CHAPTER FIVE

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This chapter examines the militant dimension of the anti-colonial struggles. The diplomacy of the Algerian liberation movement against the French colonialism signifies the radicalised aspects of the Third World diplomacy. The French rule lasted 132 years in Algeria. With the possible exception of South Africa and Palestine, Algeria was the most intensively colonised country in the entire Third World. The existence of a sizable French settler population in Algeria was another factor that made the revolt against French rule violent and hence complex as compared to anti-colonial movements in India and Indonesia.

The diplomacy of the nationalist movement was moulded to make the armed insurrection against the colonial power a success. The most important tasks of Algerian nationalist diplomacy were to amass arms, organise military and guerilla training, and establish sanctuaries in the neighbouring countries. This was supplemented with the diplomatic moves to internationalise, through relentless propaganda, the Algerian national movement and procure political and diplomatic support in the liberation war. In the following pages we shall discuss in detail the strategies of a militant nationalist diplomacy.

The Algerian nationalist movement occupies a place of
prominence in the revolt against colonialism in Africa. The outbreak of the Algerian revolution in November 1954 heralded the beginning of a new era of revolution and guerilla warfare in many nationalist movements in a number of Third World countries. The war of liberation in Algeria startled the Western world and provoked in France, the colonial power in Algeria, a long series of political crises which finally destroyed the Fourth Republic (1946-1958) and brought General de Gaulle to power.

The Algerian liberation war, by its sheer intensity, compelled France to grant independence to Tunisia and Morocco as well as to its fifteen Sub-Saharan colonies before other such costly wars could break out. Britain and Belgian found in the Algerian revolution one more sign that the tide of colonial history had turned, and they made no attempt to hold on to their African colonies by force of arms.

The war of national liberation in Algeria was fought under the stewardship of the Front de Libération Nationale (National Liberation Front (FLN)), the militant organisation which guided the course of Algerian struggle against the French colonialism. There were two main dimensions in the FLN liberation strategy. The first was the internal organisation of the militant nationalist outfits, training in guerilla warfare and armed attack on the French colonial machinery and settlers in Algeria.

The second dimension of the FLN strategy was the
diplomatic endeavours to publicise the case for Algerian independence in various international forums and seek military and diplomatic support for the liberation war. It is the latter that concerns us here.

Unlike liberation diplomacy in India and Indonesia, the Algerian nationalist diplomacy was characterised by its overtly militant nature. The FLN leaders made concerted efforts to seek political asylum in the neighbouring countries of Morocco and Tunisia, urging to the leaderships in these countries the recognition of the community of diplomatic interests, their common colonial experience of the French rule, and the need for a uniform strategy to fight the scourge of colonialism. Unlike their counterparts in India and Indonesia, the Algerian nationalists sought safe sanctuaries in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt to mount a military offensive on the French authorities in Algeria.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ALGERIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT:

The Algerian national movement as symbolised by the guerilla warfare of the FLN took shape in the context of a nationalist revolution against the French rule in Algeria. An examination of this political and social background is essential for understanding the causes and the effectiveness of the Algerian nationalist diplomacy.

The methods and goals of French colonialism in Algeria partially explains the desperation of the group of
nationalists who began the revolution for national liberation in 1954. The French conquered Algeria and pursued a policy of colonisation in an undirected and aimless fashion from 1830 until 1871, when the last serious indigenous resistance was broken and the territory was transferred from military to civilian rule.1

French Settlers in Algeria:

The character and interests of the French settlers in Algeria were important determinants of the causes, the strategy and the consequences of the Algerian war of liberation. By the turn of the century, the substantial French minority had become adapted to Algeria. By 1954 there were in Algeria approximately one million French citizens known as Pieds Noirs. Most of them were employed in industry and lived in Algeria's coastal cities.

The wealthy Colons, as the French settlers were called, controlled the best lands and possessed great political clout. Vineyards producing wine exports were the

mainstay of the colonial economy, which was heavily dependent on the French market. In contrast, the Algerian population, having lost the most fertile lands to the French settlers did not have any substantial land holdings.2

The disastrous impact of the military conquest and of colonial rule on the social, cultural, religious and economic structures of Algeria was completely disregarded by the French. The traditional life of Algeria was totally destroyed and replaced with an alien system from which Algerians were excluded. In general, the French regime in Algeria was one of obstinate and authoritarian paternalism.3

Mild Nationalist Diplomacy:
In the first few decades of the present century the Algerian nationalist diplomacy was characterised by its moderate tone as reflected in the constitutional agitation through various political organisations within the metropolitan centre. In 1926, Messali Hadji created in France the Etoile Nord-Africaine (ENA), a movement with a nationalist orientation. The ENA sent its delegates to attend the Brussels Congress of the League Against Colonial Oppression, where it announced its claim for

3 ibid, p. 3.
Algerian independence. The French banned this organisation and arrested Messali. In 1937, the ENA narrowed its focus from all of the Maghrib to Algeria and became Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA), which was itself banned two years later.4

After the First World War the Algerian nationalist movement gradually developed from a moderate, collaborationist nationalism into a new radicalism. This change of political strategy paralleled with the national movements of Tunisia and Morocco. Moderate nationalism was at first represented by Emir Khaled, who was the guiding spirit behind the Federation of Native Algerian Elected Candidates, set up in 1927 to agitate for representation in the French parliament.5

At the same time, a strong reformist religious movement, determined to restore the purity of Islam, grew up in Algeria under the leadership of Sheikh Ben Babis, who in 1935, formed the Association of Algerian Ulemas.6

The undermining of Algerian faith in the French government strengthened the radical nationalist groups. The PPA and


5 Hutchinson, n. 2, p. 10.

the Ulamas, called a Muslim Congress, bringing together all nationalist groups, including the Parti Communist Algerian (PCA) which had been established in 1935. However, the unity achieved thereby was brief and superficial. All these organisations, which became vehicles for nationalist diplomacy, were moderate in their approach towards opposing the French rule in Algeria.

As in India and Indonesia, World War II stimulated the development of nationalism in Algeria, especially through the participation of many Algerians in the War and the spectacle of French defeat. During and after the War, Ferhat Abbas, a moderate nationalist leader, attained prominence. He was the originator in 1943 of an appeal by Algerian nationalists for a constitution guaranteeing basic political rights and freedom.

The "Manifesto", as it was known, rejected the policy of "assimilation" that had been supported by moderate Algerians. The manifesto, which is considered to be a milestone in the evolution of Algerian nationalism, had great symbolic value in terms of nationalist diplomacy. It took up the idea of an Algerian nation, already launched by the Ulamas and the PPA and introduced it to a larger public. As a vehicle of propaganda it had no equal in any liberation movement.7

7 The Manifesto is quoted in full in Clarke, n. 1, pp. 20-21.
In 1946, Abbas founded the Union Democratique du Manifeste Algerian (UDMA) to garner support for the Manifesto.8 While during the same year Messali, the representative of Algerian nationalist elite in France, returned from exile to establish the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libites Democratiques (MTLD).9

THE RISE OF MILITANT NATIONALISM

The first nationalist body in Algeria which advocated an armed confrontation with the French was a splinter group of the MTLD. Ben Bella became one of the founder member of the Organisation Speciale or O.S. that pledged to fight colonialism "by all means", legal or illegal.10 By 1949 Ahmed Ben Bella had emerged as the most forceful leader of the O. S. and had started armed raids on colonial holdings to get booty that provided the future FLN with its first operational funds. The O. S. was, however, broken up by the French. Ben Bella escaped from prison to Tunisia, France and Egypt. In Tunisia he confided with the then outlawed nationalist leader Habib Bourguiba, and discussed with him the strategy for fighting the French in Algeria.

9 ibid, p. 45.
10 ibid, p. 60.
The French defeat and humiliation both in World War II and in Indo-China provided a new impetus and confidence to the Algerian nationalists. The new spirit of independence and self-determination of the colonial peoples that was sweeping Asia and the Arab world gave hope to the Algerians too. This spirit reflected in the creation of the Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unite et d'Action (CRUA) by the nationalists in 1954 to guide the Algerian war of independence. The president of the CRUA was Mohammed Boudiaf. Ben Bella, Hocine Ait Ahmed, and Mohammed Khider composed an "exterior delegation" in Cairo that was charged with soliciting support for the revolutionary forces.11

**Impact of Nasserism:**

The regional factors also seemed to influence the evolution of Algerian nationalist diplomacy. The revolution in Egypt had a substantive influence on the diplomacy of the Algerian nationalist movement. Nasser, harbinger of the new forces of Arab nationalism, propounded his ideas on how to combat the colonial powers in North Africa and in the Middle East. He saw Arab world as a single, though artificially divided, community faced

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11 A number of Algerian nationalists living in Cairo had been actively working and soliciting diplomatic support for their cause. See for the activities of the Cairo-based Algerian nationalists, Heggoy, n. 1, pp. 60-82.
with the common enemy- imperialism. He advocated need for Arab solidarity and a united Arab action to fight the colonial powers.12

The Algerian nationalists who had come to the capital of the most powerful Arab state for political propaganda found Nasser's pronouncements on Arab solidarity very encouraging. The nationalists who had been active in Cairo with other members from Tunisian and Moroccan nationalist movements, were soon to find in Nasser and the Revolutionary Council of Egypt the kind of support needed to make significant action for Algerian independence possible. Nasser became for them the great exponent of Pan-Arabism, the leader who had thrown the powerful British out of the Suez Canal Zone and whose Cairo radio in their "Voice of the Arabs" beamed a constant flow of anti-colonial propaganda at the Maghreb.

However, one of the early disappointment faced by the Cairo-based Algerian delegation of the "exterior" wing of the CRUA, was the failure of Nasser's Egypt to come forth with material aid. Egyptian Pan-Arabism had failed the nationalists and they were left with no option but to turn to terrorism to continue their struggle against the French colonialism. Egyptian support was significant, however,

12 This theme is developed in his article "The Philosophy of the Egyptian Revolution", published in a Cairo Weekly Akher Saa in 1953. Quoted in Clarke n. 1, p. 10.
as a factor of psychological warfare through the bombast poured out from Cairo radio about Arab unity and the heroic Algerian Moudjahiddine.

Meanwhile, the moderate Algerian nationalist leadership as represented by Ferhat Abbas, was trying the constitutional methods for seeking independence. Abbas, in a bid to negotiate with the French authorities, visited Paris in August 1954, in what was the last chance for the moderate Algerians to seek an amiable solution to the French-Algerian dispute. The visit failed, signifying the demise of all moderation in Algerian diplomacy. A militant diplomatic style, committed to an armed rebellion against the colonial power, took root in Algeria. Guerilla activity and violence spread at an alarming rate as more and more liberals accepted the only available option for gaining independence—violence.

INTERNATIONALISING THE STRUGGLE:

One of the declared priority objectives of the Algerian diplomacy since the establishment of CRUA in 1954, was the internationalisation of the conflict in Algeria. The Algerian nationalist diplomacy was charged with achieving this. The issue of Algerian independence was publicised through active participation in international conferences, a relentless propaganda campaign against the French, the proclamation of an FLN government and the diplomatic and military actions of the nationalist elite. In the
following pages an effort is made to discuss the various dimensions of internationalising the Algerian struggle for independence.

CONFERENCE DIPLOMACY:
The nationalists realised, as their counterparts had done in India and Indonesia, that for internationalisation of their cause they must enhance their diplomatic profile by participating in international conferences. On the diplomatic front, the FLN's most outstanding achievement in internationalising the Algerian question was its opportunity to participate in the Bandung Conference. After some lobbying by members of the FLN, the front was able to gain an invitation to attend the Conference.

Although the Algerians, with no recognised government behind them, could only attend as "unofficial" delegates, their presence was sufficient to achieve a notable diplomatic victory on the international scene. After condemnation of colonialism in all forms was pronounced by the Conference, it adopted unanimously an Egyptian motion proclaiming Algeria's right to independence and called upon France to implement this forthwith.13

The proclamation of the Bandung communique was a significant diplomatic development for the Algerian

nationalists. From now onwards the issue of Algerian independence became the concern of the entire Afro-Asian bloc of nations. With Bandung a vital watershed had been reached for the FLN and the road to the United Nations was open. Five months later the word Algeria was formally inscribed on the agenda of the UN General Assembly.

In becoming actively involved in Afro-Asian politics, Ben Bella sought to use this emerging bloc of friendly nations for the cause of Algerian struggle for national liberation. Beginning with Bandung Conference the FLN representatives were present at every major gathering of African and Asian leaders in order to gain diplomatic support for their cause. Algerian nationalists attended the constituent meeting of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) in Cairo in 1957 in a bid to attract the Left-forces in the newly emerging countries represented at the meeting.

The regional dimension of the FLN diplomacy was reflected in its efforts to gain support from the Arab world. The nationalist diplomacy was seeking regional support for their liberation struggle. In a major diplomatic victory for the FLN, the Arab summit of February 1957 endorsed the Algerian cause. The summit comprising Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and convened in Cairo, in a first display of Middle East unity, declared its total support for the liberation war in Algeria.
The FLN also took part in the first summit of the Non-aligned countries held in Belgrade in 1961. Additionally, Algeria was also a member of the radical Casablanca Group founded by some radical African countries to express support for Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. Formed in January 1961 at Casablanca (Morocco), the group besides Algeria, consisted of Morocco, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea and Mali.

MILITARY ASPECTS OF DIPLOMACY IN THE LIBERATION WAR:
The accomplishment of military support from sympathetic foreign countries and coordination of military actions in the liberation war was one of the primary tasks of the nationalist diplomacy. Ben Bella and his team in Cairo had been entrusted with achieving this aim. Ben Bella moved from one capital to another, canvassing financial support and arms deals.14

Most observers take 1 November 1954, as marking the beginning of the Algerian war of liberation. On that day a number of police posts in Algiers were attacked by the military wing of the nationalist FLN, the Armée de Liberation Nationale (ALN). From this time the FLN used guerilla warfare and terrorist tactics to fight the French colonialism and also to transmit revolutionary nationalist values to the mass of the Algerian people.15

15 Quandt, n. 8, p. 110.
Domestically this terrorism translated an unstructured and vague popular sense of grievance into explicit political rejection of the French; it stimulated awareness of injustice, polarized opinion, discouraged neutrality and inspired a new Algerian self-confidence. This change of attitude was effected by a new breed of FLN leaders, most importantly Ramdane Abane. Described as FLN's "best brain", from 1955 Abane's influence was central to the FLN, both in its external operations and internal organisation. He drafted a new proclamation dated 1 April 1955, a masterpiece of propaganda, which became a guiding spirit of the FLN in the coming years.

The nationalist diplomacy received its biggest impetus with the closing of ranks between the moderates and the FLN guerillas which became a natural corollary of the increasing intensity of the fight against the French exploitation. Undoubtedly the most important single acquisition to the FLN was the person of Ferhat Abbas who was disillusioned with his moderation. This attitude reflected in an interview that Abbas gave to the Tunisian paper L'Action in January 1956, when he said:

My party and I have thrown our entire support into the cause defended by the National Liberation Front. My role, today is to stand aside for the chiefs of the armed resistance. The methods that I have upheld for the last fifteen years—co-operation, discussion, persuasion—have shown themselves to be ineffective, this I recognise...16

16 Quoted in Horne, n. 1, p. 141.
Thus the shift in the political outlook of Abbas seemed complete. In April 1956 he was in Switzerland negotiating with Ben Bella, a few days later in Cairo, declaring to the world by radio the dissolution of the UDMA, and its incorporation within the FLN. In August at the Soummam "Summit" Conference held to reorganise the factions of the FLN, he was elected a member of the FLN's newly created governing body, the CNRA (Conseil Nationale de la Revolution Algerienne).

Seeking Sanctuaries in Neighbouring Tunisia:
One of the significant aspect of Algerian nationalist diplomacy was to persuade its neighbours to allow them to use their territories for military operations against the French in Algeria. The greatest bonus for the Algerian cause, both in terms of arms supplies and later of troop movements, came with the independence of Morocco and Tunisia in March 1956. From then on the FLN had friendly and open frontiers to east and west, of which the Tunisian in particular was to provide great benefits to the nationalist cause. To quote a contemporary American journalist who was well-versed in Algerian affairs:

...but for the aid and protection afforded by Tunisia and Morocco, the rebellion would have been circumscribed and perhaps crushed before the end of 1957. But, as the United States learnt in Korea, it is singularly difficult to destroy an enemy enjoying the sanctuary of an inviolable frontier.17

In all the FLN's aspirations for international influence there was no more important object for their diplomacy than the figure of Habib Bourguiba. The Tunisian leader had two principal ideals - to gain independence for Algeria, while retaining a generally pro-Western stance. The FLN leadership realised that without the help of Tunisia they would have been crushed by the superior French military forces. Although Moroccan Mohammed V was also of great help throughout the FLN war effort, for both political and geographical reasons Tunisia became more important for the Algerian nationalists.

To the Algerians, Bourguiba fulfilled several vital functions which included: providing the most convenient and safe route for arms supply, the most convenient and safe sanctuary for ALN troops, training, resting or preparing for operations inside Algeria, military and political headquarters for the CCE in exile, a persuasive and articulate ally in international forums, and a potential bridge for negotiations with the French.

PROPAGANDA DIPLOMACY:

As in the case of Indian and Indonesian national movements, media played an important part in the diplomacy of the Algerian liberation war. The FLN used media for liberation propaganda purposes. They were however basing their strategy on the legacy of nationalistic media in the Arab world. In 1920 an Arab language newspaper *Ah Nadjah*
was founded by an Algerian in Constantine. Because it was written in Arabic it represented a challenge to colonial administration.18

From 1922-24 a more nationalistic Algerian journal El Muntaqid appeared, edited by the future leader of the reformed Ulama group Abd al Hamid Ben Badis. This was followed by Ash Shihab and Al Islah published from Biskra propagating ideas of nationalism. These publications were soon joined by Al Bassair which served as the official organ of the Ulamas.19

The MTLD newspaper El Maghrib El Arabi propounded the theme of Arab solidarity in the North African region and helped make the anti-colonial sentiment more coherent. Publications of Messali Hadj’s movement first the ENA and then PPA like Al Ummah played a significant role in politicising Arab students who were to actively participate in the formulation and execution of the Algerian nationalistic diplomacy.20

The UDMA party journal Egalite: La Republique Algerienne

18 Quandt, n. 8, p. 33.


20 Quandt, n. 8, p. 47.
represented the moderate elements in the Algerian nationalist diplomacy.21

Under the impetus of the FLN militant leadership the politicisation of the Algerian masses increased many folds. In June 1956 the first copy of the FLN's own newspaper, *El Moudjahid*, was distributed secretly. By the end of the year, with the establishment of the clandestine *Voix de l'Algérie* (Voice of Algeria), radio station, the radio had become a major weapon of war against the French.

At first the French authorities tried to control sales of radio and transistors in Algeria, then jammed transmission. Both these measures had but little success and the Voice of Algeria established itself as a vital factor in maintaining morals and spreading the revolt still further. The FLN had now become a mass movement.

Hand in hand with this went a new offensive of terrorism, launched by the FLN. Through its official publication, *El Moudjahid*, the FLN published a directive ordering an intensification of terrorism throughout Algeria and also in the metropolitan France with the help of the FLN activists there. Once the conflict was fully engaged, the major task of the nationalist media diplomacy was to maintain popular awareness of its existence and keep the

21 ibid, p. 56.
issue of Algerian independence alive in France where the metropolitan public opinion was the key to the outcome of the liberation war.

The FLN's every act and announcement played on the sympathies and sense of justice of the international community, by creating the picture of a courageous people fighting for independence against the oppressive colonial forces. The entire arsenal of revolution—guerilla fighting, terror, sabotage, propaganda—was brought to the nationalist politics in an effort to make the continuation of colonialism impossible. This was done by politicising labour and encouraging industrial action to slow down production, boycotting imports, inciting insurrection, forbidding payment of rents to foreign owners, and attacking French industrial installations. The nationalists believed that the increased cost of colonial exploitation and of political control and the expense of maintaining the armed forces that must be used to put down the rebellion, would put pressure on French authorities and force them to withdraw from Algeria.

The FLN campaign of guerilla warfare was responded to by the French with large-scale military effort. As the conflict grew the French repression also escalated, defying the domestic opposition in Paris. The FLN's successful provocation of counter-terrorism sparked international publicity, especially in metropolitan France. This publicity was not only spreading awareness
of the FLN and of the gravity of the conflict, but also creating an image of the FLN as the heroic underdog and the French as brutal torturers. The French response to FLN warfare failed dismally because it reinforced in FLN's legitimacy while undermining that of the French government.

WORLD OPINION & FRENCH REPRESSION IN ALGERIA:

It was between 1957 and 1958 that the Algerian liberation war became truly internationalised. The fast-moving events were to fix the Algerian issue finally in the forefront of world attention. The tales of torture and exploitation emanating from Algiers and published world-wide had its influence on the intelligentsia in France and elsewhere. The published accounts, in the forms of books on the political situation in Algeria and the vivid coverage in the international press, raised the issue of liberation into an issue of human rights violation by a colonial power. The intense propaganda mechanism of the FLN was instrumental in publicising the human rights abuses world-wide. It was especially successful in metropolitan France.

Spurred by the Algerian rebellion some intellectuals on the far Left began unreservedly to denounce French control. The most elaborate and thorough attack on French colonization was launched by the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre's important contribution was an essay
on Algeria in *Les Temps Modernes*, which he edited, in March-April 1956, titled “Colonialism Is a System”. He called for a total abolition of the system.

In his introduction to Henri Alleg’s *La Question*, perhaps the best-known single testimony on torture in Algeria, Sartre dismissed the moralists who denounced the act of torture but hesitated to denounce the war and give the Algerian people their freedom:

.... no we will not humanize the Algerian war. Torture came there of itself the circumstances suggested it and it was required by racist hatred, in a certain way, as we have seen, it is at the heart of the conflict...If we want to put an end to these sad and inhuman cruelties, to save France from shame and the Algerians from hell, there is only one way, still the same, the only way we have ever had, the only way we will ever have: Open negotiations, make peace. 22

In France the opinion on the Left was against the continuation of Algeria as a French colony. Claude Bourdet, who edited the daily *Combat* (1947-50) and the weekly *L’Observateur* (renamed *France-Observateur* in 1954) was Left’s leading journalist who became the most vociferous of the critics of France’s colonial policies. The moderate Leftists included Albert Camus and Maurice

Duverger. The weekly *L'Express* became the focal point of moderate Leftist anti-colonialism.23

*Combat*, the famous resistance journal, was very critical of the French colonialism. Albert Camus, its editor, who was born in Algeria, stoutly opposed French colonial policies in Algeria. He insisted in his editorials, that French colonization like all colonization had been a scandal. The articles of Camus in *Combat* were the most extensive and sensitive treatment of Algeria's troubles in the French press. He discussed the demands of autonomy of Abbas and his supporters. He argued in his perceptive style that the primary cause of trouble in Algeria was not nationalism but social injustice.

**Fanon's Role in the Propaganda War:**

In strictly intellectual terms, the person who made the most significant contribution to nationalist propaganda was the impassioned Martiniquais doctor, Frantz Fanon, who became one of the revolution's most articulate ideologue and a violent exponent of anti-colonialism in any shape. Fanon wrote and spoke for the Africans with the same inexorable logic and the same transparent love of justice that Che Ghevara spoke for the peasants of Latin America.

Colonialism for Fanon was a form of systematic

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exploitation which created and perpetually reinforced a feeling of inferiority among the colonized peoples. He believed that this imposed sense of inferiority could be exploded only by fighting back, by counter-assertion, and in his later writings he attached increasing importance to the violent dimension of decolonization.

After 1956 Fanon worked in Tunis for the free Algerian press service and for the FLN newspaper El Moudiahid. The majority of the articles that he wrote during the liberation war were specifically addressed to Algerians by an adopted Algerian.

In an article published in El Moudiahid on November 1, 1958, Fanon wrote about the real character of the Algerian nationalist movement:

The Algerian war occupies a choice place in the process of demolition of imperialism...Whereas Tunisia and Morocco, as protectorates, were able to reach independence without fundamentally challenging the French empire. Algeria, by its status, the length of its occupation, and the extent of the colonialist foothold, raises in broad day light and in a critical fashion the question of the collapse of the empire.

Analysing the French attitude towards Algeria, he wrote:

For French colonialism, Algeria is not solely a new colonial conflict but also the occasion of a decisive confrontation, the final test. For this reason the French forces have reacted in the course of this conflict with brutality and a violence that have often been disconcerting.24

Fanon urged the French intellectuals to ram home to the French public the impact of the liberation war in Algeria on living costs, taxation and political liberty in France. He wanted his French friends to share his perception of the scale and horror of the liberation struggle. In his essays and journalistic commentaries written in support of the liberation war he propounded the thesis that violence was the only viable means of ending the colonial rule. According to Fanon, colonialism is violence—political, military, cultural and psychic, only a counter-violence operating in the sphere can eradicate it.

For the FLN and its leaders this became the staple ideology for their struggle against the French. They honoured Fanon, who died aged 36 in 1961, when Algeria became independent by naming a university and a boulevard after his name. Internationally, Fanon established himself as the undisputed philosopher of colonialism and his book *The Wretched of the Earth* became a classic on anti-colonialism.

DIPLOMACY IN THE METROPOLITAN CENTRE:

Another factor that made the Algerian case an international issue was the FLN strategy of physically extending the war to the mother country. Algerian university students were organised as early as 1927 into the *Association des Etudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains*. In
1955-56 there were 1,800 Algerian students in French universities.25

One of their task was to enlist international students support for the Algerian independence. The FLN organised some four hundred thousand Algerian workers in France. Under the MNA the Algerian workers in France had been sufficiently politicised. FLN with its superior organisation started pro-Algerian propaganda in France and allied activities for making the Algerian question the central issue of French public life. Acting under the name of the Federation de France, the FLN collected funds from Algerians living in France, recruited cadres for FLN and tried to acquiring Algerian officers in the French army.26

The money collected from the Algerians in France was vital for financing the liberation war and to make the revolution a success. Through its well-organised system of collectors and with the help from sympathetic French elements, the money was shipped out of France and deposited in Swiss banks from where it went to the purchase of arms for the FLN.27


26 Horne, n. 1, p. 237.

27 ibid, p. 238. For the impact of Algerian war on French intellectuals see: Henri Alleg, n. 22; Albert Camus, Resistance, Rebellion and Death (London, 1961).
SYMBOLIC DIPLOMACY: PROCLAMATION OF FLN GOVERNMENT IN EXILE

As was done by nationalist elites in the diplomacy of Indian and Indonesian freedom struggles, the Algerian nationalists also recognised the importance of symbolic diplomacy. De Gaulle's coming to power in France necessitated a rethink of the diplomatic strategy of the FLN. With his pronouncements favouring a settlement of the Algerian problem through negotiations, de Gaulle had gained the initiative as the peace maker in the region and internationally. The FLN leadership thought in terms of a government in exile which would exert more authority and prestige among its ranks and most importantly, on the international scene it would strike a major propaganda blow against the colonial government.

After much discussion the principle and structure of a government in exile was agreed on September 9, 1958, in Cairo. Ten days later a press conference was called in Cairo to announce the creation of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Algeria (GPRA).28

From the chair, Ferhat Abbas, declared that the new government would assume duties on the same day, "the 1418th day of the revolution". Similar ceremonies were held both in Tunis, which was chosen as the GPRA's

28 Quandt, n. 8, p. 135.
capital, and Rabat. Ferhat Abbas was declared as the first President of the GPRA. Among the fourteen ministers also nominated was Ben Bella who was made Vice-President. The former MTLD leader Dr. Lamine Debaghine became foreign minister while Yazid minister of information.29

Diplomatically, the decision to announce the establishment of an Algerian government in exile bore fruit and several countries recognised the new Algerian government. The Arab nations were the first to recognise the new government. China and other countries of the communist bloc followed suit, but USSR remained aloof as did USA and UK.

A new dimension was added to the FLN now. With Ferhat Abbas at the centre-stage the GPRA had a new appearance of flexibility and muted militancy which ensured a greater acceptance from international diplomatic community. A new aspect to the diplomatic endeavours of the FLN was added by a visit of the GPRA delegation to China and to the Soviet Union. In December 1958, Ben Khedda led the first Algerian delegation to China. The visit to China was, in the words of Ben Khedda:

of most importance, less because of the arms it brought than because of its psychological effect on the combatants- which was immense at that time.30

29 Horne, n. 1, p. 316.

30 Quoted in ibid, p. 317.
The threat of an outflanking entente between the FLN and Moscow and Beijing would also, it was calculated by the Algerian nationalists, considerably alarm de Gaulle. Thus as hoped by the FLN, the creation of the GPRA and its accompanying diplomatic offensive made the maximum impact abroad, while undermining de Gaulle's initiatives in solving the Algerian problem.

A powerful Algerian delegation to Beijing and Moscow was led by Krim, in his new capacity as foreign minister, in April 1960, which included trips to North Vietnam and North Korea. He received a warm welcome from the Chinese and offers to supply more arms. Five months later Ferhat Abbas was received officially, as President of the GPRA, in both communist capitals, Beijing and Moscow. In Beijing his visit coincided with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Chinese revolution, and Abbas was placed at Mao's right as guest of honour, a gesture which had far-reaching diplomatic effect.

In Moscow the Kremlin policy in the age of "peaceful co-existence" did not want to be hard on France which was helping to weaken the Atlantic alliance, as the FLN was a nationalist and not a Marxist liberation movement and the pro-Moscow Algerian Communist Party (PCA) had a ambivalent attitude towards the war. Abbas managed to extract de facto recognition and a promise to supply Soviet arms once the GPRA was in control of some "liberated" Algerian territory.
The FLN with considerable diplomatic skill, warned the West that Algeria was appealing for military assistance from the communist countries and they expected Chinese and Soviet arms deliveries to be substantially increased. The leaders of the FLN valued their relationship with Beijing and Moscow for the pressure this diplomatic liaison applied upon France, both directly and through the medium of her nervous Western allies. As in case of Indonesia, the diplomacy of the provisional nationalist government was geared to exploit the Cold War division to achieve Algerian diplomatic ends.

NATIONALIST DIPLOMACY IN THE UNITED STATES AND AT THE UNITED NATIONS:

Like the Indonesian nationalists had done the Algerian nationalist leadership also realised the importance of the United Nations, which had become a fertile ground for articulating the diplomatic aims and aspirations of the emerging Afro-Asian nations. Maximum diplomatic mileage, it was surmised by the FLN leadership, was to be obtained by holding up France to the opprobrium of the world. They believed that the French could not stand indictment at the bar of world opinion. The FLN could count on the solid backing of the Arab and Asian nations and on that of the communist bloc.

For a vigorous campaign of the FLN at the United Nations the Algerian nationalist leadership decided to send the most suited two talents to New York- Abtelkader Chanderli
and Mohamed Yazid. Whereas Chanderli had worked in Cairo with Ben Bella's external delegation and also had an enriching experience of international diplomacy during his stint at the UNESCO, Yazid was a student at University of Paris, where he had become Secretary General of the Association of Muslim Students in France. Yazid had also made his mark at the Bandung Conference where the FLN first achieved international recognition. Later, in September 1958, he was to become first minister of information of the nationalist Algerian provisional government (GPRA).31

To influence public opinion in the United States Chanderli and Yazid visited the American university campuses, generated contacts with the US media, lobbied opinion makers and politicians. Chanderli cultivated liberals like J. K. Galbraith and through him he became friendly with John F. Kennedy, then a democratic senator. The Algerian nationalists in New York, in their pursuit to give a correct perspective on the liberation war, accorded the maximum publicity to anti-torture outrages in France.

Encouraging for FLN's campaign for internationalisation, was the growing awareness of the war in the US. As in France, the FLN propaganda had done much to publicise the

31 ibid, p. 245.
war, and the French anti-torture campaign had its echo in the American liberal opinion. There was a new ferment in the US media about the war in Algeria. More and more American journalists were finding their way into the FLN camps, and writing reports and articles sympathetic to the Algerian cause. An enterprising American journalist had made two films after a visit to the FLN and televised them across the USA.32

As well as telling harrowing tales of French brutality, the films revealed to the American public the scope of the problem in Algeria. This stirred the conscience of America which, in those days of a naive idealism as yet un tarnished by Vietnam, sought to believe in certain liberal values.

The Algerian nationalists in the United States during this period, also tried to exploit, as the Indonesians had done earlier, the political divisions of the Cold War to further their diplomatic aims. Yazid played on America's high sensitivity in the Cold War to the growing Soviet competition in the Arab world.

In reply to a question about the communist supply of arms

to the FLN in a 1957 television interview, Yazid said diplomatically:

We are far from being communist, but one is at war one needs arms. We prefer Western arms, if I were to find someone who could procure us any, I can not see any reason for refusing them.33

The FLN had registered its first diplomatic success at the United Nations in September, 1955 by getting the Algerian issue tabled, thereby administering a shock to the French who maintained that Algeria was an "internal affair" for France and therefore the UN was not competent to deal with it. This diplomatic victory had been "worth more than a convoy of arms" to the Algerian nationalists. The FLN diplomacy in New York was specially focused on garnering support from the strong Afro-Asian bloc. The US decision to block Afro-Asian resolution to bring the issue of independence directly into the General Assembly in February and December 1957 was however a disappointment to the FLN diplomats in New York.

The basic contention of the Algerian nationalists, endorsed by the Afro-Asian bloc of nations at the UN, was that the question in Algeria was one of human rights and self-determination, that it transcended considerations of national sovereignty, and thus came within the purview of

33 Quoted in Horne, n. 1, p. 245.
the United Nations. To the Afro-Asian bloc Algeria, far from being a part of France, was a subject nation struggling for its freedom and therefore a natural concern of the United Nations. It was this view, defended notably by Krishna Menon of India, that had prevailed.

The FLN diplomats in New York used all their propaganda material to influence the US opinion through their access to the opposition Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy. Kennedy challenged President Eisenhower and the Secretary of State Dulles: "to place the influence of the United States behind efforts... to achieve a solution which will recognise the independent personality of Algeria and establish the basis for a settlement interdependent with France and the neighbouring nations". He accused United States policy of representing "a retreat from the principles of independence and anti-colonialism".34

No speech on foreign affairs by Senator Kennedy attracted more attention and under such pressure United States policy on Algeria began to shift. The diplomatic efforts of Chanderli and Yazid had started showing results. Henceforth, instead of backing France at the United Nations, the United States would abstain. It was a serious blow to the French diplomacy at the UN and a triumph for the FLN and accelerated the process of decolonisation in Algeria.

34 ibid, p. 247.
As the French resolved to increase military suppression of the nationalist agitation in Algeria, the Arab countries raised the Algerian question at the United Nations. But they could only secure two votes—those of Iraq and the Soviet Union. The Afro-Asian group then returned to the General Assembly to discuss the Algerian situation.

Iraq catalogued French atrocities in Algeria. The Syrian delegate warned with obvious reference to France's NATO partners, that Afro-Asia could no longer be viewed with the geographic or strategic interests of the colonial powers.35

The Sri Lankan delegate took the Western powers to task for their double standards:

> When people in Hungary fought for their freedom they were called heroes, whereas in Algeria they were described as incendiaries and terrorists.36

The political committee rejected the Afro-Asian bid to censor and undermine the French position in Algeria and adopted, a Latin American resolution, backed by the US, that expressed hope for a peaceful solution.

Peace did not come to Algeria as the UN General assembly had hoped, on the contrary the armed struggle led by the FLN and the French suppression were intensified.

36 ibid, p. 86.
Seventeen African nations once again introduced a draft resolution before the political committee of the 12th sessions of General Assembly that they sought to secure recognition of the principle of self-determination. The Afro-Asian draft was defeated by the 12th Assembly unanimously adopted a revised Asian-Arab-Latin resolution which took note of the offer of good offices by Tunisia and Morocco and hoped for peaceful solution.37

In the months following United Nations debate the Algerian war of liberation reached dangerous proportions both inside Algeria as well as in France. The activities of the militant extremist organisation, the secret army organisation (OAS), who were using violence and counter-insurgency measures to keep Algeria French had brought a new bitterness in the Algerian war and intensified it manifolds.

The supporters of the Algerian cause at the United Nations, continued to keep up the diplomatic pressure and brought the Algerian strife again before the political committee of the 13th General Assembly. With a view to secure recognition of FLN as the sole representative and spokesman for Algeria they introduced a resolution urging France to negotiate with FLN, which was defeated.38

37 ibid, Plan Meetings, p. 567.

38 GAOR, 13th Session, 1958, Plenary Meetings, p. 627.
Although the diplomatic efforts to gain support at the UN had so far failed to realise their aims, the events in France led to Algerian independence. Within France there was a growing realisation that Algeria could no longer be kept as a colony. The enormous sapping of France's material and moral energy made de Gaulle and other leaders of the Fifth Republic to open negotiations with the FLN.

On September 16, 1959, de Gaulle had called upon the FLN for a cease-fire whose qualified acceptance was announced by the FLN. A diplomatic breakthrough seemed near. By the end of 1959 it had become clear that the French occupation could not continue in the face of the tide of West African nationalism. In January 1960 the de Gaulle government suppressed a revolt by the French settlers in Algeria.

In June 1960 de Gaulle invited the Algerian nationalists, in a spirit of conciliation, to seek with him an honourable end to the fighting. The FLN responded favourably by sending Ferhat Abbas, premier of the Algerian provisional government, to Paris. For the first time since the outbreak of the war of liberation, the parties had begun face to face negotiations.

At the United Nations, meanwhile, the Afro-Asian states kept up the diplomatic pressure on France. As a result the 15th General Assembly adopted a compromise resolution that recognised the imperative need for effective guarantees to ensure self-determination for Algeria. Fortunately, for all the parties concerned, the United
Nations did not have to discuss Algeria again as the France-FLN talks finally led to Algerian independence in 1962.

National interest is the single most important factor that dictates the formation and execution of a country's diplomacy. The ultimate national interest of an anti-colonial movement is the achievement of independence. In case of Algeria this was achieved through extending nationalist diplomacy to metropolitan France to enlist political support from sympathetic elements there, active participation in international conferences by Algerian nationalists, and diplomatic parleys to various world capitals in search of military aid to fight the liberation war.

By resorting to sustained arms struggle with the support of friendly neighbours and international socialist forces, by employing a militant liberation media diplomacy and activating diplomatic support from the emerging Non-aligned bloc of nations, the Algerian nationalist diplomacy attained its ultimate goal, freedom from French colonialism. Although unlike India and Indonesia the nationalist movement's diplomacy placed strong emphasis on financial and military support for liberation war, independences from French colonialism could not have been achieved without considerable propaganda, conference and symbolic diplomacy to mobilise opinion both in international community and in metropolitan centre.