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"We Sit on a Boiling Kettle": The Influence of Race on US Policy towards the Decolonization of North Africa, 1942-1962

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The impact of race and racism in American history has been noted and felt for five hundred years, but the influence of race and racism on American foreign policy has only more recently received attention. Borrowing from the innovative literary theorist Edward Said, historians Michael Hunt and Douglas Little have investigated a "hierarchy of race" that developed in the nineteenth century and its imprint on the American mind. While Edward Said engaged his study of "orientalism" in the European context, Little argues that a specifically American orientalism emerged. This American version was shaped by a deeply religious American focus on the biblical significance of the Middle East and its own history of racial conflicts with Native Americans, African-Americans, and Asians. Little has argued that this emerging American orientalism deeply influenced US policymakers in the postwar period as they increased their interactions with the nations of the Middle East (9-42).

Tempering this claim of orientalist prejudice influencing US foreign policy, Salim Yaqub notes that "prejudiced individuals are capable of disregarding negative ethnic or cultural stereotypes and behaving in a nondiscriminatory manner when other priorities. . . . so dictate" (12). While this argument is certainly true, it is also possible that racial stereotypes can reinforce or justify decisions made based on more rational priorities, allowing contradictory evidence to be cast aside. The historian George White tackled this question in his recent study of the influence of race on Eisenhower's foreign policy towards sub-Saharan Africa. White reinforces the arguments of Said, Hunt, and Little by examining the influence of domestic racism and white supremacy in the United States to explain its operation in Eisenhower's policies toward Ethiopia, Ghana, South Africa, and the Belgian Congo. In his study, White notes that Eisenhower and many Americans constructed a paradigm of the western world contrasted against the other: "a place of cultural depravity and deviance, a place where most people were content with western guidance. Based on this construction, the only plausible explanations for African radicalism were Black incompetence, instability, and blind hatred of Whites, fed by Communist propaganda" (*Holding the Line* 22-23). Within this paradigm US policymakers tended to conflate or

to transfer racial stereotypes among groups, most notably evident in westward expansion with stereotypes and images of Native Americans and African Americans being transferred to Filipinos and other Asians as Kramer maintains. As a result, concepts and conflations of race reinforced Americans' tendencies to support European allies and delegitimize nationalist movements that emerged following World War II. US policy towards the decolonization of North Africa, Asia, and the West Indies, more broadly, drifted throughout the period between rhetorical support for liberty and self-determination and tacit support for metropolitan powers. While not the defining reason for US opposition, race deeply influenced Americans' unwillingness to support Arab nationalists in North Africa, prompted Algerian and Egyptian nationalists to look elsewhere for support of their challenge for independence, and severely weakened the American ability to attach US interests to the global movements for decolonization that would shape the Cold War era.[1] At the same time, racist assumptions about the incompetence of Arabs to rule themselves and maintain order in the postwar capitalist world allowed the United States to maintain tacit support for France and Great Britain and reinforced American unwillingness to abandon France despite its costly colonial wars. This combination of inaction and tacit support framed nearly two decades of American interaction in North Africa that ended with an independent North Africa transformed by the very revolutions that the United States had sought to restrain, avoid, and deny legitimacy.

On November 8, 1942, American troops unloaded on the shores of western North Africa to remove the Nazi threat. These troops and their leaders carried with them the heavy burden of arms as well as weighty racial stereotypes framed by biblical stories, rousing tales of American conflict with the Barbary pirates, and ventures in Morocco by President Theodore Roosevelt as well as the encumbrance of orientalism framed by European literature and art. In this vision of Arab, Berber, and Muslim North Africa, the civilizing mission of the Europeans had failed to transform a people. Despite this failure, American leaders were loath to challenge the political and economic structures constructed by the Europeans, and they accepted the arguments for leaving Europeans in control. Combined with this vision of an alien culture and society, US policymakers approached

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[1] Although several excellent studies of the decolonization of North Africa and Algeria exist, most place little emphasis on the impact of race on United States policy. See Matthew James Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era;* Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War;* Martin Thomas, "Defending a Lost Cause: France and the United States Vision of Imperial Rule in French North Africa."

the issue of an independent North Africa within their own framework of an evolutionary approach to the question of decolonization.

From its inception, the United States had approached the decolonization of European colonies within a racially constructed concept of evolution as Sangmuah claims. This evolutionary approach assumed that non-European populations required extended periods of western tutelage prior to achieving independence. This ideal of a peaceful and orderly process of transformation to democratic capitalism stemmed from an American aversion to revolutionary changes that might threaten the stability of an emerging global capitalist structure fostered by the United States. These broad ideals of evolutionary decolonization were rooted in the perceived success of the United States with its colony in the Philippines. After decades of American tutelage, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his advisors believed that they had succeeded in creating a viable, pro-western society and government in the Philippines without revolutionary upheaval or dislocation of US interests. Although delayed by World War II, Filipino independence was granted on July 4, 1946, but economic and military links were maintained through the Bell Trade Act and military basing deals which left the Philippines firmly integrated into an American-led system. As Isaiah Bowman, President of Johns Hopkins University, a delegate to the San Francisco Conference, and a supporter of the American model, noted in 1945, "The US plan for decolonization was 'like setting a bird free, but putting a little salt on its tail'" (Louis 573, LaFeber, Sbrega 256-280). This vision of limited independence and evolutionary decolonization would serve as the model for the US approach to North Africa in the upcoming decades.

Despite expounding universal ideals of self-determination and equal rights in the Atlantic Charter, US officials tempered these goals with security interests and racial stereotypes. On the day of the invasion, long time Algerian nationalist Ferhat Abbas conveyed his support for the invasion to Robert Murphy and hoped that it forecast American support for Algerian independence. Murphy later recounted that "I repeated what I had told him before, that Americans were generally sympathetic to all desires for independence but that our present purposes in Africa, as everywhere else, were concentrated upon defeating the Nazis" (123). Several days later, General Dwight David Eisenhower told his staff that "Arabs are a very uncertain quantity, explosive, and full of prejudices. Many things done here that look queer are just to keep the Arabs from blazing up into revolt. We sit on a boiling kettle!!" (Ambrose 84). It was this image of Arabs that led Eisenhower and his officer corps to urge the maintenance of French control. While President Franklin Delano Roosevelt hinted at his

support for Moroccan independence in a personal audience with the Sultan of Morocco during the January 1943 Casablanca Conference, he agreed to the British-crafted plans of securing the Mediterranean and sided with Winston Churchill's support for continued French presence in North Africa (Sangmuah 117-118, Murphy 166-168, Kimball 72). American support for decolonization and national independence remained overshadowed by war and a need to maintain European support as Bills claims in *Empire and the Cold War*.

Unlike the strong negative reactions of the United States to the continuation of British and French imperial presence in the Middle East in the early postwar period, the United States supported the continued presence of both nations in North Africa. Loy Henderson, Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, noted in early 1945 that "we regard our policy towards the independent Levant States as entirely distinct and separate from our policy toward France and the French empire" (Louis 163-164). France had been assigned both Syria and Lebanon as Class A mandates by the League of Nations following World War I. During the interwar period, the French government did little to prepare for the eventual independence of either state despite a host of nationalist political pressures and revolts. The United States feared that French and British attempts to reestablish their mandates would cause violent revolts and create instability in the region. Such events occurred in May 1945.[2] US Consuls George Wadsworth and William Porter watched in horror as the French shelled and bombed Damascus and killed hundreds of Syrian civilians.[3]

In contrast, J. Rives Chiles, chargé in Tangiers, warned against supporting Arab ambitions for self-rule in North Africa. Childs wrote in December 1943 that "I would respectfully suggest that while avoiding to give offense to legitimate Moorish nationalist aspirations, we refrain from being made the cat's paw for circumlocutory intrigues to which the Moors are so addicted."[4] Like Murphy and Eisenhower, Childs saw the French presence as a positive force

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[2] Aviel Roshwald subtitles one section "The Pot Boils Over" which notes the fierceness of the revolt and the repression and unintentionally harkens to Eisenhower's previous concerns over Arab issues.

[3] Porter confirmed his witnessing of the bombing of Damascus in 1953. Historian Anthony Clayton calls the bombing of Damascus "the second of the two curtain-raisers" in French efforts to reassert empire (33).

[4] Scott Bills in *The Libyan Arena: The United States, Britain, and the Council of Foreign Ministers, 1945-1948* notes that "Here as elsewhere, native peoples were not judged ready for independence" (10).

and questioned the ability of local Arabs to govern themselves. As a result, US officials barely noticed a far more brutal suppression of Algerian nationalist demonstrations by French forces on VE-Day after having openly condemned the French efforts to quell Syrian nationalist challenges in Damascus. Although the United States did call for more lenient treatment of nationalists, Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson informed his colleagues that "our stated concern should not be interpreted as acceptance on our part of [the] contention that the United States has acquired responsibility for developments in North Africa because of our military assistance in liberating the area" (Department Airgram from Acting Secretary of State to Tuck). Other officials, such as Robert McClintock and George Kennan, came away from the war and visits to the Middle East with bigoted attitudes towards Arabs. McClintock wrote that "it is important to the interests of this country that these fanatical and overwrought people do not injure our strategic interests through reprisals against our oil interests" (Little 26). Kennan bemoaned Arabs' "selfishness and stupidity" and their inclinations "to all manner of religious bigotry and fanaticism" (Little 26). Given these fears of Arab instability and fanaticism, the United States preferred to rely on French and British efforts to maintain order and stability and begin the evolutionary approach to decolonization and national independence. This reliance on the French and British to safeguard the evolutionary process would result in over fifteen years of turmoil in North Africa and the emergence of revolutionary nationalism that threatened to harm US interests.

However, US hope to slowly move North African nations to independence began to unravel in Libya. As the historian Scott Bills has elucidated, the United States soon found its evolutionary concept undermined by competing French, British, and Soviet strategic and economic interests (*The Libyan Arena* 155-164). Under orientalist assumptions, the Council of Foreign Ministers deemed the Libyans unable to organize a stable, independent state, and delayed Libyan independence as the Council debated and ultimately failed to create the structures for an "orderly process" controlled by European powers. With the British and French seeking to divide the spoils of the former Italian colony within their own North African colonial areas, the United States deeply feared Soviet penetration caused by continual delays. As the Council became bogged down in Cold War considerations in 1948, the United States decided to press for more immediate, but limited independence using the vehicle of a monarchy structured around Sayyid Idris. In this case, Idris and his leadership of the Sanusi brotherhood, a conservative Muslim group, became an asset against Soviet penetration. The elevation of Idris allowed the United States and Britain to avoid revolutionary nationalist forces seeking greater independence for Libya from the West. The

United States also sought to disconnect Libya nationalism from larger pan-Arab forces emerging in the Middle East. Therefore, US officials worked to move the consideration of Libya from the Council of Foreign Ministers to the United Nations, which ultimately recognized independence for Libya on December 24, 1951. However, American assistance to King Idris came at the price of Libyan agreements to develop an American airbase at Wheelus field and to allow American access to the development of Libyan oil fields. The United States preferred a nominally independent Libya with a dependent government directly linked to the West and capable of continuing to receive western tutelage. While certainly not the evolutionary success envisioned by American policymakers, Libya served as an example of decolonization that preserved United States interests through a non-democratic suppression of the voices of independent nationalism in Libya.

While the United States struggled in Libya, the British continued to maintain strong ties in Egypt through King Farouk. Though nominally independent, Egypt struggled under the heavy hand of British military and economic presence. A nationalist revolution overthrew Farouk and precipitated the emergence of Abdel Gammel Nasser, a voice for secular Arab nationalism and a thorn in the Americans' side in the Middle East and North Africa. For many policymakers, Nasser symbolized the unstable Arab who could rouse the Arab street but could not be relied upon to create an ordered society. US officials realized that Middle East stability depended on the recognition of Egyptian nationalism. But Americans' sympathy for Egyptian nationalism conflicted with strategic interests mandated by the Cold War. The conflict between these interests turned Egyptian nationalists against US policy.[5]

Nasser exposed this tension in US policy by challenging European imperialism, embracing neutralism, and directing pan-Arabism. As Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs, Nasser was accused of supporting "virulent nationalism and unreasoning prejudice" (Little 27). For Eisenhower Nasser embodied the irrational and emotional Arab as well as the anti-western nationalist, threatening to unleash revolution and chaos across the Middle East and Africa. Indeed, Nasser emerged as nationalists in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia increased their efforts for independence, including the launching of a national war of liberation in Algeria on November 1, 1954.

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[5] Peter Hahn in *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956* defines US strategic interests as maintaining the flow of oil to Europe through the Suez Canal, maintenance of British bases, and preventing Soviet penetration of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East (242-243).

To counter Nasser and North African revolutionary nationalism, US officials looked for Arab leaders they deemed to be "moderate." This term meant a fully evolved leader who had accepted the need for slow, orderly transition and recognized the value of developing an interdependent relationship with the West. The United States found a "moderate" Arab leader in the form of Tunisian nationalist Habib Bourguiba, who led his nation's achievement of independence from France in 1956. Like King Idris's post-independence basing and exploration agreements with the United States and Britain, Bourguiba had achieved this peaceful victory by accepting a continued French military presence in Bizerte and recognizing the preponderant economic power of France in Tunisia. By this route, Bourguiba gained a limited freedom for Tunisia and became a trusted ally in the American effort to develop North Africa along this evolutionary path. Bourguiba would continually counsel the Algerian National Liberation Front, known by its French acronym FLN, to seek a negotiated settlement with France guaranteeing a place for the large European population that dominated Algerian political and economic structures. At the same time, US officials found their own search for "moderate" Algerian Muslim leaders thwarted by increasingly repressive French measures to quell the rebellion. By 1956, many US officials recognized that "the militant nationalist movement in Algeria has now expanded both in size and strength to the point where it can claim without serious contradiction to speak for the Moslems of Algeria" (National Security Council Document 5614/1 21.3).

The efforts to counter revolutionary Arab nationalism in North Africa following the rise of Nasser and the launching of the Algerian war of independence continued to waver between the broader ideals of self-determination and equal rights that US officials publicly espoused and their private skepticism that North Africans were not fully developed and required continued western tutelage. Consul General Lewis Clark summed up the problem noting that the "fundamental problem remains of course to find some way to give [a] nine million Moslem majority the impression of control while protecting the preponderant *financial investment* of European minority of one million."[6] By early October 1956, Eisenhower's National Security Council approved a policy paper that revealed the underlying concerns of US policy for the maintenance of European power in North Africa and the need to protect the interests of the European settlers known as *colons*. "It is entirely understandable," argued National Security

[6] Algiers Telegram 207, 25 January 1956. Documents from the National Archives will be cited with their record group number and pertinent filing information. Emphasis in the original document probably by George West, then the Algerian desk officer.

Council 5614/1, "that these elements should be unwilling to turn over their political preeminence to the Arab majority. The Arab population is generally illiterate, unwashed, and unskilled" (21). Americans' racial ideas about North Africans now sidetracked their higher ideals to privately justify their acceptance of French repression in Algeria and the limits placed on Moroccan and Tunisian independence.

The tacit approval of French actions in Algeria contrasted greatly with the American response to the challenge of the Suez Crisis. President Eisenhower perceived Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal to help fund Egypt's economic development efforts from his racially constructed view of Arabs. On July 31, 1956, Eisenhower said that "Nasser embodies the emotional demands of the people of the area for independence and 'for slapping the White Man down'" (Little 27). Eisenhower hoped to contain the issue, but Nasser's slap led Britain and France to make an imperialist grab and to attempt to destroy Arab nationalism at its root. While the British and French, along with their Israeli partners, succeeded in capturing the Canal Zone, Eisenhower and his advisors were horrified by the action and saw it as opening the door for far more radical Arab nationalism and Soviet penetration of the Middle East. While Eisenhower did not "fancy helping Egypt in the present circumstances," his administration placed sanctions, went to the United Nations to demand a withdrawal, and worked diligently to prevent the Soviet Union from exploiting the situation further (Hahn 234). While ultimately successful in forcing a withdrawal from the canal zone and Sinai, Eisenhower continued to seek containment of Arab nationalism and any challenges to the maintenance of western power and influence in the Middle East and Africa (Yaqub 54-55).

Although it rejected the return of imperialism in Egypt, the United States failed to press the decolonization process forward in Algeria. Indeed, the United States barely protested when the French hijacked an international flight between Morocco and Tunisia on October 22, 1956 carrying five FLN leaders including Algeria's future president, Ahmed Ben Bella, and arrested them. Despite Ambassador John L. Tappin's warning that the failure to protest French actions might result in finding "ourselves no (repeat no) longer considered by the Arabs as world power most likely [to] work for peaceful and equitable solutions to world problems," (Tripoli Telegram 245) the United States refused to accept these men as legitimate leaders of an Algerian future. Nasser's challenges to western imperialism and the widening appeal of pan-Arabism led the United States to perceive the FLN as anti-western and, as the historian George White

has written, for the Eisenhower administration, "no liberation movement could be both legitimate and anti-West" ("Little Wheel Blues" 109-126). Instead, Eisenhower again turned to Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba, who had responded "without histrionics and with intense calm," in hopes of developing a "just and equitable solution" (Tunis Telegram 165).

On November 21, 1956, President Eisenhower met for the first time with Bourguiba "with whom he was greatly impressed" (Dairy Entry Nov. 21, 1956). During their conversation, Bourguiba expressed gratitude for American aid, and Eisenhower "was struck by his sincerity, his intelligence, and his friendliness" (Dairy Entry Nov. 21, 1956). Bourguiba confounded Eisenhower's racial stereotype of Arabs. The US president's perception of Bourguiba contrasted greatly with his comments about Nasser the day before when Eisenhower complained about "the great undependability and unreliability of Nasser" (Yaqub 68-69). When Bourguiba proposed the establishment of commonwealth status for the Algerians, he expressed the very moderate view which Eisenhower had hoped for. "If we could get this war settled," argued Bourguiba, "all the Western World would have a very much finer relationship with North Africa and indeed with the Arab world" (Dairy Entry Nov. 21, 1956). While meeting American hopes of an integrated North Africa under western tutelage, Bourguiba's vision of an Algerian future did not match the FLN's call for "national independence through the restoration of the sovereign, democratic, and social Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles; [and] respect of basic liberties without distinction as to race or religion" (qtd. in Ruedy 159). In this opening declaration of independence and principles of their revolution, the FLN embraced the western ideals of democracy and liberty, but their challenges to the preeminent position of the *colons*, the French empire, and the capitalist system made the FLN an unacceptable vehicle for the evolution of Algeria for US policymakers. Over the next several years, the United States would continue its search for moderate Arabs who supported the evolutionary approach to decolonization.

In the years following the Suez Crisis, US policymakers continued to rely heavily on their concepts of race to organize their policies toward North Africa and the decolonization of Algeria. In the immediate aftermath, the Eisenhower administration launched the Eisenhower Doctrine, fostered better relationships with more conservative regimes in the Middle East, and increased support for Bourguiba. All three approaches were aimed at staving off both secular Arab nationalism and the possible Soviet penetration of Arab nationalist movements. US officials continued to question the readiness of Arabs, Africans, and Asians

to become fully independent nations. As C. D. Jackson informed Eisenhower in early 1957, "The malaise [about emerging nations] arises. . . . out of the growing realization that far too many of these nations are political teen-agers, and quite a few of them show signs of being or becoming political juvenile delinquents" (Galantiere). This fear of delinquency led Vice President Richard Nixon to advocate strongly for maintaining the Tunisian "'pilot project' for the development of stability, moderation, and pro-Westernism" (Memorandum of Conversation with Habib Bourguiba and Vice President Nixon). While counseling new pressures on France to "awaken France to the extreme dangers which she faces and to which she is exposing the West in North Africa," Nixon privately proposed the United States to support an interdependent "EurAfrican" solution which would alleviate nationalist demands for independence while maintaining western influence (Report to the President on the Vice President's Visit to Africa). Ingrained in this inherently racist idea for an integrated society was the need for all Africans to further evolve under western guidance. As the historian George White has argued, the Eisenhower administration "constructed an image of the West that obliterated the genocidal legacy of imperialism, touted the altruism of Western nations, and emphasized the salience of Western characterizations" (*Holding the Line* 37). Eisenhower and Nixon hoped to reinforce this image and strengthen Bourguiba and other Arab "moderates," but found none within the FLN.[7] By June 1957, Consul General Lewis Clark believed that in Algeria "almost the entire Moslem population [is] now anti-French and liberal Moslems no longer exist" (Algiers Telegram June 5, 1957).

Despite the perceived lack of acceptable Arabs in Algeria, the evolutionary ideas advanced by the Eisenhower administration were publicly advocated several months later by Senator John F. Kennedy who called for Algerian independence. Although his Congressional speech challenged both French and US policies regarding Algeria, Kennedy praised the French for their efforts in West Africa, where

> Under the guidance of M. Felix Houphouët-Boigny, the first Negro cabinet minister in French history, the French Government took significant action by establishing a single college electoral system, which Algeria has never had, and, by providing universal suffrage, a wide measure of decentralized government, and internal self-

[7] Throughout the conflict, the French government attempted to deny the FLN legitimacy as a representative voice for the Algerian people.

> control. Here realistic forward steps are being taken to fuse nationalist aspirations into a gradual measurement of political freedom.[8]

Kennedy revealed his own doubts about the readiness of Algerians for independence and called for a "settlement interdependent with France and the neighboring nations" (10788). While recognizing the Algerian desire for independence, Kennedy failed to connect directly with the FLN's call for immediate independence. Instead, Kennedy hoped that Bourguiba could lead North Africa to a new relationship similar to that negotiated by Houphouët-Boigny, who had not only attained a ministry in the French government, but also official French status as *évolue* or "evolved."[9] Again, the racially constructed idea of an evolutionary approach to decolonization appeared and shaped Kennedy's understanding of who would be acceptable to receive the mantle of leadership in a decolonized Africa. Despite his challenge to Eisenhower's policies, Kennedy's speech and the statements of other Democratic senators show that the constant influence of race was bipartisan and informed their support for gradual evolutionary steps for North Africa as well as sub-Saharan Africa.

As Algeria's national liberation war continued into 1958, the United States confronted a serious challenge to its evolutionary dream when French pilots in American made bombers flew out of Algeria and attacked the Tunisian border town of Sakiet Sidi Youssef. Following this incident, US officials divided over how to respond as Bourguiba attempted to use worldwide sympathy for Tunisia to press the cause of Algerian independence. Consul General Clark pleaded that "if Bourguiba harbors any illusions that [the] Sakiet incident can be used as a peg to force French withdrawal from North Africa, he should be quickly disillusioned" (Algiers Telegram 248). When Bourguiba altered his plan and called for the United States to offer its Good Offices to solve the border problem, some US officials hoped to push France to an immediate solution of the Algerian war. The State Department working group on North Africa reported that "the ideal solution would a Maghrebian union federated with France, but . . . the feeling against France in North Africa has now become so

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[8] In his speech before the Senate, Senator John F. Kennedy focused his decolonization ideas on developing the moderate nationalists in Africa and believed, much as Nixon had, that the path to decolonization lay in the Bourguiba model or the developing strategy under Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the future president of Ivory Coast.

[9] The French granted separate citizenship status to some Africans which often required renunciation to Koranic law in preference of French law. See Alice L. Conklin, *Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*.

deep-seated and intense that this goal is unrealistic" (Memorandum from J. C. Holmes to the Secretary of State). While advisors like Consul General Clark continued to argue that the FLN's claims to be "sole representative of [the] independence movement unfounded" and that the United States should reach out to "reasonable Moslems," other officials met with FLN officials in Tunisia and found them strikingly moderate (Algiers Telegram 273). As a result of these talks and the need to fully support Bourguiba, Eisenhower decided to press France in a personal letter to French Prime Minister Gaillard (April 10, 1958). This letter set off a French governmental crisis which ended in the coup that brought Charles de Gaulle and his Fifth Republic to power in May 1958.

While the bold decision of the United States to support Bourguiba resulted in the collapse of the Fourth Republic, it did not end Americans' hopes for an evolutionary process of decolonization in North Africa or mitigate its deep concerns about emotional and irrational Arabs leading the process. Indeed, the United States placed great faith in De Gaulle and his Constantine plan for the economic development in Algeria and hoped that this economic effort would lead to political independence over time. Unfortunately for the proponents of evolutionary decolonization, neither De Gaulle nor the FLN seemed prepared to institute the necessary steps down the evolutionary path. Ironically, US officials used orientalist language in railing against De Gaulle's "Levantine tactics" after he refused to accept American advice on a political solution in Algeria. The American officials imagined De Gaulle as an "oriental" for engaging in "circumlocutory intrigues to which the Moors are so addicted" (Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs to Herter).

While De Gaulle intrigued like an Arab, independence movements across Africa began to call for immediate independence. Leaders like Seko Toure challenged De Gaulle and Houphouët-Boigny and demanded immediate independence after being denied equal status within the West African Federation as Schmidt reports. In response to Guinea's September 1958 rejection of De Gaulle's Constitution of the Fifth Republic, Houphouët-Boigny counseled Abidjan's American Consul General Massey that "Sekou Toure must not be rewarded for his defiance. . . . friends of France in other territories must not be undermined by any concession to bad boy Sekou Toure" (Abidjan Airgram Sep, 22, 1958). C. D. Jackson's fears of "juvenile delinquency" among the Africans now appeared confirmed. Despite being warned by the United States to avoid such an action, the FLN announced the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic on September 19, 1958 and denounced De Gaulle's constitution. By January 1960, the FLN drafted and ratified a constitution that "affirmed that Algeria was

conducting not only a war of national liberation but also a revolution" (Ruedy 182). US officials argued that despite de Gaulle's resistance, the real problems were the FLN's "tendency to prefer revolution over evolution as a method of acquiring Algerian independence" (Algiers Telegram 347). De Gaulle's efforts to maintain control in Algeria, to punish Guinea and Seko Toure, and to shape the destiny of Africa seemed more acceptable as revolutionary changes were taking place throughout Africa. This fear of radical Arab nationalism remained a central tenet in the US decision to support De Gaulle despite his delays and dissent. Eisenhower could forgive De Gaulle's intrigues, emotionalism, and "attitude as that of a Messiah complex, picturing himself as a cross between Napoleon and Joan of Arc" because the US president did not see De Gaulle as a delinquent, radicalized, anti-westerner, as he saw Seko Toure and the FLN (Memorandum of Conference with President Eisenhower, Secretary Herter, and Major John S Eisenhower).

Strikingly, during the 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy, the critic of colonialism, publicly limited his comments to support for de Gaulle. After Averell Harriman returned from a fact-finding trip to Africa, he counseled Kennedy to steer away from challenging the Eisenhower model for African decolonization. In October, Pierre Salinger stated "France was progressing toward a solution of its own problems."[10] Kennedy's support for a program of interdependent development for all of Africa now ran headlong into the challenges of the FLN and other African nationalist groups that sought immediate independence and revolutionary changes in the political, economic, and social structures of their countries. Following the US election, De Gaulle announced a possible future "Algerian republic" that US officials applauded. Consul Richard Johnson reported from Algiers that "de Gaulle has gone as far as he can be expected. Responsibility now on [the] FLN" (Algiers Telegram 113). Once again, the FLN was expected to sacrifice its goals for the evolutionary path which the United States and now De Gaulle had laid before it.

Determined to keep newly emerging nations within the western camp, President Kennedy both welcomed and warned these countries during his inaugural address. On January 20, 1961, Kennedy stated:

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[10] Both United Press International and Agence France-Press offered this article to their subscribers on October 19, 1960. Even after Kennedy's election, his aide Fred Holborn counseled caution after a conversation with Charles Bohlen and Paul Nitze. Bohlen expressed "his strong view that you not say anything about Algeria for the time being" (Memorandum from Holborn to Kennedy, 11 November 1960).

> To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom--and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside. (Inaugural Speech)

In this speech, Kennedy asserted that the US policy of gradual decolonization could provide the stability needed for an orderly transfer of power. Nationalists were also warned that they were not capable of taming the revolutionary tiger of Soviet communism or Nasser's pan-Arabism. Fearing the appeal of more radical Arab and African nationalism, Kennedy turned to Bourguiba once again. Bourguiba was honored with the first state visit to the Kennedy White House, given increased economic aid, and served as a conduit for the opening of negotiations between France and the FLN. However, during the summer of 1961, Bourguiba's conflicts with France over the maintenance of military bases in Tunisia exploded as French and Tunisian forces fought for four days in July. Suddenly, the moderate Arab leader whom the United States had courted for several years reverted back into the irrational Arab who raised the political temperature "from its normal just-below-boiling point" (Algiers Telegram 40). Again, the image of the Arab as a "boiling kettle" of emotionalism and irrationality emerged, and the legal and rational reasons for Bourguiba's challenge were discounted. US officials found Bourguiba's decision to take "other means than negotiations" as "particularly regrettable….at this particularly important time in the evolution of French and North African affairs" (Department Telegram to Paris 387). The United States refused to support a U.N. resolution recognizing Tunisia's sovereign right to call for the withdrawal of French forces. As a result, Bourguiba's position was weakened, and his limited ability to moderate the FLN was further curtailed.

Undeterred by these setbacks, President Kennedy attempted to limit the damage and reconnect the United States with the larger world in a speech at the opening of the sixteenth United Nations General Assembly. Kennedy offered his support to every nation seeking freedom and declared:

> I do not ignore the remaining problems of traditional anti-colonialism which still confront this body. These problems can be solved with patience, goodwill, and determination.

> Within the limits of our responsibility in such matters, my country intends to be a participant and not merely an observer, in the peaceful, expeditious movement of nations from the status of colonies to the partnership of equals. That continuing tide of self-determination, which runs so strongly, has our sympathy and our support. (Speech to United Nations General Assembly)

Kennedy's speech launched a significant effort by the United States to redefine its position and to revitalize his prestige among Third World leaders, but also showed that the United States refused to fully abandon the evolutionary approach or its sense of racial superiority. Even with the realization that independence for Algeria was rapidly approaching, the United States refused to work with the FLN directly in an effort to bring it into the western orbit. After years of discounting the FLN's positions and chastising the increasing militancy of many nationalist movements, the United States now faced the very revolutionary decolonization that it had sought to prevent. As the final negotiations between the FLN and France began, Walt W. Rostow, Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, outlined the basic policy goals for Algeria in 1962: "an unburdened France and a neutral, independent Algeria integrated into the West's capitalist system." Rostow admitted that "to achieve these basic goals, the US has few means of action" (Memorandum to McGeorge).

As the Evian Accords began to take hold in the spring of 1962, United States officials became extremely disheartened by the violence of OAS, a *colon* terrorist organization focused on destroying the accords and maintaining France in Algeria, as well as a more radical turn within the FLN. In May 1962, the various elements of the FLN came together in Tripoli to organize a transitional government. As feared, more radical elements within the liberation army or ALN dominated the conference and organized the Tripoli Program. As the historian John Ruedy described, "The Tripoli Program called for a popular democratic revolution . . . [which] rejected both economic dependency and market economics in favor of a socialist system in which the large means of production would be collectivized" (Ruedy 191). From his sources in Tunisia, Ambassador Walter Walmsley learned of the split within the FLN and the possibility of conflict in post-independence Algeria (Tunis Telegram 1237). Concerned about an open divide, Walmsley told FLN spokesman Mohammed Yazid that "it would be a tragedy if Algeria on the eve of independence should show Syrian type symptoms of instability" (Tunis Telegram 1280). Once again, US officials feared the instability of Arabs and their inability to govern themselves

or their emotions. From Algiers, Consul General William Porter commented on the surprising success of the FLN and his astonishment that they could maintain unity during the war. Porter noted:

> In [the] history of Arab revolutionary movements the remarkable stamina and basic toughness of this Algerian controlling group (PAG) stands out. For seven and one half years they fought the French Government and army; when these negotiated peace, the PAG then contended with the OAS; and now, [the] final irony, they must bring their own army to heel lest it snatch their authority from them and divert the country into paths they consider unhealthy. If they can meet this final challenge, it will indeed stamp them as a very unusual group and one worthy, until proved otherwise, of help and understanding of France and her allies. (Algiers Telegram 711)

The long held racial stereotypes of Arabs as disorganized, unruly, and highly emotional remained firmly in place even as Algeria gained its independence and spun out of its western orbit.

For nearly twenty years, the United States struggled to organize its policies towards the decolonization of North Africa to insure the maintenance of western interests and to provide stability and order to the region. This effort to institute evolutionary decolonization remained shaped by concepts of race framed by both the history of American racial conflict and orientalist visions shaped by images of Arabs and Middle Eastern cultures. These same racial structures informed the evolutionary approach of the United States and retarded the process of decolonization in all of North Africa. Fears of Arab irrationality and inability to govern helped to justify evolutionary decolonization and support for continued European presence and tutelage. Concerns about delinquency and incompetence denied legitimacy to nationalist movements across Africa and the globe. Instead of working directly with nationalist movements or pressing European reforms, the United States either fostered leaders like King Idris or strengthened perceived moderates like Habib Bourguiba. Leaders or groups that directly challenged United States or European imperialist interests were labeled as unpredictable, undependable, and easy marks for Communist subversion. As a result, the United States continued to search for "a just and equitable solution" and accepted European delays, repression, and destructive violence. While American goals were certainly shaped by economic and political interests during the Cold War, race played a key role in justifying officials' reluctance

to support nationalists' challenges to European imperialism. This simplistic approach allowed US officials to discount the myriad social, economic, and political problems highlighted by nationalist movements for independence and to focus on the failures or unreasonableness of nationalist goals. By the time that Algeria achieved its independence in 1962, the United States could discount the radicalization of the FLN and its revolutionary agenda as the failure of this Arab movement to fully evolve into a stable, moderate, modern, and pro-western nation. In Algeria, as in much of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, Americans' willingness to discount nationalist desires and the legitimacy of nationalist aspirations for decolonization contributed to the drift of Algeria, and much of the Third World, from the western orbit, counter to US interests. Algeria, like much of North Africa, remained "a boiling kettle."

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