

Kennedy's 1957 Resolution Regarding the Algerian Revolution

Presented by:

Prof. Linda Belabdelouahab-Fernini

University of M'Sila



- الملخص: في 02 يوليو 1957 ألقى السناتور جون كينيدي خطاباً مثيراً للجدل أمام مجلس الشيوخ الأمريكي بعنوان "الإمبريالية - عدو الحرية"، حيث وسم الاستعمار الفرنسي وأعلن دعمه لاستقلال الجزائر من خلال تقديم قرار لتحقيق حل في هذه الجلسة. لهذا السبب أصبح خطابه معروفاً باسم "خطاب الجزائر". واعتبر كينيدي أن الإمبريالية هي العدو الرئيسي للحرية وأن نسختها الغربية كانت فظيعة مثل الشكل السوفيتي. في سياق الحرب الباردة، أثار الخطاب ردود فعل متباينة فورية من أمريكا وفرنسا والجزائر وأماكن أخرى. لقد انتقد البيت الأبيض ووزارة الخارجية وحلفاء أمريكا والصحافة خطابه. في العالم العربي وفي الجزائر بشكل أكثر تحديداً، تم الترحيب بها بجرارة لأنها تمثل دعماً سياسياً رسمياً لصالح استقلال الجزائر النابع من مفكر سياسي بحجم كينيدي. على الرغم من أنه كرئيس، خفف كينيدي موقفه من القضية الجزائرية، إلا أنه مع ذلك شكل متحداً حاسماً لحل هذه الأخيرة، في وقت كان يقتصر فيه على مجال مشكلة فرنسا الداخلية. يجب الاعتراف بكينيدي للدور الرئيسي الذي لعبه في تدويل حرب الاستقلال الجزائرية خلال واحدة من أحلك حلقاتها.

- الكلمات المفتاحية: الثورة الجزائرية، الإمبريالية قرار كينيدي لعام 1957

Introduction

The thirty-fifth American president, John F. Kennedy was known for being assassinated near the end of his third year in office. Despite his manifold accomplishments, some probably remain not well-known. Not only was he a speed talker and a speed reader, but he was also the sole president to win a Pulitzer Prize for his book, Profiles in Courage. In addition, he was the first Boy Scout to become president. Besides, he earned a Purple Heart for his brave service in the Pacific during World War II. But what makes him an exceptional president is also the donation of his full presidential salary to charity.

John F. Kennedy is also famous for his speeches. In his fourteen-minute presidential inaugural speech, he addressed the American nation and the world by calling for strong U.S. international relations: “my fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”¹ Years earlier, as a senator of Massachusetts from 1953 to 1960, John F. Kennedy had denounced Western colonial politics, principally those of the French. He believed that the United States had a common bond with the emerging nations of the Third World with which they shared the same revolutionary spirit.

This paper aims to endeavor to highlight Kennedy’s least recognized foreign policy speeches regarding the Algerian Revolution through the resolution embodied in his ‘Algeria Speech’ that called for Algerian independence after more than a century of French colonization. The focus will be laid on the context and content of his address as well as the influences of his policy. Attempts will be made to look into the genuine motivations that directed his views on the French colonial rule of Algeria. Did his resolution and speech have any impact on the Algerian cause? How did his daring opinions affect the United States, France, and the Algerian War of Independence? Did reactions to his address subsequently impact his stance toward the Algerian Revolution? Attempts to answer such interrogations may help unveil Kennedy’s legacy in the Algerian War of independence.

The French Colonization

During the last decades, special interest was devoted to the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962) and numerous aspects have been explored and clarified to debunk those who still sustain allegations related to its legitimacy and far-reaching effects. But the advent of the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of Algeria witnessed an outstanding proliferation of literary productions on its causes, consequences, and impacts on other revolutions.

The account of a slight to the French consul was a mere pretext France exploited to invade Algeria in 1830. In fact, the desire to conquer Algeria had been nourished years earlier in vain. However, in 1815, after the defeat of the fleet of *Rais Hamidou* against the American squadron led by Stephen Decatur in the Algerine War,² (1812-1815) and the signature of a peace treaty imposed on the *Dey*, the United States became the first state to coerce the Regency of Algiers to ensure a safe passage of its ships in the Mediterranean without payment of tribute.

England and France realized that the United States had achieved what the two countries could not fulfill despite their maritime powers. After the British naval bombardment of Algiers by Lord Exmouth in 1816, the fleet of the Regency of Algiers was destroyed and the most powerful North African State had to fall prey to French colonial plans fourteen years later. The Ottoman period culminated with the French colonization of Algeria. The latter took place through distinct stages that lasted from the French landing at Sidi Fredj on June 14, 1830, to the campaigns of the Sahara from 1882 to 1902. The conquest of Algeria is referred to as July 5, 1830, since it was the date of the capitulation of the *Dey* Hussein of Algiers. The occupation of Algeria was vehement, and involved massacres, rapes, and further outrages.³ It was characterized by the advocating of a full-scale war backed by the willingness to destroy the powers of Emir Abd-el-kader and the tribes that supported him, thereby attempting to eradicate any form of resistance.⁴ The conquest terminated with the appropriation of

Algeria to the French Republic by the foundation of the French departments of Algeria in 1848.

The colonization of Algeria is a too vast topic to be developed in a mere article. By itself, it would require a lot of volumes to try to dissipate the confusion surrounding it and expose the verity behind its genuine motives. However, it would be interesting to allude to the position of the French reference writer: Victor Hugo ⁵ and the father of American Democracy: Alexis de Tocqueville regarding the Algerian occupation. ⁶

Frank Laurent attempted to interpret the standpoint of Hugo concerning the French Conquest of Algeria through the latter's published and unpublished sources. ⁷ As his unpublished notes and articles could be controversial, the focus will be laid on one of his famous novels: *Les Misérables* where he denounces the French Barbary: "Algeria was too harshly conquered, like India by the English, with more barbary than civilization." ⁸ Hugo's attitude is very complex and seems even ambivalent. Even though Hugo had some unpublished notes declaring that barbary was in Algeria, ⁹ he seems to admit, in this quotation, the French barbary in Algeria. Regarding Emir Abd-el-Kader, he valorized the incarnation of the latter of the Algerian popular resistance and highlighted his superiority by comparing him to Bonaparte: "Abd-el-Kader is ambivalent but great; Louis Bonaparte is not ambivalent, he is so simple and petty, cruel without greatness, blood-thirsty, without heroism." ¹⁰

As for the French political thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville who is best known for *Democracy in America*, his attitude is more explicit concerning the colonization of Algeria. He was against slavery, the fact that a person owns another, but he had no problem with the fact that a country possesses another. He was against the extermination of the Indian natives in America, but he was favorable to the reduction of the Algerian populations to allow better colonization. He referred to this genocide by his famous expression "compress the Arabs." He made two trips to Algeria in 1841 and 1846. During these trips, he investigated the military situation of the country and its

inhabitants. Tocqueville undertook a long voyage visiting Algiers, Mostaganem, Oran, Bejaia, Skikda, and other cities and villages with the intention to appropriate lands in Algeria.¹¹ In October 1841, he wrote *Work on Algeria 1841*.¹² Actually, Tocqueville was famous for his works and admiration for American democracy, but regarding the Algerian conquest, when it was about the interest of his nation, he preferred nationalism coupled with colonialism to equality, justice, and freedom of nations. It is this ambiguity in Tocqueville that is worth studying and deepening to have a complete image of the political thinker.

The Algerian Revolution

The Algerian Revolution did not take place overnight. It was in the minds of the population since the capitulation of Algiers. After the annexation of Algeria to France and the creation of the Ministry of Algiers, the willingness to chase away and defeat France never ceased to fuel the resistance of those who did not doubt that France would and should be expelled.¹³ November 1, 1954, was a turning point in Algerian history. It was the day Algerians declared war on colonial France. A revolution was born to never stop until the liberation of a country with whom France used to negotiate peace treaties to be able to venture into the Mediterranean. A country that weakened for a while under special circumstances, but that recovered her strength thanks to the bravery of her men and women who decided to have no rest nor tranquility until it would be free. A country that would set an example for other countries on their way to freedom for the years to come.

On that very day, under the aegis of the National Liberation Front (FLN), simultaneous shots in various parts of Algeria were launched to announce to France and the world the declaration of the Algerian Revolution. The FLN, which received the political backing of Djamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt, broadcast a proclamation from Cairo calling on all Algerians to join the national fight to reestablish the sovereignty of the country.

The FLN founded a nine executive member committee named: *Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action-CRUA* in Cairo. Ait Ahmed, Ben Bella, Rabah Bitat, Moustafa Ben Boulaid, Mohamed Boudiaf, Mourad Didouche, Mohamed Khider, Belkacem Krim and Larbi Ben M'Hidi formed the nucleus behind the Algerian Revolution. They meticulously planned for the independence of their beloved country:

Local political committees were established to influence workers' unions, students, intellectuals, and women's groups. For effective armed action, the CRUA divided Algeria into wilayets and Kasbahs with local commanders assigned to each cell. The decentralized units were autonomous and could initiate military contact at opportune moments. It was classic asymmetrical warfare, which pitted a diffuse, highly motivated insurgency against a centralized, modern French army.¹⁴

François Mitterrand, then French minister of interior replied that "the only possible negotiation is war."¹⁵ On November 12, the President of the Council of Ministers, Pierre Mendès-France stated in the National Assembly:

One does not compromise when it comes to defending the internal peace of the nation, and the unity and integrity of the Republic. The Algerian departments are part of the French Republic. They have been French for a long time, and they are irrevocably French... Between them and metropolitan France, there can be no conceivable secession.¹⁶

Algeria was considered an integral part of Metropolitan France and thus, the demand of Algerians to restore their lands was perceived as an intrusion in France's internal affairs and a menace to her peace. Repeated operations of the Algerian Nationalists targeted public places to claim their freedom on the one hand and to draw international attention on the other.

France entered Algeria with the oppression of the native population. The oppression lasted one hundred and thirty-two years. The declaration of war was the only means Algerian freedom fighters could use to respond to the French colonization. Pacifist reaction could have never brought liberty

to Algerians. Realizing that the fallacious civilizing French mission was meant to make Algerians adopt the French culture instead of prospering on their own and that the French were not going to leave Algeria because it was a French department that numbered a huge settler population, the FLN decided to respond with the same means advocated by France since it was crystal clear liberty would not be offered to them. In this case, violence became a necessity as described in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth*.¹⁷

Despite her military superiority and use of collective slaughters and tortures of all kinds, France could neither stop Algerian resistance nor find a political solution. Backed by emerging nations, the Soviet Union, and Arab states, the question of Algerian independence was brought before the General Assembly of the United Nations. The FLN started a military campaign in Algiers to impact the debate at the UN session of September **1956**. A general strike of all Algerians in Algiers and France took place on July **5, 1956**. As Algiers was paralyzed, the French responded with a massacre of innocuous civilians. The latter influenced the UN debate and the resolution for Algerian independence was passed by a vast majority. By **1958**, the international criticism questioned and denounced France's involvement in the Algerian War. On March **19, 1962**, France and FLN representatives agreed on a cease-fire at Evian, France.¹⁸ The referendum held the following July, was overwhelmingly in favor of Algerian independence. General de Gaulle proclaimed the independence of Algeria on July **3, 1962**. The FLN chose to declare the independence Day a couple of days later as a reminder of the capitulation of Algiers that was replaced on the same day July **5**, by the restitution of Algerian sovereignty. The Algerian War was one of the bloodiest wars of the twentieth century. Algerians paid the price very high. With bleeding hearts and injured minds bearing intact memories of recent tortures, slaughters and losses, the pouring tears of widows and orphans melted with tears of joy of hugging one's own country that had been so inhumanly plundered. The happiness that submerged every free Algerian fused with the promise to heal the mother country from its infected wounds, by

injecting nationalism into its future generations that would preserve it from any intrusion to raise it in the scale of free nations.

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the first to congratulate Algeria upon its independence¹⁹ from France on July 3, 1962:

This moment of national independence for the people of Algeria, the creation of a great new state represents the devoted and courageous work of the Algerian people and their leaders stretching on the many years. I congratulate them. I congratulate them as the president of the United States, and I congratulate them on behalf of the American people. We too fought for our own independence also, and it cost us many years of bloodshed and tears and work and perseverance. But, we finally obtained our independence as you have yours, and we have maintained it as you will yours. It is a particular source of satisfaction to me, to express these words of greetings to our friends in Algeria because I recall speaking some years ago in the Senate of the United States on behalf of independence for Algeria. And now that great goal has been achieved. We wish you every success in the future, and I want to assure you of our whole heart of desire to work in cooperation with you and your leaders on behalf of peace and prosperity and the progress of your people and mine and of all mankind.²⁰

Kennedy's Resolution submitted after his Algeria Speech'

Three years after the declaration of the Algerian Revolution, on 2 July 1957, then a Democrat Senator and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Sub-committee on United Nations Affairs, John Kennedy delivered a controversial speech: "Imperialism-the Enemy of Freedom."²¹ to the US Senate. As in this speech, the Massachusetts' senator criticized French colonialism in Algeria and declared his backing for Algerian Independence, it became known as the 'Algeria Speech.' It kindled the foreign policy establishment since it challenged virtually all of the assumptions of American foreign policy and condemned the French occupation of Algeria. The speech was widely reported

and brought more mail to Kennedy's office than any Senate speech the senator ever delivered.²²

Since he had been selected to the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee in January 1957, Kennedy gathered any piece of information likely to inform him on Algeria. He privately met Mohammed Yazid and Abd-el-kader Chanderli. Both became the spokesmen of the FLN in New York since FLN chiefs-Ait Ahmed, Ben Bella, Boudiaf, Khider, and Lachref- had been arrested on October 22, 1956, and imprisoned for six years in France.²³ Through its two spokesmen's propaganda campaign in the United States, the FLN sought to gain the sympathy of the American people. In a cold war context, it was essential that any collusion with communism be rejected. In addition, drawing parallelism between the two Revolutions namely: the American and the Algerian revealed efficient.²⁴ According to Alistair Horne and Yves Courrière, the documentation of Kennedy's speech was provided by Chanderli who was cited as Kennedy's close friend.²⁵

Maxime de Person provides us with two other probable sources of information that might have helped in the genesis of Kennedy's speech: Fred Holborn, Kennedy's assistant, as suggested by David Halberstam, and William Porter, the North-African Affairs director at the State Department, as cited by Arthur Schlesinger.²⁶ Fred Holborn also suggested the frequent contacts with Habib Bourguiba Jr, the son of president Bourguiba, and the Tunisian ambassador in Washington, Mongi Slim, as important sources of information to Kennedy on the Algerian question. The senator also consulted American experts specialized in the Maghreb. Regardless of the controversial influences that might have led to Kennedy's speech, the latter was undisputedly well researched and constituted a turning point in the Algerian War of Independence.

Context and content

When Algeria sought the aid of the United States on February 13, 1950, through Said, the grandson of Emir Abd-el-kader, it had no response.²⁷ However, American officials had established some early contacts with Algerian Nationalists. Back in

November 1942, the American consul Murphy received and gave political advice to Ferhat Abbas,²⁸ later President of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (G.P.R.A), in Algiers. When Abbas wondered about what the United States would think of the independence of Algeria, Murphy responded that Americans were sympathetic to all desires for independence, but that the present purposes in North Africa, as elsewhere, were concentrated on defeating the Nazis. He also mentioned that Americans hoped that their friends would join them in winning the war.²⁹ OSS officer Archie Roosevelt also met Ferhat Abbas in Constantine in June 1943. These contacts assured Algerian Nationalists of the sympathy of Americans to their cause. In a Cold War context, the American government had to keep in contact with FLN representatives to avoid the Algerians falling under Soviet or Chinese influence. Kennedy's first official encounter with the Algerian question can be traced back to 2 June 1956 when he had exhorted the view that the tension was rigorously a colonial problem, instigating the Eisenhower Administration to assist all dependent peoples to obtain freedom.³⁰ The 'Algeria speech' represented the first official political contribution in favor of the Algerian independence emanating from a famous politician as Kennedy.

Most historians wondered about the genuine motivations that led Kennedy to voice his opposition to the French colonization of Algeria and reproach the Eisenhower Administration for having resigned the American anti-colonial tradition.³¹ Those who disagreed with Kennedy's opinions chose suspicion and correlated his speech with a campaign that would serve his ambitions to the White house. However, those who shared and believed in his attitude, as Algerian Nationalists, welcomed his boldness in expressing his deepest convictions.

There were two major contemporary events to Kennedy's speech. The first one concerned the massacres of the populations of two MNA (Algerian National movement- the rival of FLN) villages: Wagram and Mélouza by the French army. This outrageous slaughter was meant to discredit the FLN and the ALN (National Liberation Army). The French press distorted

the facts and attributed the massacres to the FLN thereby contributing to an atmosphere of doubt and confusion.³² The American press reacted through the *New York Times* and *The New York Herald Tribune* with suspicion with regard to the French policy undertaken in Algeria.³³ At the beginning of July 1957, in Tunis, a second event related to the fifth congress of the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) had the Algerian Revolution as the main topic. Senator Kennedy must have been influenced by such events that preceded his speech since the preparation of the latter lasted fifteen months.

The main context of the speech consisted of Kennedy's criticism of France's colonialism in Algeria and its opposition to the fight for Algerian independence. He commenced his momentous speech by mentioning man's undeniable desire to be free:

(...) the most powerful single force in the world today is neither communism nor capitalism, neither the H-bomb nor the guided missile it is man's eternal desire to be free and independent. The great enemy of that tremendous force of freedom is called, for want of a more precise term, imperialism - and today that means Soviet imperialism and, whether we like it or not, and though they are not to be equated, Western imperialism.³⁴

After referring to the existence of many cases of the conflict between independence and imperialism in the Western World, the senator distinguished the striking case of Algeria. Denouncing America's neglect of the issue of war in Algeria, he qualified it as "the most critical diplomatic impasse" the United States faced since the crisis in Indochina. Kennedy also voiced his disagreement regarding the American tepid support to Algeria and France that translated into careful neutrality. He argued that such a stance: "(...) has affected our standing in the eyes of the free world, our leadership in the fight to keep that world free, our prestige, and our security; as well as our moral leadership in the fight against Soviet imperialism in the countries behind the Iron Curtain."³⁵ He also noticed that Americans were misled to think that they pleased both sides by

the use of the “*head-in-the-sands policy*.” The latter only proved, as he explained, that America did not feel concerned by the conflict and consequently became the subject of suspicion of all.

Then, Kennedy enumerated all the attempts toward a settlement of the Algerian War that were aborted because of the French insistence that neither negotiations nor elections would take place until the termination of hostilities. He nevertheless, praised the positive attitude of a French independent thinker, M. Raymond Aron through his book on *The Algerian Tragedy* in which he expressed his view on the constitution of an Algerian State.³⁶

Kennedy denounced American aid to France by quoting Ambassador Dillon’s gratitude to the United States:

In his statement, Ambassador Dillon recalled with pride that “the United States has consistently supported France when north African subjects have been discussed in the United Nations”; and that American military equipment - particularly helicopters - had been made available for use against native groups in Algeria.³⁷

He also identified four major obstacles to the settlement of the Algerian War. For him, the first obstacle lay in the claim of the French that Algeria was an integral part of metropolitan France. The second one, he added was raised by the French population in Algeria, who feared for their rights as French citizens, their property, and their lives. Kennedy considered that postponement in a settlement of the Algerian question would only endanger their situation. He then attributed the third hurdle to the help that would be provided through any solution to: “the extremists, and saboteurs that permeate the nationalist movement, to the Communist, Egyptian, and other outside anti-Western provocateurs that have clearly achieved some success in penetrating the movement.”³⁸ Kennedy mentioned that the goals of any successful revolution-even the French- could not be distorted by the practices of terrorism and counterterrorism it revealed. He then warned against the dangers of not backing African nationalism:

Most political revolutions - including our own - have been buoyed by outside aid in men, weapons, and ideas. Instead of abandoning African nationalism to the anti-Western agitators and Soviet agents who hope to capture its leadership, the United States, a product of political revolution, must redouble its efforts to earn the respect and friendship of nationalist leaders.³⁹

Finally, the last obstacle according to him, dealt with the fear to negotiate with a “nationalist movement that lacks a single cohesive point of leadership, focus, and direction.”⁴⁰ He considered that this was due to the fact that the French had purposely prevented the Algerian Population from education, imprisoned, exiled, or killed its political leaders. Drawing lessons from Indochina, Kennedy had no doubt Algeria would be free, and advised that America had better not be remembered as an obstacle to Algerian independence:

The time has come for the United States to face the harsh realities of the situation and to fulfill its responsibilities as leader of the free world - in the U.N., in NATO, in the administration of our aid programs and in the exercise of our diplomacy - in shaping a course toward political independence for Algeria.⁴¹

At the end of his speech, Kennedy submitted a resolution for peace in Algeria, in which he urges the President and the Secretary of State, to exercise the influence of the United States on the cause of Algerian independence. The resolution (S. Res. 153) was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, as follows:

Resolved, That taking cognizance of the war in Algeria, its repression of legitimate nationalist aspirations, its growing contamination of good relations between the new states of North Africa and the West, its widening erosion of the effective strength of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the mounting international concern it has aroused in the United Nations, the President and Secretary of State be, and hereby are, strongly encouraged to place the influence of the United States behind efforts, either through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or through the good offices of the Prime Minister of Tunisia and the Sultan of Morocco, to achieve a solution which will

recognize the independent personality of Algeria and establish the basis for a settlement interdependent with France and the neighboring nations; and be it further

Resolved, That, if no substantial progress has been noted by the time of the next United Nations General Assembly session, the United States supports an international effort to derive for Algeria the basis for an ordinary achievement of independence.⁴²

In the first part of the resolution, Kennedy acknowledges the legitimacy of the Algerian Revolution and the repression it was subjected to. In addition, he reminds the American government of the damages that endangered the relations between the North African States and the West. Besides, he underlines the international concerns that the Algerian Revolution has roused in the United Nations. For all these reasons, Kennedy exhorts the United States to act in favor of Algerian independence through the auspices of the NATO or good offices of Tunisia and Morocco.

Kennedy pursues by raising the tone. He almost gives an ultimatum to resolve the Algerian war by warning that if by the following United Nations General Assembly session a solution was not in progress, the United States would back Algerian independence with an international coalition.

The resolution was not adopted by Congress. However, Kennedy's Congressional criticism helped gain the support of numerous senators who were not satisfied with the Eisenhower Administration's approach to the Algerian question. It also triggered the State Department's shipment of food and medical supplies to Algerian refugees in the neighboring countries.⁴³

Reactions to Kennedy's speech and Resolution

Kennedy's Resolution was met with strong criticism in the United States. The American press reprimanded the senator. *The Boston Sunday Globe* reported that he was immediately denounced by the White House, the State Department, American allies, and the press.⁴⁴ Kennedy's address was met by a great movement of protestation in the United States:

President Eisenhower complained about "young men getting up and shouting about things." Secretary [of State John Foster] Dulles commented acidly that if the senator wanted to tilt against colonialism, perhaps he might concentrate on the communist variety. Most prominent Democrats were equally scornful. Adlai Stevenson dismissed Kennedy's speech as "terrible." Dean Acheson described the speech as "foolish words that wound ... a dispirited ally."⁴⁵

Herve Alphred, the French ambassador knew about the speech on June 30 as copies of the latter were provided to all Washington correspondents. As a matter of fact, he advised Dulles to officially deny it in order not to irritate France. Dulles denounced the speech before it was delivered to lessen the French criticism of the speech.⁴⁶ It was even reproved by the New York Times,⁴⁷ which paraphrased Kennedy's address as: "perhaps the most comprehensive arraignment of Western policy toward Algeria yet presented by an American in public office."⁴⁸

The speech enkindled an immense irritation in France.⁴⁹ "Le Figaro," the French daily paper wrote: "It is shameful that our business is so badly directed that we are forced to endure such idiocies."⁵⁰ French leaders were scandalized. Reacting to Kennedy's speech and Resolution, Rene Coty, the French president, informed the French Senate that France would never negotiate with cutthroats and scarify a million Europeans in Algeria. As for Andre Morice, the French Defense Minister, he considered that speaking of independence would require the giving-up of more innocuous people.⁵¹ "Le Monde," however, had a more balanced attitude. It acknowledged the historical background in American politics of the senator as well as his well-documented speech, even though it denounced his stance in favor of Algerian independence. Writing from Paris in July, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., informed Kennedy that French critics of official policy warmly received his backup and that his entire speech was published in L'Express.⁵²

Among the European colonists in Algiers, a lambasted feeling against the speech developed. American newsmen and

residents were discouraged to remain off the streets to avert reprisals. On July 4, a bomb blew up outside the American consulate in Algiers.⁵³ However, the speech and Resolution won Kennedy more admirers among the native population. The FLN must have perceived it as a triumph. A thankful telegram was rapidly sent to Kennedy by the MNA.⁵⁴ The Algerian freedom fighters, or Moudjahidines, who were tortured and decimated by the French army, hailed the American support through Kennedy's address. The persecuted Algerians welcomed the speech since it was the first official defense and backing of their Revolution and War for Independence. The hope of an eventual American mediation to put an end to French colonization was mirrored. The FLN had the impression to have found an outstanding ally with a certain future in the political arena.⁵⁵ Thanks to this speech, President Kennedy has always been heartily recalled by the Algerian people. In his honor, the principal square of El-Biar bears his name.

Kennedy was not apathetic to such criticisms. He replied on July 8, to the French Minister for Algeria, Robert LaCoste, and all those who lambasted him. He acknowledged that he was fully conscious of the reactions of the Department of State, the French government, and all the other critics. He considered that there were some verities that had to be termed regarding the situation in Algeria. He argued that the latter was worsening especially with the refusal of the French authorities to seek a solution, and the American authorities' unwillingness to recognize "the grave international implications of this impasse."⁵⁶ He warned that if such a situation persisted especially with the American aid to France, it would lead pro-Western Algerian Nationalists to turn into extremists:

Algerians will someday be free. Then, to whom will they turn - to the West, which has seemingly ignored their plea for independence; to the Americans, whom they may feel have rejected the issue as none of our affair while at the same time furnishing arms that help crush them; or to Moscow, to Cairo, to Peiping, the pretended champions of nationalism and independence?⁵⁷

He labeled the situation in Algeria as a: “deadly time bomb steadily ticking toward the day when another disaster to the free world - worse than Indochina - might explode.”⁵⁸ Drawing parallelism between the Soviet Union’s suppression of the revolt in Hungary in 1956, with Washington’s approval for a UN resolution denouncing Soviet Imperialism, and American abstentions in the UN regarding the Algerian question, Kennedy explained America cannot afford to forbear in case a resolution for Algerian independence was submitted.

Kennedy the President, and the Algerian issue

The victory of John F. Kennedy in the 1960 presidential elections comforted the Arab World and the populations seeking liberty. Kennedy’s pertinent remarks in his ‘Algeria Speech’ three years before were still resonant in the minds of Algerian Nationalists as they backed up their fight for freedom. Supporters of the FLN strongly anticipated that as a president, Kennedy would be a fervent defender of Algerian independence. Before preparing his speech, Kennedy had been informed by the FLN, North African experts, Mongli Slim, Habib Bourguiba, Jr., and William Porter who stressed that the United States’ outstanding endorsement of French policy in Algeria was imperiling American relations in Africa.⁵⁹ Unexpectedly, despite his anti-colonial convictions, the new president chose to contain his opinions on Algeria.

The Kennedy Administration was to embrace virtually an identical stance as its predecessor regarding the Algerian situation. Criticizing France’s, treatment of the Algerian problem, Kennedy the President would patently soften the thoughts he had positively indorsed as Senator, as he would thereafter contend any move implicating the United Nations in the search for a settlement.⁶⁰ The leading concern of Kennedy as a President was the infiltration of Communism in the Third World. He was anxious about the Soviets’ economic and political aid to emerging countries and the provision of arms to Algerian Nationalists.⁶¹

Kennedy twisted between pledging his support to Algerian Nationalists by establishing official meetings with the Algerian

Provisional Government and tranquilizing de Gaulle of the United States solidarity. Kennedy intended to use Bourguiba's friendship with Algerians to tenderize the demands of the latter in their negotiations in Paris.⁶² Curiously, the Kennedy Administration remained silent on Algeria during the whole period of Algerian-French negotiations. The criticism of African countries regarding American attitude toward the Algerian question was countered by the American reassertion in favor of a democratic settlement of the conflict. The paradox intensified with American eagerness to establish formal contacts with representatives of the Provisional Government as independence seemed close.⁶³

Kennedy's opinion on the Algerian Revolution unveiled an essential paradox in American views toward the Third World. The convictions of Kennedy as a senator regarding the Algerian War changed when he became president. He then was persuaded that the Soviet Union intended to utilize national liberation fights to subvert Western influence in the Third World.

Conclusion

President Kennedy has been criticized by the press in the United States, France, and other African countries. The genuine motivations behind his 'Algeria Speech' and Resolution can never be indisputably asserted. Whether his speech was a footbridge he took on his way to the presidency,⁶⁴ or the reflection of a strong desire to sustain the self-determination of colonized people cannot be affirmed with certainty. His stance as a president toward the Algerian question was affected by the Cold War context. Kennedy recommended, as suggested by Miloud Barkaoui, a French-Algerian solution without the intervention of the U.N. or any other international organization. A solution that would guarantee France and the West's strategic interests in the region and keep Algeria out of the Soviet influence.⁶⁵ He was reproached for either his support to Algeria or his backing of France. His passage from senator to president was marked by a shift in his position regarding the Algerian war. This ambivalence could be the subject of manifold subsequent literary productions.

No matter how criticized he might have been, Kennedy demanded through his speech, that the United States change its policy with regard to the Algerian issue by introducing a resolution in favor of Algerian independence. By denouncing the French colonial occupation of Algeria, he challenged the Eisenhower Administration and made a bold step in American foreign policy. He likewise provided the needed hope for the Algerian Nationalists whose cause for independence was imprisoned in the sphere of French internal issues. Kennedy played a key role in the internationalization of the Algerian war. His address was a turning point in the Algerian Revolution. The Algerian people did not forget his stance toward colonized people in general and their cause in particular. Following the assassination of President Kennedy, the late Algerian President Ben Bella led a ceremony at Belgrade Square, which was later renamed Kennedy, and declared a seven-day period of mourning. Kennedy's attitude in favor of Algerian independence was essential but not sufficient. To be independent, Algeria had to pay a heavy bill with more than a million and a half brave citizens who did not hesitate to donate their lives to break the bonds of colonialism and assure future generations of deserved freedom.

1 The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, **1961** in

<http://ap.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/sixties/resources/john-f-kennedy%E2%80%99s-inaugural-address-1961> (May, **2022**).

2 For more information refer to: Frederick C. Leiner, The End of Barbary Terror. America's 1815 War Against The Pirates of North Africa (Oxford University Press, **2006**). Also consult: Linda Belabdelouahab, "Rais Hamidou: The Legacy of the Most Famous Corsair of the Algerian Navy" Revue d'Histoire Maghebine N **140** (Tunis: June/July **2010**).

3 Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, "Torture in Algeria : Past Acts That Haunt France-Liberty, Equality and Colony" Le Monde Diplomatique (June **2001**) in <<http://mondediplo.com/2001/06/11/torture2>>. Also refer to: Alistair Horne, A Savage War of Peace. Algeria 1954-1962 (New York: Viking, **1977**); Matthew Connelly, A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's War for

Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era (New York; Oxford, 2002).

4 France was confronted to the resistance of the natives in different parts of Algeria. The official capitulation of Emir Abd-el-Kader was not until December 23, 1847. In the Djurdjura, Lalla Fatma N'Soumer did not give up until 1857. Cheikh Bouamama resisted until 1902. For further information consult: Camille Rousset, La Conquête de L'Algérie 1841-1857 Vol. 1. (Editions Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1889) in

<<http://archive.org/stream/laconquedela100rous#page/n1/mode/2up>>.

5 Victor Hugo (1802-1885) was a French poet, novelist, playwright, essayist, statesman and a Human Rights activist. In poetry, he is better remembered for Les Contemplations and La Légende des siècles. He became famous with his novels: Les Misérables and Notre-Dame de Paris.

6 Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) was a French historian famous for Democracy in America that appeared in two distinct volumes in 1835 and 1840.

7 Franck Laurent, Victor Hugo Face à la conquête de l'Algérie coll. «Victor Hugo et l'Orient». (Ed. Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001). Summary and interview by Christiane Chaulet Achour. Frank Laurent is a lecturer in literature at Mans University (France).

8 Idem. «L'Algérie trop durement conquise, et, comme l'Inde par les Anglais, avec plus de barbarie que de civilisation.» Own Translation.

9 «La barbarie est en Afrique, je le sais, mais que nos pouvoirs responsables de l'oublient pas, nous ne devons pas l'y prendre, nous devons l'y détruire ; nous ne sommes pas venus l'y chercher, mais l'en chasser. Nous ne sommes pas venus dans cette vieille terre romaine qui sera française inoculer la barbarie à notre armée, mais notre civilisation à tout un peuple ; nous ne sommes pas venus en Afrique pour en rapporter l'Afrique, mais pour y apporter l'Europe». Idem. “Barbary is in Africa, I know it, but our officials should not forget it, we should not take it there, we should rather destroy it; we did not come here to find it but to dispel it. We did not come to this old Roman land that will be French to inoculate barbary to our army but our civilization to an entire people; we did not come to Africa to bring Africa but to bring Europe.” Own translation.

10 Idem. “Abd-el-Kader est ambivalent mais grand ; Louis Bonaparte n'a rien d'ambivalent, il est tout simple et tout petit, cruel sans grandeur, sanguinaire sans héroïsme.” Own translation.

11 On his way to Oran, Tocqueville discovered the nice landscapes of Blida, Medea and Miliana. He kept a journal on his trip to Algiers in which he expressed very prejudiced opinions about the Algerian population. He noticed that the people had different, languages, customs and traditions, but the only thing that united them was religion. He admitted that if one wanted

to divide such people, it was only through religion. A scheme that was thought and planned, at least more than a century before religion became a source of division or more specifically a means of genocide up to the present time.

12 Alexis de Tocqueville, Travail sur l'Algérie 1841. Electronic version by Jean-Marie Tremblay, 2001. In

<http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/De_tocqueville_alexis/de_la_colonie_algerie/travail_sur_algerie/travail_sur_algerie.html>. [April, 2012].

13 On May 8, 1945 Algerians demonstrated peacefully to demand their independence in different parts of the country, in Sétif, Kharata and Guelma. The French response was characterized by terrible massacres that numbered 45,000 innocent people. For further information refer to: Africa Human Voice International

Fédération d'Afrique, "The French Massacre At Sétif (Algeria)" in

<<http://www.africa-humanvoice.org/afrique/frenchmassacre.html>> [April, 2012].

14 Ahmed Nazeer, "The War of Algeria's Independence – 1954-62," History of Islam in <<http://historyofislam.com/contents/the-modern-age/the-war-of-algeria%E2%80%99s-independence-1954-62/>>. [February, 2012].

15 "Algerian War of Independence 1954-1962," Wars of the World in

<<http://www.onwar.com/aced/data/alpha/algeria1954.htm>> [April, 2012].

16 Idem.

17 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, Trans by Richard Philcox, (USA, 2004) in

<http://books.google.dz/books/about/The_Wretched_of_the_Earth.html?id=-XGKFJq4eccC&redir_esc=y>

[April, 2012]. For more information on FLN operations to free Algeria consult Gillo Pontecorvos's The Battle of

Algiers (Scribner, 1973).

18 "1961: The Franco-Algerian talks. Evian agreements", in

<<http://continuityafrica.com/algeria/21-revolution/52-1961-the-franco-algerian-talks.html>> [April, 2012].

19 Formal diplomatic relations started with the appointment of William Porter, as a US ambassador on September 27, 1962.

20 «JFK félicite l'Algérie pour son indépendance,» in

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBoJIZ9jMDI>> [March, 2012]. Video. Also refer to: Statement on Algerian Independence, 3 July 1962. Papers of John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Musuem in

<<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKPOF-039-013.aspx>>
[March, 2012].

21 "Imperialism-the Enemy of Freedom. July 2, 1957" in

<http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/congress/jfk020757_imperialism.html>. [March, 2012]. For further information on the main aspects of Kennedy's speech, consult Gregory D. Cleva, John F. Kennedy's 1957 Algeria Speech The politics of Anticolonialism in the Cold War Era, (Rowman Littlefield, 2022).

22 Ted Widmer, "The Challenge of Imperialism," The Boston Sunday Globe (July 15, 2007) in

<http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/07/15/the_challenge_of_imperialism/> [April, 2012].

23 Robert L. Miller, Un tournant de la guerre d'Algérie : Le discours de John F. Kennedy au Sénat des Etats Unis en juillet 1957 in <<http://fr.calameo.com/read/00005972947d389d94c57>> [April, 2012]. Yazid and Chanderli had Tunisian diplomatic passports and an office in the 56th Avenue in Manhattan not far from the United Nations' Headquarters.

24 Maxime de PERSON, « Kennedy et l'Algérie » Recherches contemporaines, n° 3, 1995-1996 in

<<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:JX7RIAdDxPYJ:www.u-paris10.fr>> [March, 2012].

25 Yves Courrière, La guerre d'Algérie. T. 3, L'heure des colonels (Paris : Le livre de poche, 1974), pp. 581- 583 ; Alistair Horne, Histoire de la guerre d'Algérie (Paris : Albin Michel, 1980), pp. 255-256. Quoted in Maxime de PERSON, « Kennedy et l'Algérie » Chanderli would become the first Ambassador of Algeria to the United Nations 1962-1964.

26 Maxime de Person, « Kennedy et l'Algérie » op., cit.

27 Fredj Maatoug, « John F. Kennedy, la France et l'Algérie » in <http://www.cairn.info/resume.php?ID_ARTICLE=GMCC_224_0135>

[March, 2012]. Also consult : Irvin M. Wall, France, the United States and the Algerian War (Berkley: California U.P., 2001).

28 Jean Jolly, L'Afrique et son environnement européen et asiatique (Editions L'Harmattan, 2008), p. 115 in

<http://books.google.dz/books?id=ZXAYyzO_TLYC&pg=PA115&lpg=PA115&dq=Murphy+american+government+1942+and+ferhat+abbas&source=b1&ots> [May, 2012].

29 Christopher Ross, The United States Mission in Algeria . A Historical Sketch (April 1991). In

<<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:ckme962TRtgJ:algiers.usem.bassy.gov/uploads/images/>> [April, 2012].

30 Congressional Record, Vol. CII. Part 7, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, "Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy," Fourth Annual Rockhurst Day Banquet of Rockhurst College, Kansas City, Mo., John F. Kennedy introduced into Congressional Record by Senator Symington (6 June 1956), 9614-9615. Quoted in Miloud Barkaoui, "Kennedy and the cold war imbroglio: the case of Algeria's independence - President John F. Kennedy" Arab Studies Quarterly (Spring, 1999) in

<http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2501/is_2_21/ai_55683885/?tag=content:col1> [April, 2012].

31 "Imperialism-the Enemy of Freedom. July 2, 1957" in

<http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/congress/jfk020757_imperialism.html>. [March, 2012]. On June 11, Secretary of State Dulles asserted that the U.S. would exercise no pressure on France concerning Algeria and that the United States would continue to provide France with arms. Also consult: Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, "Kennedy's Algerian Dilemma: Containment, Alliance Politics and the 'Rebel Dialogue,'" Middle Eastern Studies Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr., 1999), pp. 61-82.

32 « Récits de la Bataille d'Alger par Yacef Saâdi: de Mélouza à Wagram » El Moudjahid (1 juin, 2011) in

<<http://www.elmoudjahid.com/fr/mobile/detail-article/id/12742>> [April, 2012].

33 Maxime de PERSON, « Kennedy et l'Algérie » op., cit.

34 "Imperialism - The Enemy of Freedom" (July 2, 1957) in

<http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/congress/jfk020757_imperialism.htm> [March, 2012].

35 Idem.

36 M. Raymond Aron, La Tragédie Algérienne (Plon, 1957).

37 Ibid., 33.

38 Idem.

39 Idem.

40 Idem.

41 Idem.

42 Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers. Senate Files, Box 784, "Algeria Speech." John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

43 Quoted in Miloud Barkaoui, "Kennedy and the cold war imbroglio: the case of Algeria's independence - President John F. Kennedy" Arab Studies Quarterly (Spring, 1999), p. 33.

44 Ted Widmer, "The Challenge of Imperialism," The Boston Sunday Globe (July 15, 2007) in

<http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/07/15/the_challenge_of_imperialism/> [April, 2012].

45 Richard Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa, pp. 19-22. Quoted in Chapter 10: LBJ's "Passionate Attachment" to Israel" in Salvador Astucia, Opium Lords, Israel, the Golden Triangle, and the Kennedy Assassination in <http://www.jfkmontreal.com/lbj's_passionate_attachment.htm> [April, 2012].

46 Dulles secretly approved of several remarks raised by the senator in his speech however he refuted Kennedy's tactics. Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, "Kennedy's Algerian Dilemma: Containment, Alliance Politics and the 'Rebel Dialogue'" Middle Eastern Studies V. 35 N 2 (April, 1999), p. 63.

47 For further reactions Of the American press consult: Russell Baker, "Kennedy Urges U.S. Back Independence for Algeria," New York Times, (3 July 1957), pp:1- 5; "Mr. Kennedy on Algeria," New York Times, (3 July 1957), p. 22; Robert C. Doty, "Paris Is Bitter," New York Times, (4 July, 1957), p. 10; C.L. Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: The United States, France, and Algeria." New York Times, (6 July 1957), p. 14; Arthur Krock, "Five Political Figures Without a Single Thought," New York Times, (7 July 1957), p. 115. Quoted in Kelly Shannon, "Maybe I Can Marry Them Both": Conflicted American Views On The Algerian War" in

<[http://alaska.academia.edu/KellyShannon/Papers/83948/ Maybe I Can Marry Them Both Conflicted American Views on the Algerian War](http://alaska.academia.edu/KellyShannon/Papers/83948/Maybe_I_Can_Marry_Them_Both_Conflicted_American_Views_on_the_Algerian_War) > [May, 2012].

48 Consult: New York Times, July 3, 1957. Quoted in Ronald J. Nurse, "Critic of Colonialism: JFK and Algerian Independence," The Historian 39 (1977), p. 314.

49 For French response to Kennedy's speech consult: "M. Lacoste Answers U.S. Critic," The Times (London), (7 July 1957), p. 6; "Coty Pledges Reactions," The Times (London), (11 July 1957), p. 8; "No Settlement by Magic in Algeria," The Times (London), (24 July 1957), p. 6. Quoted in Kelly Shannon, "Maybe I Can Marry Them Both": Conflicted American Views On The Algerian War" in

<[http://alaska.academia.edu/KellyShannon/Papers/83948/ Maybe I Can Marry Them Both Conflicted American Views on the Algerian War](http://alaska.academia.edu/KellyShannon/Papers/83948/Maybe_I_Can_Marry_Them_Both_Conflicted_American_Views_on_the_Algerian_War) > [May, 2012].

50 Richard Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa, pp. 19-22.

51 Idem.

52 Arthur M. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days (New York, 1965), p. 554. Quoted in Ronald J. Nurse, "Critic of Colonialism: JFK and Algerian Independence," The Historian 39 (1977), p. 316.

53 Richard Mahoney, JFK: Ordeal in Africa, pp. 19-22, op., cit.

54 Maxime de PERSON, «Kennedy et l'Algérie» op., cit.

55 Ted Widmer, "The Challenge of Imperialism," op., cit.

56 "Algeria" July 8, 1957 in

<http://www.jfklink.com/speeches/jfk/congress/jfk080757_algeria.html> [April, 2012].

57 Idem.

58 Idem.

59 Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days : John F. Kennedy in the White House (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), pp. 552-3. Quoted in Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, "Kennedy's Algerian Dilemma: Containment, Alliance Politics and the 'Rebel Dialogue,'" Middle Eastern Studies Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr., 1999), p. 65.

60 Miloud Barkaoui, "Kennedy and the cold war imbroglio: the case of Algeria's independence - President John F. Kennedy" Arab Studies Quarterly (Spring, 1999), p. 32.

61 Theodore Scorenson, Kennedy, 2nd ed. (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1966), p. 255. Quoted in Miloud Barkaoui, "Kennedy and the Cold War Imbroglio."

62 Miloud Barkaoui, "Kennedy and the Cold War Imbroglio," p. 35.

63 The first social meeting between an American official and Provisional Government took place on October 17, 1961 in Tunisia. The first official Algerian-American meeting took place between the Algerian delegation to the U.N. directed by Mohamed Yazid and the American delegation headed by Adlai Stevenson.

64 Peter Edson, "Kennedy Takes Algerian Fight", The Tuscaloosa News, July 10, 1957 in

<<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1817&dat=19570710&id>> [April, 2012].

64 Miloud Barkaoui, "Kennedy and the cold war imbroglio, p.40.