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<p>The Algerian Revolution in African Writings: Albert Téoédjèrè as an Academic Activist and Intellectual Model</p>	<p>Larbi Ghanem University of Batna Algeria Email: larbi.ghanem@univ-batna.dz</p>	
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<p>Abstract This article explores the intellectual, academic, and political trajectory of the African historian and activist Albert Téoédjèrè, emphasizing his influential role in documenting anti-colonial struggles and articulating African resistance narratives during the mid-twentieth century. Focusing on his writings produced at a critical moment in Africa's liberation movements, the study highlights how Téoédjèrè positioned the Algerian Revolution as a paradigmatic model for African emancipation and revolutionary consciousness. The paper examines Téoédjèrè's formative experiences as a student activist in France, his engagement with the Federation of Black African Students (FEANF), and his intellectual contributions through political journalism and scholarly publications. Particular attention is given to his seminal work <i>Africa in Revolt</i> (1960), which offers a profound critique of colonial exploitation, racial discrimination, and the ideological foundations of European domination. Through a combination of historical documentation and critical analysis, Téoédjèrè connected the Algerian struggle for independence to broader African aspirations for unity, dignity, and self-determination. By situating Téoédjèrè's academic activism within the wider context of African and global anti-colonial movements, this article demonstrates how his writings fostered continental solidarity and promoted a vision of African renaissance grounded in political sovereignty and economic independence. His intellectual legacy remains a crucial reference for understanding African identity, resistance, and the enduring struggle against neo-colonial domination.</p>		
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Epigraph

*If you are white, you are deemed right;
if you are brown, you may be tolerated;
but if you are Black, then go to where...*
(Tévoédjèrè, 1960, p. 13)

1. Introduction

With these striking lines, the Beninese scholar Albert Tévoédjèrè opens his influential book *Africa in Revolt*, first published in 1960. The deliberate choice of both the epigraph and the title reflects the profound injustice endured by African peoples under colonial domination and institutionalized racial hierarchies. Tévoédjèrè's words capture not only the lived experience of colonial oppression but also the moral outrage that fueled Africa's liberation struggles.

The book emerged at a decisive historical moment when anti-colonial resistance was intensifying across the African continent. Armed struggles and nationalist movements were gaining momentum, with the Algerian Revolution standing out as one of the most organized, sustained, and symbolically powerful struggles for national liberation. For many African intellectuals and activists, Algeria represented both a practical model of resistance and a moral beacon of hope. At the time of its publication, Tévoédjèrè—then in his early thirties—was not merely expressing opposition to colonial domination. Rather, he articulated a mature and coherent liberation consciousness that mirrored a broader awakening among African societies. This emerging awareness reflected a growing recognition of political rights, human dignity, and historical agency, coupled with a firm rejection of the humiliation imposed by racism and colonial ideology.

Blending historical narrative with critical reflection, *Africa in Revolt* establishes a clear connection between the trajectory of the Algerian Revolution and its far-reaching influence on African societies. Tévoédjèrè presents the Algerian struggle as both a symbolic and practical catalyst for revolutionary consciousness across the continent, inspiring African peoples to envision collective emancipation beyond colonial borders.

This article aims to introduce Albert Tévoédjèrè as an intellectual and activist figure and to examine the significance of his work, particularly its close engagement with the Algerian Revolution. Far from being a purely national conflict, the Algerian struggle emerged in his writings as part of a broader continental project of decolonization—one that embodied resistance, unity, and the aspiration for genuine independence throughout Africa.

2. Albert Tévoédjèrè: Intellectual Formation and Political Awakening

Albert Tévoédjèrè was a writer, journalist, historian, political activist, and public intellectual. He was born on 10 November 1929 in Porto-Novo, then part of the French colony of Dahomey (present-day Benin). Coming from a family of modest means, his early life differed from that of many members of the local elite, shaping his sensitivity to social inequality and injustice.

He began his education in his hometown before continuing his studies in Dakar, Senegal, and later moving to France in 1957, where he enrolled at the University of Toulouse. There, he completed advanced studies in history, geography, and economic sociology, disciplines that would later inform his critical analysis of colonial systems and global inequality (Maxwell, 1998, pp. 375–377).

Tévoédjèrè's years in France marked a decisive turning point in his intellectual and political development. Immersion in French society exposed him to political freedoms, social protections, and institutional stability that contrasted sharply with conditions in colonial Africa. This comparison sharpened his awareness of the structural inequalities produced by colonial rule and revealed the contradictions underlying France's proclaimed values of liberty, equality, and fraternity (Bancel & Devisse, 1993, p. 114).

This heightened consciousness propelled Tévoédjèrè toward political activism. He joined the Federation of Black African Students (FEANF), founded in France in 1950, and rapidly emerged as one of its leading figures. Under his influence, the federation increasingly adopted a militant stance, defending the rights of Black African students while openly denouncing colonial oppression.

His commitment to activism was further demonstrated through his role in founding the journal *The Black African Student*, which became a vital platform for political expression and intellectual resistance. Through this publication, Tévoédjrè authored numerous critical articles condemning European colonial practices, including economic exploitation, resource plundering, political repression, and systematic racial discrimination. His writings highlighted not only the suffering of African peoples in general but also the specific injustices endured under French colonial administration.

The radical nature of his political engagement prompted the French authorities to issue an arrest order against him in April 1957, accusing him of threatening public order and inciting student unrest (Jason, 2002, p. 42). This repression, however, failed to silence him. After his release, Tévoédjrè resumed his activities with renewed determination, eventually becoming editor-in-chief of *The Black African Student*. From this position, he and his colleagues continued to expose colonial violence and denounce the absence of basic living conditions in African colonies.

3. Africa in Revolt and the Algerian Revolution as a Continental Model

Alongside his political engagement, Tévoédjrè pursued his academic career, earning several degrees at the University of Toulouse. Upon returning to Dahomey, he became actively involved in labor union movements, seeking to combat the humiliation and exploitation endured by African workers. He also continued his work as a political journalist, drawing on his expertise in economic sociology and political history to analyze contemporary African issues (Foster, 2019, pp. 149-151).

In 1960, amid widespread armed resistance against European colonialism—including the Algerian Revolution and the Kenyan Mau Mau uprising—Tévoédjrè published *Africa in Revolt*. The book articulated both an analytical framework and an activist vision for Africa's future (Tobor, 2013, p. 53). It emerged at a time when African nationalist parties were increasingly calling for direct political action and armed struggle, while simultaneously warning against colonial strategies of reform designed to preserve domination under the guise of modernization.

Tévoédjrè argued that such colonial reform policies ultimately failed because African societies had developed a heightened political awareness that allowed them to recognize and reject false promises. This awareness exposed the bankruptcy of the colonial “civilizing mission” and reinforced the legitimacy of liberation movements.

Central to his analysis was the Algerian Revolution, which he portrayed as a unifying symbol of resistance and a concrete example of successful anti-colonial struggle. In his writings, Algeria represented not only national liberation but also a continental call to action, encouraging African unity as the only effective response to Western economic and political power.

4. Legacy and Conclusion

Albert Tévoédjrè lived a life marked by intellectual commitment, political struggle, and unwavering dedication to African unity. Throughout his career, he held various political and public roles in his country and witnessed the gradual dismantling of colonial rule across Africa. Yet he remained critical of neo-colonial structures, consistently advocating for economic sovereignty and sustainable development as prerequisites for true independence.

Until the final years of his life, he continued to emphasize that only through unity and collective effort could African nations overcome dependency and reclaim their historical agency. Tévoédjrè passed away on 6 November 2019, just days short of his ninetieth birthday, leaving behind a powerful legacy of resistance, intellectual courage, and visionary thought (Kiki, 2019, p. 51).

His contributions remain an essential reference for scholars seeking to understand African identity, anti-colonial resistance, and the enduring significance of the Algerian Revolution in shaping Africa's path toward liberation and renaissance.

2. A General Overview of the Book

The book under study is of medium length, comprising approximately 150 pages, and was first published in February 1960 by the *Commercial Office for Printing, Distribution, and Publishing* in Beirut. The Arabic edition was translated by Saïd Azz and Najda Hajar, who also contributed an introductory note presenting the author and situating the work within its historical and intellectual context. This introduction plays an important role in framing the text for Arab readers by explaining both the motivations behind its writing and its relevance to contemporary African liberation struggles.

The volume opens with a brief yet meaningful dedication written by Tévoédjrè himself. Composed of five lines, the dedication is addressed successively to his family, to African students, and finally to Senegalese conscripts. This symbolic sequence reflects the author's layered identity: as a private individual shaped by family bonds, as an intellectual

engaged with African youth and student movements, and as a committed activist concerned with the fate of Africans subjected to colonial military service.

The book is introduced by the Senegalese thinker, activist, and journalist Alioune Diop, founder of the influential journal *Présence Africaine*, established in 1947. Diop's preface, entitled "*A Land of Pain and Hope*," articulates a distinctly African perspective that firmly rejects European domination of the continent while affirming the values of unity, progress, and social justice. In this text, Diop expresses a collective African consciousness forged through suffering but oriented toward liberation and renewal.

Alioune Diop (1910–1980) is widely regarded as one of the most prominent cultural figures of twentieth-century Africa. Through the creation of *Présence Africaine*, he provided a vital intellectual platform for African voices and played a decisive role in strengthening African cultural and political identity. His lifelong commitment to reclaiming African heritage and promoting solidarity among African peoples made him a central figure in the intellectual history of decolonization.

In the preface "*A Land of Pain and Hope*," Diop articulates the aspirations of African societies striving to free themselves from European colonial domination. He underscores the necessity of unity, justice, and development, arguing that genuine freedom can only be achieved through cooperation and mutual support among African nations. His reflections emphasize the shared experience of colonial suffering while highlighting cultural identity as a foundational element for political and social liberation. Diop's intellectual legacy, including his contribution to this book, remains an essential reference for understanding African thought in the post-colonial era (Lock, 2013, p. 152).

Structurally, the book is organized into ten main chapters, each addressing political, economic, social, and ideological dimensions of colonial domination and African resistance. Among the most significant chapter titles are: "*Has Colonialism Been Defeated?*," "*Defining the Colonies*," "*Africa: A Continent of Hunger*," "*The African Economy*," "*Our Shortcomings*," "*The Church in Black Africa*," and "*What Is to Be Done After Independence...?*" These chapters are followed by a concluding section devoted to the political role of Black African students and the activities of nationalist parties confronting European colonial presence on the continent (Tévoédjèrè, previously cited, p. 149).

The book's title, *Rebellious Africa*, powerfully captures the historical moment in which it was written—an era marked by the intensification of revolutionary struggle against colonial rule. African liberation movements were confronting the full military and political force of colonial powers determined to suppress resistance. At the same time, the continent had become a theater of ideological rivalry between East and West, adding further complexity to the struggle for independence.

A pivotal event reinforcing this global context was the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung in April 1955, which represented a major turning point in anti-colonial cooperation. Delegates from Africa and Asia affirmed the necessity of strengthening Afro-Asian solidarity and pursuing coordinated action to eradicate colonialism from both continents, regardless of the sacrifices required (ibid., p. 65). This spirit of solidarity profoundly influenced African intellectuals and activists, including Tévoédjèrè.

This political and economic environment strongly shaped Tévoédjèrè's intellectual outlook, as reflected in both the book's title and its internal structure. The chapter headings are coherent and logically interconnected, allowing the author to move fluidly between local realities and international dynamics while maintaining analytical depth and historical precision.

The credibility of Tévoédjèrè's analysis is further reinforced by his frequent use of empirical data, statistical tables, and comparative methodologies. A particularly striking example appears in the chapter "*Africa: A Continent of Hunger*," where he presents a detailed table comparing African workers' monthly wages with the prices of essential goods required for basic survival. This comparison leads to a stark conclusion: colonial wages were so low that they failed to meet even the most fundamental needs, leaving no possibility for economic security or social advancement (Tévoédjèrè, p. 79).

More broadly, the author's extensive intellectual training, combined with his lived experience of political activism, student and labor struggles, imprisonment, and repression by French authorities, enabled him to produce a work that is both academically rigorous and politically courageous. In *Rebellious Africa*, Tévoédjèrè openly condemns unjust French colonial policies and denounces racism directed at Africans—whether in the colonies or within metropolitan France itself. He calls for a radical transformation of these policies and exposes the deliberate distortion of public opinion—French, African, and international—regarding the realities of colonial domination (ibid., p. 81).

3. Tévoédjèrè and the Algerian Revolution

Historical circumstances proved particularly favorable to Albert Tévoédjèrè, allowing him to observe the Algerian Revolution at close range—a struggle that resonated deeply both within France and across the international community. His relocation to France for academic purposes coincided with the revolution's second phase (1956–1958), a period characterized by heightened intensity, broader geographic scope, and increasing international visibility.

Internally, this phase witnessed the consolidation of the revolution's military and political structures. Externally, it marked a turning point as the Algerian question was brought before the United Nations General Assembly, where it

gained unprecedented global attention and exposed the systematic violence inflicted upon the Algerian population under French colonial rule.

Tévoédjère was particularly fortunate to visit Algiers on Saturday, 22 June 1957 (ibid., p. 38), during his return journey from France to his homeland. This visit allowed him to directly observe the harsh realities faced by Algerians under colonial administration, as well as the brutality exercised by European settlers and military forces.

Despite these oppressive conditions, the Algerian people confronted one of the world's most powerful colonial armies with limited material resources but with an unwavering belief in freedom and national sovereignty. Through their resistance, they succeeded in projecting their cause onto the continental and international stage, demonstrating that armed struggle had become the only viable path to liberation for many colonized peoples, particularly in Africa (Bedida, 2009, p. 86).

A deeper reading of the Algerian experience reveals its broader intellectual and political significance. The Algerian Revolution was not merely a localized movement aimed at national independence; it constituted a regional and continental project. The Declaration of 1 November 1954 extended beyond a call for armed struggle against French rule, articulating a strategic vision for African unity and collective liberation from European domination.

This revolutionary dimension profoundly influenced African freedom movements and attracted numerous thinkers and activists, including Tévoédjère, who engaged directly with the Algerian cause. In his work *Africa and the Algerian Question*, he moved beyond descriptive narration to offer a penetrating analysis grounded in personal observation and firsthand experience, thereby enhancing the documentary and intellectual value of his writing.

Tévoédjère devoted a substantial section of his book to the Algerian Revolution, presenting it as a symbol of resistance for colonized peoples worldwide. On page 38, he provides a vivid account of the daily hardships endured by Algerians, detailing colonial violence and human rights abuses in a manner that strengthens the credibility of his analysis. He also portrays the revolution as a model of organization and determination, emphasizing the Algerians' capacity to sustain armed resistance despite relentless repression.

According to Tévoédjère, the Declaration of 1 November was far more than a proclamation of revolt; it was a comprehensive political program that outlined a clear path toward independence while simultaneously promoting regional and African cooperation. It reflected the Algerian leadership's awareness of shared continental challenges and their desire to position Algeria's struggle as a source of inspiration for other liberation movements.

From this perspective, the Algerian Revolution transcended its geographical boundaries to become a global symbol of freedom and dignity. Tévoédjère's analysis underscores the intimate connection between the Algerian struggle and the broader African quest for liberation, highlighting the revolution's enduring influence on political thought and anti-colonial activism.

Albert Tévoédjère's work thus stands as a vital testimony to the transformative impact of the Algerian Revolution on African liberation movements. It demonstrates how unity, perseverance, and ideological clarity enabled colonized peoples to confront imperial domination. Through his honest and lucid treatment of the subject, Tévoédjère helped convey the message of the Algerian Revolution to a wider audience, reinforcing its place within the global history of liberation struggles.

These experiences strengthened his conviction in the justice of the Algerian cause and deepened his belief that, despite immense suffering, the Algerian people were resolute in their determination to achieve independence. He regarded their struggle as a model for other African movements, emphasizing that liberation required both national commitment and continental solidarity. Ultimately, the Algerian people's steadfast resistance confirmed his belief that victory and sovereignty could be attained through perseverance and unity.

4. The Algerian Revolution as the Core of the Colonial Question in Tévoédjère's Thought

Tévoédjère conveyed his conviction with particular clarity in the opening lines of his discussion of Algeria:

"...The Algerian question today represents the key to the entire colonial issue, for the fate of all the colonies is, in some measure, linked to the outcome of the war in Algeria. Today, the Algerians bear the heaviest share of the sufferings endured by any subjugated people. One of the blessings I value most, in my view, is that I was able today to witness with my own eyes a scene among the terrible realities of Algeria." (Tévoédjère, p. 38)

These words reveal the depth of Tévoédjère's understanding of the Algerian Revolution as a pivotal and decisive moment within the wider history of decolonization. For him, Algeria did not represent a single national case among many; rather, it represented the **strategic center of the colonial question**, whose outcome would shape the future trajectories of other colonized societies—especially across Africa.

During his return journey from France, the young activist encountered—directly and concretely—conditions that had previously reached him through Algerians living in France: narratives of sacrifice, endurance, and unexpected victories achieved despite limited resources. What made the Algerian struggle particularly significant in his eyes was the profound imbalance between the modest means of the revolutionaries and the overwhelming military capacity of the colonial power. Yet, in Tévoédjère's interpretation, this asymmetry did not weaken the revolution's legitimacy or prospects;

instead, it strengthened its moral and political meaning, because it demonstrated that **historical change may be generated by conviction, organization, and collective discipline**, not merely by material superiority.

On this basis, T vo dj r  advanced a broader argument: a people committed to a just cause, with a clear political program and sustained unity, can ultimately overcome even the most powerful systems of domination. He further suggested that in contexts where political reforms remained superficial—limited to administrative measures or constitutional frameworks that did not transform the colonial relationship—armed struggle came to be perceived by many colonized peoples as a necessary pathway to sovereignty (Hammana, 2005, p. 227). Importantly, T vo dj r  framed this logic in ethical terms: he considered such revolutions to be fundamentally revolutions of **justice and dignity**, rather than revolutions driven by vengeance.

5. Dignity, Belonging, and the Rejection of Colonial Dependency

T vo dj r  concluded from the Algerian experience that the revolution embodied the struggle of a people deeply attached to their identity, heritage, and right to belong to their own land. To strengthen this interpretation, he cited the testimony of an Algerian student in France, **Mohamed Arkoun**, who expressed a core aspiration of the Algerian struggle: “...Above all, we want Algerians to feel at home in their own country, to be free of the sense of alienation. We no longer wish to hear expressions about France’s greatness, France’s generosity, or France’s glory in Algeria. We would rather live in misery and poverty than endure French pity...” (T vo dj r , p. 39)

This testimony functions in T vo dj r ’s text as more than an individual opinion. It serves as a condensed articulation of a collective political psychology: the demand for independence is inseparable from the demand to restore dignity, end imposed inferiority, and reject symbolic dependency. In this sense, the revolution becomes not only a conflict over territory and governance, but also a struggle over **identity, recognition, and the right to historical agency**.

From this perspective, T vo dj r  interpreted Algerian victory as a victory whose significance exceeded national borders. If Algeria could defeat a major colonial power, then the broader African horizon of liberation would be reshaped. He therefore argued that Algeria’s success would strengthen liberation movements throughout the continent, including those living under French, British, Belgian, and Portuguese colonial systems. Conversely, he suggested that a failure of the Algerian Revolution would have had serious consequences for the pace and direction of decolonization in Africa, potentially prolonging colonial domination and discouraging other movements (Carlile, 2006, p. 86).

6. Solidarity as a Strategic Responsibility

In T vo dj r ’s analysis, the hardships faced by Algerians under colonial rule were not merely a national tragedy; they represented a profound human and political crisis that demanded attention and solidarity. He argued that supporting Algeria was not only a moral position but also a strategic responsibility. Solidarity, in this sense, served two interconnected purposes:

1. **Ethical purpose:** affirming the legitimacy of a people’s struggle for freedom, dignity, and self-determination.
2. **Political purpose:** transforming the Algerian experience into a continental source of mobilization—an example capable of strengthening confidence and determination among other colonized societies.

Accordingly, T vo dj r  treated the Algerian Revolution as a generator of collective consciousness: a struggle that could turn suffering into political meaning and inspire organized action elsewhere. The revolution’s success, he maintained, would positively influence the overall balance between colonized peoples and colonial powers across Africa. Conversely, the faltering of such a symbol could reinforce the colonial system’s legitimacy and strengthen mechanisms of control.

7. Algeria’s Revolutionary Diplomacy and the African Liberation Horizon

Beyond the military dimension, T vo dj r  drew attention—directly or implicitly—to Algeria’s role in building international legitimacy through revolutionary diplomacy. The Algerian struggle communicated its message in global forums and contributed to a political climate in which colonialism could increasingly be challenged, debated, and delegitimized. Within African conferences and transnational networks, the Algerian case became an emblem of effective organization, disciplined resistance, and strategic communication.

This diplomatic dimension reinforced Algeria’s symbolic status as a leading force within continental emancipation. It helped spread a revolutionary vocabulary centered on sovereignty, dignity, unity, and solidarity—concepts that many African movements adopted within their own contexts (Mekrani, 2009, p. 203). Moreover, the Algerian Revolution affirmed a principle that resonated strongly in the period: the liberation of one part of Africa was inseparable from the liberation of the whole.

In this sense, the revolution was not merely an internal Algerian struggle; it functioned as part of a broader continental project aimed at dismantling colonial exploitation. T vo dj r ’s position aligns with this view: he repeatedly insisted that

the Algerian question was the “key” to the wider colonial problem, because its outcome would help determine the confidence, direction, and strategic imagination of liberation movements across Africa (Mekrani & Touati, 2009, p. 44).

8. Conclusion

This study has examined the intellectual and activist trajectory of **Albert Téhoédjère** as an African academic figure whose life combined political engagement with a sustained commitment to anti-colonial thought. Téhoédjère was not simply an observer of colonial injustice; he participated actively in multiple arenas: student activism, political journalism, labor engagement, and intellectual production aimed at exposing colonial practices and supporting liberation struggles.

His close engagement with the Algerian Revolution was central to his interpretation of Africa’s decolonization. For Téhoédjère, Algeria represented a decisive historical case demonstrating that liberation could be achieved through unity, organization, and commitment to justice. The Algerian struggle, in his writings, transcended national borders and became a continental symbol—capable of shaping African revolutionary consciousness and accelerating the dismantling of colonial domination.

The significance of this study lies in highlighting how Téhoédjère’s work documented an interconnected liberation trajectory, where national struggles carried regional and continental implications. It also underscores the extent to which the Algerian Revolution functioned as a cornerstone in reshaping African political imagination and international anti-colonial discourse, reinforcing the idea that Africa’s future depended not only on independence, but on solidarity, dignity, and unity.

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