

## The Theory of the Revolutionary War of the French Army in Dealing with the Algerian issue 1954-1962 ad

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to analyze the history of French colonial policy in Algeria. This concerns the French army's theory of revolutionary warfare, both in its security and military aspects, in dealing with the Algerian issue. Our study focuses on the basic strategy of what is known in French circles as the "counter-revolutionary war," which requires attacking rebels within the population and against the population itself, at a time when the army had come to combine political and military power. Within a methodological framework based on descriptive historical research, the study concludes that the French authorities in Algeria chose to place their full weight on the military effort and the use of force, especially with the expansion of the revolution and the widespread participation of Algerians in the National Liberation Front and Army. The study also aims to demonstrate the active cooperation of the state, which militarized while simultaneously politicizing the military. This contributed to establishing the necessary structural framework for seizing control of the Algerian population.*

**Keywords:** Theory, Revolutionary War, French Army, Algerian Issue.

### Introduction

Some believe that the state can only be strong if it is based on a strong army, so it should devote its efforts to serving its military forces, and there is another trend whose owners believe that handing over the state to the military to act on their war calculations is something with a lot of risk. It seems that the French authorities in Algeria chose the first opinion and threw all their weight on the military effort and the use of force, especially with the expansion of the revolution and the wide participation of Algerians in the front and the National Liberation Army. With the dawn of the Algerian revolution, the basic strategy of the counter-revolutionary war was to attack the rebels in the middle of the population and the population, this required that the military be free from any political control and not be held accountable, the army needed to be free and operate according to a strategy that is not hindered by laws protecting civil liberties, the panic November 1954 and the coordinated attacks carried out by the National Liberation Army All gave the military an opportunity to combine political and military power.

In this context, always since the end of 1955, the call of the theorists of the Revolutionary War succeeded in directing the military establishment towards the creation of a whole series of organizations specialized in the field of psychological work, and military leaders concluded from the Vietnamese experience that the use of destructive military force alone or what has been termed as "pacification" is insufficient to tip the scales in favor of France. Based on this, the following problem was recorded: to what extent did the Revolutionary War Theory of the French army succeed in countering the Algerian revolution.

To answer this question, I adopted the method of historical descriptive research, and this is an attempt by us to familiarize ourselves with the most prominent means of the Revolutionary War as the best means of encircling the revolution, in addition to trying to monitor its most important dimensions and results on the way to finding a solution to the Algerian issue.

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To discuss the above-mentioned observations, I have used in this research paper an important set of founding studies on this topic, perhaps the most important of which are:

The study of Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, professor of political science and philosophy of politics at the Université d'Evry Val d'Essonne in 2008, entitled: "colonialism annihilation: reflections on war and the colonial state" (*Coloniser Exterminer Sur la guerre et l'état colonial*), the author of this study tried to show how contradiction in this context, he explained to us the procedures on the basis of which the colonial society was militarized, and analyzed for us the perceptions of government and its organization of the colonial state to establish security in Algeria, and although he did not elaborate much on these procedures, he subjected them to in-depth legal criticism. The importance of these measures is great in the research because it was necessary for us to look into the roots of the militarization of the colonial state and its causes, and this is to clarify the nature of the colonial policy in Algeria.

In this context, we always point out the great importance of the study of the Algerian researcher Ibrahim Tas, tagged with: "French policy in Algeria and its repercussions on the revolution of 1956-1958," which is a thesis in which the author obtained a master's thesis from the University of Algiers, and despite its focus on French military policy in general, he pointed to the psychological work that was a quick fruit and an outsider to the revolutionary experience of the liberation battles in China and Vietnam.

This paper is divided into two main axes, the first axis examines the problem of the militarization of the colonial state, along with the roots and causes of this influence, while the second axis addresses the dependence of the French army on the theory of the Revolutionary War as a method to achieve pacification and as a way out of the crisis, by knowing the theoretical context of the nature of the Revolutionary War and the most prominent methods and devices applied to it.

#### *The Militarization of the French Colonial State*

##### *The Roots of the Militarization of the State:1-1:*

When the French arrived in the colony, the administration gathered them into militias whose mission was to expel the subjugated tribes and tighten control over them. These militias were led by officers who indoctrinated them with certain military customs and ensured their security. All of these measures demonstrate the militarization of colonial society, in which the boundaries between military and civilian were blurred. According to Alexandre de Tocqueville, the close cooperation between civilians and the military allowed for the practice of very strict and permanent surveillance. After a few years, joining these militias became mandatory for every Frenchman between the ages of 18 and 55, after they had been qualified by the Census Council (Grandmaison, 2008, p. 136).

Tocqueville, in his analysis of the colonial state's perceptions of governance and organization, goes on to establish security in Algeria. In his view, "it must be based on the logic of decentralization, i.e., allowing the aforementioned militias to acquire significant powers" (Grandmaison, 2008, p. 137), which allows the colonial state to move quickly to thwart the movements of the Arab tribes. There is no point in establishing peace with the Arabs and achieving a truce because it will end prematurely due to a sudden uprising that has become a nightmare for them. This requires that the colonial state necessarily be structured for permanent war so that it becomes the norm and the norm." This explains the organization of the militias that contribute to this construction and permanent mobilization that requires large numbers of armies (Grandmaison, 2008, p. 137).

Tocqueville adds that the strength of the African army and the progress of the colonial state would come at the expense of Arab resistance. He understood that what increased the anger of the people was their status as colonized by a European and Christian power, and therefore concluded that "We must be strong and not seek to extinguish hatred towards our rule, but only to alleviate it. The point is not to make them love our yoke, but to make them bear it little by little. We do not seek to erase the Muslims' aversion to any foreign authority at all times, but to make them understand that this authority may benefit them. In a phase

that may be a long time coming, in which we see Muslims recognizing their interests in the interests of their colonizers, and their hatred for them diminishing, the army and the settlers must remain heavily armed to defend themselves and their gains, and the rest of the Europeans must be urged to come here so that their numbers and their system will contribute to driving away the locals." (Granmezou, 2008, pp. 138-139).

In fact, the roots of the militarization of the colonial state can be traced back to the practices of the French army in Africa during the invasion of Algeria (1830-1962 AD): organized massacres of unarmed individuals, systematic raids aimed at terrorizing the population and driving them from their villages by making life there impossible, destruction of towns and villages, with widespread use of torture, summary executions, and mutilation of corpses. Thus, we witness the extraordinary "brutality" of colonial conflicts through the complete militarization of the economy, space, and population (Mussard, 2012, p. 287). This process results from the conscious, systematic, and permanent elimination of the fundamental distinction between soldiers and civilians, combat zones and non-combat zones. Unlike traditional wars, it seems possible to analyze colonial wars as total wars, in the sense that there are no territorial or human boundaries (Laignel-Lavastine, 2005).

In this regard, we can draw on what General Changarni wrote about a military operation carried out by his soldiers west of the M'Sila plain: "They found great amusement in the repeated raids I launched in winter against the tribes opposed to us between El Harrach and Bouregreg." He then added, citing the Bible to justify this pillaging and looting: "The Bible teaches us that Joshua and other leaders whom God blessed in their work carried out terrible raids." He goes on to say, "To justify our actions, if it is possible in the wars known in Europe to force the enemy to seek peace after defeating him... This is not the case with the Arabs, because after we overthrew Abd al-Qadir's rule and scattered his army, it was imperative for us to seize money and supplies and destroy agricultural crops in order to force the tribes to surrender" (Al-Ashraf, 2007, pp. 106-107).

This passage from the general's speech reveals the ideological principles of colonialism and shows us how the militarization of the colonial state developed and intensified until it exceeded its own objectives and became unrestrained. We have already said that this doctrine is based on the idea of "war for war's sake." We should add, quoting the title of Thomas de Quincey's book, that "war has become one of the fine arts" (Al-Ashraf, 2007, pp. 107-108)

Whatever the case may be, the Algerian War was an absolute war waged by professional officers and often exceeded its primary objective, as evidenced by what Captain Klere wrote: "The war we are waging today in Algeria is an exceptional war... It does not follow the rules established in major and minor wars, discipline among soldiers is low, military training is almost non-existent (Haberbusch, 2014, pp. 38, 48), and every officer acts as he pleases... One might think that the goal of this war is not to force the Arabs to seek peace, but rather to enable certain influential figures to obtain more medals and military ranks (Al-Ashraf, 2007, pp. 110-111).

With the dawn of the Algerian revolution, the basic strategy of counterinsurgency required attacking rebels in the midst of the population and the population itself. This required the military to be free from any political oversight and accountability. The army needed to be free and to operate according to a strategy that was not hampered by laws protecting civil liberties. The panic caused by the operations of November 1954 and the coordinated attacks by the National Liberation Army gave the military the opportunity to combine political and military power (Lazrak, 2011, p. 60).

The transformation of the colonial state from an institution that protected the rights of the colonists and administered the affairs of the local population to a state controlled by the military took place alongside a growing awareness among the civil authorities of the danger of losing Algeria and a sense of panic inspired by the fact that they were not sufficiently equipped to guarantee security (Lazrak, 2011, p. 60).

*A Set of Reasons and Justifications for Military Influence:*

As we reviewed the roots of the militarization of the colonial state, which experienced varying degrees of success and failure, we saw that it followed a single path from which it hardly deviated. We saw how the army initially worked to settle civilians, that is, it helped in the civil reconstruction of the country, but preferred to remain military. The army did not expect civilians to have political demands, and when it realized this, it did everything in its power to extend its influence throughout the country, especially over the Muslim population (Al-Ashraf, 2007, p. 311), and the two fought to secure a stranglehold on Algeria and control its population (Meynier, 2014, pp. 13-14).

This last part of his program could only be achieved through war, which is evidence of his desire for permanent control and his efforts to consolidate the foundations of colonialism by usurping rights and using methods of oppression and violence. Did not Pugeaud advise in 1848, one year after the official end of the war of occupation, to “put Algeria in a state of war” as a justification for establishing permanent military rule in the country? Cavaignac said that officers, soldiers, sailors, merchants, and civilians from various groups were, during that period of occupation, competing for glory, rank, promotion, and quick profits. They were afraid that the war would end and were not optimistic about this possibility. Montiac Montiac, who had expressed his opinion several years earlier, considered that “the Algerian project is not viable” because “Algeria is of no benefit to anyone except us, the military, due to the battles we are involved in, because every year we spend there counts as two years for us” (Al-Ashraf, 2007, pp. 311-312).

Let us hear from General Ibus, who, in a book published in 1930, praised the military spirit that spread like an infection even to civilian employees affected by the obsession with war, an obsession that took hold of the military regime. He wrote: “The feeling that drove the soldier to be with the people like a shepherd with his flock was the same feeling that made civilians follow the soldier's example in their work. Civil administrators (meaning civil administrators, who were groups of settlers recruited as militias to militarize colonial society and tame the Algerians, as mentioned previously), or at least the young ones among them, consider themselves leaders and engage in warfare, and their operations often reveal military cunning and boldness in planning wars (Al-Ashraf, 2007, p. 312).

Beaugeau, whose positions we have repeatedly reviewed, wanted to increase the scale of military occupation, because only this type of occupation could eliminate Algerian nationality. He therefore worked to settle colonists imbued with military spirit on the widest possible scale. In addition to this settler institution, there were also militia groups at the time, as mentioned above (Granmezou, 2008, p. 136), which were very active in cooperation with or under the command of the military. Among these, we can mention those under the command of General Lacroix in 1871ad, and alongside the foreign legion in 1945. Since 1955, this cooperation with the army has become systematic, reaching its peak with the rebellion of May 13, 1958ad, whether through participation in operations inside or outside cities, or through involvement in acts of torture (Al-Ashraf, 2007, pp. 312-313).

In his discussion of colonialism and assimilation policy (Le Cour Gradmaison, 2012) in Algeria, Jamal Kharchi states “The November uprising only increased the European authorities' intransigence, collective blindness, and refusal to reconcile with the revolutionary movement. At the height of the November uprising, French rhetoric toward the Algerian people remained unchanged from before November. To escape this paradox, France resorted to the term ‘integration’.” says Jamal, “a vague and undefined term.” Ironically, the colonists demanded the return of the military to Algeria, even though they had stipulated its abolition at the end of the Second Empire. With the declaration of a state of emergency, the French state finds itself under the control and supervision of the Algerian generals, marking a return to the early days of the French occupation of Algeria (Kharashi, 2009, pp. 468-469).

Returning to the search for the reasons behind military influence in Algeria, the center-left government initially hired an army that was reluctant after the lost war in Indochina. However, if this war had to be waged, it had to be done “well” and effectively in order to win. It was necessary to destroy not only the military elements of the Algerian revolution, but also all political and administrative infrastructure, and thus also the political structures of Algerian nationalism (mass organizations, etc.). However, the destruction of these political structures of the enemy could always be reversed as long as the Algerian people were free to determine their political preferences. It was necessary to supervise the population based on the

theory of counter-sabotage warfare. and on this basis, the French army developed a justification for the de facto dictatorship in Algeria and its independence from the authorities in Paris (Elsenhans, 2014, pp. 125-126).

*Adopting A Revolutionary Warfare Approach to Achieve Calm “The Military and Police Approach”:*

*Theoretical Context of the Nature of Revolutionary Warfare:*

French strategic culture in counterinsurgency has been the subject of numerous studies in recent years, particularly in the context of the Iraqi and Afghan conflicts. American specialists in these issues have often highlighted the work of Colonel Roger Trinquier and, less well known in France, Colonel David Galula, author of a conceptual work published in English in 1964, which drew extensively on his experience as a commander in the Algerian mountains. However, the intellectual contribution of the most famous French theorists to what was referred to at the time as “revolutionary warfare” remains somewhat neglected. Colonel Charles Lacherey, one of the most famous theorists of revolutionary warfare, briefly wrote his views on this subject in his memoirs published in 2003. However, the testimony he gave to the Ministry of Defense History on May 12 and 13, 1997, allows us to delve deeper into this story and trace the lineage of French strategic thought in the early 1950s (Catherine & Villatoux, 2012, p. 1).

Before discussing the theoretical context of revolutionary war, we must define its terminological meaning, which is "the conflict between rebels and those in power, with each side seeking to win over the masses to its cause. To this end, those engaged in revolutionary warfare must possess an ideology that enables them to rally the people against their adversary, in which the ends, the means, and the values are consistent. This opponent is either a colonizer or an illegitimate, corrupt regime, and this ideology must remain constant, especially in the case of a revolution against a foreign occupier, until the country is liberated" (Dahou Feghourour, 2000, pp. 165-166). Another definition of revolutionary war states that it is “a means of overthrowing a corrupt regime and replacing it with a just one, or a war of liberation to expel the occupier and establish or restore a state. Guerrilla warfare is the method used in military action aimed at exhausting the enemy and depleting its capabilities” (Amer Shin, 2014-2015, p. 24).

Despite the changes and modifications that the French military leadership continued to introduce into its plans and combat methods during the first two years of the liberation revolution, through the classic warfare employed by NATO armies, the military situation remained very worrying for the military leadership in Algeria, which was supervised by General Charrière (Lazraq, 2011, p. 39; Catherine & Villatoux, 2012, p. 1), as the large-scale operations carried out by his units against the strongholds of the National Liberation Front failed due to the primitive nature of his methods, which were incompatible with the nature of guerrilla warfare (Gharbi, 2009, p. 358).

One of the most vocal critics of Charrière's plans and methods was Colonel Roger Trinquier, who said, "The conclusion that cannot be hidden is that we are facing our enemies with an ill-equipped army and military plans that cannot defeat them. This is what happened in Indochina. Despite the apparent superiority of the French army in terms of equipment and supplies, this superiority did not prevent our defeat. Faced with this criticism, the French political authorities had to come up with a quick solution to appease French public opinion" (Gharbi, 2009, p. 359). From this perspective, the wars that the French called the “Indochina War” and the “Algerian War” constituted the major conflicts for them in the years from 1945 to 1962, which naturally pushed them, especially Those who participated in these two conflicts compared and studied the two experiences, concluding that revolutionary warfare was the best means of containing the revolution (Ageron, 2005, p. 517).

For reference, the foundations of these theoretical concepts were laid out in two books written in 1952 and 1953 by Colonel Lionel-Max Chassin Lionel-Max Chassin, a former pioneer of the Indochina War, describing how Mao Zedong led his revolution in China and seized power. Chassin's ideas had an impact on army officers (many of whom were either veterans or former prisoners in Indochina under the French), and he studied how wars were fought after World War II and how to prepare for future battles. After Colonel Lachèreau finished his service in Indochina, he began lecturing and writing about guerrilla warfare

techniques, and theorists, mainly Brigadier Jacques Hogard (Villatoux, 2003, p. 3; Raffray, 2013), Colonel Nemo, Captain Suarez, and Colonel Trinc (Lazrak, 2011, p. 39; Catherine & Villatoux, 2012, p. 1).

Although this theory caused unrest among young officers, it gained prominence among the generals who rebelled against the French government in April 1961, including Raoul Salan, Maurice Chevalier, Henri Zeller, and Edmond Jouho. Among the defenders of this theory were high-ranking politicians such as Bourgas Monory, Robert Lacoste, General Massu, and General Paul Élie. This theory spread widely in political and military circles and became a frame of reference in all discussions about the progress or stagnation of the Algerian War (Lazrak, 2011, pp. 39-40).

Borgas Monori, who was Minister of Defense at the time, asked, "Why can't we win when we have strong units that are superior in terms of leadership and firepower? In other words, how is it that the weakest have become the strongest, even though they are inferior in rank?" This question sums up in a nutshell the motives behind the theory of revolutionary warfare (Lazrak, 2011, p. 41). This question draws attention to the undeniable imbalance between the technological superiority of a modern army such as the French army and its inability to defeat guerrilla armies, as was the case in Indochina (Lazrak, 2011, p. 41).

The minister's brief answer mentioned other factors that were unknown or underestimated, which appeared to be methods commonly used to help assess enemies. These factors and methods all lead to a crucial concept for theorists. "Turning the tables," means revolution. Revolutionary war has been described as, first and foremost, a game changer, a characteristic that, according to Trinky, "fundamentally changed the way wars are fought." As a war that overturns the status quo, revolutionary war is characterized as "permanent and universal" and unique in place, time, and methods, from Algiers to Brazzaville (Lazrak, 2011, p. 41).

#### *The Doctrine and Tactics of Revolutionary Warfare:*

As for the methods by which revolutionary warfare, or counterinsurgency warfare as it is called, is carried out, one of its theorists, Colonel Trinky, says: "The goal of modern warfare is not to seize geographical or military targets or annex territories, as was the case in previous wars. Rather, the main goal is the population, which we must subjugate by all possible means, the most effective of which is terrorism," in his view. Colonel Hugart focuses on the importance of creating chaos among the enemy's ranks by launching military and police operations and daily air strikes, which affect the morale of the rebels. This morale depends on a sense of security, but if they are constantly attacked and pursued by French forces, their morale will collapse, especially after they are isolated from the population and subjected to an economic blockade following the implementation of the no-fly zone strategy. This theorist sets out three steps to achieve victory, as follows (Gharbi, 2009, p. 368):

- Extermination of enemy military units.
- Destruction of the political and military organization of the revolution.
- Control of the population through intensive propaganda and psychological warfare (Taqiya, 2010, p. 413).

Thus, psychological warfare, which was a quick and external result of the revolutionary experience of the liberation struggles in China and Vietnam, and of a superficial understanding of Algerian political and sociological reality, will resort to a set of brainwashing techniques that influence the masses to be won over to what is desired of them. This is because the colonial system is never accused, but rather defended under the slogan of French Algeria (Al-Sheikh, 2003, p. 234), and since psychological work involves the triad of "protection, commitment, and control" (Tas, 2013, p. 159) coordinated by Argoud (Tas, 2013, p. 159), it is inherently marked by its military nature, since protection begins with roundups that involve transporting people, uprooting them from their land, placing them in fortified camps surrounded by barbed wire, and subjecting them to close surveillance, so that the difference between roundup and imprisonment seems very subtle. The obligation is to frame the people with Muslim officials whose job is to observe suspects and report them to the administration. Finally, surveillance is based on subjecting the people to constant

surveillance, completely isolating them from the outside world, and punishing suspects in a exemplary manner in the public arena, or punishing those accused of rebellion, and imposing collective punishment in cases of unproven abuse, in accordance with the old principle of collective responsibility (Al-Sheikh, 2003, p. 235).

Colonel Trinky openly reveals his methods for organizing May 1958, which involved gathering the Muslim population, transporting them in trucks, and then subjecting them to threats, pressure, torture, or murder. We have seen that at the end of 1956, he established the Urban Protection Unit (D.P.U), which is a striking example of counter-revolutionary warfare tactics. He himself proudly explains his achievement, saying: "The Urban Protection Unit quickly proved to be the best tool for fighting terrorism, and nothing could escape the grip of its members. Any unknown person entering a building was reported immediately... In the end, it was an excellent propaganda tool, as orders could be disseminated quickly through the urban protection apparatus" (Taqiya, 2010, p. 411).

These ideas found great encouragement from General Salan, especially after his appointment as commander-in-chief of the French army in Algeria in December 1956. The year 1957 would be a year of experimentation with counter-revolutionary war strategies, with several French agencies specializing in the application of police, judicial, administrative, and military repression, embodying the counter-revolutionary war theories of Trincard, Hugart, Salan, Jean Allard, François Bégard, and Château-Gubert, using various methods including interrogation and torture, murder and imprisonment, intelligence work, and the aforementioned agencies with full powers, represented by the Operational Protection Agency and the Urban Protection Agency (Gharbi, 2009, pp. 369-370).

These are some of the broad outlines of this war, in which police work becomes one of the primary tasks. The great importance given to various interests (D.O.P., etc.) and other interests stems from the perceptions of counterrevolutionary war theorists. D.P.U) and other interests stems from the perceptions of counter-revolutionary war theorists, thus leaving the door open to countless fascist-style crimes. As for military operations, they are not battles between two unequal forces, but rather a testing ground for the French army, which possesses all types of armored vehicles and warplanes (Taqiya, 2009, p. 419).

During this phase, revolutionary warfare moves from theory to practice, while at the same time profoundly altering the traditional role of the army, particularly with regard to political power and mission. In this new role, Droz and Lever write: "The army will act with a deep conviction and determination that will make it less concerned with the choice of means, encouraged by civilian authority, especially after the vote on special powers, under which it will make Algeria a personal matter over which it has complete control." In this context, at the end of 1956, the public authorities worked primarily to find efficiency in the field of psychological warfare, which led to the reorganization of French propaganda in Algeria. Two new agencies were created at the beginning of 1957: the Civil Service for Algerian Affairs (S.C.A.A) and the Central Information and Information Agency (C.I.I.A) (Villatoux, 2003, p. 3).

## Conclusion

From the above, we conclude that the military influence of the French army in Algeria and its direct supervision of the Algerian population was based on the theory of counterinsurgency warfare, through the formation of administrative bodies such as the SAS and other specialized administrative services. Based on this, the French army developed a justification for its de facto dictatorship in Algeria and its independence from the authorities in Paris.

The criticism levelled at the French political authorities forced it to consider a quick solution to appease French public opinion. From this perspective, the wars that the French called the "Indochina War" and the "Algerian War" constituted the major conflicts for them in the years from 1945 to 1962. This naturally led them, especially those who participated in these two conflicts, to compare and study the two experiences, concluding that revolutionary warfare was the best means of containing the revolution.

Among the political figures who defended the theory of revolutionary warfare were high-ranking politicians such as Bourges Monory and Robert Lacoste, General Massu, and General Paul Élysée. This theory spread widely in political and military circles and became a frame of reference in all discussions about the progress or stagnation of the Algerian war.

Colonel Trinky describes revolutionary warfare as follows: “The goal of modern warfare is not to seize geographical or military objectives, or to annex territories as in previous wars, but rather to subjugate the population by any means possible, the most effective of which is terrorism.”

Finally, it can be said that the counter-revolutionary war or revolutionary war represented a dangerous turning point in the course of the Algerian war of liberation, especially after the French authorities, particularly the military, were granted broad exceptional powers, which they used to suppress the Algerian resistance by various means. These measures left a deep mark on Algerian society, which remains etched in the collective memory to this day.

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