

# *‘Save France from its humiliation!’*

Sartre, Camus, and the intellectual debate on the Algerian War and French identity



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Universiteit Utrecht



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Darling, you got to let me know  
Should I stay or should I go?  
If you say that you are mine  
I'll be here 'til the end of time  
So you got to let me know  
Should I stay or should I go?

Should I stay or should I go now?  
Should I stay or should I go now?  
If I go, there will be trouble  
And if I stay it will be double  
So come on and let me know

**The Clash- Should I Stay or Should I Go? <sup>1</sup>**

'Le fait est que la civilisation dite « européenne », la civilisation « occidentale », telle que l'ont façonnée deux siècles de régime bourgeois, est incapable de résoudre les deux problèmes majeurs auxquels son existence a donné naissance : le problème du prolétariat et le problème colonial ; que, déferée à la barre de la « raison » comme à la barre de la « conscience », cette Europe-là est impuissante à se justifier ; et que, de plus en plus, elle se réfugie dans une hypocrisie d'autant plus odieuse qu'elle a de moins en moins de chance de tromper.'

**Aimé Césaire – Discours sur le colonialisme, 1955.**

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<sup>1</sup> Citation of title and the image on the front page and the quotations on this page can be found in the bibliography.

## Abstract

This thesis focuses on the intellectual debate that erupted as reaction to the Algerian Independence War against France (1954-1962). This war was not only a period of cruel violence against proponents and opponents of Algerian independence, but simultaneously one of serious questions on France's policy of colonialism. This thesis explores the contribution of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus in the intellectual debate on decolonisation and on France's struggle to redefine its values and geopolitical role. Sartre and Camus are positioning themselves differently in this debate. Sartre, on the one hand, argues for Algeria's independence and condemns France for using violence in Algeria and its lack to modernise its institutions in the Metropole. Camus, on the other hand, strives for a federal Algeria that retains its strong ties with France. He argues against France's colonialism, but cannot see Algeria without French influence, if it were only for the large Franco-European community of *pieds noirs* in the country. Using the theory of neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci, this thesis analyses the intellectual commitment of Sartre and Camus during the Algerian War. Sartre defends the colonial people and the French middle and lower classes who suffer from France's colonialism. Adopting an activist attitude, he summons his readers to change the status-quo. Camus is less radical in his opinion and tries to be as reasonable as possible, finding a third way between the continuation of colonialism and decolonisation that would satisfy all groups. Sartre and Camus both are advocating for a change, however their analysis and engagement is different. Sartre adopts a more radical argumentation and writing style, whilst Camus stresses the need for intellectuals to bring reason to the conflict and prevent it from escalating. The thesis can, in a humble way, provide insight in intellectuals' participation in political debates.

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## Introduction

It was November 1<sup>st</sup>1954 when the pro-independence Front de libération nationale (FLN) attacked several Algerian villages and cities. The attacks were targeted on French colonists who had settled in Algeria from 1830 onwards. Just months after France lost its territories of Indochina, the country found itself again in the turmoil of nationalistic uprisings. Little did the French know then that the conflict in Algeria would turn out to be one of the bloodiest and dividing conflicts in the second part of the twentieth century. The FLN was a political party active in the French colony of Algeria that strived for Algerian independence. From 1954 onwards, they were seeking sympathisers for their cause, initially in rural Algeria. The wish for an independent Algeria was strong and became a political goal among the inhabitants of the country, especially after the Second World War. The decolonisation process, taking place in other North-African countries, made the appeal of an independent country even stronger. The FLN was able to find a strong base of supporters and could eventually influence the major Algerian cities of Oran and Algiers, too. The French government was surprised by the organisational and strategic capabilities of the anti-colonial army. In only a few months, the conflict grew to be more serious than the French had initially thought: the French army could not suppress the radicals' guerrilla warfare. Moreover, the Algerian peoples themselves became victims of the war, among which Arab-Algerians, as well as French-European Algerians (named  *pieds noirs*  in French). Until the end of the Algerian war, which was concluded by the Evian accords of 1962, the civilians in Algeria were afraid of being attacked themselves. Afraid of losing their families or own lives, they fled from the fronts, hoping to find some peace and hoping that the two sides would come up with a peaceful solution.

The Algerian War (1954-1962) is more complicated than might appear at first sight. In order to get a firm grasp on the conflict, one has to take into account the different ethnicities in Algeria, the differences in public opinion in France, and the wider historical framework in which the Algerian Independence War fits, particularly the framework of decolonisation processes and the Cold War. Moreover, the conflict was the culmination of the debate about the definition of French culture and identity. As historian le Sueur puts it:

Violence, identity politics, intellectual and political legitimacy, the problem of reconciliation, and the concept of the Other all merged during the French-Algerian War to form one of the most contested periods in modern French and world history.<sup>2</sup>

The Algerian War was not fought by the two opposing armies alone, nor by the French governments, but was fought (symbolically) by a far wider group of intellectuals as well. Especially philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Albert Camus (1913-1960) marked the debate on the Algerian War and on the wider context of colonialism and French identity. Through their political activism, expressed in their written pieces, interviews and speeches, they clearly stated how they saw the future of France and that of its colony Algeria.

This thesis will be centred around the following research question: how did Sartre and Camus contributed to the intellectual debate on French identity and decolonisation during the Algerian War (1954-1962)?

The related sub questions are then as follows:

- What was the historical context of the Algerian War during which the debate on identity and decolonisation became omnipresent in France?
- What was Sartre's position in this intellectual debate and how did he participate as an intellectual?
- What was Camus' position in this intellectual debate and how did he participate as an intellectual?

In order to come up with a decent answer, I will use the theory of intellectual activism by philosopher Antonio Gramsci. In the first chapter, I will provide an extensive historical context of the Algerian War, and France's struggle to cope with the Algerians' desire to accede from its coloniser. The second chapter will be focusing on Sartre's perspective of French identity and decolonisation. The third chapter will explore Camus' analysis on the situation. Both chapters will conclude with a short paragraph on the philosophers' intellectual participation and their relation to the theories of Gramsci.

Answering this question will give an understanding of the influence of non-state actors (i.e. intellectuals) on political debates. In contrast to politicians, intellectuals are not bound to political interests per se and can therefore offer an interesting insight in existing debates, often

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<sup>2</sup> James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War. Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 11.

with different perspectives (although one has to remember that there are always interests at stake). Furthermore, the Algerian War remains one of the most contested historical events in France and Algeria. The wounds of the colonial past are still present: even today presidents of France and Algeria struggle to fully acknowledge the war crimes committed at the time. Historical knowledge on colonial history is important in order to keep the conversation alive among historians, politicians, students, and all citizens.

Much has been written on the Algerian War concerning the question on identity and decolonisation in general, and on French intellectual perspectives on those questions in particular. Historians and scholars specialised in literature and philosophy alike have contributed to the interpretation of the subject. The difference in the historians' arguments lay in their use of different perspectives. Literary criticist Germaine Brée offers a Marxist perspective (the book was published in the 1970s) on the philosophers' commitment focused especially on the difference between Sartre and Camus, the former being more radical in his convictions than the latter. Historian Ronald Aronson gives a post-Cold War perspective on Sartre and Camus, stating that the two men were indeed divided on the decolonisation debate. He notes, however, that historians can now find strengths and weaknesses in both philosophers, instead of accusing either one of being on the wrong side of history. Aronson, too, focuses more on the lives of Sartre and Camus and their literature to explain their position in the different political debates. Todd Shepard writes on the Algerian War in more depth and states that Algeria could become independent through intellectual commitment that exposed the injustices and violence used by the state. An important aspect of his main argument is his perspective on identity, which is described as being an invention of French policy makers. Historian James D. Le Sueur, finally, provides a post-colonial perspective on the Algerian War and on Sartre's and Camus' involvement. The Algerian War still has relevance as Algeria is present in debates about culture and migration in modern-day France. Le Sueur interprets the Algerian War also as an intellectual conflict between Camus' desire to unite French and Algerian cultural aspects in one Algeria and Sartre's emphasis on the differences between the two countries. The debate on how to explain Sartre's and Camus' engagement is still ongoing, since post-colonial studies, (neo-)Marxist, and postmodern schools did not lose their popularity in academia.

More could be said on Sartre and Camus and their involvement in the Algerian War, particularly regarding the aspects of identity shaping in France, with Gramsci's perspective in mind. This thesis can, in a humble way, provide an opening for new research through the intellectuals' perspective on the debate on French colonialism and the Algerian War.



## Theoretical framework

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian Marxist philosopher who is known for his neo-Marxist ideas of hegemony, subordination and culture. Imprisoned in Italy because of his affiliation with communism during Mussolini's reign, Gramsci wrote pieces (*Selections from Prison Notebooks*) on society, power and intellectuals. In contradiction to traditional Marxists, he focused more on the revaluation of the superstructure, i.e. on ideologies and culture in general rather than on the forces of (economic) productions.

According to Gramsci, society is always divided into a hegemonial and subordinated group. Domination in the eyes of Gramsci is based on coercion and consent. The dominant, hegemonial group uses (figurative) violence, whilst the subordinated group accepts their inferiority. This dominion of one group to the detriment of the other can only be changed if the masses of the subordinated group become conscious of their submission and start a revolution to enforce their emancipation.<sup>3</sup> Gramsci was occupied with interpreting why a certain ideology could better mobilise a country than another. Political and cultural domination in society therefore is a precondition for conquering and exercising political power. In the classical Marxist tradition, the subaltern groups are the working class dominated by the rich bourgeois elite. The theory can, however, be applied to other situations in history during which a comparable situation of hegemony and subordination is present. Hence Gramsci's theory influenced scholars time and again, for example to explain relations between colonisers and the colonised. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) adopted aspects Gramsci's ideas in order to explain the misrepresentation of the East by the West.<sup>4</sup>

Gramsci further developed his theory by looking at intellectuals and their role in defending or undermining the domination of a particular group. Intellectuals could play their part in this change of the status quo. Intellectuals can be categorised in two different groups: firstly, there is the classical intellectual, who often work as professors at universities. Their task is to research and illuminate the public, but always in relation to their profession. Organic intellectuals, *a contrario*, are actively engaging in public debates. It is this group on which this thesis focuses. Gramsci states that each social group brings forth its own intellectual who can

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<sup>3</sup> Quitin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds.), *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London : Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> Michiel Leezenberg, *History and Philosophy of the Humanities: an Introduction* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 222-223.

vocalise the feelings and needs of that particular group. In this, the intellectual is an important factor, because he can defend or undermine a particular status quo. This intellectual could raise consciousness among the proletariat of their precarious situation, to say it in Marx’ words. In short, ‘he [the organic intellectual] must be the organiser of “masses of men.”’, a ‘dirigente’, i.e. someone who can lead others to a certain direction.<sup>5</sup> This leader is especially vital to the dominated groups in society, since they could be unified as a result of the intellectuals’ products. The end goal would be their emancipation through a class struggle and the organic intellectual could mobilise the masses and bring them closer to that ultimate goal.

## Methodology

A large amount of works is available that can be selected to analyse both Sartre and Camus. This thesis will focus only on a selection of political pieces on the Algerian War and on the works that elaborate on the more general themes like colonialism and France’s politics. The selection is based on two bundled books, namely *Situations, V. Colonialisme et néocolonialisme* by Sartre, and *Chroniques Algériennes, 1939-1958. Actuelles III* by Camus.<sup>6</sup> These two bundles include the main political works Sartre and Camus wrote on the Algerian War and French imperialism at the time. Sartre’s *Situations V.* includes mainly op-eds published in the political magazines *L’Express* and *Les Temps Modernes*, one interview, and some prefaces Sartre wrote as introduction for books.<sup>7</sup> All pieces are originally published between 1956 and 1962, which spans by and large the time period of the Algerian War and thus the time span of this thesis.

Camus’ *Chroniques Algériennes 1939-1958. Actuelles III* is a collection of political pieces he wrote between 1939 and 1958. As with Sartre, the pieces were published initially in different journals, like *Combat*, *L’Express* and *Communauté Algérienne*. The bundle includes one transcript of a speech addressed in 1956, too. Several pieces do not correspond with the time period of this thesis, hence the pieces originating before 1955 are excluded from this research. Camus stopped writing about the war after 1958 and therefore no analyses can be made on Camus’ opinion on the developments after that year. It is important to notice that all

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<sup>5</sup> Hoare and Smith, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Sartre’s *Situations, V.* was published in 1964. Camus’ *Actuelles III* was published in 1958.

<sup>7</sup> See annex for total overview of the selections from the bundles, as well as additional information on the type of source and original publication.

pieces consulted for this thesis were written during the crisis in Algeria and France. This thesis will indeed focus on the positions of Sartre and Camus between 1954 and 1962. Since the primary sources are collections of writings, bundled and published by editorials, one should remain critical since there could be lying interests behind the selection of pieces. Adaptations or errors in language and lay-out could as well have been made that could change the original message and its meaning.

## Chapter 1 - Algeria is France

### *The Pride of the Empire*

During the second wave of European colonialism, France became the second largest empire in the world, behind the British. This vast territory gave the French a goal, since they saw a chance to change the world for the better. France always justified their colonisation in name of the *mission civilisatrice*: their colonisation was not merely an exploitation of peoples and natural resources, but a project to make of underdeveloped countries a modern state based on French-European values. In this way, the French conducted a policy of integrational colonialism, in order to eventually obtain a community with a common French culture. The intensity of this reciprocal integration varied from one colony to another, but the Algerian territory was the colony in which the integration process was most visible. The *mission civilisatrice* was however a disguise for Algeria's exploitation: a colonial burden in the eyes of the Algerians instead of enlightening goodwill.<sup>8</sup> From the occupation of Algeria in 1830, people who had their origins in France started to settle in the newly acquired colony. By the end of the 1950s, Algeria counted nearly 1,2 million inhabitants (of total 8 million) who had their origins in Metropolitan France.<sup>9</sup> The steady number of *pieds noirs* (the population in Algeria with French-European origins) reflects this policy of integration. It was not only the *pieds noirs* and the original population that lived in the territory, for there were diverse ethnicities that included Arabic, Berber and Jewish people.

Algeria was considered to be an integral part of France, comparable to the provinces like Normandy or Burgundy, having also representation in the *Assemblée Nationale*. The infamous phrase 'L'Algérie, c'est la France' affirms this position: Algeria was the pride of the French Empire.<sup>10</sup> In the wake of the Second World War, France was criticized for doing too little to give the Algerians proper representation. This critique became especially strong because of the rise of independence movements and the anti-colonial Cold War superpowers that ascended the geopolitical world stage. France defended its colonial position in describing the colonial territories as belonging to France, stressing cooperation and the institutionalisation of democratic and republican values. Both politicians and intellectuals in favour of the

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<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution. Algeria, Decolonization & The Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 118.

<sup>9</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War, a world history* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 276.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Claude Barreau, *Toute l'histoire de France*, (Paris : Editions du Toucan, 2011), 261.

colonisation, who were still a majority until the late 1950s, used the concept of a very close cooperation between the European and African continent, *Eurafrique*.<sup>11</sup> The pro-independence Algerian liberation front, the FLN, rejected this idea and argued that Algerians possessed entirely different cultural origins than the one the Europeans imposed on them. The Algerians belonged in the eyes of the FLN to the Arabic and Islamic cultures. Stressing the differences between Europe and Algeria, they simultaneously rejected the notion of Algeria being an integral part of France, calling it a myth created by the colonisers.<sup>12</sup> Algeria is not France: the country has its own identity and culture, they would argue. This position would mark the beginning of a conflict between France and Algeria and was the first time that a French colony dramatically rejected French identity.<sup>13</sup> The war rapidly escalated as more parties involved in the conflict. Besides the French army and the FLN, the right-wing terrorist organisation called the *Organisation de l'armée secrète* (OAS) fought in Algeria and France alike, intending to fight decolonisation movement. Many former French army officials were member of this organisation who were advocates for decolonisation, which shows how important it was for some to hold on to Algeria as colony.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Tide of History*

The times had changed for the European powers, and that became especially clear during the 1950s and 1960s. France came from a position of world hegemony together with the British Empire during the first half of the 1900s, but the country and its empire entered a period of decay after the destruction of the Second World War. After that war, France thought it could reclaim its – in its eyes – right to the world stage. Being however a weak link in the allied cooperation, the country faced difficulties to find meaning and relevance in the Cold War framework. The government, desiring to turn History to their advantage, tried unsuccessfully to mark a policy that differed from the US and the Soviet Union, stressing universalism, the integration of colonies, and European cooperation:

The governments of the Fourth Republic were caught among competing priorities: Being anti-communist (while also wanting to appear radical); resenting US domination (while also fearing

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<sup>11</sup> Westad, *The Cold War*, 275.

<sup>12</sup> Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization. The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> W. Scott Haine, *The History of France*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 182.

US abandonment); and embracing European integration (while also fearing a drop in French independent power and prestige).<sup>15</sup>

The role of France in the world changed, and the decolonisation process can perhaps best exemplify this trend. Clinging to its colonies, France showed how reluctant it was to cope with the tendencies of geopolitics. After France lost its territories of Indochina, both government and the military were determined to stay present in Algeria. It was as if the conflict in Algeria was not only a military or political crisis, but most importantly a crisis on identity and a way of searching for meaning in a new geopolitical world order.<sup>16</sup> The Algerian War therefore had far reaching effects, some of which are still recognisable in the immigration debates today: 'The war's importance is moreover manifold. It occupies a seminal place in the history of European decolonization; and, perhaps more important, it either forced new notions of identity and nationalism in Europe and North Africa or forced a reconsideration of old ones.'<sup>17</sup> The Algerian War was the final battle against the independence movements; the last real chance of saving the French Empire from its deterioration and staying the prestigious world power it had always been. This wrestling with identity, and the unease with the political developments would form the main reasons as to why France was so reluctant to grant Algeria its independence.

The longer the war went on, the more unpopular France's position became, even among its own citizens. Intellectuals in Paris increasingly spoke up in favour of an autonomous Algeria. The pride of a vast empire among the French faded away and made place for the wish to profit from the luxury a consumer society could offer. The imperial era, to which France held fast, was at odds with the modernisation of the 1950s in the West. Indeed, 'by 1960 most people took much greater satisfaction from owning their own home, car, refrigerator, and television than from the knowledge that the tricolor flew over some wretchedly poor village in the Sahel.'<sup>18</sup> These citizens preferred a stable political regime, a safe house and the luxury the times offered, over an ideological mission to modernise countries hundreds of miles from their homes. Slowly but steadily, politicians became aware of the importance to shift France's focus from a solitary colonial strategy towards the cooperation model of the European Project. Cooperation

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<sup>15</sup> Westad, *The Cold War, a world history*, 274-5.

<sup>16</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War. Intellectuals and Identity Politics During the Decolonization of Algeria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution. Algeria, Decolonization & The Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 104.

with European countries seemed to be the only viable way of conducting international politics in which France could play a decisive role.

As citizens and politicians gained awareness of the repressive model used by the French military in the colonies, the Republican values so omnipresent in the institutional framework in the Metropole came in question. How strong were the words of politicians emphasising liberty for all, when at the same time people were tortured in Algeria? The notions of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, i.e. French universalism, seemed not to count in Algeria, although it was considered to be an integral part of the country.<sup>19</sup> This dichotomy between Metropolitan France and Algeria would eventually undermine the credibility and integrity of France in the world. The election of Charles de Gaulle as first president of the Fifth Republic in 1958, shows how unsatisfied the electorate was about its politicians. De Gaulle promised to handle the conflict in a short period of time, promising the Algerians the right of self-determination and saving France from a further political crisis:

For Charles de Gaulle, May 1958 was an opportunity to assume and to rehabilitate the power of government and the unique *grandeur* – or greatness in reputation, ambition and potential – of the French state, which he and others believed the leaders and institutions of the Fourth (not to mention the Third) Republic had lost.<sup>20</sup>

De Gaulle thought of this shift in French attitude as a move with ‘The Tide of History’: it was clear that the era of French imperialism was over. Although the conflict lingered on for several years to come, the president could eventually arrange a cease-fire and negotiations that would enable the two opponents to work out peace agreements in 1962.

The eventual shift of France's attitude regarding the Algerian Question reveals how impactful the conflict was for French identity in the post-war period: ‘The Algerian Revolution was at the same time a French revolution. As a French revolution, the Algerian War posed fundamental questions about who was French and how the country must be governed.’<sup>21</sup> The horrors of the war would remain a source of criticism and raise question for politicians, intellectuals and citizens on how to cope with French colonial history and the post-colonial bonds of Algeria and France.

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<sup>19</sup>Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 14-15.

<sup>20</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 74.

<sup>21</sup> Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 1-2.

## Chapter 2 - Sartre and the Colonial System

The variety of questions the Algerian Conflict brought with it formed a rich source for inspiration for many politicians and independent thinkers. In the following chapter, I will explore the criticisms of Jean-Paul Sartre in this debate on the manner in which France could rethink its position in the world. Sartre was particularly focused on the unequal system of colonialism, and the ineptness of the French political system to modernise and adapt to the spirit of the times. His convictions can best be understood in the light of his philosophy as part of the broader existentialist movement. Existentialism as philosophy explores the boundaries human life entails and concludes that all humans are free and that humans consequently have great responsibilities to themselves and other human beings. In essence there is no set of standards or values that prescribe how humans should behave. This makes it especially urgent to engage in society in order to stop repressive, unequal or violent situations.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Sartre was a fervent anarchist, believing that all humans should be equal, advocating for decolonisation and sympathising with communism. The intellectual position Sartre already acquired from 1945 onwards made him an influential figure in the debate on the Algerian Question.<sup>23</sup>

### *Colonial tyranny*

It is particularly interesting how Sartre portrayed himself as an advocate for decolonisation: often referred to as the 'African philosopher', he opposed the Eurocentric vision of conquest and the so-called modernisation in the colonies, propagated by the European upper classes in which he himself was born into, and became a voice of the unheard Africans who lived hundreds of kilometres away from those European upper classes.<sup>24</sup> Sartre explains how the Algerian situation is unsolvable as long as France sticks to its policies of the previous decades. The ultimate situation in Algeria would be the defeat of French hegemony and the liberation of the unfree Arabic Algerians. To speak in Marxist terms: it is vital for the Algerians to gain the consciousness of being subverted for decades, because this conscience will enable a strong anti-colonial movement that could end French colonial rule. Indeed, Sartre states that : 'Elle [France] crée des *masses* mais les empêche de devenir un prolétariat conscient en les mystifiant par la

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas F.X. Noble et al., *Western Civilization Beyond Boundaries. Volume II: since 1560* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014), 836-837.

<sup>23</sup> Robert J.C. Young, 'Sartre, the "African Philosopher"', in Young and Haddour (eds.) *Jean-Paul Sartre, Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2001), XVII-XVIII.

<sup>24</sup> Young, 'Sartre, the "African Philosopher"', XVIII.



caricature de leur propre idéologie.<sup>25</sup> Colonisation, Sartre believes, will always result in Othering, and therefore the discrimination, of one group to the detriment of the other: 'la richesse des uns repose sur la misère des autres.'<sup>26</sup> As long as France does not quit Algeria, the colonised people will remain victims of the marginalisation of their existence by the colonisers.

Furthermore, Sartre believes the system of colonisation in itself is based on inequality attained by force and violence. This violence, committed by the colonisers, will have to increase in severity in order to maintain the system (i.e. the hegemony in the colony). Indeed, France's reaction against the nationalistic uprisings in Algeria was more brutal and massive than before the turmoil. The resulting bloody conflict during the Algerian War was France's ultimate attempt to suppress anti-French sentiment. This increasing radicalisation of violence is like a vicious circle that enables ever more cruelty and bloodshed on both sides: 'C'est que le système anéantit par lui-même et sans efforts toutes les tentatives d'aménagement : il ne peut se maintenir qu'en devenant chaque jour plus dur, plus inhumain.'<sup>27</sup> In Sartre's eyes, the Algerian uprisings in the 1950s are therefore completely understandable, since the revolts against French rule is not only a claim to an own identity and culture, and rejection of the French culture, but more importantly a revolt against their exploitation and suppression.

In contradiction to other advocates for Algerian independence, like Franz Fanon, Sartre does not address himself to an Algerian audience so much as to the French reading public living in the Metropole. He stresses the importance of a de-escalation of the conflict in order to let the two parties negotiate and open the ways to the independence of Algeria. 'Faire la paix', he writes, because peace will also be advantageous for France itself. The country has been terrorised by the mindset of imperialism and by that, the French have been colonised, too; trapped in their own colonial discourse they wanted to maintain at all costs. His writings are meant to set the French in motion rather than the Algerians. Indeed, 'because the French army was fighting in the name of France, Sartre argued, each French person was personally responsible for the collective crimes against the Algerians.'<sup>28</sup> Sartre encourages his fellow citizens to accelerate the end of colonisation in order to save France from the malaise it has

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<sup>25</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Le colonialisme est un système', in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations, V. Colonialisme et néocolonialisme* (Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1964), 40.

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Une Victoire', in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations, V. Colonialisme et néocolonialisme* (Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1964), 85.

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Le colonialisme est un système', 40.

<sup>28</sup> Le Sueur, *Uncivil War*, 159.

summoned upon itself: 'sauver la France de la honte et les Algériens de l'enfer.'<sup>29</sup> This phrase contains the two goals Sartre engages himself in: he strives for an Algerian independent state, that would mean the end of the French colonial empire (at least in Algeria). At the same time, he is convinced that France would be better off leaving its colonies behind, in order to regain its integrity and rebuild the country and its geopolitical role in a post-colonial Cold War world.

### *A Republic in bankruptcy*

As mentioned above, France found itself in an identity crisis as the Algerian Question came up. Having just escaped the horrors of Nazi-Germany, France too was guilty of committing the same crimes in its colonies as Germany had in Europe. Sartre clearly stated that these French military and political establishments during the conflict were waging a war that was anachronic to the geopolitical situation France found itself in. Convinced of keeping Algeria as a part of France, the politicians of the Fourth Republic prioritised the imperial geopolitical role, instead of the cooperative Europe-oriented policy in which France would fit better. Sartre explains that the loss of Indochine in 1954 was such a shock to the political establishment and military that an eventual loss of Algeria, the pride of the Empire, would have been unimaginable. The anachronistic idea of being capable of maintaining the imperial presence in Algeria at all costs, however, is phony in Sartre's opinion and shows how France places itself in the world and in history in general:

Un pays humilié, éreinté, miné par les dissensions qui s'enfoncent par disgrâce et bouderie, dans des guerres sans espoir et se dégrade chaque jour encore plus, en vendant sa souveraineté puis en déposant la gerbe de ses libertés entre les pieds bottés des militaires (...) Un pays stratifié, transi de méfiance et de morosité, qui répète sans cesse et non sans fatuité : « J'ai rendez-vous avec l'Histoire ! » et qui s'est aperçu que l'Histoire lui avait collé un lapin.<sup>30</sup>

This megalomaniacal idea that France will always play a decisive role on a world level has to be adjusted according to Sartre. It is this vision that makes it so difficult for the country to let go of its colonies. Moreover, he warns that the decision-making is increasingly in the hands of the military that is desperate to win the war, no matter its cruelty, duration and hopelessness.

A second alarming point Sartre makes in many of his pieces in *Situations, V* is that the

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<sup>29</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Une victoire', in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations, V. Colonialisme et néocolonialisme*, (Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1964), 88.

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Les grenouilles qui demandent un roi', in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations, V. Colonialisme et néocolonialisme*, (Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1964), 126-127.

Fourth Republic's focus on the Algerian War has damaged the democratic institutions of the country. The political establishment was too weak to react to all the uproars, protests, and terrorist attacks in the country. For Sartre, it was clear that the end of the Fourth Republic was near and that a new government must require active participation of its citizens. These citizens, consisting of working class or middle-class French families, were not interested in fighting a bloody war. Instead, they would be better off if their government spent its money on rebuilding the Metropole and raising the living standards of these groups. In his article 'Prétendant', Sartre stresses that France's restoration would require the participation of all citizens instead of only those at the top: 'Et certes nous pouvons le [the country] changer ; à nous tous, en prenant ses maux à leurs racines : car le pays, c'est nous.'<sup>31</sup> His notion of 'the country is us' (as opposed to the infamous phrase ascribed to Louis XIV 'l'état, c'est moi') exemplifies how he saw a renewed France: a country that would focus on its democratic institutions and that would count on the active participation of all citizens. With this notion in mind, it is particularly understandable why he opposed the call for Charles de Gaulle to return to the Elysée Palace. In effect, Sartre was a fierce opponent of the referendum held in 1959 that asked the French citizens whether de Gaulle should be named president. Two main reasons can explain this negative stance vis-à-vis the former World War II-hero. Firstly, de Gaulle only wanted to accede to power if he could obtain more executive power than the head of governments in the Fourth Republic. De Gaulle proposed a new constitution which included the idea of a strong president and less powerful legislative houses. Secondly, although de Gaulle promised to conclude the Algerian Question quickly, Sartre believed that he could not improve the situation in Algerian, nor in France. De Gaulle would only be another authoritative head of state who would not meet the citizens' needs of democratisation, civil representation and the improvement of civil rights. Unfortunately for Sartre, de Gaulle did win the confidence of the voters by a large margin of 79% and could install his constitutional reforms.<sup>32</sup> The author would, however, remain outspoken to the policies of the president in the years to come.

Sartre's critique on the situation of France itself is as strong as his critique on France's colonial activity in Algeria. For him, the lack of political focus domestically had equally contributed to the country's decline. Especially the citizens of middle or working-class background have been the victim of the lack of political representation. Instead of focusing on the well-being of this group, the political establishment have been focusing on the Algerian

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<sup>31</sup> Sartre, 'Les grenouilles qui demandent un roi', 127.

<sup>32</sup> Haine, *The History of France*, 181.

War and on the handling of the conflict between the rebellious military and the FLN's sympathisers. France's restoration would only be successful if it came from all citizens' participation, hence his multiple calls for action and change in his writings.

### *Sartre and Gramsci: change through intellectual participation*

Following Antonio Gramsci's writings on the function and identity of the intellectual, some comparisons could be made with the engagement of Sartre on the crisis of the Algerian War. As mentioned before, Sartre engaged both with the Arabic-Algerians who were striving for independence from France and with the French citizens of the lower classes who have been neglected by the government's war efforts. Although Sartre originated from a different social class, he gave a voice to the two groups that did not have a strong voice or representation in Metropolitan France yet. In this sense, Sartre is not an example of an intellectual who speaks on behalf of his own social or ethnic group but engages in the convictions and ideals of another.

Sartre's intellectual works, however, call for the overthrowing of the hegemonial position France had in Algeria. He urges French individuals, living in the country that exercises hegemonial power over Algeria, to change the imperial regime. Simultaneously, Sartre wants to overthrow the existing political establishment of inept autocratic leaders, as well. By mobilising the French lower classes, he believes that change can only happen if everyone comes into action. In Gramsci's eyes, Sartre could have been an example of an organic intellectual. He produces politically engaged pieces that take a particular position in the debate and urges its readers to overthrow the present policies and political representation in order to improve the position of the dominated classes, either the colonised Algerians or the misrepresented Frenchmen and women. Sartre could fit his arguments perfectly in the Marxist perspective:

the Marxist terminology gave Sartre what he needed, the assurance that his was a rational, not a "magic", emotional reaction. (...) And it seemed to furnish a guiding principle for "rational", practical options: in all issues the cause of freedom must be defended.<sup>33</sup>

By actively engaging in the situations of the subordinated classes of his time, he believed to raise consciousness among his reading public and was convinced to improve their situations.

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<sup>33</sup> Germaine Brée, *Camus and Sartre* (New York: Delacorte Press), 193.

## Chapter 3 Camus : An Alternative for Algeria

Albert Camus is regarded to as the author who represented the French community of the *pièdes noirs* in Algeria (from which he himself originated), striving for an Algeria that would include different communities and that would remain part of France. Criticised by his contemporaries for either being too much of a defender of colonialism or not defending France properly, Camus took an interesting position as an intellectual in the Parisian intellectual debate on the 1950s. His position in the debate on the Algerian Conflict and Frenchness can best be understood by looking at two essential aspects of the author. Firstly, as mentioned above, Camus was born into the French Algerian community. Being a *pièd noir* himself, he could adequately grasp the realities in Algeria and the complex situation of different ethnicities. Hence, Camus could position himself differently from other Parisian intellectuals, like Sartre, who were not shaped by the Algerian experience. Simultaneously, Camus' social construct could also be interpreted as a pitfall, defending an excessively one-sided cause in his essays on Algeria and French colonialism. Secondly, Camus was part of the philosophical current of existentialism, as explained before. He added his own thoughts to this rich branch of philosophy and literature, especially stressing how humankind could find happiness in a cruel and often absurd world. Camus' contribution of the *homme révolté* summarizes how he thought men should find meaning and happiness in life through revolting against the uncertain, absurd and often unjust world. Camus died unexpectedly in a car crash in 1960 and hence could not live through the later developments of the Algerian War.

### *A Third Way*

To begin with, Camus had been preoccupied with the Algerian Question long before the conflict erupted in 1954. Although he lived in Paris at the time, he stayed connected to Algeria, writing many of his (literary) texts on the country or on the French-Algerian community. From 1954 onwards, Camus criticised both the extreme sides of the conflict for their extensive use of violence, especially committed against innocent citizens. He condemned the radical section of the French military, the terrorist organisation O.A.S., and also the anti-French FLN. Camus thought that violence would not solve the division in the debate but would rather make it increasingly difficult to come to a proper solution. It was not so much the debate on an Algerian independence he was against as the radicalisation of it, resulting in bloodshed and casualties

that could have been prevented. Indeed, Camus was concerned for his family, in particular his mother, who lived through the horrors of the war. This would also be a reason from him to abstain from the debate from time to time, although he did have a clear vision for the future of Algeria.

Camus did not position himself on the radical sides of the debates, as Sartre did for instance. He could not imagine an independent Algeria, for which the FLN and many left-leaning French intellectuals strived, nor did he agree on the system of French imperialism in Algeria, with all its violence and racism. Instead, he tried to unite the two radical visions into a solution that was in the middle of the two: a third way for Algeria and France. This third way, Camus thought, would be an Algeria in which the French and Arab communities could live in peaceful coexistence:

Plus précisément, si on veut que la France seule règne en Algérie sur huit millions de muets, elle y mourra. Si on veut que l'Algérie se sépare de la France, les deux pétriront d'une certaine manière. Si, au contraire, en Algérie, le peuple français et le peuple arabe unissent leurs différences, l'avenir aura un sens pour les Français, les Arabes et le monde entier.<sup>34</sup>

He argues that Algeria is indeed part of France, possessing many aspects of French culture. The integration of Algeria in the French community might not have been fully accomplished, however, French culture is very well integrated in the different Algerian communities. An independent Algeria would be unimaginable for Camus. He defends his position by arguing that the debate in France on Algeria has become an either/or conflict. On the one hand, there was the Left, that represented the moral side of the conflict, condemning the French political establishment and the military for its use of violence and the perpetuation of colonialism. On the other hand, there was the imperialistic side represented by the Right, who strived for a strong French Empire of which Algeria would remain part. In his introduction written in 1958, Camus explains that he has been occupied with the Algerian dilemma for several decades and argues that he can provide a solid analysis of the situation. The main reason why he thinks Algeria cannot become independent is because he is afraid the country would become the victim of neo-colonial ties with France and would henceforth be worse off.

On trouvera dans ce recueil un choix d'articles et de textes qui tous concernent l'Algérie. Ils s'échelonnent sur une période de vingt ans, depuis l'année 1939, où presque personne en France ne s'intéressaient à ce pays, jusqu'à 1958, où tout le monde en parle. (...) Tels quels, ces textes résument la position d'un homme qui, placé très jeune devant la misère algérienne, a multiplié

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<sup>34</sup> Albert Camus, *Chroniques algériennes, 1939-1958. Actuelles III* (Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1958), 20.

vainement les avertissements et qui, conscient depuis longtemps des responsabilités de son pays, ne peut approuver une politique de conservation ou d'oppression en Algérie. Mais, averti depuis longtemps des réalités algériennes, je ne puis non plus approuver une politique de démission qui abandonnerait le peuple arabe à une plus grande misère, arracherait de ses racines séculaires le peuple français d'Algérie et favorisent seulement, sans profit pour personne, le nouvel impérialisme qui menace la liberté de la France et de l'Occident.<sup>35</sup>

One of Camus' most engaging moments during the Algerian War was the speech he delivered in Algiers on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1956. His 'Call for an Algerian Truce' [Appel pour une trêve civile en Algérie] was addressed to a mixed public of Arab and French Algerians, including supporters as well as opponents of Algerian independence. In this speech, Camus urged his audience to support his idea of a truce that could ensure the end of violence and the rapprochement of both parties. He warned for the increasing feelings of nationalism of communities that once lived peacefully together for decades. Indeed, Camus was convinced that the conflict was like a family conflict that had become extremely complex and was harder to conclude with the passing of time: 'ces vieux procès de famille où les griefs et les arguments s'accumulent pendant des générations, et à ce point que les juges les plus intègres et les plus humains ne peuvent plus s'y retrouver.'<sup>36</sup> Therefore, as reaction to this worsening situation, Camus presents himself as a unifier and representative of hope for the French-Arab community. This position, however, might have been too optimistic, since the Algerian War indicated that a unified Algeria could no longer be achieved: 'Camus' dream of a civilian truce remained unachievable and hopelessly idealistic because it lacked structural support and because Camus had fundamentally misread the degree to which violence against civilians had become part of French and Algerians' armory.'<sup>37</sup>

Although Camus was a strong defender of the French presence in Algeria, he thought the unjust relationship between coloniser and colonised should change dramatically. In his piece on the future of Algeria, he explains what changes France had to make in its attitude vis-à-vis Algeria in order to change the negative sentiment the Arabs had towards French. In his written piece 'Algeria 1958', Camus defends the Arab call to end their exploitation. He sums up several

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<sup>35</sup> Albert Camus, 'Avant-propos', in *Chroniques algériennes 1939-1958. Actuelles III* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1958), 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Albert Camus, 'Appel pour une trêve civile en Algérie', in Albert Camus, *Chroniques algériennes 1939-1958. Actuelles III* (Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1958), 177.

<sup>37</sup> Le Sueur, *Uncivil War*, 102.

French policies that needed to be changed. First and foremost, Camus called for the end of colonialism and the institutionalised violence that accompanies it. Moreover, the French should quit the, in his eyes, lies of assimilation. Although France portrayed itself as a welcoming country that would grant all Algerians French citizenship, this promise never met the expectations of the Algerian people. He states that it is time to revise what it would mean for Algerians to be French, and France has to reinvent their relations with Algeria in a mutually equal relationship based on dignity and justice: 'Il est hors de doute enfin qu'une réparation éclatante doit être fait au peuple algérien, qui lui restitue en même temps la dignité et la justice.'<sup>38</sup> Camus' vision on the future of Algeria is nonetheless limited to the framework of a French-Arab cooperation. He rejects Arab nationalism, because that would lead to an independent nation and might end in the establishment of an Arabic empire. This, Camus argues, would endanger the French-European community in Algeria, and might even affect the world stability.<sup>39</sup> France should therefore pay attention to these nationalistic developments in the country and should not be doubtful to intervene (with violence) in order to repress those developments: 'qu'elle [France] refuse, en particulier, de servir le rêve de l'empire arabe à ses propres dépens, aux dépens du peuple européen d'Algérie, et, finalement, aux dépens de la paix du monde; (...).'<sup>40</sup> The ultimate solution for Camus would be to create in Algeria a federal state that would include different communities, and that would not ignore the French cultural roots of the country. France should indeed change colonial policies, but it would be dangerous for Algeria to break entirely with the French, since that break would expose the Algerians to the dangers of radicalisation, nationalism and neo-colonialism.

### *Camus and Gramsci: cautious reason vs. radical activism*

Camus describes the role of an intellectual quite extensively in his introduction of the *Chroniques Algériennes*. An intellectual in Camus' eyes should bring reason to the debate, that is often too heated on both sides. In order to come to a solution, an intellectual should bring together the conflicting sides. He admits that this role is not a glamorous role, nor a dynamic one, but that is the reason why intellectuals are so indispensable. They have to 'désintoxiquer les esprits et apaiser les fanatismes' and defend the truth from being destroyed by the conflict.

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<sup>38</sup> Albert Camus, 'Algérie 1958', in Albert Camus, *Chroniques algériennes 1939-1958. Actuelles III* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1958), 201.

<sup>39</sup>Camus, 'Algérie 1958', 203.

<sup>40</sup> Camus, 'Algérie 1958', 206.



Camus himself notes in his introduction that he has tried to be the kind of intellectual he describes and therefore he continuously speaks out for reason amongst the disturbing violence in France and Algeria, especially the crimes committed by the radical organisation of the FLN and OAS. In effect, the philosopher was aware of the limits of taking a pacifist position in this conflict, but the violent alternative was even worse in his eyes: 'Camus had opted for forms of non-militant violence, (...). He had no illusions as to their limitations, but he had no illusions either concerning the alternative: the use of violence.'<sup>41</sup>

Camus published articles in journals and magazines in the hope to influence the debate. As mentioned, Camus' proposals had little support and he could not make his public enthusiastic for an Algerian federation. Moreover, at crucial moments during the Algerian War, Camus stayed off the radar, fearing that he would endanger his mother if he shared his opinion with the world. His silence in the debate was criticised by many intellectuals and Algerians.

With the theories of Gramsci in mind, Albert Camus is harder to categorise as an organic intellectual. The Frenchman was an intellectual of the *pieds noirs*, the social group he himself was born into, and defended their position in the debate on Algeria and Frenchness. Simultaneously, Camus stressed that intellectuals should not join the radicals on either side, but rather should be focusing on telling the truth and on bringing reason back. Camus would not take up arms himself and he would certainly not argue for a class struggle and the overthrowing of a hegemony. Indeed, one can argue that he did not defend a subordinated class, like Sartre did with the colonised Algerians, but rather defended the French-Arab community that was already the country's dominant group. Camus was rather a man of the middle, always hoping to come to a consensus that would indeed end the cruelty and injustice of French colonialism but would not enable the radical revolution the pro-decolonisation activists hoped for at the time.

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<sup>41</sup>Brée, *Camus and Sartre*, 218.

## Conclusion

By the end of the Evian Accords in 1962, Algeria officially gained self-autonomy from the French government. Eight years of fighting were over, but the wounds of the conflict remained. Streams of *pieds noirs* migrated from Algeria to France which made it clear that France could not leave its colonial history behind immediately but had to cope with the consequences first. Moreover, the French participation in the war became a taboo in politics and education. It was only in 1999 that France actually labelled the Algerian War a war, instead of discursively reducing it to a period of severe actions to control the public order. Only in 2018, President Emmanuel Macron mentioned in a speech that the French army was guilty of committing war crimes against the Algerians during the war.<sup>42</sup> Although public figures are increasingly outspoken on the period, the war archives on the Algerian War are not fully accessible and that restrains the research possibilities of historians. More work is to be done in order to enable the public's possibility to fully comprehend the war, with all its different perspectives.

This thesis focused on the following research question: How did Sartre and Camus contributed to the intellectual debate on French identity and decolonisation during the Algerian War (1954-1962)? The thesis' analysis was based on written texts of Sartre and Camus, explained also through the lens of Gramsci's theory on hegemony and intellectual participation. Sartre, to begin with, expressed himself quite clearly on French colonialism, condemning it for the so-called civilising mission the country advocated for in their colonies. This mission brought, however, violence, injustice, and racism, rather than peace and representation. Moreover, both Algeria and France were victims of the colonising mission France found itself in, since the colonial system would only become harsher and inhumane, also damaging the Frenchs' moral values. Sartre's intellectual participation in the debate is interesting in two ways. Firstly, because he strives for the improvement of the Algerians' lives and the overthrowing of France's hegemony in the country. Secondly, because Sartre stood up for the middle-lower class French families in the Metropole who were neglected by the French government precisely because of France's focus on Algeria rather than the focus on improving democratic institutions and their representation in the motherland. Sartre took a clear position: he defended the victims of French colonialism, whilst fiercely rejecting and condemning the

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<sup>42</sup> Arthur Berda, 'Guerre d'Algérie : Macron relance le débat mémoriel', *Le Figaro*, September 13<sup>th</sup>2018, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/2018/09/13/25001-20180913ARTFIG00065-guerre-d-algerie-macron-va-reconnaitre-l-implication-de-la-france-dans-la-mort-de-maurice-audin.php>

French colonialists. In Gramsci's eyes, Sartre would be an organic intellectual, but not in his classical interpretation. He is not part of the groups he defends in his writings but engages nevertheless in their precarious situation, gives voice to the unheard and calls for change. In order to activate his public, he used clear language, with little nuance and with a radical tone.

Camus was far more nuanced in his opinion than Sartre. Although he defended France's presence in Algeria, Camus does condemn the violence used in order to maintain the status quo of the empire. He called for a cease-fire during the war, since war crimes would only worsen the situation of the Algerian civilians. He was convinced that both sides of the conflict should return to a state of non-violence in which a proper solution for all parties could be found. The ideal situation for Camus was the installation of a federation in Algeria in which all citizens would be equally represented. France's role would remain essential, too, particularly in the aftermath of the Algerian War in order to prevent political instability. Intellectuals should in Camus' eyes encourage society to listen more to reason instead of taking up arms and radically change the status quo. Unlike Sartre, Camus was part of the social group he defended, namely the *pieds noirs*. His focus, however, was pragmatic, considering that he was trying to prevent a further escalation of the conflict. The two philosophers may have strived for the end of French colonialism: both were anti-government and hoped to improve the situation of the French and Algerian citizens, defending their cause and raising consciousness of their bad situations. Their style and analysis of the situation however, differed considerable from one another. That can also be explained by looking at their difference in social backgrounds. Given the limited time of this project, this thesis did only focus on the perspectives of the intellectuals. It would be better to include different angles in order to provide a solid conclusion. Although Sartre and Camus did address their public, there is no consideration of the public's reaction to their arguments.

Although these insights are interesting thus far, it is vital to continue research on the subject in order to better understand the French intellectual movement during the Algerian War. Sartre and Camus are but two intellectuals during the time and there is more to analyse on the intellectual commitment of, for instance, Simone de Beauvoir or André Breton. Furthermore, it would be interesting to do research on intellectuals who lived in French colonies at the time of the decolonization processes, like Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire. Finally, since I focused on the intellectuals' commitment rather than on the public reactions to that commitment, it would be illuminating to look at the French public opinion on the Algerian War and on the intellectuals' involvement therein.

It is tempting to condemn or praise either Sartre or Camus on their opinions on France's attitude in hindsight. Post-colonial studies have indeed enlightened the unjust and cruel situations in the colonies and addressed the Eurocentrism of Europeans in history. It is, however, essential to look at the historical context of the time during which the authors wrote their pieces and at the social milieus the authors originated in. Sartre might be praised because he strived for the freedom of subordinated classes. Camus might be neglected in today's debates because he would be associated with colonialism. He was, however, not defending France's crimes in Algeria, but offered a different opinion on the Algerian independence than the radical sides. Between pro-independence and pro-colonial supporters, Camus presented a nuanced vision of Algeria in which all communities would be represented equally. Sartre, on his turn, could be considered to be too radical, because of his justification of violence and call for action. These points are part of an interesting debate on how an intellectual should engage in political or social crises. Is it better to choose for one side of the conflict and participating in it, or should the intellectual be more nuanced in his opinion, and by that distance himself more? There are valid arguments on both sides: one attitude should not exclude the other. Whatever attitude they adopt, intellectuals remain an interesting group to analyse because of their - often original - perspectives on complex questions in society. Especially considering today's polarisation, solutions could pop up from unexpected corners in the world.

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## Annex

### Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations, V. Colonialisme et néocolonialisme* (1964)

#### Articles

Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Le Colonialisme est un Système', in *Les Temps Modernes*, n° 123, March-April 1956.

Jean-Paul Sartre, '« Vous Êtes Formidables »', in *Les Temps Modernes*, n° 135, May 1957.

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Albert Camus, 'Avant-propos', in Camus, A. *Actuelles III. Chroniques Algériennes, 1939-1958*. Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1958.

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<sup>43</sup> These chapters are included for the first time in the bundle. Therefore only the titles of the chapters are named here.

Albert Camus, 'Algérie 1958', in Camus, A. *Actuelles III. Chroniques Algériennes, 1939-1958*. Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1958.

Speech

Camus, A. *Appel Pour une Trêve Civile en Algérie*. Delivered in Algiers, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1956.