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Civilizational Foundations of the ALN's Military Doctrine: Peaceful Intent and Popular Legitimacy in the 1st November 1954 Declaration.
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Introduction

A researcher exploring the history of the Algerian War of Liberation will encounter numerous writings addressing its military and political dimensions, which were indeed the revolution's primary focus in its early stages. However, as events unfolded, new aspects emerged that demanded equal attention, revealing that the revolution could not sustain its momentum without establishing mechanisms and frameworks to organize and uphold all revolutionary texts, thereby enabling its leaders to confront France effectively (Hefdhallah et al. 2016). In this context, the judicial system played a crucial role in monitoring the progress of revolutionary work and ensuring that members of the National Liberation Army (ALN) adhered to the principles dictated by their military doctrine (Guettaf. 2025). The significance of this topic lies in its exploration of the civilizational and value based dimensions enshrined in the Declaration of November 1st, 1954, which added substantial depth to the revolutionary movement (Zeraoui. 2012). The philosophy of the Algerian Revolution stemmed from a profound awareness of the need to build a peaceful, popular army, led by the people and guided by the vision of a free Algeria, while being compelled to take up arms in response to the arrogance of French colonial policy (Akkache and Kharoubi. 2025). While much of the existing literature has concentrated on the armed struggle and political leadership of the revolution, relatively little attention has been given to the role of civilizational values in shaping its military doctrine. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the extent to which the Declaration of first November succeeded in framing the ALN's doctrine, particularly in embedding principles such as peacefulness and popular participation (Mekalati, et al. 2025). The central question guiding this research is: to what extent did the Declaration of first November influence the formation of the ALN's military doctrine? To address this question, it is necessary to consider how the ALN was established, what experiences preceded its formation, and to what degree the early revolutionary leaders succeeded in formulating foundational principles such as the peaceful and popular dimensions that shaped the revolutionary action embraced by the ALN. To provide comprehensive answers, the study employs the historical method, as it is best suited to describing the civilizational dimensions of the ALN's military doctrine in a manner consistent with the nature of the topic.

The Special Organization - The First Core of the National Liberation Army (1947–1950)

Heated discussions took place in the first congress of the People's Party regarding the evaluation of the party's activity before 1946. Harsh criticism was directed by attendees at the party leadership for backing down from the order it had issued to generalize the uprising in May 1945, and for preferring to participate in the elections instead. There was also an in-depth discussion about the necessity of participating in the legislative elections to give legitimacy to the party's activity. The radical elements strongly opposed this option, seeing it as an implicit recognition of the colonial institutions with which they wanted a complete break. Eventually, the congress reached the following conclusions:

The establishment of the Special Organization was considered the party's striking force, a semi-military wing preparing for armed struggle in complete secrecy, with its leadership entrusted to Mohamed Belouizdad (Hefdhallah et al. 2016). The founding of the secret military organization was an important event in the transformation of the Algerian national movement from the struggle of words to armed struggle, both theoretically and practically (Chelli. 2006). If the military organization was embodied in practice through this body, it was in the first congress of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, held on 15-16 February 1947 in Belcourt, at the premises of militant Mouloud Meliane, that the new generation of militants succeeded in imposing the formation of a secret Special Organization equipped with armed struggle structures.

It was composed of a Leadership Council, a General Council, and a Regional Council. The Leadership Council consisted of five members who, at the national level, managed organizational affairs. The commander of the secret

organization acted as a coordinator with the party leadership, while each district had a unit led by a commander assisted by a council that included regional leaders.

The decision to create a secret military organization came under pressure from some young militants, especially those who had participated in the Second World War and were influenced by the idea of armed action. Among them were Didouche Mourad (Khodja et al. 2008), Zighoud Youcef (Khalfallah.2021), and Mohamed Boudiaf (Abdekader. 2012), who proposed the idea of establishing a revolutionary organization to prepare for armed struggle, which became known as the Special Organization (Labaidi. 2019). Its creation began in 1947.

The operational militants - that is, the recruited members - were distributed across the entire national territory, according to the following structure:

- Half-section: composed of four (4) militants led by a leader.
- Section: composed of four (4) militants led by a leader, making a total of five (5) members.
- Squad: composed of three (3) sections and a leader, totaling sixteen (16) members.
- Platoon: composed of three (3) squads and a leader, totaling forty-nine (49) members.

The total number of operational militants in the Special Organization (Kafi. 2011) was about 1,500, distributed throughout the national territory. The General Staff formed the top of the organizational pyramid (Kafi. 2011). The General Staff also worked to create specialized networks to assist in its work, carry out its military missions, and execute its operations. These networks were as follows:

A-Explosives Network: manufactured bombs and studied/destroyed colonial base installations.

B-Signals Network: specialized in radio communications.

C -Collaboration Network: responsible for finding hideouts for missing militants.

D-Communications Network: responsible for purchasing communications equipment and training in its use.

E-Intelligence Network: focused on monitoring the actions and movements of French military apparatus and tracking traitors (Lounici et al. 2010).

As for selecting members for this secret organization, it was done based on competence, with the condition that this competence meet certain criteria:

- The member must be an experienced militant in the party.
- Must have the ability to discuss political issues with strong militant commitment.
- Must be physically strong, well-trained, and capable of enduring harsh living conditions.
- Must be free of family responsibilities, ready to move and hide to carry out missions at any moment, in any place or time, and capable of adapting to the material and psychological conditions of an upcoming real war (Kafi. 2011).

Whenever an active and competent militant appeared, he was recruited into the Special Organization and invited to join the structure. The new member was required to perform major ablution (even if he did not pray), because he was obliged to swear an oath of loyalty and obedience on the Quran (Chelali. 2016).

Thus, the founding of the Special Organization was a qualitative leap in the course of Algeria's liberation struggle, especially in the struggle of the national movement. From this military structure, known as the Special Organization, would emerge the first nucleus of the National Liberation Army.

The leaders of the Special Organization worked hard to collect weapons, organize administrative matters, focus on intelligence, and learn about the enemy's military and police structures (Boumali. 1995). Branches were established throughout the country, especially in the Aurès region, where the task was entrusted to Mustepha Ben Boulaïd, who recruited in mosques and had recruits swear not to betray, not to retreat, and not to reveal its secrets.

The Weaponry of the Special Organization:

The Special Organization did not compromise when it came to means and funds. It obtained a significant stockpile of weapons through the black market and smuggling, including rifles, pistols, and ammunition left over from the Second World War, and stored them in secure hideouts (Kafi. 2011).

The first weapons collection operation was carried out by Commander Mohamed Belouizdad in the eastern border region of Algeria, storing them in the Aurès Mountains. As for the second operation, he acquired another quantity of weapons purchased from Oued Souf, which included 33 military rifles of the Stati type, and deposited them with militants Mohamed Belhadj and Belkacem Addouka (Hefdhallah et al. 2016).

After the discovery of the Special Organization on March 18th, 1950, and following the crisis that struck the party in September 1953 as a result of the conflict between the Messalists and the Centralists, a third party intervened. Meetings were held between members of the Special Organization, namely Mohamed Boudiaf and Mustpha Ben Boulaïd, and two members of the Central Committee, namely Mohamed Dakhli, General Officer for Organization, and his assistant Ramadan Bouchbouba, Organization Inspector. It was agreed to revive the Special Organization to preserve the unity of the party by creating the "Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action on March 23rd, 1954, at the Al-Rashad School in the capital.

From the significance of the name, it was clear that the aim was to prevent the party from disintegration, work on establishing the military base (Chelli. 2006), and deny the warring factions the opportunity, by launching the revolution based on an initial organization that took into account both the political and military aspects. The first was named the National Liberation Front, and the second the National Liberation Army. The leaders of the revolution sought to organize and structure its ranks by relying on various layers of the population so that it would be genuinely popular. They also sought sources of supply and armament with the aim of giving the National Liberation Army greater organization (Hefdhallah. 2013).

The Document of the November 1st, 1954 Declaration

The texts and charters of the revolution carried many dimensions, characteristics, and values liberational, civilizational, and religious. Perhaps the November 1st, 1954 Declaration is the most important ideological document among the documents of the liberation revolution, as it is the foundational document of the revolution (Tahari. 2016). This is because it was the product of a historical course that combined the armed resistance of the Algerian people with the national movement. The declaration confirmed the unity of the people and their aspirations, as well as the peaceful and popular dimensions of the Algerian revolution.

The document contained 685 words divided into 9 paragraphs, written in a simple and concise language so that both the general public and the educated elite could understand it, with the aim of uniting the words and actions of Algerians individuals and groups against French colonialism (Yakhla. 2025).

The November 1st, 1954 Declaration began with an appeal addressed directly to the Algerian people, without any intermediary, in all their components, to engage in armed struggle (Djaghaba. 2012) on the first of November 1954, corresponding to the sixth of Rabi' al-Awwal 1374 AH. It is a historical text with a political character, a charter and communiqué of the outbreak of the liberation revolution, and the first defining document of it, issued by the General Secretariat of the National Liberation Front.

In reality, any political declaration cannot be drafted with the mere stroke of a pen; it requires consultation and deliberation to clarify ideas and choose appropriate words. The necessity and content of the declaration were discussed among the six leaders during their periodic meetings held throughout the month of October (Ouman & Tlemcani 2017). The Committee of Six entrusted Messrs. Mohamed Boudiaf and Didouche Mourad with drafting the text that would be broadcast with the launch of the revolution (Kalil. 1991). According to Issa Kachida, Boudiaf

and Didouche Mourad were formulating the ideas of the declaration inspired by the principles of the national movement and the resolutions of the congresses of the Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties (Kechida. 2010).

The Popular Dimension of the National Liberation Army Through the November 1st, 1954 Declaration

The declaration affirmed that this stage meaning the armed struggle was a burdensome and difficult task that required all forces and the mobilization of all national resources, while also foreseeing a long struggle crowned with victory:

“This is a burdensome and difficult task, and it requires all forces and the mobilization of all national resources. In truth, the struggle will be long, but victory is assured (Declaration of November 1, 1954).

The declaration also stated: “O militants for the national cause,” (Jughoul. 2008) addressing all militants without discrimination, as it acknowledged the presence of sincere patriots within the ranks of the People’s Party as well as within other parties. The will of the militants for the national cause was the strongest weapon against the colonial machine of destruction (Djaghaba. 2012).

Accordingly, it can be said that the appeal was primarily directed to the popular base, which in turn would provide the National Liberation Army with the finest militants, whether in the Army or in the National Liberation Front. This is confirmed by what appeared in “El Moudjahid” newspaper, October 1961, Issue No. 85, stating that these freedom fighters from among the youth and its leaders were, in fact, military resisters who volunteered in the National Liberation Army for the liberation of the people and the usurped homeland (El-Moudjahid newspaper. 1961).

The creed of the National Liberation Army was embodied in its reliance on the popular base. For this reason, the drafters of the declaration sought to create a form of mass support and to achieve comprehensive national unity. They began their text with:

“O Algerian people, O militants for the national cause, you who will pass judgment on us we mean the people in general and the militants in particular.”

These revolutionaries were certain of the presence of great potential and ideas supportive of armed struggle among party members, and they were confident that the popular masses were eagerly awaiting the outbreak of the revolution. This is what Larbi Ben M’hidi expressed when he said: “Throw the revolution into the street and the people will embrace it”. (Meziane. 2021)

Ali Kafi adds: “As a result, acts of sabotage increased, especially in the colonists’ farms, as well as the cutting of roads and wires. Between ten and fifteen hectares of fruit trees and vegetables would be destroyed with the help of the people.” The strategy of building the revolution was fundamentally based on the Algerian people, as confirmed by one of the architects of the liberation revolution, Mohamed Boudiaf, who said: “A strategy for the revolution was set, consisting of three stages. The first and most important was the stage of building the political and military structure of the revolution to ensure its expansion, by explaining the meaning, nature, and objectives of the revolution in order to win the sympathy and support of the people, by arousing their enthusiasm through striking the collaborators of the occupation’s agents (Abbas. 2003)

The military creed of the liberation revolution, based on the Algerian people, appeared even more clearly in the August 20th, 1955 attacks in the North Constantine region that rare plan designed by the commander of the Second Zone, Zighoud Youcef aimed at ending the hesitation of some bodies and certain citizens, pushing them to join and support the liberation revolution by strongly involving the people. This applied one of the main dimensions mentioned in the appeal of the National Liberation Army on November 1st, 1954, namely the first dimension, which called upon the people to unite and continue the struggle to restore their confiscated and usurped rights.

From the above, it becomes clear that the National Liberation Army was the only force born from the popular base, thus adopting the noble duty of restoring independence and dedicating itself to the principle that the only leader of the revolution is the people, and that the ideology of the revolution is Algeria (Boualtamene. 1981).

One of the most important features of the November 1st Declaration is that it opened the door to all national forces to join the National Liberation Front and succeeded in rallying the Algerian people around the cause of independence, as it directly addressed Algerians with the words: "O Algerian people, O militants for the national cause."

The Peaceful Dimension of the National Liberation Army Through the November 1st, 1954 Declaration

The declaration stated the following: "To avoid false interpretations and to demonstrate our desire for peace, and to limit human losses and the shedding of blood, we have prepared for the French authorities an honorable document for discussion, if these authorities are guided by goodwill and definitively recognize the right of the peoples they colonize to decide their own destiny. (Declaration of November 1, 1954)."

From this part of the declaration, it is clear that bearing arms was not an end or goal for the National Liberation Army, but rather a necessity required by the conditions of the time in the face of the arrogance of French colonialism, the continuation of its colonial policy against the Algerian people, and the failure of political struggle.

Peace is one of the deep-rooted principles of Islam and is inherently tied to it. Therefore, the declaration called for peace, as the culture of peace is embedded in the Islamic religion (Mokhtar. 2025).

The night of November 1st, 1954, was a pivotal moment in the history of the Algerians' confrontation with French occupation. On that night, the first bullets were fired, beginning a fierce war that lasted nearly seven years, producing great epics despite the scarcity of means, numbers, and weaponry. Yet, a group of young Algerians was able to lead this liberation project and compel colonial France to recognize a sovereign Algeria.

On the morning after the launch of the Algerian liberation revolution, the National Liberation Army announced its military creed in the military statement distributed simultaneously with the November 1st Declaration, both of which were read to the leaders and soldiers of the National Liberation Army at the start of the revolution in November 1954. The militant Issa Kachida said: "The two texts, which we distributed to militants and notable figures in the capital from different religions, were written by a militant named Al-'Ichaoui. (Kechida. 2010)"

The military creed of the National Liberation Army, defending a just and legitimate cause, was expressed in the following sentence from the appeal: "God is with the mujahideen who defend just causes. (Call of the National Liberation Army on November 1, 1954)."

On this point, member of the Group of 22, Abdelkader Al-'Amoudi, said: "Without faith in the cause, militants could not have borne the sacrifice of everything, when what awaited them was prison or death. (Call of the National Liberation Army on November 1, 1954)" The military creed was necessary; it was the moral strength that enabled the leaders and soldiers of the National Liberation Army to stand firm in the face of French colonial attempts to break their morale in difficult circumstances. The steadfastness of the commander of the Battle of Algiers, Larbi Ben M'hidi, after his arrest and torture, and his refusal to give the French army any information about the revolutionary organization of the Army and the National Liberation Front, is the best proof of the strength of faith in the national cause (Call of the National Liberation Army on November 1, 1954).

Allah said in His revelation: "Permission to fight has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged and indeed, Allah is competent to grant them victory" (Quran, Surah Al-Hajj. Verse 39, Roger and Wengraf. 1963) and also: "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it also and rely upon Allah; indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. (Quran, Surah Al-Anfal. Verse 61, Mairi et al. 2025)

From these two noble verses, the Islamic foundations and principles of the Algerian revolution in general, and the National Liberation Army in particular, were established. The tenth principle of the National Liberation Army's principles confirmed the necessity of respecting Islamic principles and international laws in defeating the enemy (Algerian Resistance newspaper. 1956, Akkache and Kharoubi. 2025).

The religious extension of the Algerian revolution and its peaceful dimension were guaranteed by the charters of the revolution from its outset, making them among the main principles of the military creed of the National Liberation Army. The November 1st, 1954 Declaration, issued by the General Secretariat of the National Liberation Front, affirmed this approach, stating that “the goal of the struggle is to establish an Algerian democratic and social state with full sovereignty within the framework of Islamic principles”^{40,46}, (Declaration of November 1, 1954, Scott. 2025) and rejecting racial or religious discrimination between all segments of society, as made clear in the phrase: “Respect for all fundamental freedoms without discrimination based on race or religion. (Declaration of November 1, 1954, Mekalati, et al. 2025)”

The newspaper -La Dépêche- reported in one of its issues an interview with a Spanish prisoner and a French prisoner (a doctor) in the Jijel region, in which the latter admitted to the humane treatment she received from the soldiers of the National Liberation Army. She even mentioned that she gained weight during the three months she spent in captivity.

Most of the prisoner releases were conducted under the supervision of the International Red Cross, following their presentation to the international press. This humane treatment reflected, first and foremost, the deeply rooted ethical and humanitarian principles embedded in the military doctrine of the National Liberation Army (NLA). It also stemmed from the strategic understanding that these prisoners could serve as living witnesses to the revolution beyond Algeria's borders. By releasing them, the NLA sought to undermine French colonial propaganda that depicted its combatants as mere rebels or outlaws. In some cases, NLA soldiers even escorted prisoners to the sites of French military operations so they could directly observe and later testify to the crimes committed by the colonial forces. Such actions reveal an early form of psychological and information warfare, comparable in purpose though different in context to the modern use of humanitarian and media strategies analyzed by Marquina (2025) in discussions of state narratives, transnational influence, and the instrumentalization of human rights discourses (Kalil.1991, Guettaf. 2025, Marquina. 2025, Zeraoui. 2012).

Conclusion

The Declaration of November 1st, 1954 served as the guiding framework for shaping the military doctrine of the National Liberation Army (ALN), setting out the objectives of the revolution along with its peaceful and humanitarian principles. It framed armed struggle within the context of defending a just national cause, emphasizing the avoidance of bloodshed except when necessary, the respect of Islamic values and international conventions, and the humane treatment of prisoners reflecting the deep bond between the ALN and the people from whom it emerged. These values played a crucial role in strengthening the resilience of the fighters, countering colonial propaganda, and garnering international sympathy for the Algerian cause.

Building on this experience, it is recommended to further research the humanitarian and peaceful dimensions of liberation movements, and to integrate ethical values into modern military doctrines. This would help ensure a balance between legitimate defense and the protection of civilians, while fostering greater opportunities for peaceful conflict resolution.

Conflicts of interest/Competing interests

We wish to confirm that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this publication and there has been no significant financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

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Methodology

This study employs a qualitative historical approach with an emphasis on primary-source interpretation and contextual analysis. The methodology is based on:

examining original revolutionary documents, including the November 1, 1954 Declaration, OS archival texts, FLN circulars, and memoirs of early revolutionaries;

conducting textual analysis to identify conceptual frameworks relating to peace, legitimacy, and resistance;

correlating documentary evidence with secondary historiographical literature;

situating the ALN's doctrine within its civilizational context using interpretive historical reasoning.

The methodological aim is not simply descriptive, but analytical: to uncover how cultural and ethical principles shaped the doctrinal character of the ALN.

Findings

This research demonstrates that the military doctrine of the ALN, as articulated in the 1st November Declaration, was distinctly civilizational in nature.

1. Peace as the Foundational Principle

The ALN emphasized peaceful intent as a moral and strategic ideal, presenting armed struggle as a compelled response to colonial violence after the exhaustion of diplomatic channels. The Declaration clearly articulated that war was initiated not out of aggression, but necessity.

2. Popular Participation as a Source of Legitimacy

The ALN grounded its authority in the will of the Algerian people. Rather than functioning as a detached military elite, it sought unity with civilians, creating a participatory liberation framework. Popular support was envisioned not merely as assistance, but as partnership.

3. Continuity from the Special Organization (OS)

The OS served as the proto-institution of the ALN, transmitting structural, ideological, and ethical foundations. The transformation from the OS nucleus into a national liberation army was evolutionary rather than abrupt, ensuring ideological coherence and operational continuity.

4. Civilizational Dimensions of Military Resistance

The ALN incorporated values rooted in Algerian cultural identity – justice, dignity, community solidarity, and restraint – which distinguished it from other revolutionary armies. The struggle was conceptualized not solely as territorial liberation, but as restoration of historical identity and civilizational sovereignty.

5. Moral Boundaries in Warfare

The findings highlight adherence to ethical limitations regarding the treatment of non-combatants, emphasizing the distinction between legitimate resistance and indiscriminate violence. This moral discipline strengthened political legitimacy and international sympathy.

Overall, the study confirms that the ALN's doctrine fused military action with cultural identity, ethical consciousness, and societal unity, making its revolution not merely a war for independence, but a civilizational reclamation.

Ethical Considerations

All data used in this study derives from publicly available historical documents and academic literature. No personal data, human subjects, or interviews were involved. Interpretations were conducted with respect for historical context and sensitivity to national heritage.

Author Contributions

Dr. Abdelhafid Abdelhai — research design, primary-source analysis, and theoretical framing.

Dr. Mabrouk Mouhoub — historical contextualization, methodology articulation, and structural organization of arguments.

Dr. Abdelouahab Yahiaoui — data verification, historiographical comparison, and manuscript refinement.

All authors participated equally in the development of this study and approved the final version.

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Conflict of Interest

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