

The world's engagement with Algeria's revolutionary experience: Selected case studies

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Abstract---Algeria succeeded in becoming a concrete embodiment of the successful struggle against settler colonialism. It is beyond doubt that this pioneering revolutionary experience played a decisive role in galvanising the determination of militants throughout the Third World, owing primarily to the revolutionary principles it championed — above all, the right of peoples to self-determination. Algeria therefore committed itself to supporting just causes across the Third World and called for the liquidation of colonialism in all its forms and vestiges, particularly after independence. Algerian foreign policy thus became a natural extension of these revolutionary principles. Algeria demonstrated its capacity to honour its commitments toward every just cause in the world, and its support for liberation movements was neither incidental nor temporary; it was a principled stance destined to endure, founded on the recognition that liberation movements represent a form of international conflict to which international law must be applied. This was, and continues to be, Algeria's objective: to lift liberation movements out of the narrow colonial orbit and bring them within the purview of the international arena, on the grounds that such movements are armed struggles in which peoples resist colonial domination, foreign occupation, and racist regimes — as an exercise of the right to self-determination enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Keywords---Algeria's revolutionary experience, the War of National Liberation, anti-colonial struggle, colonialism.

Introduction

The Algerian Revolution's belief in the right of peoples to self-determination was nothing less than a deep ideological conviction, forged through the bitter experience of French colonialism since 1830. Algeria consequently did not confine itself to resisting French occupation on its own soil; it proclaimed

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a comprehensive revolution against colonialism in all its manifestations — a revolution against tyranny and exploitation wherever they existed in the world. By launching its armed struggle, the Algerian Revolution sought to give concrete expression to international justice, particularly the right of peoples to self-determination, international peace and security, and cooperation with the nations of the world to eradicate colonial imperialism across the Third World.

This commitment was made explicit in the National Liberation Front's (FLN) affirmation of its active solidarity with all nations that supported the Algerian cause — an affirmation that reflected the emancipatory values underpinning the Revolution's humanism. The Algerian Revolution thus exported its liberationist thought throughout the years of armed struggle to all peoples yearning for freedom and liberation from colonialism across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This mission continued after independence, as Algeria became the primary patron and sponsor of most liberation movements. ***What were the manifestations of this exportation, and what dimensions did it assume? What accounts for the Algerian Revolution's far-reaching emancipatory resonance?***

1. Liberationist Thought in the Ideology of the Algerian Revolution

By virtue of the national, humanitarian, and pacific content of the Algerian Revolution, the liberationist thought that counterposed colonial ideology was able to affirm the emancipatory dimension of national independence and the recovery of national sovereignty — at both the domestic and international levels. This thought formed the essential foundation for winning support and recognition for the Algerian cause on the world stage. It was this foundation that qualified the Algerian War of National Liberation to serve as a model for other independence and liberation movements across the globe.

The values and revolutionary principles embodied in the FLN's charters and its overarching ideology defined the parameters of the path forward — in the present and the future — and outlined how Algerian society was to be organised. This ideology imparted a distinctive quality to the Revolution and enabled its influence to transcend national borders. As the historian Nouredine Hattoum wrote:

"The Algerian Revolution was by no means an ordinary revolution or a passing uprising. It was a genuine revolution prepared by men — an organised revolution with its programme, even if its work was initially concealed from public view by the secrecy that enveloped it. It was a revolution that dissolved the political parties within its crucible, rallied the Algerian masses, and captured the attention of the world." (Hattoum, 1984, p. 33)

Although the Algerian Revolution comprised numerous intellectual currents and elements that differed in their analyses of the situation — and sometimes in their political and ideological orientations (Debbache, 2009, p. 23) — it succeeded, through the intelligence of a leadership rooted in the depths of the people, in penetrating the conscience of freedom-loving and peace-seeking peoples around the world. The Algerian War of Liberation consequently became a symbol and a rallying cry for free people everywhere (Ben Sultan et al., 2007, p. 26).

The Algerian Revolution was able to embody the principle of peoples' right to freedom not only on its own soil but on every land fighting for liberty. It was for these reasons that it produced renewed reverberations and effects in the Third World and beyond (Hammana, 2010, p. 197). The experience of the FLN in the struggle against colonialism gradually invested this fight with a universal meaning — one that targeted colonialism not only in Algeria but throughout the world. Algeria's battle was no longer an isolated incident; it had expanded to encompass the entire world (Al-Sheikh, 2003, p. 507). The FLN was not fighting merely against French colonialism in Algeria; it was fighting against colonialism as a system of domination. It was on this basis that Algeria participated in the Bandung Conference of April 1955 (Ben Nabi, 2001, p. 27), in order to publicise the Algerian cause and inform the most active African and Asian states of the tragic situation of the Algerian people.

Algeria's participation in the Bandung Conference was far from straightforward, given that this gathering was restricted to independent states from Africa and Asia — a status Algeria did not yet possess. The representatives of the delegation abroad, Mohamad Yazid and Hocine Ait Ahmed, therefore conducted intensive contacts with Arab states — particularly Saudi Arabia and Egypt — and with Southeast Asian countries, in order to present the Algerian cause, its principles, and its objectives. Their efforts culminated in Algeria's participation as part of the Maghreb Arab delegation at a time when promoting the Algerian cause and garnering support for it was exceedingly difficult, even in Arab and Maghrebi circles, given the FLN's organisational rivalry with Messali Hadj's movement (Meghlati, 2012, p. 39). Messali Hadj sent a personal letter to his friend Jawaharlal Nehru — president of the Bandung Conference proceedings and Prime Minister of India — through his emissary Chedly El-Mekki, who delivered Messali Hadj's message (Simon, 2000, p. 116).

Messali Hadj's letter detailed Algeria's condition under French colonial rule: the confiscation of property, the denial of democratic freedoms, a catastrophic economic situation marked by chronic high unemployment and widespread poverty and malnutrition, and a deteriorating social environment characterised by minimal per capita income — which had driven Algerian youth into voluntary exile in search of livelihood for themselves and their families. The letter called for international support for the Algerian cause (Boudarbah, 2017, p. 18).

For its part, the Algerian delegation within the Maghreb Arab delegation organised meetings with journalists and representatives of foreign news agencies, through which its members expressed their right to self-determination — particularly after Messali Hadj's letter had outlined Algeria's political, economic, and social situation. One may conclude that Messali's letter indirectly served the Algerian cause in the FLN's favour.

From another angle, the delegation called for a clear stance against the illegitimate regime prevailing in the Arab Maghreb, and urged the conference participants to hear the representatives of North Africa who, as yet, had no official standing at the conference (Chatibi, 2009, pp. 84–85).

The Algerian delegation succeeded in influencing the African-Asian bloc, winning the conference's unequivocal endorsement of liberation causes, including those of North Africa. The conference adopted the use of all available means to guarantee the independence and freedom of the world's colonised peoples — an explicit endorsement and recognition of Algeria's chosen method of liberation: armed struggle. The FLN's representatives thus made a positive contribution by highlighting the Algerian War of Liberation as a struggle with noble, legitimate, and humane objectives at both the national and international levels (Debbache, 2009, p. 35).

The final communiqué stated: "...Given the instability of the situation in North Africa and the denial of the right of the peoples of North Africa to determine their own destiny, the African-Asian Conference declares its support for the peoples of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in their pursuit of autonomy and independence." (Saoud, 2004, p. 178)

Mohamad Yazid later described Algeria's participation in Bandung in the following terms: "...The FLN, through the Bandung Conference — represented by a delegation composed of Ait Ahmed and Mohamad Yazid — was able to enter the international arena with force and grandeur, thanks in particular to the support of Nasserist Egypt and to the personal efforts of President Gamal Abdel Nasser in bolstering the Algerian Revolution at the international level..." (Ben Fellies, 2007, p. 150).

Among the most significant resolutions of the Bandung Conference was the establishment of a world organisation for solidarity among the peoples of Asia and Africa. Algeria attended this body as a full member on 27 December 1957, and solidarity with Algeria — as a liberation movement fighting for its right to self-determination — was thereby further consolidated (Al-Mujahid, 1958, p. 2).

Notably, this conference adopted all of the FLN's demands, as its communiqué declared: "...Given the legitimacy of the Algerian people's right to independence and national sovereignty...the Conference of Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity condemns the colonial war and the torture inflicted by colonial forces upon the Algerian people, who are fighting for their independence...and affirms its support for the glorious struggle being waged by the Algerian people..." (Al-Mujahid, 1958, p. 2). Beyond this, the FLN succeeded in establishing itself as the sole legitimate representative of the Algerian people and as a member of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation. Remarkably, it also managed to instil confidence in Afro-Asian peoples in themselves, in the justice of their causes, and in their capacity to recover their rights (Laoudj, 2013, p. 285).

The Algerian Revolution also contributed to the dismantling of the colonial world order through the decisive impact it exerted on the concepts of international law. The Algerian cause did not merely seek to expand the scope of liberation, sovereignty, and independence; it worked toward the collapse of the colonial system from within and the fundamental revision of the political history of the colonial West. Algerian political discourse thus became an equal and adversarial force capable of matching its coloniser — and herein lay the full intellectual, political, and diplomatic dimensions of the Algerian cause (Thaniyou, 2013). The Algerian Revolution became, in effect, the conscience of the oppressed peoples who had endured the ravages of colonialism.

2. The Place of the Algerian Revolution among Liberation Movements

A. The People's Republic of China

The Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, assessed the Algerian Revolution and the transformation it wrought upon the global colonial order — particularly at the African level — in the following terms:

"The great victory of the revolutionary Algerian people has demonstrated that imperialist military repression can be resisted by revolutionary military forces... Algeria's independence is a major event for the contemporary African national liberation movement. It has provided a magnificent example for other African peoples of how to adopt armed struggle in order to secure victory and take the correct path to independence and freedom." (Debbache, 2009, pp. 143–144)

China, through the voice of its Premier, held that the FLN had chosen the correct approach and the right means of achieving independence — namely, armed struggle and guerrilla warfare. This was the same course that China itself had pursued in its war against Japanese colonialism (Belkacem et al., 2007, p. 336) before 1945 and in its internal struggle against the forces of Chiang Kai-shek in 1948.

The Algerian Revolution represented a practical model for the victory of the Chinese perspective against imperialist hegemony, grounded in the deep conviction that armed struggle is the optimal means of achieving unconditional peace and independence. This expression of expanding Afro-Asian national sentiment demanded the solidarity of all anti-colonial forces (Kab, 2016, www.arabic.people.com, 19 March 2021, 18:24).

China was therefore among the foremost countries to support the Algerian Revolution financially, militarily, and morally — on the basis that, in Premier Zhou Enlai's words at a reception honouring the Algerian delegation:

"The Algerian Revolution has worked to advance contemporary liberation movements against colonialism, and its importance and influence have transcended Algeria's borders. The inspiring example set by Algerians in their heroic war and their sustained offensive in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism in Algeria has become a model followed by peoples fighting for liberation in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Algerian liberation movement has also provided powerful support to the peoples of the African continent struggling for independence." (Peking Review, 1960, pp. 40–42)

The FLN clarified the nature and scope of Chinese assistance in the newspaper *Al-Mujahid*, dated 2 April 1959:

"China has shown great readiness to assist us in our battle against colonialism... We accept this assistance... without ideological or other conditions... Despite the differences between our two systems and beliefs, there are common bonds linking us to China: the love of freedom and progress, the common struggle against colonialism and foreign domination, and our shared membership in the Afro-Asian bloc — representing the new peoples who are economically and socially underdeveloped, who have suffered greatly from colonialism and backwardness, and who wish to take their rightful place in the modern world." (Al-Mujahid, 1959, p. 7)

The politician Mohamed Amine Debbaghine further elaborated: "...Regarding the orientations adopted by the Algerian Revolution, the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong has a particular vision and concept of the war of liberation that Algeria is waging against French colonialism. The Chinese are opposed to colonialism and imperialism, and unlike the Soviet Union, they have no interests with European states. For this reason, the most substantial assistance the Liberation Revolution received came first and foremost from the People's Republic of China and from Yugoslavia — beyond our Arab environment, upon which we primarily relied..." (Ben Fellies, 2007, p. 245).

China was the second country outside the Arab world to recognise the Algerian Provisional Government, after North Korea. As a mark of respect and esteem, China invited the delegation to visit the country; they were received with the honours accorded to heads of state, and the Algerian national anthem 'Kassaman' was performed for the first time at a foreign airport — by the Chinese army (Dahlab, 2007, p. 86). The FLN's representatives were treated as leaders of a cause that was not merely Algerian but universal, requiring collective action and solidarity to break the powerful and organised military alliance of the major powers (Debbache, 2009, p. 146).

In a statement to *Al-Mujahid*, Premier Zhou Enlai declared: "I extend my most sincere congratulations to the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic, recently proclaimed. The Chinese people are gratified by the establishment of this government, as are the Arab peoples and the peace-loving peoples of the world." (*Al-Mujahid*, 1958, p. 5)

Mao Zedong identified a convergence of struggle between China and the Arab states, with Algeria and Egypt at the forefront, stating: "...The United States attacks socialism and attacks nationalism. China is fighting for communism, while Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, and other countries in the Middle East are fighting for nationalism — which places the Asian and African states at the vanguard of the struggle against imperialism. Both sides occupy important strategic positions that should be seized." (Kab, 2016, www.arabic.people.com, 19 March 2021, 18:24)

On this basis, Mao Zedong advanced his 'encirclement strategy,' positing that Asian and African states could collectively counter American power and disperse it. Within this framework, China accorded great value to the Algerian struggle against the French and gave full attention to the Algerian Revolution. Algerian-Chinese relations became an important component of the FLN's united front policy against imperialism (Al-Sha'b, 2016).

Omar Oussedik summarised the Chinese assessment of the Algerian Revolution in the following terms: "The Chinese are entirely convinced that years of sustained struggle have proven the solidity, splendour, and moral superiority of the Algerian Revolution... It has also succeeded in capturing the world's attention and mobilising the living consciences of humanity to its side, so that the enemy now finds itself in an isolation it had never anticipated. The Algerian Revolution has become, in the eyes of the entire world, an example and a model whose methods all struggling and fighting liberation movements must emulate in the cause of freedom and independence... They are equally convinced that the era of

colonialism has ended and that the FLN will be victorious... The Chinese have reaffirmed their support for the Algerian cause..." (Ben Fellies, 2007, pp. 250–251).

After independence, Algeria adopted the path of the modern state on democratic foundations within a socialist framework — as embodied in the Tripoli Conference — and opted for the socialist system economically as a means of comprehensive and balanced development (Kasmi, 2009, pp. 268–272). China thus became Algeria's logistical backbone, while Algeria served as the primary bridge for assistance extended to national liberation movements, particularly across the African continent. Algeria represented the forward force in support of global national liberation movements, by virtue of its militant heritage and its national struggle principles. Algeria demonstrated an increasing affinity with China's approach of expanding the united front against imperialism, colonialism, and all forms of domination (Debbache, *Annales de l'Université d'Alger*, 2011, p. 73) and in championing Third World causes and calling for a just international order.

B. Vietnam

The Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh expressed his admiration for the Algerian Revolution in the following terms:

"...The whole world today watches with enormous admiration and respect the heroism of the Algerian people... The credit for the world's interest in your revolution belongs entirely to your revolution itself, and to your perseverance in it with resolve, patience, steadfastness, and an unwillingness to retreat... This colonialism is a common enemy for both of us. We know its methods and its criminal, repressive, and terrorist acts very well... Tend to your revolution, for the free and honourable people of this world stand beside you until the achievement of your fundamental goal: freedom for the Algerian people across their entire territory and homeland... I say this to you because we know that this colonialism understands only one language — the language of arms. Force alone is sufficient to drive it out in ignominious defeat..." (Ben Fellies, 2007, p. 169)

This declaration was made during a visit by the Algerian external delegation in 1958, on which occasion Ho Chi Minh received the delegation with special honours and expressed his country's readiness for solidarity and support of the Algerian people's just struggle (Al-Mujahid, 1958, pp. 3, 8). Ho Chi Minh was deeply impressed by the Algerian Revolution — primarily because it was a liberation movement against a shared colonial adversary, and because of the mutual reinforcement of both peoples' will for independence and liberation, particularly as Vietnam was itself confronting a renewed colonial threat from the United States, even as it lent Algeria its fullest support (Al-Mujahid, 1961, p. 2).

General Vo Nguyen Giap, the military commander of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, offered the following assessment upon visiting Algeria:

"We support the complete and total demands of all peoples, and we are determined to combat all colonial systems in whatever form they may take."

He added:

"...Our army and our people harbour deep affection for the struggle being led by the Algerian people for their independence — a struggle that has traversed great difficulties and will doubtless face others still, but we share your unwavering faith in ultimate victory... We stand with the brotherly Algerian people in our hearts, not only because we all support the independence of peoples, but also because we ourselves have known the hardships and suffering of our long war of liberation..."

He concluded by saying:

"I am filled with happiness in asking you to convey to the fighters of the heroic National Liberation Army of Algeria, to its officials and commanders, the fraternal greetings of our army and our people. We also extend our greetings to the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic." (Al-Mujahid, 1958)

These statements illustrate that the Algerian Revolution — through the dissemination of its liberationist thought and its adoption of armed struggle as a means of achieving peace — had produced a tangible emancipatory effect upon liberation movements and their leaders around the world.

C. Latin America

Che Guevara declared:

"There are few countries that equal Algeria in symbolic power — one of the most heroic capitals of freedom... May the great Algerian people, who have been tempered in the sufferings of independence as few peoples have been — under the leadership of their struggle and their friend Ahmed Ben Bella at their head — inspire us in this relentless combat against American imperialism." (Che Guevara, 2017, p. 178)

This was an excerpt from a speech delivered by Che Guevara at the Afro-Asian Solidarity Symposium held in Algiers from 22 to 27 February 1965. Guevara — one of the principal leaders and architects of the Cuban Revolution — affirmed that the struggle of the Algerian people was a struggle on behalf of all humanity, insofar as it had helped to awaken the oppressed peoples to fight against all forms of imperialism (Ahmed Masoud, 2002, p. 98).

Fidel Castro, for his part, declared that the Cuban Revolution was a people's revolution whose struggle rested upon popular masses — just as the Algerian Revolution had been — and described the two revolutions as 'sister revolutions.' He further stated:

"...Since my victory over Batista, I have received thousands of gifts. But I must admit that of all of them, I have kept only two to this day: the first is a copy of the American newspaper 'The New York Times' that attacked me most violently, because I regard that attack as the most powerful proof that I am on the right path; and the second is this decoration I received from the Algerian government — which represents, in my view, a priceless value, for it is the tangible expression of the solidarity extended to me by a people whose struggle was, for me — especially in the darkest of times — a living example of courage and patience, and a wellspring of vitality and hope." (Al-Mujahid, 1960, p. 6)

This was an honest expression from the leader of the Cuban Revolution that the Algerian Revolution bore immense significance for the struggle on behalf of human liberation and progress.

The Cuban Revolution constituted the most important revolutionary force in Latin America by virtue of its positions in opposition to colonial powers and its moral and material support for all national liberation movements in the Global South (Debbache, 2007, p. 172). The situation in Latin America during this period resembled that of Africa, owing to the deep penetration and domination exercised by the United States over the countries of the continent in pursuit of its diplomatic and media supremacy. Latin American countries were consequently fertile ground for French propaganda, and their entry into Afro-Asian gatherings and meetings was delayed (Boulghouidjeh, 2017, p. 153) until the Belgrade Conference of September 1961, at which Latin American delegations were present — including Cuba and three countries as observers: Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador. Furthermore, the Cuban Revolution had generated a broad anti-colonial sentiment in Latin America and inspired peoples to take a stance of solidarity with the Algerian people in their heroic struggle. In the eyes of Latin Americans, Algeria's fight for independence was a liberationist struggle on behalf of all oppressed peoples, all of whom suffered varying degrees of colonial subjugation (Paolo De Castro, 1959, p. 4).

Algeria's battle was thus not a solitary, isolated conflict; it was a phase or dimension of the comprehensive struggle of all oppressed peoples against colonialism. The war waged by France represented merely one stage in the imperialist aggression aimed at imposing political and economic domination over colonised countries. The Algerian-French conflict was therefore no more than a component of the broader battle between the forces of colonialism and imperialism on the one hand, and national liberation movements seeking to free the oppressed on the other. Paolo De Castro further

affirmed: "...Algeria, which took up arms, gave heroic expression through its struggle to the hopes of all peoples fighting for their national dignity — and among these peoples are the peoples of Latin America..." (Paolo De Castro, 1959, p. 4).

Cuba accordingly supported the Algerian cause, and it remained a matter of personal interest to President Castro. This is confirmed by Iskander Noureddine, who stated: "...The victory of the Cuban Revolution on this continent of the world constitutes a great victory for the Algerian Revolution and a powerful source of support for it and for national liberation movements worldwide... Cuba declared, from the very first moment of the victory of its revolution, its absolute support for and solidarity with the struggle of the Algerian people under the leadership of the FLN, and provided material and political assistance." (Ben Fellies, 2007, p. 179)

Fidel Castro reaffirmed his solidarity with and support for the Algerian Revolution at the 15th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, declaring: "We support Algeria's right to independence one hundred per cent. It is ironic that the French claim Algeria is French. Algeria belongs to Africa just as France belongs to Europe. The United Nations intervened in the Congo, and I hope it will do the same in Algeria — but in defence of Algerian interests. I nonetheless ask: will UN forces go to Algeria with the same speed and enthusiasm with which they flew to the Congo?" (Al-Mujahid, 1960, p. 2)

It may therefore be concluded that the victory of the Cuban Revolution and its absolute solidarity with the Algerian Revolution — as testified by Abdelkader Chanderly — greatly facilitated other Latin American countries' alignment with the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist current and their calls for Algerian freedom and independence. This was largely driven by the work of the FLN office in New York, which reached out to Latin American states (Ben Fellies, 2007, p. 181).

As a fitting conclusion to this theme, we cite what was written by the Brazilian journalist Paolo De Castro on Algeria: "The movement in support of Algeria has reached considerable proportions among workers and intellectuals... From another standpoint, I wish to put on record here that we in Latin America believe that the battle against colonialism is one and the same battle... Latin America stands beside Algeria, and Algeria's Latin American friends have carried out great deeds, though under the most arduous of conditions." He added: "...Algeria, which took up arms, gave heroic expression through its struggle to the hopes of all peoples fighting for their national dignity — including the peoples of Latin America." (Paolo De Castro, 1959, p. 4)

Conclusion

In summary, the Algerian Revolution succeeded in dismantling the structures and institutions of colonialism — not only within Algeria but across the world — through its advocacy for the right of all peoples to self-determination and its promotion of the principles of international peace and security. It restored to freedom and human dignity the meanings that colonialism, in all its forms and manifestations, had violated throughout the world. This endowed the Algerian Revolution with a universal human emancipatory dimension, consecrating the values of freedom and thereby exerting a profound influence on the maturation of liberationist thought among colonised peoples in general, and African peoples in particular.

By virtue of the Algerian people's struggle for freedom — which is the natural and legitimate right of every human being — and by adopting armed struggle not as an end in itself but as a means of achieving peace, Algeria came to represent the struggle of all humanity against colonialism and imperialism. The solidarity of world leaders and free peoples with the Algerian Revolution — among them Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, and Fidel Castro — attests to this universal dimension.

The Algerian Revolution was a cause that brought together the components of humanity in pursuit of the eradication of colonialism and its roots. It was a revolution imbued with universal human values, seeking the realisation of the rights of the Algerian individual as a human being. It was for this reason that free people throughout the world rallied to its cause. The most powerful motive driving them was moral and humanitarian: the Algerian cause was a profoundly human cause waged against a colonialism that had subjugated the dignity of the Algerian individual and violated his rights.

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