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<div>Abstract</div> <div>This article analyzes the diplomatic struggle led by the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), focusing on the principles that guided Algerian negotiators and the extent to which these principles were consistently implemented throughout the negotiation process with the French colonial authorities. While armed struggle constituted the backbone of the Algerian revolution, political and diplomatic action formed a complementary and equally decisive front in the battle for independence. From the outset of the revolution, the FLN articulated a clear negotiating doctrine grounded in the recognition of Algerian sovereignty, national unity, and the legitimacy of the Algerian people’s right to self-determination. These principles were first formulated in the November 1st Declaration (1954), reaffirmed in subsequent political statements, and institutionalized at the Soummam Conference (1956). Despite persistent French attempts to undermine or bypass these principles through military escalation, political maneuvering, and conditional negotiations, the Algerian delegation maintained a coherent and unwavering negotiating position. By examining key negotiation phases, including secret contacts, diplomatic initiatives, and the Evian negotiations, this study demonstrates that the Algerian negotiator’s strength lay not only in military pressure but also in the disciplined application of a principled diplomatic strategy. The article concludes that adherence to these principles played a decisive role in transforming negotiations from a colonial maneuver into a path toward full independence.</div>	
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Introduction:

The Algerian War of Independence, since its outbreak in 1954, combined military and political action. The National Liberation Front (FLN) raised the possibility of negotiations despite its reliance on armed struggle, as

the November 1st Declaration called for understanding to avoid further bloodshed, provided that Algeria's sovereignty and unity were recognized. The revolutionary leadership established the initial core of a diplomatic apparatus to manage the political battle by appointing members of the external delegation tasked with promoting the Algerian cause in international forums and engaging in dialogue with the French government.

This study will examine the negotiations undertaken by the Algerian revolutionary leadership, highlighting its adherence to the negotiating principles it established at the beginning of the revolution, and the extent to which it was able to implement these principles in the face of French colonial maneuvering.

1- Principles of the Algerian Negotiator:

In preparing for the revolution, the revolutionary leadership considered all possible scenarios in its liberation struggle. The National Liberation Front (FLN) outlined its operations and the efforts it would undertake on both the internal and external fronts, as well as on the military and political levels. It prepared itself for the diplomatic battle, which is part of the political struggle, with the aim of complementing and strengthening the armed struggle (Kiouane, 2009, p. 5). The principles and conditions it deemed necessary for ending the fighting were defined in the November 1st Declaration, which stated:

Finally, to avoid misinterpretations and to demonstrate our genuine desire for peace, particularly to prevent further loss of life and bloodshed, we have prepared a respectable document for discussion with the French authorities, should they be acting in good faith and definitively recognize the right of the peoples they colonize to self-determination.

- Public and official recognition of Algerian nationality, thereby nullifying all pronouncements, decisions, and laws that render Algeria French territory, despite the history, geography, language, religion, and customs of the Algerian people.
- The commencement of negotiations with the authorized representatives of the Algerian people, based on the recognition of Algerian sovereignty as an indivisible whole.
- The creation of an atmosphere of trust through the release of all political prisoners, the lifting of special measures, and the cessation of all persecution against resistance fighters.

This statement, with its suggestions for potential events, demonstrates the National Liberation Front's (FLN) profound political awareness of the nature of the struggle it had declared and its various means. Meanwhile, the French side relied on a military solution and rejected any possibility of a peaceful resolution through meetings with representatives of the Algerian revolution. As French Interior Minister François Mitterrand stated on November 5, 1954: "The only negotiations are war." (Weiss, 2012, p. 21) This did not deter the FLN from its liberation struggle; rather, it continued its work both domestically and internationally.

On February 3, 1956, the FLN reiterated its principles for negotiation, making them the basis of its demands as a condition for a ceasefire. These demands included: (Gillespie, 1961, p. 157)

- France's recognition of Algeria's independence.
- The release of political prisoners and detainees.
- Cessation of hostilities by the French army.
- Formation of an Algerian government to negotiate the future status of both countries.

When the Soummam Conference convened on August 20, 1956, the second reference point for the Algerian Revolution after the November 1st Declaration, it reaffirmed the aforementioned principles for negotiation,

making them non-negotiable, and predetermined the conditions for a ceasefire, which were: (Azghidi, 2009, p. 143)

- Unity of the Algerian people.
- Independence and sovereignty of Algeria.
- Release of political prisoners.
- The National Liberation Front (FLN) as the sole representative of the Algerian people and the only body authorized to negotiate.

The Soummam Conference laid the groundwork for negotiations that the National Liberation Front would adopt, based on: recognition of the Algerian state, recognition of the National Liberation Front as the sole representative of the Algerian people, a ceasefire and negotiations, (Courrière, 1969, p. 408) which would take place after the ceasefire conditions were met.

The National Liberation Front (FLN) also clarified that the goal of the revolution was national independence without any compromise, whether in national defense or diplomacy, and full sovereignty over national territory, including the Algerian Sahara, thus ruling out any attempt at partition. (al-Shaykh, 2003, p. 92) For Algerians, negotiations were the outcome of recognition of independence, while for France, they were the result of a ceasefire without recognition of independence.

2- The beginning of contacts between the National Liberation Front and France:

A- Circumstances:

Several factors contributed to the French government's realization of the strength of the Algerian revolution, prompting it to probe its momentum and assess its sustainability by contacting its leaders.

The summer of 1955 witnessed an escalation of Algerian revolutionary activity aimed at demonstrating the revolution's strength and its reach across the entire national territory. This refuted the French government's claims regarding the revolution's limited geographical scope and sought to encourage popular participation. The revolutionaries aimed to extend their influence and gain the support of the largest possible number of people by launching attacks in various locations, thus expanding the revolutionary zones. The attacks in northern Constantine demonstrated the revolution's strength and instilled fear among the French.

Faced with this victory, leaders of other political currents joined the National Liberation Front (FLN), abandoning their moderate and reformist demands. Examples include Ferhat Abbas, leader of the assimilationist movement, and Ahmed Toufik al-Madani of the Association of Algerian Muslim ulamas in 1956. (al-Shaykh, 2003, p. 91) This significantly increased the effectiveness of the liberation struggle and strengthened national unity against French colonialism.

On the external front, the National Liberation Front exerted diplomatic pressure on France by stirring up world public opinion against it and working to isolate it diplomatically. It succeeded in gaining the support of some countries, such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which appealed to the UN Security Council to discuss the situation in Algeria on the basis that it threatened peace. (Gillespie, 1961, p. 148) The National Liberation Front also participated in the Bandung Conference, April 18-24, 1955, which allowed it to gain the sympathy of Third World countries for the Algerian cause. (al-Shaykh, 2003, p. 90)

As a result, the United Nations General Assembly included the Algerian question on its agenda for the first time at its tenth session on September 30, 1955, a major diplomatic victory for Algeria that exposed French policy and its repressive practices in Algeria. Thus, the Bandung Conference and the tenth session of the United Nations shattered the myth of Algeria's legitimacy as French territory, (Gillespie, 1961, p. 170) enabling the National

Liberation Front (FLN) to assert its presence and the justice of its cause on the world stage. In this regard, Saad Dahlab wrote: "Through our activity at all levels, we imposed ourselves on the international stage and established our presence internationally without waiting for the goodwill of the French colonizer." (Dahlab, 2007, p. 26) This prompted the French government to open channels of communication with the FLN to find a peaceful solution to the Algerian problem.

B- Secret Negotiations:

The aforementioned victories of the Algerian Revolution coincided with the appointment of Guy Mollet as Prime Minister, (Gillespie, 1961, p. 156) who announced his famous three-pronged plan in February 1956, based on a ceasefire, followed by elections, and then negotiations. However, (Dahlab, 2007, p. 39) the National Liberation Front (FLN) declared on the same date that a ceasefire would only be possible after France recognized Algeria's independence. (Gillespie, 1961, p. 157) A fundamental difference is evident between France's conditions, which did not include independence but rather negotiations after a ceasefire, and the principles of the Algerian negotiator, who stipulated recognition of independence as a prerequisite for a ceasefire.

Given these circumstances, secret exploratory negotiations began. The first contact took place in Algiers at the beginning of January 1956 between Andrés Mandouz, envoy of the French government minister Mendes France, and Abane Ramdane and Benyoucef Benkhedda. The Algerian delegation affirmed its readiness to enter into negotiations based on the recognition of independence, but Guy Mollet refused. (Al-Moudjahid, 13/03/1961) The second meeting was held in Cairo on April 12, 1956, between Mohamed Khider, representative of the FLN's external mission, and Joseph Begarra and Georges Gores, representatives of Guy Mollet. However, this meeting was fruitless because the French delegation presented Guy Mollet's three-pronged approach: a ceasefire, the organization of elections, and negotiations. (Al-Moudjahid, 13/03/1961)

In the summer of 1956, contacts between the two parties were renewed, and the Belgrade meeting of July 21, 1956 brought together M'hamed Yazid and Ahmed Francis on behalf of the National Liberation Front and Pierre Commin, who renewed Guy Mollet's previous offer. (Courrière, 1969, p. 408) Then came the Rome meeting on September 2-3, 1956. The National Liberation Front (FLN) was represented by Mohamed Khider, M'hamed Yazid, and Abdel Rahman Kiouane, while the French side was represented by Pierre Commin. (al-Zubayri, 1999, p. 115) At the time, Lacoste was fighting in Algeria with a force of 400,000 soldiers, (Courrière, 1969, p. 388) reflecting the French side's lack of seriousness in these talks. The meeting was more about gauging the situation than genuinely discussing an agreement. The French government refused to negotiate with anyone other than the representatives of the Algerian people (in its view), meaning the exclusion of the FLN. It insisted that there would be no negotiations until a ceasefire was established and elections were held. (Courrière, 1969, p. 409) This contradicted the principles of the FLN. The last meeting in these contacts took place in Belgrade on September 22, 1956, but it ended without result. The hijacking of the plane carrying the leaders of the revolution on October 22, 1956, effectively ended any initiative for understanding between the two sides. (Patrick Evenot, 2013, p. 283)

Thus, the fate of the secret communications of 1956 was failure, because the French side did not seriously seek to negotiate as much as it was trying to get to know the National Liberation Front and to find out the minimum concessions it could offer.

3- Renewal of negotiations 1960-1962:

The French government gambled on a military solution against the Algerian Revolution, employing every repressive measure to contain it. However, all these measures failed to quell the Algerian Revolution and only increased France's diplomatic isolation. In parallel with French repression, the National Liberation Front (FLN) developed its military strategies and brought the revolution into France, sabotaging the economy, oil and gas installations, and police stations to sway French public opinion against the government's policies. (Saadallah, 2007, p. 182) The establishment of the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic on September 19, 1958, contributed to increased diplomatic pressure on France, raising awareness of the justness of the Algerian cause

and gaining alliances with various countries around the world and within all international bodies. This influenced the United Nations discussions on the Algerian question during its thirteenth session, as supporters of the Algerian cause gained ground after France withdrew from the debate.

On September 16, 1959, de Gaulle proposed a plan for self-determination, contingent upon a ceasefire, offering three possible solutions: complete separation from France; the Frenchification of Algerians through integration into the French population; or the formation of an Algerian government by Algerians with French assistance (de Gaulle, 1971, p. 87) (meaning autonomy within the French Union), with France retaining control of the Sahara (Yahya, 1959, pp. 346-349) and dividing Algeria into two parts to ensure the security of settlers in the northern regions. This demonstrates de Gaulle's continued maneuvering to secure significant gains for France's withdrawal from Algeria.

The Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic welcomed the French position, provided it took into account the issues of Algerian national unity and territorial integrity.

The Algerian negotiator was keen to embody his principles and confront the challenges:

- Melin talks:

The Melun talks were the first official contact indicating a shift in the French government's policy towards Algeria. However, the French government wanted the Melun talks to be based on the principles of the September 16, 1959 declaration, which stipulated a ceasefire followed by an indefinite period of calm (Al-Moudjahid, 13/03/1961)—a move that effectively amounted to surrender. The Algerian delegation vehemently rejected the French proposal, arguing that it contradicted the Algerian negotiating principles, which required recognition of independence before a ceasefire. This thwarted de Gaulle's plans, as he believed that through his maneuvers he could achieve for France what its army had failed to achieve on the battlefield. (Al-Moudjahid, 13/03/1961)

In a press statement, Farhat Abbas emphasized that ending the war in Algeria could not be separated from a political solution to the Algerian question. He explained that a truce would enable the French army—if the talks dragged on—to expand and occupy areas liberated by the National Liberation Army, where it had sacrificed six years of fighting. He asked: "When has a cessation of hostilities ever preceded talks to end the fighting?" (Al-Moudjahid, 13/03/1961) He argued that the continuation of the fighting was the FLN's trump card, through which it could pressure the French government. Given the daily economic and human losses, France would have no choice but to make concessions to the Algerian negotiator.

- The Lucerne meeting in Switzerland:

It came after the demonstrations of the Algerian people on December 11, 1960, and the failure of the French army to achieve victory over the National Liberation Army despite its numerical and technical superiority, (Harbi, 1983, p. 231) in addition to the diplomatic victory for the Algerian cause due to the echo of the demonstrations, as the United Nations General Assembly voted in 1960 on a resolution recognizing the right of the Algerian people to freely determine their own destiny and their right to independence on the basis of respect for the unity and integrity of the Algerian territory and under international supervision. (Al-Moudjahid, 13/03/1961)

The Lucerne meeting took place on February 20, 1961, where the French delegation focused on a truce while retaining the Sahara and considered it non-negotiable, given that it is a sea with coasts inhabited by several peoples and France must consult with everyone (Ben Khedda, 1986, p. 21). The Sahara issue remained a stumbling block to negotiations due to its underground wealth and geopolitical location, making it a primary target for Western and French imperialism. (Harbi, 1981, p. 393)

But the Algerian delegation emphasized its previous positions, which were the unity of the Algerian territory and people, that the National Liberation Front was the sole representative of the people, and that there would be no cessation of fighting except after negotiations and the signing of the agreement. (Ihaddaden, 2007, p. 82)

Saad Dahlab explained in a press meeting that a truce means a cessation of fighting, and a cessation of fighting means abandoning the struggle, which is something that can never be accepted unless we obtain at least real guarantees for self-determination. (Al-Moudjahid, 13/03/1961) This led to the failure of the meeting.

- Neuchâtel Meeting: March 5, 1961

Talks between the two delegations resumed in Switzerland, and the French delegation conceded some of its conditions, recognizing the National Liberation Front as the sole representative of the Algerian people, and agreeing to discuss the Sahara issue (Ihaddaden, 2007, p. 82), but it proposed postponing this after the issue of self-determination was decided, as another maneuver that could jeopardize the future of the independent Algerian state, which led the Algerian delegation to reject the French proposal because it contradicted its principle in the negotiations.

- The First Evian Negotiations: May 20 - June 13, 1961

Faced with the growing successes of Algerian diplomacy, de Gaulle became convinced that France's continued hold on Algeria was damaging the morale of its army and its national unity. (de Gaulle, 1971, p. 85) On April 11, 1961, he declared his acceptance of moving towards a serious solution for handing over power to the Algerians: "The least that can be said is that Algeria is costing us far more than we are gaining from it... France has no objection to the Algerian people deciding to form a state to manage their country's affairs." (de Gaulle, 1971, p. 117)

De Gaulle showed some flexibility on certain issues, such as acknowledging that foreign policy was the prerogative of the Algerian state, returning squadrons of aircraft to France, releasing approximately 6,000 Algerian political prisoners, and transferring Ben Bella and his companions from Aix Island to the Turquin Palace. (de Gaulle, 1971, p. 126) However, fundamental issues remained unresolved, such as the truce, the Western Sahara, and national unity. After thirteen sessions, the Evian negotiations ended without reaching a solution, and the Algerian delegation remained committed to its principles of national unity, territorial integrity, and a cessation of fighting after the recognition of independence.

- Les Rousses Talks: February 11-19, 1962

De Gaulle made concessions to the Algerian negotiator, and the two delegations discussed the contentious issues over eight days. The text of the agreement was drafted for submission to the French government and the National Council of the Algerian Revolution for ratification. The agreement included the conditions set by the Algerian negotiator as a basis for ending the fighting, namely the recognition of Algerian sovereignty over the entire national territory and independence internally and externally before the cessation of hostilities, and they considered the referendum a legal formality. (Ihaddaden, 2007, p. 89)

The provisional government appointed Karim Belkacem as head of the Algerian delegation to resume negotiations in Evian, which lasted from March 7 to 18, 1962 and ended with the signing of the ceasefire agreement, which came into effect at noon on March 19, embodying the principles of negotiation set by the National Liberation Front at the beginning of the revolution, and for which it faced all the challenges of the French government, namely the independence of Algeria, the recognition of the National Liberation Front as the sole representative of the people, and the unity of the territory. (al-Shaykh, 2003, p. 131)

Conclusion:

The negotiations embodied the political dimension of the Algerian liberation struggle, a dimension complementing the armed struggle. This reflects the awareness of the revolution's leaders of the role of political action and diplomatic pressure in the liberation struggle of the second half of the 20th century, and its implications for the decline of traditional colonialism.

The revolution's leaders demonstrated remarkable political acumen in handling the negotiations with the French government on an equal footing. From the outset of the armed struggle, they proposed a peaceful solution that would end the bloodshed and guarantee Algeria's complete independence. This proposal was outlined in the November 1st Declaration, a political document that governs the Algerian liberation struggle and serves as a fundamental reference for the revolution's requirements, methods, and objectives.

The revolution's leaders demonstrated steadfastness and resilience in the negotiations, just as they had on the battlefield. They successfully thwarted all French maneuvers aimed at forcing them to make geographical, political, and social concessions to French colonialism. They compelled the French government to make concessions and yield to their demands, while upholding the principles of negotiation as declared in the revolution's charters. The Algerian negotiator maintained the unity of the Algerian people and achieved full sovereignty over all Algerian territory despite colonial military and political pressures.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based exclusively on historical sources, archival documents, official statements, newspapers, and previously published scholarly works. It does not involve human participants, personal data, interviews, surveys, or experimental research. Consequently, ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required. The research adheres to academic integrity standards, ensuring accurate citation, objective analysis, and respect for historical sources.

Author Contributions

- **Dr. Bouden Ghanem:** Conceptualization of the study, historical analysis, interpretation of diplomatic developments, drafting of the manuscript, and overall supervision of the research.
- **Dr. Achouri Ahmed:** Source collection, archival and documentary analysis, contribution to the theoretical framework, critical revision, and validation of historical interpretations.

Both authors contributed substantially to the work and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this study.

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