North African Veterans
from Colonial Mobilization to National Reintegration

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Introduction

To understand the specificity of the North African experience of demobilization/reintegration, it is imperative to look at the process of colonial mobilization itself: how North Africans found themselves twice involved in a world war to defend and liberate the same nation that had subdued them and subjected them to a colonial system particularly repressive and dehumanizing. Also, how they found themselves involved in fighting the same nation(s) they twice fought for.

North Africa experienced the full weight of both World War I and II. By the turn of the 20th century, North Africa became a “reservoir of men” supplying labor and manpower to the metropole. During the First World War 173,000 Algerians were enlisted; 25,000 of them never came back. Tunisia sent 56,000 soldiers, 12,000 of whom were killed (Laroui, 1977: 352). Algerian goums were used early in the war to subdue Morocco. And as early as the signing of the protectorate in Morocco in 1912, Hubert Lyautey immediately made use of Moroccan troops. By the outbreak of World War II, he sent 34,000 soldiers; 17,000 were wounded by the end of the war, and 9,000 never came back (Gershovich:173).

The Second World War was not only costly to North Africa in terms of human sacrifice, but happened in part on its territories. And because it was immediately followed by decolonization, the three countries of the Maghreb inherited a significant number of combatants. As the war broke off, French mobilization from within its colonial territories was intense. At the time of the fighting in France, twelve Arméed' Afrique regimes were involved. North Africa became the main supply of manpower as the war continued, even after the defeat of France. According to Thomas:

Between 1939 and June 1940, about 300,000 colonial troops were recruited in North Africa, 197,300 across Afrique Occidentale Française
and 116,000 within the Indochina federation. At the point when the armistice agreements were signed in June, a further 313,750 colonial troops had been scheduled for recruitment between 1940 and 1944. (Thomas 1998: 12 cited in Maghraoui, 2000: 96)

However, while the need to face the German was vital for the French, the need to control the situation in the North African colonies was no less vital: “177,000 North Africans were used to maintain order (85,000 in Morocco, 66,700 in Algeria and 25,400 in Tunisia” (Thomas 1989: 48 cited in Maghraoui, ibid.).

This intense moment of mobilization—ending in the liberation of France—was soon followed by a re-mobilization (from the same reservoir of men), aimed this time at liberating the colonies themselves from France. The defeat of France prompted nationalists in Indochina to engage in a ferocious armed struggle against an already exhausted metropole, causing it to withdraw after a loss of 93,000 soldiers (more than in Algeria). Many of those who lost their lives were men from the African colonies. Some of those who participated vigorously in these wars soon emerged as key military officers—and even politicians—immediately after independence, especially in Morocco and in Algeria.

The liberation of France and the end of the war in 1945 were only the beginning of trouble for the French empire. In a highly tragic event of May 8, 1945, in Sétif, the French brutally repressed an anti-colonial demonstration of Algerians, triggering what is now commonly called the Algerian war of liberation (1954-1962) (and, then, only as the war without a name). An estimated 6,000 Algerians were massacred by French colonial authorities.

In both Morocco (1955) and Tunisia (1953), nationalists organized armed forces against a weakened but still colonially determined France. These struggles were different from country to country, but they were undoubtedly longer, bloodier, and more costly in Algeria than in Tunisia.
and Morocco. It is the nature of these struggles that in many ways significantly impacted the social and political situation of ex-combatants in the post-independence era.

Given this situation, marked by an unusual number of wars of different natures and on different fronts—from colonial to national, with combatants fighting on the side of France only to fight against it a few years later—a significant number of combatant groups emerged, with different statuses because of their military experiences. There were the *anciens* combatants of France, a legal status in and of itself, referring to those who fought with France (and Republican Spain), whether European or North African. France was mainly in charge of these veterans. There were also the *moujahidoun*, also called *jounoud*, especially in Algeria, referring to all those who fought for independence with the FLN. Among these, there are those who fought inside the country and there are those who were stationed on the borders in military units. There are the nationalists (*al wataniyunrijaal al muqawama or muqawimun*) in Morocco and the *moujahidoun* of Tunisia, all of whom fought France. Then there are the *harkis*, those Algerians who fought on the side of France against the FLN.¹

In this paper, I will consider all these groups while paying specific attention to the *anciens* combatants and the *moujahidoun*, especially in Algeria, to understand the conditions (planned or not) under which these soldiers were demobilized (or not) and reintegrated into society (or not). Since each country has its own specific context, I will consider each under a separate section. I use the term *combatants* or *veterans* not to mean a legal status, but only to refer to a historical experience—all those who fought during colonial and anti-colonial wars whether on the side of France or on the side of colonized nations. When necessary, I will use the legal term in usage in each country.

¹ The case of the *harkis*, not treated in this paper because it was considered a French problem, finds an original treatment in the work of Vincent Crapanzano. See *The Harkis* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011).
The French System of Reinsertion of Ex-Combatants

Given the magnitude of French mobilization of North Africans in its colonial wars, it is no surprise that many of these soldiers would benefit from the French system while continuing to live in their own countries. Because of France’s long tradition of mobilization in North Africa, it had already put in place an association for the ex-combatants. One of these was Diar El-Askiri, “The Amitiés Africaines, a charitable organization set up in 1935 at the behest of Marshal Franchet d’Espéry (Degeorges, 2006: 108). However, the purpose of these associations, openly charitable for the benefit of soldiers serving far away from the metropole, was in North Africa “the surveillance of North African veterans for seditious ideologies” (Ibid).

Associations of combatants became, then, an important strategy for reinsertion, but also of sustaining the community of combatants that the war created. The association of combatants created in 1927 continued to be officially maintained under the patronage of the state itself. The associations, from their inception, were important systems of reinsertion even though they were created to perpetuate the memories of fallen comrades, honor the wounded ones, and assist the handicapped, and stay above state politics (Remond, 1955: 267, 190). However, after the war, the associations developed even more strategies; a number of commemorations were annually planned by the state, in which ex-combatants participated. Such commemorations were a way of recognizing the combatants even while displaying the state power that claims itself to be from the people, the same people that fought colonialism and brought independence (Carlier, 1991).

The state also offered adult schooling for the anciens combattants to prepare them for insertion into professional life, and facilitated this by making them take a test (instead of undergoing an interview) for jobs they applied to. And above all, the ancient combatants were entitled to a carte that also allowed them to receive a pension from the state.
North African combatants (those who fought with France during the First and Second World Wars) benefited from this system, despite the inequality in pay and treatment that has continued till recently. Offices of *anciens* combatants were opened in Casablanca, Algiers, and Tunis. Those offices served as places where the *anciens* combatants found support and medical and social aid. But this system of associations, with its services for the combatants, was by no means the solution to reinserting a population that had served France in two wars. They continue to be a living example of marginality and neglect (Gershovich, 2007). In the Maghreb, in addition to specific dynamics of post-independence state building, it is rather their own communities and families that constituted for them the best means of reinsertion.

However, not all French combatants and North African combatants were legally considered *anciens combattants*, and thus could not qualify for programs of reinsertion. Those who fought in Indochina and even Algeria did not benefit from the legal status of combatants given the fact that these were not even considered wars, but only “*théâtres d’opérations extérieurs,*” or for Algeria, “*opérations en Afrique du Nord.*” It was only in 1999 that the law of October 18 recognized la “*guerre d’Algérie*” and this was also associated with the “*combats*” in Tunisia and in Morocco. This means that the French system neglected all those who fought during the wars. There was never any attempt to reinsert them after demobilization. This was left to the dynamics of French society itself.

Be that as it may, it is the French model of demobilization and reinsertion that the three countries of the Maghreb attempt to reproduce, more or less faithfully, to deal with the significant numbers of fighters that made independence possible. In Algeria, the model looks more like an imitation of the French one; in Morocco it is almost an improvement of the French model; and in Tunisia it is short of the French model.
Demobilization and Reintegration in the Maghreb

Morocco

It was after the brutal repression of the resistance of the Rif (1926) that Spain found itself in the middle of a civil war opposing military men to the Republican forces who championed parliamentary democracy. The north of Morocco, once an enemy war zone, became in fifteen years (by 1936) a reservoir of manpower. Between 50,000 and 100,000 Moroccans were recruited for that war, a military force that was decisive in the victory of Franco against the Republicans (Fleming, 1983). After the signing of the Protectorate (March 30, 1912)), the French immediately recruited Moroccan soldiers, on the model of the goums in Algeria, to occupy the countryside.

At the beginning of the Second World War, a total of 83,000 Moroccans out of 90,000 were stationed in France to confront the Germans (Gershovish, 185). Moroccan troops also served in the fighting against the Italians on the border between Tunisia and Libya. However, after the defeat of France and the signing of the armistice that forced it to reduce its armed forces to no more than 100,000, the Moroccan contingent was reduced by half, from 83,000 to 46,800. It was at this time that a program of demobilization and reintegration was set in place: “the policy of preferential treatment for returned soldiers was applied on a large scale to provide employment in Protectorate-related jobs. The richest pool of alternative employment for them came from the ranks of Morocco’s local and regional police forces” (Gershovich, 190).

However, opting for resistance against the Germans, the French clandestinely used the Moroccan countryside to build up their military: “remote, isolated goum posts were chosen to serve as covert depots for munitions and weaponry, including heavy armament and motorized vehicles (Gershovich, 191). Known as la période du camouflage des goums, the French were
able to secretly mobilize 50,000 men with the Allies in November 1942 (Magraoui, 2000: 99). This is in addition to “some 20,000 individual arms, 400 automatic weapons, 60 cannons, 200 mortars, 150 cars, and 50 tanks” (Jouin, 1972: 112 cited by Magraoui, 2000: 101).

When the Allied Forces landed in Casablanca in November 1942, the French could again use Moroccan manpower—a contingent of which was immediately sent to Tunisia to fight the Axis forces. Other battles followed in Italy itself, in France, and in Austria, where Moroccans fought heroically and suffered heavy casualties estimated at over 8,000 men either killed or severely wounded (Gershovich, 193).

Soon after the victory of the Allies and the liberation of France, another war broke off in December 1946 in Indochina. Moroccan veterans, demobilized after the war, were again remobilized and sent to fight the Viet Minh: 847 with several Moroccan officers such as Oufkir, Sefraoui, Serguini, and Bougrine, all of whom would occupy important positions in the Moroccan army (called FAR) and even in the Moroccan government (Smith, 1999). Similarly, the end of the war also witnessed the emergence of an armed anti-colonial struggle in Moroccan cities and an entire army called Armée de Libération operating in the Atlas mountains. Unlike the Armée de Libération Nationale in Algeria, which was made of many former French Algerian officers, the Armée nationale was made of volunteers with no formal training in modern warfare. However, in the last year before independence a few soldiers joined the guerillas (M’Barek, 1994 cited in Gershovich, 2007).

The case of Morocco is less complicated than both Algeria and Tunisia as the transition from a colonial army to a national one seemed smooth. During the German occupation of France, Mohamed V unequivocally sided with the French and made the fight against the Germans a Morocco fight. As Gershovich sums it up:
Once it succumbed to the termination of its rule over Morocco, the former military apparatus of the French Protectorate became an active partner of the Royal Family in its bid to solidify its authority. The focal point of French assistance was the formation of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces (FAR). Acting towards that end, in early May 1956 the French military began transferring battalions of Moroccan tirailleurs and spahis to the FAR. A total of 20,000 were placed at the disposal of the Moroccan government. (Gerchovich, 211–12)

Veterans of the Spanish army along with veterans of the Armée de Libération were also included in FAR (ibid.). In any case, while those who served in the French army transitioned to the FAR, the veterans of the Spanish army (amounting to 10,000) and members of the Armée de Libération (estimated at 5,000) were also incorporated in the FAR after an agreement between Crown Prince Hasan II and leaders of the veterans.

This military reintegration of heterogeneous groups within a single unit of a national army with a royal name was not without difficulties. It was important to minimize if not to eliminate what was perceived as a great danger for the then–new national order. However, it was not easy since the groups to be reintegrated in the national army were of heterogeneous tribal and regional elements as well as different military experiences. This translated into tensions and conflict in the new state institution that was the army. Gershovich also notices the initial mistrust between the officers that were trained in France and in Spain and served in Europe and in Indochina and the combatants that fought in the Armée de Libération (212). Generally those who fought as soldiers with the France and Spain looked down at those who fought in the mountains as guerrillas, while members of the guerillas never trusted those soldiers who fought with colonial France. This latent conflict was resolved at the expense of ex-combatants of the Armée de Libération, who were marginalized and eventually forced to retire.
However, it should be stressed that despite the heterogeneity of the officers, the success of integrating all the combatants into the army was also made possible by the fact that Morocco could unite around the king as a legitimate figure. Morocco also had a traditional elite with a strong interest in the monarchy. Mohamed V too, like Bourguiba, gained considerable national legitimacy because he was seen as the first combatant, a man who sacrificed his family for the independence of his country (Monjib, 1992: 27). After independence, and at least till the death of Mohamed V, there was less conflict over power and even after he was succeeded by Hasan II, when the integration was already complete, the king guaranteed a unity that could only be compared to the one created by Bourguiba (Moore, 1970).

Equally important is the fact that while the army was the means of reintegration, the returning soldiers from the war and the combatants from the mountains could also find a community and a family to integrate into, due mainly to the Moroccan social structure where the individual is a part and parcel of a collectivity.

Nevertheless, France as a former colonial power whose influence was still strongly felt in the region was able to assure the reintegration of its own Moroccan soldiers who fought with her during the First and Second World Wars. A number of Moroccan veterans did not join the FAR and retired in the French army. They, like their counterparts in the Spanish army, benefited from small pensions while living in Morocco. Aided by these small pensions, they reintegrated social life via family life. They occasionally run some small businesses and/or depended on their children to live. Their fate was better than many of those who actively took part in the national resistance, who paid a high cost, and because of their illiteracy, their lack of social connections,
were found on their own with not only stories of heroism but also narratives of torture that they tell their grandchildren with a sense of great national pride. ²

However, though marginalized, they were not stigmatized. In contrast with those who fought the French, the ex-combatant is a victim of the French colonial system whether in his own country or in France where he still suffers from inequalities. Those who fought the French from the period between 1953 and 1956 have a much better and even envious situation since they benefit from a wide range of advantages and benefits guaranteed to them by the state in the form of the royal dahirs of Mohamed V and Hassan II. One can say the program and policies for reintegration in the Maghreb, and not only in Morocco, benefited solely those who fought for independence.

Indeed, it was Mohamed V who created and implemented policies to reintegrate the combatants called ex-resistants and members of the Armée de libération: “we are extremely interested in the issues of the resistances in general and we have decided to create for them, under our highness supervision, an association for their own general benefits, it will be dedicated to guarantee their material and moral benefits …” Mohamed V also made another speech in August 20, 1960, in which he announced dahirs that guaranteed social and material benefits to the resistants: “as soon as we gained our freedom, we dedicated our effort to the resistants, and offered them and the families of the martyrs all and all the aids. And last March, we issued dahirs that protect the status of resistant from banality or fraud and guarantee to the … and the families of martyrs salaries in recognition of their work for the nation and their effort that they deployed for its sake …”

² Old combatants who fought against the French were phenomena in Morocco in 1970s and 1980s; every neighborhood had a few. In addition to their stories of heroism, there was also a sense among them that their struggle and sacrifice were hijacked by groups who not only did not participate, but even collaborated with the French.
In August 19, 1961, Hassan II, following in the footsteps of his father, founded the National Office of Resistant (al maktab alwatani li amuqawimin). This office, with branches in every city and even in small locations in the countryside was responsible for implementing the royal dahirs regarding the resistent and the martyrs. Those dahirs pertained to the material as well as the social conditions of the resistent, and their families, aimed at “paying a debt,” the official discourse says, but in practice, they also aimed at reintegrating the combatants into social life, often with tremendous benefits. Those policies issued by royal dahirs included pensions for the resistent transferable to their spouses and children. The resistent also benefits from a stipend, called minhat at3wid al ijmaali (stipend of collective recompense), when his salary from a job does not exceed 1240 dirhams (approximately 120 euros, then the salary of a school teacher or a certified nurse). If the resistent is an invalid, a committee decides on his monthly stipend depending on the gravity of the wounds he endured during the resistance.

The resistents and the families of the martyrs also benefit from additional financial aid, intended to remedy any deficit in the family budget of the combatant or his family. They include expenses of burial in case of death, emergencies, holidays, housing management and social aid for the old combatant, reimbursement of medical expenses, expenses related to schooling, and practical training. Other financial aid also includes paying for wedding and birth expenses, and financing small business projects, including the allocation of free locations in big markets. The combatants also benefit from state license for business (especially related to vegetables, fruits, and fish industries). They also benefit from the highly lucrative license transport for taxis and buses.

Other benefits for the resistant include the allocation of free housing for them, their families, and their children. The state also allocates land to be used for housing and for
commerce which is 25% subsidized by the state. The ex-resistants and the martyrs, along with their families, pay no taxes on propriety. Furthermore, the resistsants, their families, and the families of the martyrs also benefit from free vacations.

Last, but not least, the children benefit from fellowship during the entire educational cycle—from elementary schooling to graduate school—in addition to free housing on campus. For the period between 1974 and 1994, 2,600 persons benefited from such fellowships and free campus housing.

Most of these benefits are inherited by the family of the combatant (his wife, his children, or grandparents). While there were once 30,000 people with the legal status of resistant or member of the Liberation army, they now count 8,500. But again these rights pass on from father to child, thus even when the number of the resistsants decreases, the number of the beneficiaries increases by virtue of these rights being transferable to what the law calls ayants droits.

What is worth noting about this model is not only that these policies are highly successful, managed to integrate the resistsants into social life, but also in a number of cases create a segment of society that benefit from social and economic privileges rarely available to the majority of the people. The state calls this a policy of merit (istihqaq) its immediate and lasting effects have been to make the resistsants a very loyal population to the regime that guarantees their privileges. Yet, these policies do contribute, in their own ways, to the culture of nepotism, while they have resolved to a great extent the problem of reintegration.

**Tunisia**

Tunisia had the second-largest number of recruits after Algeria, estimated at 45,000. But Tunisia also shared the fate of France in that it was occupied by the Germans and the Italians. Unlike Algeria and Morocco, which were sharply divided between those who supported the
Vichy government headed by Marshal Petain and those who opted for resistance from Great Britain by Charles de Gaule, Tunisia was occupied by the Germans and the Italians.

After the war, France had to face the presence in Tunisia of a total of 33,000 combatants in the two wars in Tunisia. As Habib Belaid put it “experienced and skilful in using armaments, the excombatants were attracted by the nationalist movements that valued them and offered them the possibility to join the national community” (Belaid, 1999, 369). Thus, France had to deal with the ex-combatants in addition to the totality of the old military that constituted 118,000 men. France initially used the ex-combatants as an “antipode,” says Belaid, to the national movement because they were considered by and large to be pro-French. North African soldiers were not, for the most part, intense partisans of nationalist movements (DeGeorges, 2006: 110).

France had already a program for the ex-combatants aimed first to ensure that they were not politicized. This was significantly accomplished by the creation of the Association des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre, founded in 1943 (Belaid, 1997). Simultaneously, France offered training in agriculture and in French as a first step to facilitate the ex-combatants’ reinsertion in social life. France also offered land to the ex-combatants and 5,000 of them could acquire land where they settled and worked. But reinsertion was more difficult for the urban ex-combatants. After a French decree in October 1945, Tunisian ex-combatants were given jobs, often modest due perhaps to their limited schooling. They were also offered authorization to open coffee and tobacco shops, but most of the time they were offered jobs in construction. Specific construction sites were opened to them, as in Tunis, Sousse, and Sfax. In addition to these programs aimed at reinserting the ex-combatants, French authorities also distributed clothes for about 25,750 and food, especially during holidays (Belaid, 1997).
The success of these programs might have been limited by the colonial condition in complex ways. On the one hand, the Neo-Destour actively sought to gain the hearts and the minds of the combatants. On the other hand, despite the programs put in place in France, inequalities between Tunisian and French veterans were flagrant. The end of the war changed this, and the number of Tunisian veterans and soldiers that joined the nationalist movement significantly increased. (DeGeorges, 2006:110).

However, with independence, the ex-combatants, including those who had joined the national movement commonly called fellagas, were gradually excluded, if not evicted, from both the army and from the political system. Given the post-independence condition, marked by a struggle for power, Bourguiba looked at them with great suspicion, not only because they had experience in warfare and thus represented a potential military danger, but especially because they were competing for national prestige. Hence, the title Bourguiba conferred upon himself—claiming himself to be more than anyone could be—al-mujahid al akbar, the Supreme Combatant. Bourguiba, enjoying great legitimacy, was also an experienced and shrewd politician, and early on saw the danger that the military could pose to the security of the state (i.e., himself). The frequent coup d’états of the army in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt also convinced him of the necessity to remove the military from politics, a separation that became characteristic of Tunisian politics. Even Morocco did not know that separation; hence the fact that former officers (Oufkir, for example) held important positions in the government. Hasan II had to experience two major coup d’états organized by ex-combatants before deciding to exclude the military (the bulk of which was inherited from colonial times) from politics (Smith, 1999). Degeorges writes:
While publically hostile to the assumption of major government roles for Tunisian veterans, Bourguiba nevertheless did not seem to have pursued an especially vengeful campaign against them in private. The Franco-Tunisian accords signed in 1956 which led to Tunisian independence, stipulated that France would supply the initial investment in arms and material for the Beylical Guard and a single regiment of the new Tunisian army (composed of around 1,400 men). The veterans were to be part of this new military organization. (DeGeorges, 2006: 163)

Yet Bourguiba intentionally eliminated them and relied instead on civilians from his own party to appoint as ministers of defense. He was also quick to form his own body of officers by sending young Tunisians for military education in France (ibid. 164).

In Tunisia there was indeed a plan to deal with ex-combatants, but it was put not in terms of reinserting them into social life, but rather into minimizing their influence. Once evicted from both the military system, they found their place willy-nilly in civilian life by living on French pensions and/or by engaging, like the rest of citizens, in small business activities while the supreme combatant reigned supreme.

However, in addition to the ex-combattants of the French army, there was also the moujahidin, who fought the French, including those called the fellagas. The number of fellagas was small compared to the resistsants in Morocco and the moujahidines in Algeria, (2,713); the number of their martyrs is estimated between 300 and 400. Opposed to Bourguiba over the conditions of independence, they were perceived by and large as a potential danger, hence their exclusion. Yet, here too, one can speak of a number of policies put in place to contain them, and jobs were created for them in the police and the national guard; they were also given licenses to trade and even acquire land and farms. But this was nothing near as complex and as comprehensive as the policies put in place in both Morocco and Algeria.
Algeria

The case of Algeria is by far the most complicated. First, Algeria was considered part and parcel of France; its population were French subjects that the French government enlisted in the war as if they were its own population. Indeed, several thousand Algerians, called *goums*, participated in military expeditions called pacification against Moroccan tribes prior to the signing of the Protectorate in 1912. The number of Algerians sent to the front was the highest among the three countries of the Maghreb, estimated at 150,000 (Frémeaux, 1986).

Immediately after the war, and upon their return, the Algerian combatants were informed of one of the most horrific colonial repressions in their country. On May 8, 1945 (at the V Day celebration), Algerians protested against colonial rule. French authorities responded with great force, killing several thousand protestors. This was the beginning of the same Algerian war that historians usually trace as having started in 1954. Young sergeant Ben Bella and his compagnion Hossein Ait Ahmed, both participants in the Second World War, created OS (*Opération Secrète*, from which FLN was born) to fight the French with the conviction that only independence could bring dignity to Algeria.

The Algerian war turned a colonized society into a military society. From young professionals, high school students, and even children, to workers and peasants, there was an intense mobilization against France. The Algerian population enlisted into the fight against colonialism with unparalleled determination, “with the exception of traitors, all Algerians were affiliated with FLN, and that ALN is the people in armed struggle” (Meynier, 2002: 153). However, from the outset the armed struggle was divided into two groups: those who fought inside Algeria, within the cities, or in the mountains commonly called *maquisards*, and those on the frontiers with Morocco and especially on the frontiers with Tunisia called ALN (*Armée de
The ALN was an army in and of itself, with officers having been trained in the French army; many had served in World War II, and with military equipment worthy of a professional army made possible by strong support from Arab states, especially Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait. By 1962 the Algerian war produced a massive number of professional combatants unparalleled in both Tunisia and Morocco. At the time of the signing of the Evian accords, the ALN fighters were estimated at 30,000; by the summer of 1962, 130,000 claimed to have fought in its ranks (Moore, 1970: 127). The army was then the main instrument of reinsertion. But this was not possible without the important fact that the FLN-ALN inherited the colonial state, the exodus of Europeans, especially after the proclamation of the socialist program put forth by Ben Bella, the first Algerian president and an ex-combatant in the Second World War as well as an officer in the ALN. This created opportunities for many of the combatants of the FLN-ALN, allowing them to replace the old colonial class in privileges and in economic opportunities. That is to say that the combatants of the Algerian war became the national army.

This fact was one of the main postcolonial problems of Algeria, whose ramifications can still be seen today in that country. The army became the means not only of integration, but also a source of wealth and power. The divide continued between members of the ALN, the army of the frontiers, and the guerilla of the interior (the maquisards), especially those of wiliaya V (also called the group of Oujda), who were accused of having monopolized the state. This divide continued and sporadically creating violent conflicts.

This became clear when the minister of defense deposed the president and claimed himself to be the head of the state while retaining for the rest of his life his initial title. With Boumedienne, the power became more militarized and personalized, and leaders from the Resistance were eliminated and “authorized” to work and enrich themselves in the private sector
(Harbi, 1991, 133). Yet conflicts between the army (monopolized by the army of frontiers) and the fights of the interior continued, and were occasionally brought before the public, as in the case of Tahar Zbir, *chef d’état major*, who attempted a coup against Boumedienne (December 1967). Unlike Bourguiba, who minimized the influence of combatants, Boumedienne, a colonel of the frontiers himself, promoted them and even privileged those who served in the French army because, given the ideology of the Revolution, they could not compete with him on historical legitimacy—they were combatants in the French army, he was in the Army of Frontiers (Addi, 1994: 59).

Be that as it may, because of the importance of the population of the veterans, an entire ministry of veterans called the Ministry of Moujahidoun was founded to guarantee the reinsertion of the combatants into social life.\(^3\) From its inception in September 1962, the ministry issued and implemented a number of policies called *droits du Moujahid et ses ayant droits*. Those policies, similar to the ones we find in France, implemented by the Ministry of Moujahidoun itself, are all based on the idea that the rights of the moujahids and the *shahids* (martyrs) constitute a debt of society toward them and that the obligation of the state is to make sure that the debt is paid.

To that effect, an entire system of affirmative action in employment was immediately put in place to favor the moujahid, who is hired without an interview; once he is hired, the moujahid has the right to a promotion. The employment of the moujahid is permanent, even when the company that employs him goes out of business. Another policy ensures that the moujahid has the right to retire five years earlier than what is required for other citizens. His retirement passes on to his family after his death. The ministry also subsidizes the moujahid’s housing by 20% to 40% for rentals and 40% for purchases. The moujahid has a priority to state-distributed land used

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\(^3\) [http://www.m-moudjahidine.dz/decret/darabe.pdf last consulted May 20, 2013](http://www.m-moudjahidine.dz/decret/darabe.pdf last consulted May 20, 2013)
for agriculture. He also benefits from reduced loans (up to 50% less). Other benefits include free health care in and outside of Algeria, and free travel (by train, bus, and air).

In addition to these material benefits, the moujahid benefits from tremendous symbolic recognition: he is the symbol of the nation. Numerous laws were issued and implemented that makes the moujahid a special citizen whose offense or disrespect is not tolerated and harshly punished. Compared to both Morocco and Tunisia, this recognition is exceptional; streets and plazas in Algiers as well as other Algerian cities were named almost exclusively after martyrs of the revolution, of whom the moujahid is just a walking version. The entire legitimacy of the Algerian state is in fact based on the very idea of the moujahid.

The Algerian state (indistinct from the Army) also used another strategy that greatly contributed to reinsertion even though it was intended for another goal: national legitimacy for the FLN-ALN, that is, the state itself. If Morocco and Tunisia both had a charismatic figure that guaranteed unity, no Algerian leader enjoyed any such prestige. Thus, the presidents, especially Ben Bella, lacking the charisma of Bourguiba or Mohamed V, tried to make up for it with a populist ideology. However, because there was no charismatic leader, the Revolution became the icon of the FLN. As William Quandt put it, “without a single individual to symbolize the Algerian struggle, or at least no consensus on who that should be, the FLN made the revolution itself the icon to be worshipped. The revolution had charisma, even if no individual leader did. Glory was accorded to the “one million martyrs,” and streets were named for the most famous of them (Quandt, 1998: 21).

The Algerian state also adopted the strategy of commemoration as a post-independence strategy of gaining legitimacy and reintegration. Celebrating the heroism of the moujahid, now an honorable member of an important association called the moujahidine, with a ministry of its
own, made the old combatants part and parcel of the apparatus of the state and of its ideology. They were not only reinserted into a family, a community, and a region, but also came to occupy an important symbolic position. In other words, the moujahid liberated the nation, founded it, sacrificed for it, and it is he who should also guard it against enemies from within and from without. The combatant is already a member of the army, but even if he is not, he remains the guard of the Revolution. This is an ideological reinsertion of the utmost importance. The Algerian state is a state of moujahidin, from its successive presidents (Ben Bella, Houari Boumedeyen, Chadli Benjdid, and Abdelaziz Boutefleka), all the way to regular people who may work in post offices or railway companies.

This is not to say that Algeria, through its army, was successful in securing a post-independence free from violence. Nor is it to say that the work of demobilization—as spontaneous and forceful as it was—gave birth to a harmonious society. To the contrary, since independence, Algeria has suffered sporadic violent conflicts, the most spectacular of which was the civil war of the 1990s between the state and Islamists. The violence was preceded by an entire period in which the FLN system of legitimacy founded on the idea of the moujahid was contested before it was openly confronted in October 1989 protests that ended the one part system. One could also argue that the ensuing conflict involved different ideological forces of the colonial period, those same that once constituted the FLN (Crapanzano, 2011, Hannoum, 2010, Quandt, 1998). But the fighters on the ground were not ex-combatants (neither veterans of WWII or moujahdines of the colonial war), but young men who had been born after independence. Yet, the military wing could also count among its fighters highly experienced Algerians who had experienced the war in Afghanistan during the 1980s against the Soviets. Upon their return to Algeria, they never benefited from any demobilization program.
Conclusion

By 1962 the Maghreb region inherited an entire generation of veterans with a variety of military experiences ranging from the First World War and the Rif war to the Algerian war with the experience of Second World War as a common experience for all. One can notice that these experiences also varied from country to country. While in Algeria many of the veterans who fought for France found themselves fighting it, especially after the massacre of Setif in 1945, in Morocco those who fought for France found themselves, by the logic of independence, constituting the bulk of FAR, with officers who trained and served in France and an entire army still “assisted” by France. One can then say that in Morocco, demobilization from the colonial army resulted significantly in a mobilization into the national army. This mobilization was itself a reinsertion since the former combatants were integrated into a profession in the institution of the army that gives their life a meaning and a means of financial support as well. Unlike in Algeria and even in Tunisia, serving with the French or with Spain did not stigmatize the Moroccan combatants, less so exclude them from service in the post-independence era. In Tunisia, unlike in Algeria, the veterans were excluded for political reasons because of the potential danger they represented to the state or rather to its leader, Bourguiba. Acutely aware of the dynamics of the military coups in Syria, in Iraq, and in Egypt, Bourguiba excluded those veterans, and pushed the entire institution of the army away from politics. Despite accords with the French to integrate officers into the Tunisian army, Bourguiba quickly sent to France young men to be trained as officers of the Tunisian army. His political wisdom was confirmed again when several of the Moroccan veterans of the Second World War managed a coup against the Moroccan monarchy in 1972 and again in 1973 (Smith, 1999).
By and large, those who fought on the side of the French, especially during WWII, benefited from the French DDR. They could receive carte de combatant that allows him a small pension and could move to France without a need for a visa to benefit from medical care and even housing.

The story was different for those who fought the colonial system: the resisters of Morocco and the moujahidins of Tunisia and Algeria. Their legitimacy and symbolic capital—and not only their experience in armament—were too important to be left to improvisation. In both Morocco and in Algeria, the French model for the combatant was adopted, often with great improvements that created a privileged segment of society whose benefits added to the old class privileges and increasingly looked like nepotism, especially from the standpoint of the masses. From pensions, salaries, preference in employment to free or subsidized vacations, and retirement benefits for families and children, the moujahidines in Algeria and the resisters in Morocco see the current states as the guarantors of these privileges, and thus any destabilization of the state directly affects their social and economic conditions. Their loyalty was largely assured by these privileges.

Yet, we cannot simply conclude that the DDR policies regarding the ex-combatants were a total success. While they managed to reintegrate an important number of combatants, they also excluded a good number as well. The associations of resisters in Morocco and the moujahidouns in Algeria are also known to be the object of fraud, where non-combatants managed to be included and thus benefited from rights and privileges. In Morocco specifically, many of the resisters, due to lack of schooling, were denied any rights or were not even aware of them, and thus lived in poverty. Others were given very modest jobs (Sharif, 2005: 110). This
despite several laws in both Morocco and Algeria that were designed specifically to fight fraud and recognize the rights of those who sacrificed their lives to the nation.

There was indeed an irony in that history tragically repeated itself, but unexpectedly. Those who resorted to arm in 1990s did so against those who fought colonialism. It was then as easy to train and arm young people as it was during the colonial period. What was needed was ideological mobilization. Those who fought on the ground were young people quickly trained for the occasion.

Nevertheless, Algeria did witness highly expert combatants among the Islamists, especially the redoubtable GIA (Groupe Islamique Armée). They counted amongst their rank a significant number of Algerians who fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. Upon their return to Algeria after the war, they did not benefit from any DDR programs. The cancelation of the elections in January 1992, and the outbreak of the civil war immediately after, gave them another opportunity to exercise what they knew best, combat. Currently, in the midst of the so-called Arab Revolutions, and more specifically in the context of Syria, we witness the alarming production of highly skilled combatants, sponsored by countries that have little to fear from their return, since they are not their citizens, and would likely return to France, England, Yemen and North Africa. Would those who wholeheartedly sponsor their mobilization today, support DDR programs for them?

The problem is undoubtedly real. If DDR was largely successful in North Africa, it is because the war against the colonial system enjoyed tremendous legitimacy, and thus its end itself delegitimized any resort to arms now that the colonial enemy had been defeated. The end of the war in Syria, regardless of its outcome, will leave the combatants face to face with
enemies at home no different from the Syrian state that they are today fighting. And in some instances, the new enemies are even worse.
Works Cited


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