to hold on to Algeria in some kind of relationship, regarding that as the best policy outcome, but also preparing the ground for an expected French failure and an independent Algeria, in which case Washington would have to step in to save the area from

communism. 41

Die-hard partisans of Algérie française took little comfort from this casuistry, however, and the Quai d’Orsay was a good deal more caustic than Mollet: the United States was wedded to a useless policy based on “the seduction of Arab nationalism.” Non intervention, for the Americans, meant the protection of American citizens and interests, and anti-colonialism meant the zealous pursuit of American commercial rights, while the United States maintained an “open door” to nationalists hostile to France. Private American charities showed excessive zeal in their concern for the plight of Algerian refugees and other victims of the war; Algerian nationalist and “anti-imperialist” organizations were allowed to operate freely in New York, and their officials could enter and leave the United States as they wished, even when travelling on passports of convenience granted by other Arab countries. The Quai complained bitterly that the rebel propaganda apparatus in New York cultivated American and United Nations opinion, State Department

Diplomats maintained personal relationships with the Algerian rebel leaders, American oil companies sought concessions from the Algerian rebels in anticipation of our victory, and American trade unions supported independence and sent aid to trade unions in Algeria and throughout North Africa. 42 Most of these charges were, in fact, the case.

Guy Mollet took power in January 1956 at the head of a Republican Front that won a clear plurality in the elections on a program promising to implement liberal policies and bring peace to Algeria. Guy Mollet planned economic reforms and the recognition of an Algerian "personality"; there could be no mention in France of independence, which few in political life at the time thought possible or desirable.

On February 28, Guy Mollet announced his famous three-point program, appealing to the FLN to accept a cease-fire, elections, and negotiations, in that order, and on March 8 he asked the National Assembly for plenary powers enabling him to make changes in Algeria while imposing the equivalent

of martial law.

The Soviets were in fact pursuing an active policy of détente with France's second Socialist-led government; on 13 January 1956 Molotov had told French Ambassador Dejean that as far as the USSR was concerned North Africa was a French problem. President Auriol told Molotov on March 10 that the Algerian rebellion represented a quite un-Marxist "Coranic feudalism"; it was therefore all the more surprising that public opinion in France saw the French Communist party as being power hung in the balance.

In view of all these considerations Dulles finally authorized Dillon to make the statement in support of the French in Algeria. Lodge brought the news personally to Guy Mollet in Paris, explaining that the statement would be made in view of the "misunderstanding" in France of the US position, which had always been one of complete support for France in North Africa. Guy Mollet, while grateful, said he had no complaint about the U.S. government's attitude; the problem was, rather, unofficial elements in the

United States, the press and its “blanket anti-colonialism,” and the labour movement with its support of North African unions that had created the impression that America did not support France. The United States was not well served at the consular or embassy level either, Guy Mollet observed, or even by its businessmen in this regard. Taking the occasion to ask for eighty more helicopters and fifty low-flying reconnaissance planes, Guy Mollet said France must have the support of NATO as well: no one knew better the strategic importance of North Africa for the defense of the free world than President Eisenhower, who had commanded the invasion there during world war II and who had been supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe. Returning to another favourite French theme, Guy Mollet said that three-power unity among France, England and the United States would make a greater impression in Cairo, the real source of the Algerian revolution, than any other single act. 50

Dillon made his statement on 20 March 1956 to the Anglo-

American press club in Paris. The French misunderstood American policy, he said; the United States had no ambitions to replace French influence in North Africa with its own. Washington had consistently given loyal support and close cooperation to France in its policies in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria: it had supported France in the United Nations, and was sending a new shipment of helicopters to France, private American citizens, the French must understand, were not controlled by their government, and their actions were of minor importance.

Conclusion

From its start in 1954 to its conclusion in 1962, the Algerian war was a bloody struggle for independence on the part of the Algerians and an equally desperate bid by the French to retain its departments. The Algerian cry for decolonization had intensified in 1918 with Wilson's fourteen points and in particular its emphasis on self-determination, and many colonized Algerians began to agitate more strongly for freedom from France. Incidents

that followed included the Sétif Massacre of 1945, in which as many as 45,000 Algerians were slaughtered by French troops in retaliation for ant-French attacks. Such acts of violence by and against Algerians were also accompanied by more constructive political change. The Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) was created in 1954 along with its armed branch, the Armée de Libération Nationale (ALN), to fight for independence from France. The FLN employed guerrilla tactics to terrorize the pied-noirs, the French and European colonists who were living in Algeria, and indeed set off the entire war of independence itself in 1954 with a series of attacks on French all over the country. The most famous incident in this war was the 1956 Battle of Algiers, in which the FLN called a nationwide general strike and proceeded to bomb and occupy areas of the city of Algiers. The backlash that occurred after French torture tactics that were used on Algerian prisoners during the siege were brought to light made many give pause to and question the value of the idea of fighting to keep

Algeria. Eventually, though heavily criticized by the anti-independence faction, French President Charles de Gaulle conceded that a French Algeria was no longer possible and began the negotiations that would result in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

The aim of this paper is to show the main trends in Algerian and American diplomatic relations towards one another during the Algerian War. The US was worried about Algerian political and military stability, but in preventative sense. Ample evidence will be presented that Communism was not a direct threat in Algeria, the US line of anti-colonialism that developed primarily from the views of John F. Kennedy was a precautionary Cold War policy. The US openly fought against Communist infiltration in some countries but Algeria's independence was merely to serve as an example to other Third World countries-the Cold War, was not being fought directly in Algeria inasmuch as in a roundabout way through anti-colonialism, with the US hoping to pre-empt future threats of Communism around the world. Therefore the US did not push

the Cold War as openly in its dealings with Algeria, preferring instead to let anti-colonialism spread anti-Communism.

Algeria acted in a similar way towards the US by framing its foreign policies through Non-Alignment. Being Non-Aligned, Algeria could seek diplomatic relations with any countries regardless of Cold War blocs. In reality this middle-of-the-road approach made it possible for Algeria to play the superpowers off of one another. Even though it rejected a conventional Cold War position, choosing to side with neither the U.S. or the Soviet Union, Algeria used Cold War politics to gain support from the US for Algerian independence. Non-Alignment turned out to be intertwined with the Cold War after all, as the Algerians succeeded in winning over American policymakers and turning the tide of international attention in their favour.

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