8th International Conference of the Association for the

Study of War and Strategy (AEGES)

Sciences Po Lille, June 28, 29, and 30, 2027

Call forPapers

France's "Great Colonial War" (the Indochina, Cameroon, and Algerian Wars), 1945–1965.

A Study of a New Historiographical Topic and Its Legacy

Abstract

This panel at the 8th International Congress of the Association for the Study of War and Strategy (AEGES) invites researchers to consider the Indochina, Cameroon, and Algeria—long treated separately in French historiography—as a twenty-year war (1945–1965) that was part of the broader trend of the decline of the great colonial empires during the Cold War. The main objective of the panel is to propose a comprehensive, cross-cutting, and multidisciplinary study of the "Great Colonial War," focusing on the innovations, continuities, and ruptures between these "decolonization" conflicts, and then to identify their national and international legacies.

Description

This panel proposes to take a step back from the traditional historiography of contemporary colonial and imperial wars. It invites researchers to consider the wars in Indochina, Cameroon, and Algeria—long treated separately in French historiography—as a single twenty-year war (1945–1965) that was part of a broader trend toward the dissolution of the great colonial empires during the Cold War [1]. The year 1945 marked the beginning of a sequence leading to a major, uninterrupted colonial war in Indochina (1945–1954), in Cameroon (1955–1965), and in Algeria (1954–1962), with parallel pockets of violence, notably in Madagascar in 1947–1948, and in Morocco and Tunisia in the first half of the 1950s. While the year 1962 marked the end of imperial France, 1965 signaled the waning of its involvement in the repression of opponents in Cameroon and the conclusion of the final manifestations of this Great Colonial War.

This panel aims to present a comprehensive, cross-cutting, and multidisciplinary study of the "Great Colonial War," focusing on the innovations, continuities, and ruptures among these "decolonization" conflicts, and then to identify their national and international legacies. Emerging from nationalist and independence movements, the liberation movements— galvanized by the geopolitical upheavals of World War II—drew on the revolutionary experience— —of the communist world for resources and methods of mobilizing their populations, though they did not always embrace all aspects of it. In response, colonial discourse tended to recede in favor of a proposal for controlled nationalist emancipation, aimed at combating "the specter of international communism." This counter-discourse allowed colonial powers to hope to preserve their interests, or even their control over the country itself. It sows the seeds of—or exacerbates— a logic of civil war in the countries concerned, where actions are carried out on both sides to control or mobilize the population and seize power. This strategy prolongs certain conflicts beyond the so-called decolonization period, extending them into the

era of imperial wars during the Cold War. From the Vietnamese perspective, the Indochina and Vietnam Wars (1945–1975) constitute a single conflict, rooted in a long tradition of struggle for independence. However, as in Africa, they also represent protracted and deadly civil wars in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos [2].

Finally, the panel will examine the legacy of the combat tactics, techniques, and procedures developed by France during this "Great Colonial War" in other Cold War conflicts[3] , including the overseas operations (OPEX) conducted by France in Africa or in certain overseas departments and territories (DOM-TOM). Finally, the resurgence of counterinsurgency in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Sahel following September 11, 2001, calls for a reassessment of the influence of France's "Great Colonial War" in the 21st century [4].

Three themes have been identified for proposed papers

1. Strategic and tactical developments among the actors in the "Great Colonial War" and their politico-military interplay

During this "Great Colonial War," the French army successively engaged in counter guerrilla operations, virtually symmetrical engagements, law-and-order operations, psychological warfare, and population control, all while seeking to theorize warfare within civilian populations for the purpose of controlling them, under the terms "counterinsurgency," "anti-subversive struggle," or "counterrevolutionary warfare."

How can these practices and the effectiveness of their implementation on the ground be defined [5]? Who were the main theorists and actors on the ground? How was the politico-military framework structured around these strategic developments? What were the major stages in the implementation of this strategy, which placed the army at the heart of administrative and political affairs? How significant was the legacy of pre-1945 colonial practices in their development? What external influences, if any, were at play? What definitions of the adversary do these practices reflect? What opposition did they encounter in the political, military, and civil society spheres?

This research area also examines the political and strategic developments, as well as the combat techniques, tactics, and procedures employed by nationalist independence movements in Algeria, Indochina, and Cameroon, along with the movements'perceptions of these developments. Summarized as a single concept of "revolutionary war," are the strategies and their tactical variations pursued by these independence movements truly as uniform as they appear? Is it possible to conduct a comparative study of these strategies? How do these movements perceive and adapt to strategic and tactical changes by the French army? What methods do they develop to mobilize the population, counter dissenting narratives, and establish a presence in international forums? This panel will prioritize cross- al studies, without ruling out monographic approaches when warranted.

2. War Violence: Specific Characteristics of Warfare amid Civilian Populations?

This research area addresses the issue of war violence suffered by combatants themselves as well as by civilian populations. From torture to enforced disappearances, including rape, mass massacres, population displacements, various forms of internment, "re-education" centers, the use of chemical and incendiary weapons, and so on. The "Great Colonial War" is characterized by an outburst of violence whose victims include not only combatants but also civilian populations, who were targeted by the strategies of the various belligerents. This research focus invites a cross-

disciplinary examination of acts of violence, their connection to the objectives of war, the ways in which they spread from one theater of operations to another, and their effects on the ground. Often overlooked for various reasons in official accounts or public archives, these acts of war raise the question of possible multidisciplinary methods to facilitate their study.

3. The Legacy of "France's Great Colonial War"

The legacy of this French school of counterinsurgency was evident in Chad (1969–1972) [6], in Cameroon [7], in Latin America [8], and in Rwanda [9]. In France's overseas departments and territories (DOM-TOM), the deployment of the 2nd RPIMa in law enforcement operations during election periods in Réunion (1965–1973) and the creation of the Adapted Military Service (SMA) in 1961 by General Jean Némo [10] raise questions about the continuation of certain law enforcement and population control actions carried out by the military. After September 11, 2001, and the United States' entry into war—followed by NATO (including France)—against "international terrorism," counterinsurgency resurfaced in military manuals amid the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Sahel. France's "Great Colonial War" continues to fuel a military mindset that theorizes warfare within civilian populations for the purpose of controlling them. As such, its legacy and its contemporary effects deserve to be examined.

Submission Guidelines

Proposals for papers must be sent by email directly to each of the scientific coordinators **by January 15, 2027.** Each proposal must include the following information:

1. Last name, first name, affiliation, status, and email address of the author(s),
2. Title of the paper proposal,
3. Scientific abstract of the proposed presentation (4,000 characters, including spaces),
4. A brief biographical and bibliographical note.

Each oral presentation will last 20 minutes (PowerPoint or equivalent permitted).

Presentations may be delivered in person or remotely via videoconference (ZOOM). A collective publication of the proceedings from the study day is planned, as well as a video recording and the production of video proceedings. Participants will be kept informed in early 2027.

Working languages: French, English, Arabic, and Vietnamese.

Schedule

January 15, 2027: Deadline for submitting paper proposals.

January 29, 2027: Responses from the scientific committee, which will provide a new schedule of requirements leading up to the study day (exact date, times, requirements).

June 28–30, 2027: 8th AEGES Conference at Sciences Po Lille.

Conference Venue

Sciences Po Lille - 9 rue Auguste Angellier, 59000 Lille (map).

Travel Assistance

AEGES will provide travel and accommodation assistance. Details will be shared once the conference program is finalized.

Scientific Committee

Dr. Lina Leyla Abdelaziz (l.abdelaziz@univ-batna2.dz)

Lina Leyla Abdelaziz holds a PhD (HDR) in translation from Mentouri University in Constantine. She is a tenured professor in the Department of Translation at the Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages at the University of Batna 2. As an organizer of numerous literary events, she is a member of the International Committee for the Mohamed DIB Literary Prize and the Algerian Goncourt Prize, organized by the French Institute in Algeria. She contributes to the Vice-Versa literary translation workshops organized by ATLAS, an association for literary promotion, at the International College of Literary Translators (Arles).

Prof. Pierre Journoud (pierre.journoud@umpv.fr)

Pierre Journoud holds a Ph.D. from the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne (2007) and was granted the right to supervise research (2014). Since September 2015, he has been a professor of contemporary history at the University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry (UMPV), where he directs the "Tremplin" University Diploma Program on Vietnam, and is a member of the CRISES (Montpellier Center for Interdisciplinary Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences). His research focuses on Franco-Vietnamese relations, conflicts and peace processes on the Indochinese Peninsula since 1945, and Vietnam's foreign policy.

Dr. Christophe Lafaye (christophe.lafaye@gmail.com)

He holds a Ph.D. in contemporary history from the University of Aix-Marseille and serves as an archivist at the Jura Departmental Archives; he is also a research associate at the LIRS3S laboratory (UMR 7366) at the University of Burgundy. His current research focuses on the collection, archiving, and promotion of combat experiences from the 20th and 21st centuries, while he is also preparing a dissertation to qualify as a research supervisor on "Chemical Warfare in Algeria (1954–1962)" " (advisor: Prof. Sylvie Thénault).

Dr. Fabien Sacriste (f.sacriste@yahoo.fr)

Fabien Sacriste, who holds a Ph.D. in history and is a certified teacher of history and geography, is a secondary school teacher and also teaches at the college level. His publications include « Les camps de regroupement en Algérie : une histoire des déplacements forcés (1954–1962) » (Presses de Sciences Po, 2022). As a member of the Franco-Cameroonian Multidisciplinary Joint Commission on France's Role and Involvement in Cameroon in the Fight Against Independence and Opposition Movements between 1945 and 1971, he contributed to the commission's work and to the drafting of its final report.

This panel is part of the research project of the thematic cluster "Colonial Legacies in the 20th and 21st Centuries," established in early 2026 within the Association for the Study of War and Strategy (AEGES).

[1] Pour une tentative de synthèse : Pierre Journoud, *Dien Bien Phu*, *la fin d'un monde*, Paris, Vendémiaire/L'Artilleur, 2019/2024, chap. 5 ; « Les guerres coloniales des "soldats perdus", 1945-1962 », *in* Hervé Drévillon et Olivier Wieviorka (dir.), *Histoire militaire de la France*, T. II, Paris, Perrin, 2018, p. 477-585 ; réédition collection Tempus 2022.

[2] Pierre Asselin, Vietnam's American War: A History, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 2024 (1re éd. 2018); François Guillemot, Histoire du Viêt Nam contemporain, de 1858 à nos jours, Paris, La Découverte, 2025 (1re éd. 2018) ; Christopher Goscha, Vietnam : A New History, New York, Basic Books, 2016 ; Vietnam. Un État né de la guerre 1945-1954, Paris ; A. Colin, 2011.

[3] Denis Leroux, *Une armée « révolutionnaire ». Contre-insurrection et subversion militaire pendant la guerre d'Algérie*, Paris, La Découverte, 2026 ; Mathieu Rigouste, *L'ennemi intérieur. La généalogie coloniale et militaire de l'ordre sécuritaire dans la France contemporaine*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009 ; Paul Villatoux, Marie-Catherine Villatoux, *La République et son armée face au « péril subversif » : guerre et action psychologiques en France*, *1945-1960*, Paris, Les Indes savantes, 2005.

[4] Walter Bruyères-Ostells, Hervé Drévillon et Jean-Christophe Romer (dir.), *Anthologie des penseurs militaires français*, Paris, Nouveau Monde éditions, 2025 ; Elie Tenenbaum, *Partisans et centurions. Une histoire de la guerre irrégulière au 20e siècle*, Paris, Perrin, 2018.

[5] Le colonel (er) Michel Goya parle à propos de l'Algérie, de schizophrénie tactique ». Michel Goya, « La guerre d'Algérie et le modèle français de contre-insurrection », *Blog la voie de l'épée*, [en ligne], 22 février 2017, lien : https://lavoiedelepee.blogspot.com/2017/02/la-guerre-dalgerie-et-le-modele.html

[6] Christophe Lafaye, « Les troupes de Marine face au retour des engagements majeurs (1962-2022) », In Benoit Bodart (sous dir.), *Histoire des troupes de Marine de 1622 à nos jours*, Paris, Perrin, 2025, p. 309-314.

[7] Karine Ramondy (dir.), *La France au Cameroun (1945-1971). Rapport de la Commission « Recherche » sur le rôle et l'engagement de la France dans la lutte contre les mouvements indépendantistes et d'opposition au Cameroun de 1945 à 1971*, Paris, Hermann Éditeurs, 2025 ; Thomas Deltombe, Manuel Domergue, Jacob Tatsitsa, *Kamerun. Une guerre cachée aux origines de la Françafrique, 1948-1971*, Paris, La Découverte, 2011.

[8] Monique Robin, *Escadrons de la mort, l'école française*, Paris, La Découverte, 2008.

[9] Georges Gabriel Périès, *« De l'action militaire à l'action politique. Impulsion, codification et application de la doctrine de la "guerre révolutionnaire" au sein de l'armée française (1944-1960) », thèse de doctorat sous la direction de Jacques Lagroye, Paris 1, 1999 ;* Gabriel Périès et David Servenay, *Une guerre noire. Enquête sur les origines du génocide rwandais (1959,1994)*, Paris, La Découverte, 2020.

[10] Marie-Catherine Villatoux, Hogard et Némo. Deux théoriciens de la « guerre révolutionnaire », *Revue historique des armées*, n° 232, 2003, p 20-28.