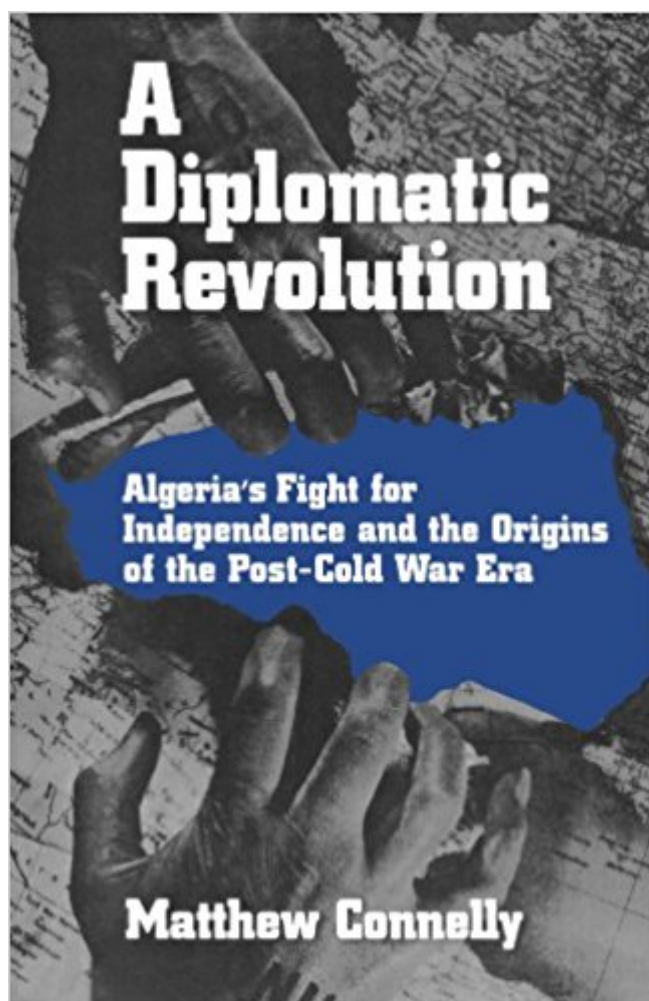


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A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight For Independence And The Origins Of The Post-Cold War Era



Synopsis

Algeria sits at the crossroads of the Atlantic, European, Arab, and African worlds. Yet, unlike the wars in Korea and Vietnam, Algeria's fight for independence has rarely been viewed as an international conflict. Even forty years later, it is remembered as the scene of a national drama that culminated with Charles de Gaulle's decision to "grant" Algerians their independence despite assassination attempts, mutinies, and settler insurrection. Yet, as Matthew Connelly demonstrates, the war the Algerians fought occupied a world stage, one in which the U.S. and the USSR, Israel and Egypt, Great Britain, Germany, and China all played key roles. Recognizing the futility of confronting France in a purely military struggle, the Front de Libération Nationale instead sought to exploit the Cold War competition and regional rivalries, the spread of mass communications and emigrant communities, and the proliferation of international and non-governmental organizations. By harnessing the forces of nascent globalization they divided France internally and isolated it from the world community. And, by winning rights and recognition as Algeria's legitimate rulers without actually liberating the national territory, they rewrote the rules of international relations. Based on research spanning three continents and including, for the first time, the rebels' own archives, this study offers a landmark reevaluation of one of the great anti-colonial struggles as well as a model of the new international history. It will appeal to historians of post-colonial studies, twentieth-century diplomacy, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. A Diplomatic Revolution was winner of the 2003 Stuart L. Bernath Prize of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, and the Akira Iriye International History Book Award, The Foundation for Pacific Quest.

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Customer Reviews

"A brilliant volume of analysis, careful research, elegant writing, and the sensitive inclusion of multiple source materials ranging from demographic statistics to propaganda films."-- International Journal of African Historical Studies

"A Diplomatic Revolution offers a fascinating argument based on a variety of multilingual and multi-archival sources that reflect the national discourse of the nations involved."--African Studies Review

"An ambitious book that succeeds admirably in its argument...In scope, and persuasiveness, A Diplomatic Revolution is unlikely to be surpassed as the best book about the Algerian revolution for many years to come."--Journal of Cold War Studies

"A. J.P. Taylor observed that historians 'talk so much about profound forces in order to avoid doing the detailed work' (p 141) Connelly is not one of them. His multiarchival research is impressive, especially his pioneering work in the recently available Algerian records. Above all, he has taken an innovative analytical approach, an engaging alternative to traditional diplomatic historiography."-- The International History Review

"In concentrating on the international dimension, Connelly weaves into his story the changing roles of the United States, Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia; the ebb and flow of FLN relations with the soviet bloc; and much more."--Foreign Affairs

"Connelly's book is not a comprehensive history of the Algerian war, but a meticulous reconstruction of the global environment in which it occurred. By recasting the Algerian revolution as a contest between competing 'transnational systems' he has shined a welcome new light on a struggle that has long been treated, for practical purposes, as an episode in the history of France and its empire, without sufficient reference to the rest of the world, whose interests were most decidedly in play."-- Strategic Insights

"This extensively researched study will provide extremely valuable information to scholars of decolonization, and represents a major contribution to the history of what one of the belligerent parties, France, only officially recognized as a war in October 1999."--Journal of Military History

Matthew Connelly is an Associate Professor of History at Columbia University.

Columbia University historian Matthew Connelly frames the Algerian War as a watershed event for France that had repercussions for future conflicts and for Cold War international relations. The book is aptly titled The Diplomatic Revolution because the war was not primarily won or lost on the ground between insurgents and counterinsurgents but through political maneuvering. Militarily, the French effectively reduced the FLN's guerrilla force. Politically, however, the French lost the war because they failed to recognize that controlling physical terrain or defeating enemy forces would not seal

victory. The FLN, cognizant of its weaknesses in the face of overwhelming French military power, restructured the geometry of the conflict around international opinion. The FLN's ability to leverage world opinion to both prevent the United States from unilaterally backing the French and to prevent the French government from effectively seeking outside assistance was revolutionary. Connolly is the first historian to effectively demonstrate this by synthesizing military, political, and economic history. Connolly's second major intervention is to explain that in losing Algeria, France was freed to follow its own foreign policy independent of the superpowers. This changed the order of the post-colonial world, since France could maintain hegemony even in countries it freed, while neither too strongly supporting either the US or the Soviet Union. Connolly's work is recognized within the historical community as a masterpiece of geo-politics and diplomatic relations. To respond to other reviewers, this is not a "popular history" for casual reading but an academic work that, will deliver in spades if given a sufficiently careful and studied reading.

This diplomatic history of the Algerian independence movement offers insight into the events of the past year, i.e., Iraq II. As the book points out, fifty years ago America stood on the right side of history, and France faced the opposition of the world. Interesting sidenotes include France's dirty tricks by its special forces. Read this history and learn how Dulles and Eisenhower would be doves in the current US administration.

I was assigned to read this book for a Graduate course in History. I agree with the first review that it does shed light on diplomatic history of world issues and parallels can be seen from the Algerian conflict to the situation today with Iraq. I understand this is a book about the international arena of diplomacy and that forces an author to discuss the many nations and their representatives involved. However, as a Graduate student familiar with picking topics for research it would have been better to pick a more isolated topic and examination of the conflict than to take on the entire conflict from all sides. The reason I say this is because as far as from a reader's standpoint keeping all the players straight in this drama became very complicated to follow. I think the author should have included an Appendix at the back of the book listing all the people's names involved so a reader could easily look up their job title and organization they were involved with. Also, the writing went on and on in details ad infinitum that probably could have been skipped and still made the point and prove the argument the author was trying to make. The combination of trying to keep all the players straight within this drama/ conflict with the rambling on of endless details made the book a very tedious reading experience. By the time I got to the last two chapters, honestly, A. I just didn't care

anymore about the conflict because the author drove my natural curiosity about history right out of me with the tedious reading experience and B. the prospect of having to read two more tedious chapters with endless details was a torturous thought. I just wanted a fast forward button to get to the point and conclusion of what happened in the end. Granted I came out of reading this book with a truly extensive knowledge of the conflict, but sometimes too much information with endless details makes enjoyment of learning and retaining the information next to impossible. If you're looking for a book that is enjoyable to read and gives you a decent background and history without all the rambling on and on pick another book. If you actually enjoy people rambling on and on, wading through endless details, and seemingly never getting to the point than this is the book for you.

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