

HSC (Historical Security Council)

The Algerian Question



“Notre mère nous a abandonné”, “On se sentait trahi”

- Marzal

“Je vous ai compris!”

“Algérie algérienne”

- DeGaulle

“Our mother has abandoned us”, “We felt betrayed”

“I have understood you”

“Algerian Algeria”

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Letter from the CD

Dear Delegates,

Hi, my name is Gabriel Herne (He/him). I am a freshman at Emory University with the intention of majoring in Business and Political Science. I am originally from Rome, Italy, but I have been lucky enough to move around a lot and see different parts of the world. I have participated in Model United Nations since I was a freshman in high school in the European international high school circuit. I served as my high school's secretary general for 3 years, hosting numerous conferences and even having the opportunity to chair the General Assembly at the UN FAO headquarters in Rome. One fact about myself is that I speak 4 languages. I can't wait to meet you all and have a fantastic and memorable ENMUNC!

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to the Historical Security Council at ENMUNC VI. This topic is not only academically interesting to me, but it is also deeply personal to my ancestral history. I was raised on stories about Algeria from my grandfather, who lived through the events you will be debating in this committee. When further researching the Algerian War of Independence, I examined not only the political and military dimensions of the conflict, but also the role of memory, identity, and collective trauma.

The more I researched, the more I understood that the Algerian War is not a simple story of right and wrong. It is a conflict shaped by colonial legacy, nationalism, migration, fear, ideology, global Cold War pressures, and decolonization following WW2. It affected Native Algerians, European settlers, Harkis, French officials, and international actors in profoundly different ways. It is a subject that continues to influence politics and identity today, yet it is often overlooked in high school curricula, particularly outside of France and Algeria.

I chose to direct this committee because the Algerian Question represents far more than a regional colonial conflict. It is a test of sovereignty, self-determination, and the credibility of the United Nations in a post-World War II world. In 1954, the UN is still young. Its authority is untested, and its principles are being challenged by the realities of empire and geopolitics. When does decolonisation become rebellion? When does revolutionary violence become terrorism? Can international law be applied consistently when powerful states are involved? Should the UN intervene or not intervene in the first place?

What makes this committee compelling is that history is not yet decided. You are not here to replay events that have already occurred; you are here to shape them and create a new timeline. Your decisions may prevent escalation, redefine international norms, or accelerate the collapse of an empire. This committee will reward nuance, diplomacy, and intellectual courage. I strongly encourage you to research beyond this background guide. Understand not only your country's official stance in 1954, but also its strategic interests, alliances, and fears. I look forward to watching history unfold in your hands.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Herne

Crisis Director, Historical Security Council

ENMUNC VI

Sensitivity Statement

At ENMUNC VI, it is our responsibility to ensure that everybody feels safe and respected in the committee. As such, we request that delegates treat each other with the highest level of respect and kindness. We also request that you treat your chairs, CD, ACD, backroom staffers and members of ENMUNC secretariat with the highest level of respect and kindness. ENMUNC VI maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy for bullying or discrimination in any form. Delegates are reminded not to engage in any rhetoric that may be offensive to others, including using any language that may be racist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, or ableist. This includes both in speeches, during unmoderated caucuses, in crisis notes or anywhere else. Delegates are also reminded to create arcs that adhere to 21st century moral standards, refraining from any engagement with topics of genocide, colonialisation, exploitation of people etc. We want to ensure that this committee is fun for everyone, and that delegates feel respected, and so any engagement with these topics will not be tolerated. If you have to second guess whether something is appropriate, it probably isn't!

If you do ever experience a problem, please raise it with your CD, ACD and or Chairs, and we will do everything in our power to help you.

Introduction to Committee - Algeria and the Crisis of Decolonisation (1954)

The mid-twentieth century represented a moment of uncertainty and inflexion for the international system following WW2, which had substantially damaged Europe and had opened the floodgates for the moral legitimacy of colonialism. This represented the beginning of a new period of profound transformation for colonial powers as well as an unprecedented level of change and nationalist support seen across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. The creation of the United Nations in 1945, following WW2, was not only dedicated to acting as a platform for conflict resolution and avoiding ever repeating the atrocities committed during WW2, but also aimed at redefining legitimacy, sovereignty, and political authority in a post-imperial world.

Despite this, by 1954, dozens of colonial territories with strong claims for independence remained under the control of powerful nations that had previously pledged their alliance with international norms. The Algerian Question represents a unique case which blurs the line between colony and an assimilationist colony (Algeria was considered inseparable from France). This is because Algeria in 1848, 18 years after France conquered Algeria, was legally defined as an extension of France and not as a colony. If this assessment were to be respected, this would make the potential independence of Algeria appear as a rebellion and not an act of decolonisation, further deepening the difficulties associated with the Algerian question.

The Algerian War of Independence is important both because of its historical significance and because it still ignites passions today. The Algerian War of Independence is inscribed in the

decolonisation process and has had a lasting international impact, but also created a trauma of sorts for France and Algeria alike (Mortimer 2022). Algeria was a French colony, but it was unique in that it was considered an integral part of France, divided into departments just like regions in mainland France (Stora 2024). Whilst Savoie and Nice were annexed to France in 1860, the 3 Algerian “départements” of Alger, Oran and Constantine had already been integrated in 1848 (Naylor 2019).

This committee begins at a moment when history remains unwritten. Delegates must confront not only what principles should govern decolonisation, but whether those principles can be applied consistently in a world still shaped by empire, ideology, and power. Algeria represents not merely a regional conflict, but a test of the United Nations’ credibility in the postwar international order following World War II.

Algeria before French influence

In 1830, before the arrival of French forces, Algeria was part of the Ottoman Empire but ruled with relative autonomy (Zack 2002). Governed by a Dey (Ruler of Regency appointed by the Ottoman Empire) in Algiers, the majority of inland Algeria was controlled by semi-autonomous Berber tribes (Zack 2002). Pre-1830 Algerian society consisted mostly of Arabs, Berbers, and Turks, whilst less than 1% of the population was European, with a total population of 2 million in 1800 (Ladjal & Bensaid 2014). By 1962, the number of Europeans had risen to 15.2% of the population, but it was not until the end of the 19th century that French settlers outnumbered Spanish settlers. (Huertas 1951) (Ladjal & Bensaid 2014) Recently, Boualem Sansal, Algerian author and winner of the Prix Goncourt, has been imprisoned in Algeria for stating these facts (Lugan, 2024).

Rise in Decolonisation Following WW2

The legitimacy of colonial empires was drastically changed by World War II. The war itself had revealed the inconsistencies of imperial control, and European powers had come out of it both militarily and economically crippled. After defending freedom and self-determination alongside European soldiers, colonial subjects had to return to regimes that denied them political equality. At the same time, nationalist organizations gained moral and diplomatic clout when the United Nations was established in 1945 and the UN Charter's wording supported the idea of self-determination. Independence movements gained traction throughout Asia and the Middle East, most notably in India in 1947, indicating that empire in its former shape could no longer be sustained politically.

There was increasing pressure on France in particular. Its 1954 setback in Indochina gave anti-colonial players more confidence abroad and showed the limits of military authority over resolute nationalist movements. In North Africa, calls for reform in Algeria had been disregarded or repressed time and time again, while nationalist forces were growing in Morocco and Tunisia. Many Algerians who had participated in the French army had also become radicalized by the conflict, only to return to ongoing economic disparity and political marginalization. The violence in Algeria was not a singular event in this global setting of waning empires, growing nationalism, and changing international standards; rather, it was a component of a larger transition in the postwar world order.

Algeria Today (1954)

By November 1st, 1954, decades of political exclusion, economic inequality, and cultural marginalisation had reached a breaking point. On that date, the Front de Libération Nationale

(FLN) launched a series of coordinated attacks across Algeria, targeting military installations, infrastructure, and symbols of French authority. Though limited in scale, these attacks were not intended to defeat France militarily. Rather, they were designed to shatter the illusion of colonial stability, provoke a disproportionate response, and force the Algerian question onto the international stage. (Horne 2011; Bartolomé & Eshaya 2024).

The violence was framed not as a political uprising but as criminal terrorism, carried out by extremists who did not represent the Algerian population. French officials insisted that Algeria remained an internal matter, outside the jurisdiction of the United Nations, and warned that any international intervention would constitute an unacceptable violation of French sovereignty. The UN, therefore, is placed in a particularly difficult situation when it comes to how it chooses to handle the Algerian situation, further amplified by the potential existential consequences associated with certain solutions. In the eyes of many nations, Algeria represented an emblematic struggle against colonial domination that could lead to a chain reaction of other colonial areas following in its example. Due to many of the UN's powers having colonial assets and differing strategic interests, this makes coming to a consensus is particularly difficult.

Perspective of Native Algerians

Native Algerians in the years of 1954 experienced profound levels of unresolved contradictions. Algerians were repeatedly told through education, propaganda, and administration that they were legally a part of France and therefore French citizens. However, the reality for many Algerians was that their lives were plagued by political exclusion, cultural repression, and economic struggle. This points to France treating Algeria through a form of political subjugation rather than equality with French citizens living in Algeria and French

citizens abroad. This also went hand in hand with the situational question of the Pied-noirs who considered themselves a mix of Algerians and Europeans, knew nothing else other than Algeria and yet weren't considered Algerian by the French government, especially De Gaulle (Zack 2002; English & Naylor 2002). Moreover, the French administrative integration as well as the attempt at cultural hybridity through schooling giving the illusion of wanting an assimilation of the Algerian people in French society. Simultaneously, the French often denied Algerians the ability of owning land, citizenship, or political power. This tension between being considered French for certain things and not for others produced a deeper sense of radicalization and disillusionment within the Algerian populus. (Horne 2011; Stora 2024).

For many Algerians the relationship between the European settlers and the local Algerian population was colonialistic: *“The native populations, the Amazigh, were considered second category citizens”* by the French government but he also recognises that *“in the administrative structure of Algeria, many tribal or clan leaders from the native population were engaged in the French administration in Algeria in positions of high responsibility. There was a co-existence between the two. They participated in gala dinners, were involved in high profile ceremonies, festivities and decision making. Some reached high ranks within the French administration”* (Oudanne 2024). Others, fought in WWII alongside the French army but returned to Algeria as the FLN formed and participated in guerilla warfare. (Oudanne 2024)

Oudanne believes that the mingling between Europeans, mainly French and Algerians created cultural hybridity *“because France wanted Algeria and Algerians to be French ... not Algerian. And even today France has kept what is called Territoires d’Outre Mer. So my father*

was always taught in school that he is Arab, living in Algeria, but first and most importantly he is French!”(Oudanne 2024). Because multiple ethnic groups lived in Algeria, French presence and language was both a national unifying identity and the occupying force everyone united against. Some European Algerians recently started returning to Algeria to the place of their birth; and Oudanne believes *“Honestly, I consider these Europeans just as Algerians as I am.”*(Oudanne 2024)

Rise of Nationalism and Front de Libération National (FLN)

Since the arrival of French forces in Algeria in 1830, French occupation was met with a multitude of resistance attempts. The National Liberation Front or FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale) was born out of a nationalist revolutionary movement established in 1954 designed to liberate Algeria of French colonialism but there were revolutionaries with a more conciliatory ideology and methodology, such as Messali Hadj and Ferhat Abbas, long before the FLN. (Investigations et Enquêtes 2021).

The Algerian War of Independence officially started on November 1, 1954 with weapons, uniforms, funds and support from outside sources. Josip Broz Tito, the ruler of Yugoslavia, supported the FLN, entrusting his cameraman Stevan Labudovic to produce documentary film footage of the conflict, subsequently screened at UN headquarters in NY in opposition to French propaganda, which played a significant role in obtaining international backing (Bartolomé and Eshaya 2024). Internationalizing the Algerian conflict to gain public opinion support was deliberate and instrumental in the determination of the outcome of the war (Bartolomé and Eshaya 2024).

Reform, Resistance, and Failed Alternatives Before 1954

The outbreak of armed conflict was begun by one singular identifiable catalyst but instead was the result of the culmination of decades of failed political reform, disillusionment, and failed assimilation. Long before the rise of the FLN and today's (November 1st, 1954) attack Algerian natives repeatedly attempted to seek out recognition and equality through non-violent means and governmental discussion, to no avail. The collapse of political discussion and France government officials inaction in response to criticism and the opinions of Algerians only increased the radicalization of Algerian Nationalism (Horne 2011; Stora 2024).

Reformist elites such as Ferhat Abbas initially rejected the idea of Algerian independence altogether, instead advocating for full political equality within a reformed French Republic. Abbas famously declared in the 1930s that he had searched for the Algerian nation and found none (English & Naylor 2002).

Algerian immigration to France started almost immediately in the late 19th century, with mainly Kabyle men going to France to work for a predetermined time period in order to earn support for their families or even the whole village back in Algeria (Derder 2012). Their numbers grew steadily to around 5,000 by 1912 although because all the immigrants already had French nationality they were often not counted differently from a Frenchman which makes the determination of real numbers complicated (Derder 2012). The construction of the "Grande Mosque" in 1926 in Paris, the Franco-Muslim hospital and the Muslim cemetery are testimony to France's desire to please its Algerian constituency (Derder 2012).

Although this may seem counterintuitive Algerian immigration into France actually grew considerably over the 8 years of conflict from 211,000 in 1954 to 350,000 immigrants by 1962 (Derder 2012). Whilst previous immigration had mainly consisted of male economic migrants in

search of work, the 1962 wave of migration included whole Algerian families with many women and children (Derder 2012). This large Algerian community in mainland France became a source of worry for the French authorities who were concerned that the conflict would spill over to the mainland, particularly in Paris (Derder 2012). Severe repressions, led by Maurice Papon, ensued, culminating with the arrest on October 17, 1961 of more than 11,500 and the killing of hundreds after a protest organized by the FLN in the streets of Paris (Derder 2012).

This immensely brutal war was fought both conventionally and with guerilla warfare, witnessing torture, bombings and sabotage, not only on Algerian soil but also in mainland France. These barbaric acts continue to haunt the collective memory of French and Algerians alike. The two factions were so opposed and yet the line between them was so blurred (Zack 2002). The Algerian war, fought between 1954 and 1962, was a struggle that dishonoured succeeding French governments. (Cohen 2000 ,1)

State of Committee (November 1st, 1954)

The group was formed immediately following the Front de Libération Nationale's (FLN) coordinated strikes on November 1st, 1954. Even if they are small-scale, these attacks could be the start of a larger uprising. Since Algeria is an essential component of the French Republic and not a colony, France contends that the situation is an internal problem outside the purview of the UN. However, in light of France's recent loss in Indochina and the emergence of nationalist movements throughout North Africa, many member states now see Algeria as part of the larger wave of post-World War II decolonization.

It is now up to the delegates to decide if this situation is terrorism, revolt, or a justifiable fight for self-determination. In addition to the possible regional destabilization of Morocco and Tunisia and the wider Cold War ramifications, the committee must balance concerns about sovereignty, human rights, and international precedence. Although not yet certain, escalation into full-scale conflict is probable. The decisions made in this chamber could have an impact on Algeria's future as well as the legitimacy of the UN in a time when empires are falling apart.

Questions To Consider

1. Is Algeria an internal French matter or a colonial matter that requires the oversight of the UN and potential intervention?
2. What precedent would the UN be setting for other colonies if it decides to intervene in Algeria?
3. Does self-determination and independence require prior nationhood or does the political struggle and willingness to become a nation suffice?
4. How should the UN respond to allegations of torture and terrorism on either side?
5. How should the pied-noirs who have semi-assimilated into both French and Algerian societies be considered in such a tedious issue?
6. If the FLN is considered a terrorist organization by France and doesn't represent the beliefs of all Algerians, how should it be classified in the eyes of the UN?
7. Due to the failed political reform and peaceful political discussion between Algerians seeking independence and France, how feasible is it to propose peaceful discussion between the two sides?
8. When does revolutionary violence become terrorism?

Character Dossier

1. France
2. United Kingdom
3. United States
4. Soviet Union
5. Republic of China
6. Front Liberation Nationale
7. Pied-Noir Representative
8. Harki Representative
9. Egypt
10. Morocco
11. Tunisia
12. Saudi Arabia
13. Kingdom of Iraq
14. Syria
15. Lebanon
16. Türkiye
17. Iran
18. India
19. Pakistan
20. Yugoslavia
21. Indonesia
22. North Vietnam

23. South Vietnam
24. Ghana (Gold Coast)
25. Ethiopia
26. Liberia
27. South Africa
28. Belgium
29. Portugal
30. Spain
31. West Germany
32. East Germany
33. Italy
34. Netherlands
35. Sweden
36. Switzerland
37. Canada
38. Brazil
39. Mexico
40. Argentina
41. Cuba
42. Kenya
43. Nigeria
44. Sudan
45. Libya

46. Japan
47. Philippines
48. Thailand
49. Haiti

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Appendix B - (Quotes and Background context)

1. *The Speech - extract from Le Figaro*

Le 4 juin, des centaines de milliers d'Algériens massés sur le Forum font un accueil triomphal au nouveau président du conseil. Du balcon du Gouvernement général, De Gaulle entame alors son discours: *«Je vous ai compris! Je sais ce qui s'est passé ici. Je vois ce que vous avez voulu faire. Je vois que la route que vous avez ouverte en Algérie, c'est celle de la rénovation et de la fraternité. (...) Eh bien! de tout cela, je prends acte au nom de la France et je déclare qu'à partir d'aujourd'hui, la France considère que dans toute l'Algérie, il n'y a qu'une seule catégorie d'habitants: il n'y a que des Français à part entière, des Français à part entière avec les mêmes droits et les mêmes devoirs.»* Suivent un appel à la fraternité entre les habitants de l'Algérie, un hommage à l'armée et à son *«œuvre magnifique de compréhension et de pacification»*, ainsi qu'aux *«10 millions de Français d'Algérie»* qui, pour approuver la constitution en gestation, seraient bientôt appelés aux urnes dans le cadre d'un collège unique, ce qui correspondait à l'intégration souhaitée par une partie des tenants de l'Algérie française.

Pour la foule des pieds-noirs qui l'écoutent et l'acclament, la cause est entendue: c'est à la faveur de la crise algérienne que s'est opéré le retour de De Gaulle au pouvoir, et ses fidèles, qui l'ont préparé de longue date, sont aussi des fidèles de l'Algérie française - Jacques Soustelle, le dernier gouverneur général, et Michel Debré parmi d'autres. Si De Gaulle s'adresse aux *«10 millions de Français d'Algérie»*, Européens et musulmans confondus, c'est bien qu'il entend y maintenir la souveraineté française. Dans ce contexte, *«Je vous ai compris»* peut difficilement être jugé ambigu. La conviction des pieds-noirs se renforce lorsque, le 6 juin, De Gaulle proclame à Oran que *«La France est ici, avec sa vocation. Elle est ici pour toujours»*. Elle atteint son comble lorsque le même jour, au balcon de l'hôtel de ville de Mostaganem, il ponctue son discours d'un *«Vive l'Algérie française!»* devant une foule en majorité musulmane.