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	RESEARCH ARTICLE 			
<h2>Colonial Press and Political Consciousness in Algeria: A Comparative Study of "Alger Républicain and L'Écho d'Alger"</h2>				
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Abstract <p>This study examines the role of the press in Algeria during the colonial period as an active instrument in the political and intellectual struggle, through a comparative analysis of <i>Alger Républicain</i> and <i>L'Écho d'Alger</i>. The former represented an anti-colonial media current, defending national and social rights, contributing to the spread of political awareness, and supporting the liberation struggle despite censorship and bans. In contrast, <i>L'Écho d'Alger</i> reflected the positions of European settlers, adopting a pro-colonial discourse that justified military repression and opposed independence demands. The study concludes that the colonial press was not neutral, but played a pivotal role in shaping consciousness and embodying the conflict between the national liberation project and the French colonial project. The comparison between these two newspapers highlights the divergent use of media in covering political and social events and reveals the press's role in either supporting or resisting the colonial project.</p>				
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Introduction

Colonial press served as an accurate mirror reflecting the political and intellectual divergences in Algeria from the late 1930s to the early 1960s. Analyzing the content of newspapers is of paramount importance for understanding the positions of elites, colonial authorities, and national movements. This study aims to shed light on two contrasting models of the press published in Algeria during the French colonial period: *Alger Républicain*, which adopted an anti-colonial stance and defended national rights, and *L'Écho d'Alger*, which represented the voice of European settlers and advocated the preservation of French sovereignty.

Firstly: *Alger Républicain*

Alger Républicain was one of the most prominent political and cultural newspapers published in Algeria during the French colonial period. It was founded on **October 25, 1938**, by the French journalist **Pascal Pia**, with the support of the French Communist Party, as a critical platform aimed at exposing colonial practices and defending the national and social rights of the Algerian people (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955; Bennoune, 2010, pp. 121–123).

1. Definition and Origins of the Newspaper

Alger Républicain was a French-language newspaper that aimed to convey the voice of the Algerian people and their national and social issues under French colonial rule. It was considered one of the few newspapers to adopt a clear anti-colonial stance, advocating for the political and social rights of Algerian society (Bennoune, 2010, pp. 123–125). The newspaper was founded and initially managed by **Pascal Pia**, a well-known French journalist and political activist, who dedicated the publication to reporting on colonial injustice and oppression. The newspaper also featured contributions from notable figures such as the French-Algerian philosopher **Albert Camus**, who was among its most prominent editors and writers (Merlin, 2004, pp. 45–47).

The newspaper experienced several interruptions due to colonial censorship and bans. It ceased publication at the beginning of World War II in 1939, resumed in 1943, and was ultimately banned in 1955 because of its support for the Algerian liberation struggle (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955; Bennoune, 2010, pp. 124–125).

2. Content and Issues Covered by the Newspaper

The archives of **Alger Républicain** available on the **Gallica website** contain approximately 3,876 issues, covering the period from October 1938 to September 1955 (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).

A. Political and National Issues

The newspaper addressed national political issues in depth, from warning about the military escalation in Europe in 1939, through analyzing the impact of French elections on Algeria, to supporting the liberation struggle after 1954 (Bennoune, 2010, pp. 121–125).

- **May 27, 1939:** Criticism of colonial practices and the impact of the global crisis (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).
- **August 15, 1954:** Support for armed struggle and the revolution (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).
- **September 10, 1955:** Condemnation of repression and the newspaper's ban (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).

B. Role of Scholars and Reformers

It highlighted the role of the **Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars** in raising awareness among Algerians and defended their cultural and educational rights (Merlin, 2004, pp. 50–54).

- **July 15, 1944:** Articles on the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).
- **November 12, 1948:** On resisting cultural erasure (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).

C. Social and Economic Life

The newspaper published reports on working conditions, strikes, poverty, and healthcare services (Bennoune, 2010, p. 130).

- **February 2, 1947:** On working conditions (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).
- **May 20, 1950:** Analysis of unemployment and poverty (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).

D. Culture and Literature

It included literary and poetic articles addressing Algerian cultural identity (Merlin, 2004, p. 58).

- **March 10, 1940:** Articles by **Kateb Yacine** (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).

E. International Events

It monitored the developments of liberation movements worldwide, such as in India, the Middle East, and the Korean War (Bennoune, 2010, pp. 121–125).

- **September 18, 1947:** Coverage of international liberation movements (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).

F. Prominent Figures

- **Pascal Pia:** Founder and director of the newspaper (Bennoune, 2010, pp. 121–125).
- **Albert Camus:** Editor and writer (Merlin, 2004, pp. 45–50).
- **Henri Alleg:** Editor-in-chief and political activist (Bennoune, 2010, p. 123).
- **Boualem Khalfa:** Editor-in-chief after World War II (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).
- **Kateb Yacine:** Prominent writer and poet who contributed to the newspaper (Gallica, BnF, 1938–1955).

3. Challenges and Censorship

Alger Républicain faced strict censorship and repression from the colonial authorities due to its anti-colonial stance and support for the Algerian liberation struggle, which resulted in repeated bans, most notably in 1939 and 1955 (Bennoune, 2010, pp. 124–125).

Despite these significant obstacles, the newspaper continued to function as an important platform for national and cultural expression, providing a voice for intellectuals, activists, and the broader nationalist movement.

The newspaper's persistence under such repressive conditions highlights its central role in the dissemination of anti-colonial ideas, political mobilization, and the articulation of social grievances. It not only reported on current events but also fostered a sense of solidarity among Algerians, promoting cultural awareness and reinforcing collective identity.

Alger Républicain can therefore be regarded as more than a mere newspaper; it represents a crucial historical record of the Algerian struggle for independence, reflecting the political, social, and cultural forces that shaped national consciousness. This makes it an invaluable source for the study of modern Algerian history and the dynamics of anti-colonial resistance (Merlin, 2004, pp. 45-58).

Secondly: L'Écho d'Alger (1954-1961)

L'Écho d'Alger was one of the most prominent French daily newspapers published in Algeria during the French colonial period. It was founded in 1912 and continued publication until 1961. The newspaper represented the voice of European settlers in Algeria, who strongly supported the continuation of French sovereignty over Algerian territories. Its pages reflected clear pro-colonial political positions and functioned as a media tool to combat Algerian national movements, particularly during the liberation struggle that began on November 1, 1954 (Weber, 1997, pp. 45-55; Gallica, BnF, 1912-1961).

This study aims to analyze the content and themes of L'Écho d'Alger during the most intense phase of modern Algerian history (1954-1961), within the broader context of its overall publication history. The analysis includes a general reading of the newspaper's different periods, followed by an in-depth study of the content published during the years of the revolution, with careful documentation of its positions, topics, and the media language employed (Ageron, 1991, pp. 241-245; Shepard, 2006, pp. 185-190).

1. General Overview of the Periods of L'Écho d'Alger (1912-1961)

L'Écho d'Alger was founded in 1912 as a media platform serving the interests of European settlers in Algeria, who constituted an influential segment within the colonized society. During its early decades, the newspaper's content centered on promoting French identity in Algeria, supporting French colonial policies, and focusing on the economic, political, and cultural affairs of the settlers (Weber, 1997, pp. 45-55).

Between 1930 and 1945, the newspaper took on an increasingly political character, strongly defending French dominance against emerging national movements and emphasizing coverage of global events affecting Algeria within the context of World War II (Stora, 2004, pp. 112-115).

With the outbreak of the Algerian liberation struggle in 1954, the newspaper transformed into a military and political media platform that justified the repressive measures undertaken by the French army and conveyed the settlers' perspective opposing independence, until it ceased publication in 1961 amid escalating political tensions (Gallica, BnF, 1954-1961).

2. Historical Background and Publishing Environment

L'Écho d'Alger was published in the capital, Algiers, primarily serving the European settler community, which by the late 1950s constituted approximately 15% of the population in major cities (Ageron, 1991, pp. 241-242). The newspaper reached its peak circulation during the colonial period, producing around 300 issues annually, with extensive coverage of political and military events. Its content consistently reflected a pro-colonial stance and strongly opposed the Algerian liberation struggle (Gallica, BnF, 1912-1961).

L'Écho d'Alger played a significant role in shaping public opinion among European settlers, serving as a key instrument for colonial propaganda and for portraying the Algerian freedom fighters negatively. The newspaper emphasized the so-called "security and stability" under French rule, often presenting events selectively and from a perspective that distorted the realities on the ground in Algeria (Ageron, 1991, pp. 241-243).

Moreover, the newspaper provided a platform for the settler elite to express their political and social concerns and defend their economic interests, making it an influential tool in supporting French colonial policies and countering the nationalist movement. It contributed to misleading the European public about developments in the Algerian Revolution by disseminating biased and, at times, distorted information to justify military repression (Gallica, BnF, 1912-1961).

3. Content Analysis of the Newspaper by Periods

A. 1954-1955: The Beginning of the Revolution and the Media Response

Following the outbreak of the revolution, the newspaper described the events as a "terrorist uprising," focusing on supporting the official French discourse by emphasizing the "Frenchness of Algeria" and refusing any concession. In its editorial on November 3, 1954, it stated:

"Ce réveil sanglant des insurgés ne doit pas faire oublier que l'Algérie est française et le restera." ("This bloody uprising of the insurgents must not make us forget that Algeria is French and will remain so") (Gallica, BnF, 1954).

B. 1956-1957: Escalation of Violence and Military Operations

The newspaper supported French military operations against the rebels, considering repression necessary to maintain order, and described the insurgents as "terrorist gangs." In the July 20, 1957 issue, it declared:

"La répression est la seule réponse possible contre ces barbares qui menacent l'ordre républicain." ("Repression is the only possible response against these barbarians who threaten the republican order") (Gallica, BnF, 1957).

C. 1958-1959: De Gaulle and Political Shifts

The newspaper welcomed De Gaulle's return but criticized his policies leaning toward Algerian independence, regarding them as a betrayal of the settlers. On June 1, 1959, it stated:

"Le Général De Gaulle trahit la cause française en envisageant un référendum qui mettrait en péril l'Algérie française." ("General De Gaulle betrays the French cause by considering a referendum that would endanger French Algeria") (Gallica, BnF, 1959; Shepard, 2006, pp. 185-190).

D. 1960-1961: Military Coup and Newspaper Ban

The newspaper supported the military coup by the generals against De Gaulle, framing it as a defense of "true Frenchness," which led to its official ban in 1961. In the April 22, 1961 issue, it wrote:

"Nous sommes aux côtés des héros qui défendent la véritable France, celle de l'Algérie française." ("We stand with the heroes who defend the true France, that of French Algeria") (Gallica, BnF, 1961).

4. Main Themes in the Newspaper

- **Politics:** Support for colonial rule and rejection of the revolution (Weber, 1997, pp. 45-55; Stora, 2004, pp. 112-115).
- **Military Repression:** Justification of the use of violence and torture (Ageron, 1991, pp. 242-244).
- **Economy and Society:** Defense of the interests of European settlers (Shepard, 2006, pp. 185-190).
- **Media Discourse:** Incitement against the national liberation movement (Gallica, BnF, 1954-1961).

The content analysis of L'Écho d'Alger demonstrates how the press served as an important instrument in the colonial struggle. The newspaper reflected the opinions of French settlers opposing Algerian independence and contributed to supporting the French repressive policies during the war (Shepard, 2006, pp. 185-190).

Third: Comparative Analysis of *Alger Républicain* and *L'Écho d'Alger* during the French Colonial Period

1-Background and Establishment

Alger Républicain was founded on October 25, 1938, by the French journalist Pascal Pia, with the support of the French Communist Party. It served as a critical platform highlighting the issues of the Algerian people under French colonial rule and advocating for their national and social rights (Bennoune, 2010, pp. 121-123). In contrast, *L'Écho d'Alger* was established in 1912 and primarily aimed to serve the interests of European settlers in Algeria, reflecting their political and social positions, particularly regarding the maintenance of French sovereignty over Algerian territories (Weber, 1997, pp. 45-55).

2-Language and Target Audience

Both newspapers were published in French. However, *Alger Républicain* aimed to convey the voice of the Algerian people, highlighting their political, social, and cultural issues, while *L'Écho d'Alger* catered to European settlers, emphasizing the preservation of French identity and defending their economic and political interests.

3-Political Stance and Content

Alger Républicain adopted a clear anti-colonial position, addressing national political issues, supporting the rights of Algerians in culture and education, and highlighting the role of scholars and reformers in raising national awareness. It also monitored international liberation movements, such as independence struggles in India and the Middle East (Merlin, 2004, pp. 45-58). Conversely, *L'Écho d'Alger* was staunchly pro-colonial, endorsing military measures against insurgents, portraying the national liberation movement as violent and terrorist, and defending the interests of European settlers while distorting the image of the Algerian revolution (Ageron, 1991, pp. 241-245).

4-Prominent Figures and Contributors

Alger Républicain featured contributions from influential intellectuals and political figures such as Pascal Pia, Albert Camus, Henri Alleg, Kateb Yacine, and Boualem Khalfa, making it a key platform for political and cultural discourse (Merlin, 2004, pp. 45-50). *L'Écho d'Alger*, however, focused on voices from the European settler community and pro-colonial French politicians, largely excluding Algerian perspectives.

5-Censorship and Challenges

Alger Républicain faced strict colonial censorship and repeated bans due to its anti-colonial stance and support for the independence movement, particularly in 1939 and 1955 (Bennoune, 2010, pp. 124-125). In contrast, *L'Écho d'Alger* ceased publication in 1961 as political tensions escalated and its ability to support settlers' interests declined (Gallica, BnF, 1954-1961).

6-Historical Role

Alger Républicain represents more than a newspaper; it is a vital historical record of the Algerian national struggle, fostering political and cultural awareness and reinforcing national identity. *L'Écho d'Alger*, on the other hand, functioned as a colonial propaganda tool, serving the interests of European settlers, supporting military repression, and distorting the perception of the Algerian revolution for the French public.

Conclusion

The comparison between *Alger Républicain* and *L'Écho d'Alger* reveals the profound contrast in media discourse in Algeria during the colonial period. Each newspaper played a pivotal role in shaping political consciousness within two opposing groups: the first, a popular nationalist platform advocating liberation and independence; the second, a colonial

elite outlet seeking to consolidate French dominance. Studying these newspapers goes beyond the media dimension, providing a lens through which to understand struggles over identity, loyalty, and resistance in contemporary Algeria. From this perspective, the press constitutes a rich documentary source for understanding the complexities of national history and the liberation struggle.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based exclusively on historical and qualitative analysis of publicly available archival materials, newspapers, and secondary academic sources related to the Algerian colonial period. No human participants, interviews, surveys, or personal data were involved. Consequently, ethical approval was not required. The research adheres to principles of academic integrity, objectivity, and responsible historical scholarship, ensuring accurate citation, contextualized interpretation, and respect for the historical record.

Author Contributions

Gharbi Elhaouas contributed to the conceptualization of the study, archival research, comparative analysis of the selected newspapers, and drafting of the manuscript.

Yasser Ferkous contributed to the theoretical framing, critical revision of the analysis, methodological guidance, and final editing of the manuscript.

Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the article.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Appendices



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