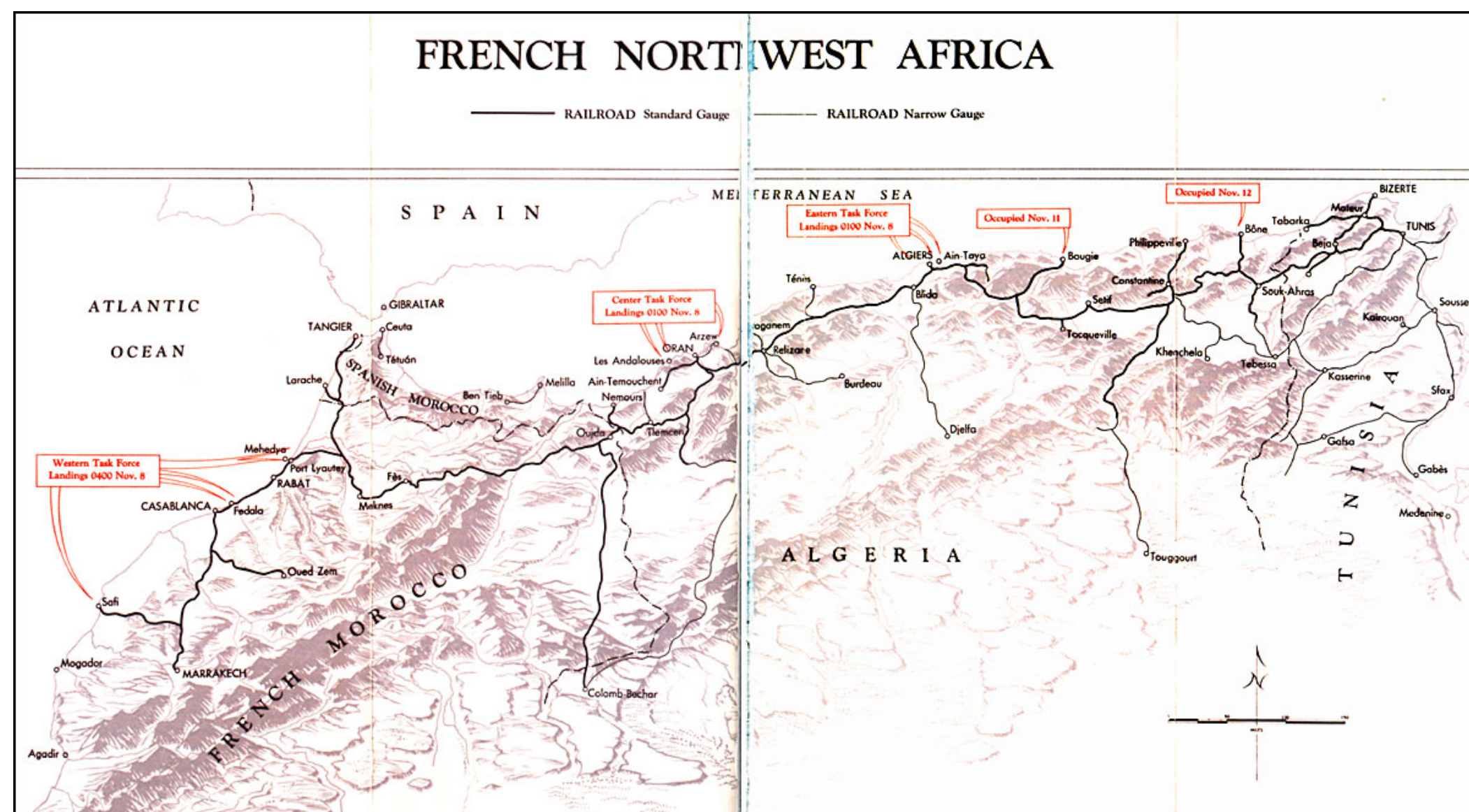


French Colonialism in Algeria and Tunisia: Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses and Their Implications

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Abstract

This poster explores how French colonial efforts at consolidating their monopoly on violence within the territories and identity construction reproduced themselves as potent tools against French colonialism in the twentieth century. The extremely violent and protracted nature of “pacification” of the population that marked the beginning of the French colony in Algeria also marked the regime’s end through the bitter, eight-year-long Algerian War of Independence. As a result of the binary construction of identity in the French colonial state, the “native” population in the newly-created Algerian state in 1962 steadfastly held to their conviction to expel all French elements regardless of where they were born. The comparatively mild military contestation for Tunisia at the outset of French colonial rule, as well as the more fluid colonial codification of identities, are reflected as much in the gradualist and constitutionalist approach taken by the supporters of Tunisian independence as they are in the population’s more appreciative response to the postcolonial hybrid Tunisian identity.



French Colonial Map of North Africa, as represented by George C. Marshall, United States Army General in a Biennial Report to the Secretary of War
Link: <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/WarReports/WarReports-2.html>

Methodology

- ❖ Interpretive-historical method: grounded in the researcher’s interpretation of newspaper and interview data, as well as of select academic secondary sources (bibliography and author contact information available upon request)
- ❖ Phenomenological and structural explanations

Major Theoretical Frameworks

- ❖ Althusser’s repressive and ideological state apparatuses
- ❖ Weber’s notion of legitimacy resting on monopoly of violence
- ❖ The interplay of structure and human agency in shaping identity, as theorized by Amartya Sen

Repressive State Apparatuses: “Pacification” Military Campaigns

- ❖ Three stages of military campaigns in order to ensure a French monopoly on violence in **Algeria** between 1830 to the 1870s:
 - a. The effort to establish French enclaves in the coastal cities was resisted by the Algerian-Ottoman state;
 - b. The integration of the plains and towns of the interior hinterland was resisted by a Sufi movement;
 - c. The incorporation of the mountainous regions and Saharan fringes involved quelling millennial jihad movements.
- ❖ French general Begeaud utilized the razzia technique to systemically destroy the countryside, inland plains, and mountainous regions and effectively established the colonial boundaries of l’Algerie francaise in 1871.
- ❖ In **Tunisia**, such territorial consolidation efforts lasted only a year due to the smaller size and less challenging landscape. The only significant resistance effort manifested in the southeast during a short-lived uprising led by the tribal qaid Ali ibn Khalifa.

Postcolonial Implications

- A corresponding level of violence marked the end of the French colonial states in Algeria and Tunisia:
- ❖ **The War of Algerian Independence (1954-62) was brutal and protracted** and has been memorialized as such in sources as diverse as the seminal film, *the Battle of Algiers*, by Gillo Pontecorvo and *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon.



Left: Algeria in 1961 © Bruce Crumley;
Right: Bourguiba in 1951 © Wikimedia Commons

- ❖ **Tunisians**, on the other hand, chose a **reformist and gradualist approach** towards postcolonial state-building, which culminated in the declaration of a Tunisian Republic in 1957.



Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs): Projects of Identity Construction

- The French constructed binary and mutually exclusive categories of French and natives in **Algeria**:
- ❖ Legal ISAs: The 1870 Cremieux decree conferred full French citizenship upon the Jewish population of Algeria, who constituted the largest minority group at the time, and fashioned and encoded into law “a native category that was synonymous with Muslim identity.”
 - ❖ Cultural ISAs: Journals, societies, scholars, publishing houses, etc., projected France as the direct and deserving heir of North Africa’s Roman and Byzantine heritage and the liberator of the backward Arabs.
 - ❖ Political ISAs: All political administration were carried out by French bureaucrats. Even the best-trained were denied positions in the upper ranks of the military, administration, and the judiciary.
 - ❖ Educational ISAs: Educational access was highly unequal between the French settlers and Algerians. In 1877, only 3.9 percent of the elementary and 6.4 percent of the secondary schoolchildren were natives.
- In **Tunisia**, partly due to the widespread dissatisfaction in Algeria, colonial ideology in Tunisia allowed for the constitution and expression of a hybrid of French and “traditional” associationist identities (e.g.: women, Arabs, Berbers, Italians, Greeks, etc.).
- ❖ Educational ISAs: Habs or plots donated by Muslim landowners at the time of their death continued to fund a small number of Arab schools that operated alongside French-language schools. In 1875, Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi established College Sadiqi and it offered bicultural, bilingual curriculum and instruction that would later become the norm in Tunisia.
 - ❖ Political ISAs: Although French bureaucrats oversaw central administration, local officials directed the on-the-ground work of the government and they exploited the opportunity to simultaneously gain skills in French-style governance.

Postcolonial Implications

- ❖ The few **Algerian** students taught at French schools became the vanguard of the struggle for independence and the other indigenous youth joined the anticolonial battle as **ferocious resisters of French culture**. Furthermore, popular conviction that all those who considered themselves French must be expelled overrode deeper considerations, such as where those with French lineage were born and eventually led to the **“resettlement” of the pieds-noirs** to France.
- ❖ The ideological state apparatuses espousing **Tunisia’s hybrid cultural identity** during the colonial regime trained a new generation of Tunisians, including president Bourguiba, who sought to **create a synthesis between “modern” French and “traditional” Arab cultures**.