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## **A Total War of the Mind: the French Theory of *la Guerre Révolutionnaire*, 1954-1958**

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With the COIN boom of the mid-2000s, the individual whose reputation received the most profound boost was David Galula, whose *Counterinsurgency Warfare* was reissued following acclaim from the authors of Field Manual 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*.<sup>1</sup> In this manner, the work of a Frenchman whose major contributions were penned in the aftermath of France's bitter wars of decolonization became a key reference point in the new COIN era. Yet as Etienne de Durand has argued, Galula was never a significant presence in his native land. Rather, he was overshadowed by a host of more significant theorists who were not even inclined to describe their military-intellectual pursuits as counter-insurgency, preferring such terms as *guerre en surface*, *guerre subversive*, *guerre psychologique*, and above all *guerre révolutionnaire*.<sup>2</sup> In the same year that *Counterinsurgency Warfare* was rediscovered, however, a more representative French work was also reissued, Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare*. In its English translation *Modern Warfare* carried the subtitle *A French View of Counterinsurgency*. This framed Trinquier's work explicitly within a recognisable counterinsurgency debate. Yet the scope of Trinquier's theory of war applied much more broadly than to the subset of warfare that the addition of the word 'counterinsurgency' seemed to suggest. It is true that his work was inspired by imperial experiences and reflected those aspects of warfare that the French had faced in the 1950s: terrorism, clandestine organisations, guerrilla operations. Nevertheless, the operational approach that he advocated was framed within a certain concept of war, the nature of which, he believed, had been permanently

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<sup>1</sup> United States. Dept of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps counterinsurgency field manual: U.S. Army field manual no. 3-24* (Chicago, 2007), xix. D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport CT, 2006). A new introduction from FM 3-24 co-author John Nagl likened the work to the best of sex manuals.

<sup>2</sup> E. de Durand, 'France' in T. Rid and T. Kearney (eds.), *Understanding Counterinsurgency: doctrine, operations and challenges* (Abingdon, 2010), 16-17. Indeed, it is testament to Galula's lowly status that *Counterinsurgency Warfare* appeared in a French translation for the first time in 2008. Like his other major work, *Pacification in Algeria*, it was originally written in English for an American audience. For Galula's transatlantic trajectory following Algeria see A. Marlowe, 'David Galula: His Life and Intellectual Context' (SSI Monograph, August 2010), E. Tenenbaum, 'From Galula to Petraeus: The French Legacy in the US Counterinsurgency Doctrine' (CDEF Cahier de la recherche doctrinale, July 2010)

altered. The subtitle should not obscure this: Trinquier thought that he was talking about modern warfare, not simply counterinsurgency.

‘We still persist,’ he wrote ‘in studying a type of warfare that no longer exists and that we shall never fight again, while we pay only passing attention to the war we lost in Indochina and the one we are about to lose in Algeria.’ Trinquier’s point was not that all wars were now colonial, but that these colonial wars had unmasked the true nature of modern warfare. This warfare, without fronts or pitched battles, would be ‘subversive’ or ‘revolutionary’:

Warfare is now an interlocking system of actions – political, economic, psychological, military – that aims at the *overthrow of the established authority in a country and its replacement by another regime*. To achieve this end, the aggressor tries to exploit the internal tensions of the country attacked – ideological, social, religious economic – any conflict liable to have a profound influence on the population to be conquered. Moreover, in view of the present-day interdependence of nations, any residual grievance within a population, no matter how localized and lacking in scope, will surely be brought by determined adversaries into the framework of the great world conflict. From a localized conflict of secondary origin and importance, they will always attempt sooner or later to bring about a generalized conflict.<sup>3</sup>

This essay focuses on the war that the French revolutionary war theorists thought that they were fighting: the modern war of which the colonial aspect was but one part. In so doing, it argues that the theorists of the 1950s considered their fight as a total war, considers the parameters of their concept of totality, and suggests that the roots of this tendency to think in total terms lay less in the colonial sphere than the metropolitan sphere. ‘Total War’ is a notoriously slippery concept. As Roger Chickering has observed, the idea of ‘Total War’ has

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<sup>3</sup> R. Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (New York, 2006), 3, 5.

meant different things to different people, even amongst belligerents involved in wars generally considered to have been ‘total.’<sup>4</sup> Far from ascribing to the more generally accepted meta-narrative of the expansion of total war culminating in the global conflict that spanned the years 1939 to 1945, the total war that the revolutionary war theorists described rested on a belief about the scale of a global subversive war which they contended had been underway since 1917, and for which France’s post-1945 colonial wars were the most tangible evidence. Given the stakes of such a conflict for the Western world, the theorists were beholden to an escalatory logic which suggested that only greater levels of popular support and mobilisation and more ruthless methods of pursuing the fight would guarantee the security not just of the Empire, but of France herself.

In this manner, owing to their capacity to rationalise and unify their experiences in colonial wars, the revolutionary war theorists forged a link between security abroad and security at home which stood in marked contrast to the experiences of the British Army, whose analogous conflicts in Asia and Africa were not subject to a similar process.<sup>5</sup> This was in part a reflection of the stakes and scale of the wars in Indochina and Algeria. Unlike other conflicts of decolonization, the wars in Indochina and Algeria pulled in hundreds of thousands, rather than tens of thousands of combatants. The Algerian War, moreover, involved the use of French national servicemen from 1956 onward, so that by the war’s end over a million conscripts had seen service there.<sup>6</sup> Algeria’s unique status, enshrined in the 1875 constitution of Third Republic,

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<sup>4</sup> R. Chickering, ‘Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept’ in M. Boemeke, R. Chickering, and S. Förster, *Anticipating Total War: the German and American experiences, 1871-1914* (Washington DC, Cambridge, 1999), 17. Indeed, the same is true of scholars: Chickering and Förster’s five volume series investigating total war from the American Civil War to the Second World War yielded no generally agreed definition. For a historiographical review of those volumes see T. Imlay, ‘Total War’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (June, 2007), 547-570.

<sup>5</sup> As David French has recently pointed out, aside from the Malaya Emergency most of the British Army’s post-Second World War counter-insurgency campaigns were not fought against Maoist insurgencies. Despite the emergence of a ‘Malaya model’ for counter-insurgency operations, codified in army manuals and popularized by Robert Thompson’s *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (1966), ‘British counter-insurgency operations in reality differed considerably from the ‘ideal-type’ as defined by Thompson and refined by subsequent analysts’ (247) Moreover, the army proved as liable to forget ‘lessons’ that might have been transmitted across campaigns as to learn from them. See D. French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967* (Oxford, 2011), 42-58, 200-219, 247-50.

<sup>6</sup> M. Thomas, *Fight or Flight. Britain, France, and their roads from Empire*, (Oxford, 2014), 8, 298-9.

as a legal part of French sovereign territory, helped make this possible.<sup>7</sup> It also played a role in facilitating a particularly shocking dynamic of violence. In the words of Martin Thomas, “The Algerian War was longer, bigger and nastier than anything in the British experience.”<sup>8</sup> For soldiers such as Trinquier, the experience of Algeria compounded that of Indochina. They became ‘centurions’, a reference to Jean Lartéguy’s popular 1960 novel of the same name and a soubriquet for ‘the hard-bitten French regular who had survived the Indochina war, had learned his Mao Tse-tung the hard way, and later had sought to apply his lessons in Algeria or even in mainland France.’<sup>9</sup> In the minds of the revolutionary war theorists, these conflicts only served to lay bare how misguided the blinkered focus on atomic rivalry really was. The process of intellectual totalization to which they succumbed, meanwhile, played a role in radicalizing the French Army during the Algerian War, producing an institution willing to employ torture as a military expedient, and willing even to take France to the brink of civil war.<sup>10</sup>

French revolutionary war theory has not been subject to exhaustive scrutiny since its demise with the end of the Algerian War of independence, especially in the English language. The most concentrated period of attention came in the immediate aftermath of the Algerian War, during which time several tomes emerged. Foremost amongst these was Peter Paret’s excellent and concise analysis, which built upon two insightful journal articles published during the war itself, very shortly after the theory had reached peak influence.<sup>11</sup> Works by the political theorists George Armstrong Kelly and John Steward Ambler followed in 1965 and 1966 respectively.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> M. Evans, *Algeria: France's undeclared war*, (Oxford, 2012), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas, *Fight or Flight*, 315.

<sup>9</sup> Preface by Bernard B. Fall in Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, pp. xi. Lartéguy was fairly prolific in his output: *Les Centurions* was followed by a slew of works with issues relating to soldiers and empire at their core. See, D. O’Connell, ‘Jean Lartéguy: A Popular Phenomenon’, *The French Review*, 45, 6 (May, 1972), 1087-1097.

<sup>10</sup> Trinquier was amongst those unapologetic over the use of torture, having been instrumental in devising ruthless plans for the battle of Algiers during which torture was utilized as a military expedient. Likewise, in *Modern Warfare* he did not shy away from stressing its utility. B. Reis, ‘David Galula and Roger Trinquier. Two warrior-scholars, one French late-colonial counterinsurgency?’ in A. Mumford and B. Reis (eds.), *The Theory and Practice of Irregular Warfare: Warrior-Scholarship in Counterinsurgency* (Abingdon, 2014), 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> P. Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria* (New York, 1964). P. Paret, ‘The French Army and La Guerre Révolutionnaire’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, 104/613 (Feb., 1959), 59-69. P. Paret, ‘A Total Weapon of Limited War’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, 105/617 (Feb., 1960), 62-69.

<sup>12</sup> G.A. Kelly, *Lost Soldiers: The French Army and Empire in Crisis 1947-1962* (Cambridge MA, 1965), J.S. Ambler, *The French Army in Politics, 1945-1962* (Columbus OH, 1966)

Thereafter academic interest in the subject went into decline. This situation changed somewhat following the emergence of the new counter-insurgency debate. In 2007 Christopher Craddock and M.L.R. Smith published an analysis of the influence of revolutionary war theory on the Battle of Algiers, partly inspired by Kelly's earlier claim that 'the victory of Algiers was an undisputed success of *guerre révolutionnaire*', although for reasons of space they did not dwell at length on the theory itself.<sup>13</sup> Most recently, as part of a wider critique of the fallacies of modern counter-insurgency, Douglas Porch devoted a chapter of his *Counterinsurgency* to the 'radicalization and collapse' of the French school under the weight of politicization and psychological warfare, paying particular attention to Galula's work.<sup>14</sup>

All of these writers make passing reference either to 'totality' in French revolutionary war theory or to the theorists' view that the West was already engaged in a new global war. Craddock and Smith note that the theory 'purported to redefine the character of war and its primary objectives. The central tenet of the *guerre révolutionnaire* was that the nature of contemporary war had changed radically.'<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Porch remarks that 'small wars were also considered unlimited ones, especially for officers of the *5e bureau* who believed that they were waging a *guerre totale* against communist-orchestrated insurgency, in which it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe.'<sup>16</sup> These features were equally apparent to Paret, who saw that 'the French solution of the problems presented by insurrectional war may be characterized as a total effort, carried on aggressively in every area of human activity', later noting that the psychological arm offered 'a total weapon of limited war' which brought 'physical and psychological brutality in its wake.'<sup>17</sup>

This essay, by contrast, places the issue of totality centre stage in an effort to better understand what the French revolutionary war theorists understood by total war. The first section explores

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<sup>13</sup> C. Craddock, and M.L.R. Smith, "No fixed values": A Reinterpretation of the Influence of the Theory of *Guerre révolutionnaire* and the Battle of Algiers, 1956-1957', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 9, 4 (Autumn 2007), 68-105, 74, 83. Kelly, *Lost Soldiers*, 191.

<sup>14</sup> D. Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge, 2013), 153-200.

<sup>15</sup> Craddock and Smith, "No fixed values", 74.

<sup>16</sup> Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 181.

<sup>17</sup> Paret, 'The French Army', 64. Paret, 'A Total Weapon', 64-8.

the emergence of French revolutionary war theory in the early 1950s as a response to the Indochina War. It focuses on Charles Lacheroy's idea of parallel hierarchies, an attempt to understand the Communist revolutionary warfare practiced by the Viet Minh, the 'totalizing' aspects of which have been underscored in recent scholarship. The next two sections explore the dimensions of totality in the writings of some key revolutionary war thinkers: not only in the work of Charles Lacheroy, but particularly in the writings of Jacques Hogard and Jean Némo which appeared in French military journals during the period 1956-1958. These sections explore the manner in which the revolutionary war was thought to have fundamentally altered the nature of war itself, creating a unitary global struggle of many conflicts, where the French colonial experience constituted the opening shock. The insidiousness of this war was enhanced by the manner in which it tore down the barriers between the states of war and peace, leading to the ultimate conclusion that the global revolutionary war was already taking place not just abroad, but at home. With the general populace unaware of this new reality, the responsibility fell on the army to 're-educate' them. Having examined the output of the revolutionary war theorists, the final section considers the origins of this development in French military thought. It contends that the inspiration for this radical path is to be found less in the continuation and development of pre-Second World War colonial military thought and more in intellectual and military currents rooted in pre-War Europe, particularly in reactions to totalitarianism.

Recent work by Christopher Goscha has shown that the Viet Minh's transition from guerrilla to conventional warfare was a key component in creating 'one of the most 'totalizing' wars in the history of twentieth-century decolonization.'<sup>18</sup> Such a transition was in line with the Maoist theory of revolutionary war. Just as Mao Tse-tung had argued that guerrilla operations were 'but one step in the total war, one aspect of the revolutionary struggle', so Vo Nguyen Giap, the director of the military effort against the French in Vietnam, professed a similar awareness of the

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<sup>18</sup> C. Goscha, 'A 'Total War' of Decolonization? Social Mobilization and State-Building in Communist Vietnam (1949-54)', *War & Society*, 31, 2 (Aug., 2012), 138.

fluidity between the guerrilla and the regular. The protracted revolutionary war against the French was carried out as ‘a long and sweeping guerrilla war proceeding from simple to complex guerrilla warfare then to mobile warfare in the last years of the Resistance.’ This was a product of circumstance, whereby the Viet Minh had to content themselves with building towards decisive, pitched battles.<sup>19</sup> Achieving this goal required not only the creation of a modern regular army but also called for mass mobilization. Hence mandatory military service was initiated in 1949, a state of general mobilization was declared in 1950, and full-scale land reform was implemented by 1953-4 to incentivize fighting for the peasant majority. Manpower was at the heart of mobilization, and was all the more important given that the Viet Minh lacked the means to pursue mechanized, air, and naval operations. In addition, since it was underpinned by a communist political philosophy, this war effort also had to transform the society in which it took place: ‘Not only would the totalizing efforts of the conflict expand horizontally in terms of mobilizing ‘everyone’ and ‘everything’, but it would also become vertically ‘totalitarian’ as the party sought to take control of the state and the society from the top down.’<sup>20</sup>

Whilst it has been remarked upon that for indigenous participants colonial wars usually tended towards totality, Goscha’s work, in focusing on mobilization for war and the transformation of society, takes the argument in a different direction.<sup>21</sup> It departs from the confines of a total war narrative often understood to have reached its culminating point

in the extremes of destruction meted out in the World Wars of the twentieth century, and particularly between 1939 and 1945. Approached within the conventional chronology, scholarly efforts to underline the colonial contribution to the World Wars of the twentieth century have tended to focus on the foreshadowing offered by extremes of violence, racial attitudes and genocidal practices. A number of chapters in the five-volume series on Total War spanning the

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<sup>19</sup> V.N. Giap, *People’s War, People’s Army* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. Hanoi, 1974), 55, 57. See also Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Urbana IL, 2000), 41, 54-5, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Goscha, ‘A ‘Total War’ of Decolonization?’, 138-140.

<sup>21</sup> On this point, see H. Strachan, ‘On Total War and Modern War’, *The International History Review*, 22, 2 (Jun., 2000), 354-5. H.L. Wesseling, ‘Colonial Wars: An Introduction’ in J.A. de Moor & H.L. Wesseling (eds.), *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa* (Leiden, 1989), 1-11.

years 1861 to 1945, under the various editorship of Stig Förster, Roger Chickering, Bernd Greiner, Manfred Boemeke, and Jörg Nagler, offer a case in point.<sup>22</sup> Here, the foreshadowing of total war appears in the manifestation of violence inflicted upon indigenous peoples: they are a target in the breakdown of the distinction between combatant and non-combatant. By contrast, Goscha's conception allows the indigenous people to become agents of a totalizing conflict because it places mobilization and social transformation at its core.

The foundation of the French theory of revolutionary war lay in the same discovery, as the professional army assessed its defeat in Vietnam. The founding figure of the movement, Charles Lacheroy, came late to Indochina, after almost a quarter of a century's service in other parts of the French Empire. A graduate of Saint-Cyr in 1927, Lacheroy's decision to join the colonial infantry took him to the Upper Volta, Syria, and then to Morocco, where he commanded an Aerial Observation Group at the outbreak of the Second World War. After the *Armée d'Afrique* came over to the Allies in November 1942, he fought in Italy under General Alphonse Juin, and subsequently in Provence and into Germany under General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, whom he had first met earlier in the war. It was de Lattre who called Lacheroy to Indochina in 1951, but not before the latter had garnered a first taste of colonial soldiering in the post-war world, taking command of an autonomous battalion (*bataillon autonome*), operating against forces of the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* in the Ivory Coast.

Arriving in Vietnam, Lacheroy was given a sector command at Bien Hòa in Cochinchina. Afforded a view of the war from the ground up, he was immediately struck by the manner in which the enemy seemed at once to be everywhere and nowhere, and how areas nominally under

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<sup>22</sup> The most relevant articles are: R.M. Utley, 'Total War on the American Indian Frontier', T. von Trotha, "'The Fellows Can Just Starve': On Wars of 'Pacification' in the African Colonies of Imperial Germany and the Concept of 'Total War'", G.A. May, 'Was the Philippine-American War a "Total War"?', S. Dabringhaus, 'An Army on Vacation? The German War in China, 1900-1901' in M. Boemeke, R. Chickering, and S. Förster, *Anticipating Total War: the German and American experiences, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, 1999), 399-414, 415-435, 437-458, 459-476. Perhaps tellingly, these four chapters combined form the section entitled 'The Experience of War.' Giulia Kunzi's contribution to the fourth volume in the series, on the Italian invasion of Ethiopia of 1935-6, concentrates more directly on Italian mobilization and warfare as a prelude to the events of the Second World War, an approach which can be framed in a more 'regular' paradigm since both sides were legitimate states recognized by the League of Nations. See G.B. Kunzi, 'Total Colonial Warfare: Ethiopia' in R. Chickering and S. Förster (eds.), *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States, 1919-1939* (Cambridge, 2003), 313-326.

French control during daylight hours ceased to be so once night fell. These observations sounded a note of dissonance: how could it be that the French, given their numerical and material superiority, were not winning this war? The idea of ‘parallel hierarchies’ was Lacheroy’s answer: first conveyed to fellow officers in the Bien Hòa sector in late 1952, it was to be the fundamental building block of the French idea of revolutionary war.<sup>23</sup>

As Lacheroy saw it, Viet Minh success was predicated on the ability to assume control of the population in both body and spirit. This approach was guided by the notion that there was no such thing as a free individual. Instead, human beings could be divided into three categories: *militaire*, *fonctionnaire*, or member of a state association. For the *militaire* or *fonctionnaire* loyalty was not an issue since the individual would at all times be under the eye of the party, or of comrades only too willing to denounce one another for the slightest failing. The civil population, meanwhile, could be bound to the party from the cradle to the grave through five basic state associations – masculine youth, feminine youth, old persons, peasants and non-peasants. This was the basis of the first of the parallel hierarchies: a hierarchy of associations which sought to group individuals according to their sex, age, tastes, needs, and which operated up the levels from the village, through the canton, sub-prefecture and prefecture, to the state, with a general staff at each level directing those below and receiving orders from those above. To this hierarchy of associations was added a territorial hierarchy corresponding more with traditional social organisation, again operating at all levels from the village, through canton, sub-prefecture and so on. In contrast to Western territorial organisation, however, Lacheroy argued that the Vietminh system substituted collective for individual responsibility, enforced at all levels by *responsables* for different areas - effectives, intendance, youth, propaganda – in a manner which loosely mirrored the French army’s first, second, and third bureaux responsibilities.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> P. Villatoux, ‘Le colonel Lacheroy, théoricien de l’action psychologique’, in J-Ch. Jauffret (ed.), *Des hommes et des femmes en guerre d’Algérie* (Paris, 2003), 494-500.

<sup>24</sup> C. Lacheroy, ‘La Guerre Révolutionnaire’ in G. Albord et al, *La Défense Nationale* (Paris, 1958), 312-314. The four *bureaux* of the General Staff, constituted by a decree of 1874 consisted of: I - personnel, II – intelligence, III –

These hierarchies aimed at control of the civilian individual, which would allow for appropriately targeted propaganda:

In other words, in the first case, one has taken the people overall: the man in his family, the family in its group of houses, the group of houses in its village. In the second case, one redistributes the people differently: one distributes them by individual; one considers them as a man or women of a certain age and of a certain level or of a certain *milieu*. *This relative homogeneity amongst associations makes them receptive to similar propaganda.*<sup>25</sup>

They were complemented by a third and final hierarchy which, unlike the first two, was selective, incorporating no more than one tenth of the population - the party hierarchy - constituting a controlling body of fanatics who ‘pull all the strings, direct all the heads, all activities military, civil, or of the state associations.’<sup>26</sup>

These parallel hierarchies constituted the fundamental means by which psychological propaganda could be made effective: control over bodies ensured control over minds. Lacheroy likened this to pouring liquid into a glass: ‘when one holds a glass firmly, one pours into it what one wishes, but if the glass shakes, if it is held crooked, one does not pour much liquid into it.’<sup>27</sup> A firm grip over these empty vessels allowed for the dissemination of propaganda on both a large scale – the mobilization of the population through the introduction of ‘independence’ and ‘patriot’ into the public discourse – and a small scale – the ideological conversion of individual prisoners and non-conformists.<sup>28</sup>

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operations & training, IV – logistics. See D. Ralston, *The Army of the Republic: The Place of the Military in the Political Evolution of France, 1871-1914* (Cambridge MA, 1967), 143.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 314-315.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 316.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 317.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 317-321.

From this base, Lacheroy developed a general schema for how a revolutionary war unfurled, adopting a five phase process which he dubbed a *scénario-type de guerre révolutionnaire*, and which progressed as follows. In the first phase a problem is created through shocking and random acts of violence: bomb blasts and assassinations. The unexplained nature of these acts cause great confusion, and their impact is amplified worldwide by press agencies and radio broadcasts. In the next phase a recognisable agenda begins to take shape, as assassinations are carried out against individuals labelled 'traitors' to the rebel cause. Low-level individuals are purposefully targeted, to make clear to the average person that they too might become a future target: 'the murders of a general, a *caïd*, a *bachaga* or a prefect, would not affect the population, whereas the assassination of a park warden concerns them enormously, because tomorrow, or the day after, it could be the turn of anyone.' This phase then culminates in what Lacheroy terms 'the battle for the complicity of silence', as police action becomes increasingly ineffective in the face of a population unwilling to comply with investigations for fear they might be next. From this point, the third phase arrives. Here, the revolutionary war moves to a higher stage, encompassing both a civil and military aspect. In military terms, the first armed elements are created, although they appear little different from the regular population: 'It will be a soldier on the street corner, a soldier in the village, a little *guérillero*, who will be able to act easily because no-one will denounce him.' Likewise in the civil sphere, the political commissars of the revolutionary force now begin to operate on the population in an effort to transform their passivity into activity. In the fourth phase the civil and military structures gain in complexity: armed forces form sections or companies that begin to operate beyond the confines of a single village, whilst civil elements grow and specialise according to different needs, addressing such problems as money, authority or justice. Finally, phase five marks the point at which the system attains perfection. On the military front, the revolutionaries can now support a force encompassing not only guerrillas, but also provincial and regular troops. The civil organisation, meanwhile, becomes ever more complex as a rival regime is instituted: 'beside each official is found, like a shadow, a person *bis*

who doubles him and who, little by little, drains the substance of his official status by rendering all his decisions unenforceable.<sup>29</sup>

Lacheroy returned to France in the summer of 1953 to take up a position as director of the *Centre d'études asiatiques et africaines* (CEAA) at the Lourcine barracks in Paris. Over the next few years, fortune seemed to favour him. In August 1954 his ideas gained wider public renown when *Le Monde* published extracts from his conference entitled 'La campagne d'Indochine, ou une leçon de guerre révolutionnaire.' The following year at the CEAA he taught the young sons of Marshal Juin and General Guillaume (then chief of the General Staff), who offered favourable reports to their fathers about what their mentor had taught them. Lacheroy was called to set-out his theories before Guillaume and the General Staff, joining the General Staff himself shortly thereafter, and gaining another influential supporter in the form of Maurice Bourguès-Manoury, minister for National Defence in 1956-7.<sup>30</sup> Where the conflict in Indochina had laid the foundations, the escalating war in Algeria lent revolutionary war theory the gloss of broader relevance. It enhanced the immediacy of the cause, presenting an opportunity to frame the new war in the context of the last, as well as to learn from the mistakes of the past in the new defence of *la France d'Outre-mer*.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, Lacheroy attempted to capitalize on the situation, pushing for the creation 'fifth bureaux' for psychological action at all levels of the military hierarchy in Algeria. In 1956 he was made President of the *Comité d'action psychologique de la Défense nationale*, and the following year he was made head of the inter-ministerial commission on psychological action of the *Secrétariat general permanent de la Défense nationale*.<sup>32</sup>

From 1956 to 1958, just as the Algerian war was escalating, so in the intellectual realm consideration and examination of the revolutionary war flourished and expanded. Only two years previously, students at the *Ecole de Guerre* were criticized 'for the extent to which experiences in

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 322-324.

<sup>30</sup> Villatoux, 'Le colonel Lacheroy', 500-504.

<sup>31</sup> No matter that the comparison was, to a large extent, erroneous. See C-R. Ageron, 'Les guerres d'Indochine et d'Algérie au miroir de la "guerre révolutionnaire"', in C-R. Ageron and M. Michel (eds.), *L'ère des décolonisations* (Paris, 1995), 47-66.

<sup>32</sup> Villatoux, 'Le colonel Lacheroy', 500-504.

Indo-China had influenced and ‘deformed’ their military judgment.’ By 1956, however, acceptance of the theory of revolutionary war was becoming ‘widespread and official.’<sup>33</sup> In Algeria, the army’s Centre for Training and Preparation in Counter-Guerrilla (CIPCG) at Arzew, near Oran, opened in June 1956. Over the follow years its curriculum became increasingly heavily weighted towards revolutionary warfare and psychological techniques, and away from tactical instruction.<sup>34</sup> Yet as Lacheroy ascended to become the figurehead for the group so his contribution dried up in print. The substance of his ideas had been moulded and written in 1953-4: thereafter it seemed not to change significantly. When the *Revue Militaire d’Information* published an issue solely devoted to revolutionary war in 1957 Lacheroy offered a seal of approval with his foreword, but he did not provide an original contribution. Instead, the debate was taken up by a new cohort of officers writing across several military journals, and amongst whom Jacques Hogard and Jean Némou stand out as the most prolific and far-reaching investigators.

For some of those writing on revolutionary war in the mid-1950s, the Indochina and Algeria conflicts were but the most salient contemporary incarnations of a form of warfare much in evidence. In the special issue of the *Revue Militaire d’Information* of 1957, for example, beside the Indochinese experience, extended consideration was given to Greece, Iran, and Tunisia.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, a table entitled ‘some revolutionary wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ listed a host of irregular conflicts from the Russian revolution onwards, presented in such a manner as to show that revolutionary movements failed as often as they succeeded, including - as far as the journal’s editors were concerned - the FLN in Algeria.<sup>36</sup> Outside the *Revue Militaire d’Information*, other

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<sup>33</sup> Paret, ‘The French Army’, 65. See also Girardet, ‘Civil and Military Power’, 132-3.

<sup>34</sup> F. Guelton, ‘The French Army ‘Centre for Training and Preparation in Counter-Guerrilla Warfare (CIPCG) at Arzew’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 24, 2 (June 2002), 37-47.

<sup>35</sup> Capitaine Labignette, ‘L’Insurrection Communiste en Grece’, H. Carrere d’Encausse, ‘Le Tudeh Iranien’, A. Souyris, ‘La Révolution Tunisienne’, in *Revue Militaire d’Information*, No.281 (Feb.-Mar., 1957), 43-51, 53-64, 65-76.

<sup>36</sup> *Revue Militaire d’Information*, No. 281 (Feb.-Mar., 1957), 24. The examples included Germany 1918-22, China 1931-49, Yugoslavia 1941-44, Indochina 1945-54, Malaya 1945-54, Indonesia 1945-46, the Philippines 1946-53, Burma 1946-53, Czechoslovakia 1948, Korea 1950-53, Tunisia and Morocco 1934-54. Other examples were divided into separate phases: thus for Spain 1931-33 represented the success of the Republic and 1936-39 that of Franco, Palestine 1936-39 an Arab failure and 1947-8 the creation of Israel, Iran 1945-6 and 1953 two separate failures.

writers were keen to cast the net still further back in time, succumbing to the temptation to see echoes of revolutionary war stretching back to antiquity.<sup>37</sup>

Jacques Hogard thought differently. A graduate of the Saint-Cyr *promotion* of 1939-1940, Hogard served with the colonial infantry in Indochina almost constantly between the years 1945 and 1953, working in particular with indigenous forces created by the newly-designated associated states in the early 1950s: first the 6<sup>th</sup> battalion of *Chasseurs Laotiens* and then the 4<sup>th</sup> battalion of *Chasseurs Cambodgiens*. Returning to France, he taught under Lacheroy at the CEAA, taking charge of lessons in the Vietnam section, before moving on to teach for a further two years at the *Ecole supérieure de guerre*. These years afforded him the opportunity to publish extensively and to take up a role as chief editor of the *Instruction provisoire sur l'emploi de l'arme psychologique* (TTA 117), published at the end of 1956.<sup>38</sup>

For Hogard it was apparent that understanding revolutionary warfare lay not in waking up to a latent mode of warfare apparent throughout human history, but rather in realizing that warfare itself had been transformed. As he explained in an article for the *Revue de Défense Nationale* in December 1956:

We are in the presence of a transformation more radical still than that imposed by the French revolution on the political and military conceptions of the age: war has become permanent, universal, and truly “total”. It is up to us, in imitation of European peoples at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to learn from the enemy, to

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<sup>37</sup> See for example, G. Bonnet, *Les Guerres Insurrectionnelles et Révolutionnaires, de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris, 1958), Col A. Montagnon, *Une Guerre Subversive: La Guerre de Vendée* (Paris, 1959), Lt-Col. Chalmin, ‘La guerre «révolutionnaire» sous la Législative et la Convention’ *Revue Historique de l'Armée*, 14<sup>e</sup> Année, No. 3 (1958). Bonnet trawled through irregular conflicts since antiquity, in part to demonstrate that whilst the fundamentals of guerrilla warfare had often been addressed, ‘la stratégie traditionnelle prête encore une attention insuffisante à l’aspect psychologique de la guerre révolutionnaire.’ In his work on the Vendée, Montagnon argued that ‘si ce que nous appelons l’action psychologique n’atteignit pas en Vendée l’intensité que nous lui connaissons aujourd’hui, faute de disposer de nos moyens modernes d’expression, elle ne fut cependant pas absente de la lutte.’ Chalmin was equally keen to stress that ‘il n’y a rien de neuf sous le soleil et le passé a déjà connu des guerres révolutionnaires’, in making the case for a contemporary parallel with the war prosecuted by the French revolutionaries against Austria. His article was based on a presentation given to *stagiaires* at the *Centre d’instruction de l’arme psychologique*.

<sup>38</sup> See, M-C. Villatoux, ‘Hogard et Némé: deux théoriciens de la « guerre révolutionnaire »’, *Revue Historique des Armées*, No.232 (2003), 20-22.

consent to transformations and sacrifices indispensable to our security, and to forge the new tactics which will bring victory.

This revolution in the art of war went hand in hand with a particular concept of the revolutionary war, which had to be understood at a higher level than individual ‘subversive’ or ‘insurrectional’ conflicts. This was ‘*the* war of the revolution for the conquest of the world [...] directed against all foreign forces, whether they resist or whether they want to remain neutral.’ The forms of this revolutionary war differed according to the demands of communist strategy, which explained the manner in which ‘*hot* revolutionary wars’, which flared constantly ‘here and there around the globe’, made up ‘*the* revolutionary war.’<sup>39</sup> Thus, an understanding of modern warfare which attempted binary distinctions missed the point:

It is useless to oppose the terms “revolutionary war” and “classic war” (atomic or not), to talk of “subversive” or “insurrectional” war in terms of current conflicts. “*The* revolutionary war” has begun. It has its mechanism and its own rules, even if it takes on, locally, episodically, such as in Korea, an aspect of conventional operations, even if it becomes a third world conflict one day. Its mechanism, its rules are sufficiently new and efficient so that there may be, in addition to the “war of the revolution”, a “revolution in the art of war” which is manifest in the conduct of all the current local revolutionary wars.<sup>40</sup>

Two years later, the problem of how to understand *the* revolutionary war was still uppermost in Hogard’s mind. In a piece entitled ‘Cette guerre de notre temps’ (‘This war of our time’), he mused that all such qualifiers – ‘cold’, ‘ideological’, ‘psychological’ – only served to ‘demonstrate

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<sup>39</sup> J. Hogard, ‘Guerre Révolutionnaire ou Révolution dans l’art de la Guerre’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (Dec., 1956), 1498.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 1509.

how much the notion of “peacetime” seems outmoded, how much we feel engaged confusingly in a general conflict. [...] Are we to believe that we have not yet understood what has happened to us?<sup>41</sup> Inasmuch as he believed that such terms did not do justice to the scope of the modern war, his answer was yes. An ‘ideological’ war might be ‘cold’ or ‘hot’; classic, nuclear, or subversive. Similarly, when seen in terms of achieving a goal, all wars were psychological by nature: ‘all wars are ultimately wars “of persuasion.”’ The only acceptable use of the term ‘psychological war’ was ‘if it refers uniquely to the use of one weapon amongst others.’ As for ‘cold’ war: ‘Ever since it arose in the years following the second world conflict, the noise of the cannon has not ceased to make itself heard on some point of the globe [...] so “Cold” war does not merit its name.’<sup>42</sup>

In rejecting all such qualifications, Hogard’s understanding of the modern war led him towards a unified concept:

The war of today, of yesterday and of tomorrow is only one. The world has been in an uninterrupted war since 1917; no one can predict the end of the conflict. There are no different wars, different forms of war. Qualifiers deceive us. If there must absolutely be one, the only one which is suitable would be that which expresses the *nature* of the war of our time, the term chosen by those who conceived and incited it, those who conduct it, it would be the adjective: “REVOLUTIONARY”. But why a qualifier? War today is what it always has been. Quite simply, it assumes the visage and the scope given to it by conditions of the moment.

*Inexpiable* and *permanent* because it is ideological, pursuing the destruction of all that is foreign to communism and the construction of a new humanity, *universal* because it is driven by a subversive organisation spreading all over the globe; *total* because it uses and combines all available forces, already resorting where it must, where it is

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<sup>41</sup> J. Hogard, ‘Cette guerre de notre temps,’ *Revue de défense nationale* (Aug., 1958), 1304.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 1306-7.

possible, to traditional forms of violence (terrorism, guerrilla, classic operations), one day perhaps to nuclear weapons, the war of our time is in keeping with Clausewitz's ideal: it is *chameleon-war*, WAR in all senses of the word.<sup>43</sup>

Hogard was not alone in emphasizing the transformation of warfare. As mentioned above, Roger Trinquier, in pointing out the obsolescence of regular wars in the face of 'the great world conflict', thought in similar terms.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruge, head of the CIPCG between the summer of 1957 and the summer of 1959, believed that the defeat of an enemy who was conducting a 'more total war than that of 1939-45' required 'a response that was every bit as "total".<sup>45</sup> Lacheroy also subscribed to the idea: not only France, but the West as a whole needed to face up to 'a new form of war, new in its concepts and new in its achievements', which would decide the fate of the world. This was emphatically a total war, 'because it is a *war*, which takes souls as well as bodies and bends them to obedience and to the war effort.'<sup>46</sup> Yet this was not simply an issue of mobilisation. The totality of the revolutionary war reflected both in its scale and its relevance to the global struggle against communism. In this regard, Lacheroy warned his contemporaries not to labour under any illusions. If they thought that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima had signalled the beginning of an era in which war would revolve uniquely around a game of *presse-bouton*, then they were quite wrong. The record of French engagement in 'varied forms of conflict, insurrectional conflict, ideological conflict, etc.' demonstrated that, 'more than in any other age and more than in all other forms of conflict – human values are revealed as dominant.'<sup>47</sup>

He recounted how, prior to leaving for Indochina, he was told by one of his superiors that he had nothing to learn there:

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 1318.

<sup>44</sup> Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Guelton, 'The French Army Centre', 44

<sup>46</sup> Lacheroy, 'La Guerre Révolutionnaire', 309-311.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 307.

Nothing to learn on the strategic level, for you will be dealing with a *strategy of ants* which is completely outmoded in modern wars. Nothing to learn on the tactical level, for you will be dealing with *out-of-date tactics*, which have more in common with the wars of '70 and '14-18, than that of '39-45, itself already so outdated.<sup>48</sup>

In reality it was such metropolitan-minded thinking which was outmoded: conflicts in the colonies held the key to contemporary and future war. To illustrate the point, Lacheroy related an apocryphal story set at an annual international summit on Western defence, during which discussions of atomic war scenarios dominated. When asked what he thought of the decisions taken, The French representative replied: 'nothing'. Pressed further by his shocked co-delegates, he proceeded to relay a sketch in which Khrushchev and Bulganin react to the decisions made at the conference:

Bulganin says to Khrushchev: "They've played a nice *krieg-spiel* over there, except that we don't care about the atomic bomb: we won't use it. – Yes, says Khrushchev, the atomic bomb: we won't use it, that's right, but they have taken a very serious decision, to use the atomic bomb first, if we were to attack. – We don't care, says Bulganin, we won't attack them. – What, says Khrushchev, we won't attack them? So, we betray? We betray Lenin? We betray the expansion of world communism? – No, don't worry, we will betray nothing at all. There will always be war. But we, because we are communists, because we are used to this regime and its formulas, because we have a considerable lead in this domain, we know how to conduct a war which will always be below the level of generalized war, below the level of the atomic bomb. We will pull the strings: we know how to do it. We will do it through

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 308.

intermediaries[...] we will try to apply this to the links that appear weakest to us, that is first of all the links in the chains of French colonial empire and the English colonial empire.”<sup>49</sup>

In this manner Lacheroy, Hogard, and Trinquier cast the revolutionary war as a theory of war on a grand scale: a subversive war in which what mattered was not just what was at stake, but how the game was being played. Or rather, how the other side was playing the game. Yet in order to appreciate this, one had to be alert to the peculiar insidiousness of what the theorists described as a state of war without war.

As George Armstrong Kelly has written, in the hands of the French the theory of revolutionary war ‘claimed its essence from the war-politics continuum described by Clausewitz and opposed itself not to general nuclear war but to total peace. Peace, in the usually accepted sense, and *la guerre révolutionnaire* could be, indeed often were, coexistent.’<sup>50</sup> Hogard put the matter in stark terms. What was new in the revolutionary war was ‘that “*the state of peace*” no longer exists and that *political and military activities are now closely interlinked* down to the lowest levels.’<sup>51</sup> Atomic warfare was the red herring which allowed Moscow and Beijing to lead the war-below-the-bomb anywhere in the world in an attempt to encircle the West.<sup>52</sup> In this context, what was most worrying was the thought that the revolutionary war might have come to the West itself.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 308-309.

<sup>50</sup> Kelly, *Lost Soldiers*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> J. Hogard, ‘L’armée française devant la guerre révolutionnaire’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (Jan., 1957), 80.

<sup>52</sup> One of the first French analysts of Maoist revolutionary warfare, General Lionel-Max Chassin, added fuel to this fire at exactly the time when the revolutionary war theorists were gaining prominence, writing that ‘India, Africa, South America are the three most important fronts of ideological combat in the world. We have been at war for a long time already. If we lose this ideological war, if the encirclement predicted by Mao is achieved, it is finished!’ L.-M. Chassin, ‘Vers un encerclement de l’occident?’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (May, 1956), 551. Chassin’s article took inspiration from the unveiling of Mao’s ‘Memorandum on the new programme for world revolution’ two years earlier. Events in the mid-1950s, he contended, conferred the document certain veracity. His analysis of Mao’s victory in the civil war, *La conquête de la Chine par Mao Tsé-Toung (1945-1949)* appeared in 1952.

Hogard believed that it had. ‘We are thus at war,’ he wrote, ‘not only in Algeria, but throughout the *Union française*, even in the *métropole*.’<sup>53</sup> Or, as he put it elsewhere: ‘Throughout the *Union Française*, the first or the second phase of the process of the revolutionary war is underway.’<sup>54</sup> That this could be so relied upon the belief that the processes which led to the loss of control in Indochina could be applied anywhere: the global enemy who had built ‘bases’ in the colonies – regions in which the population had been conquered in body and mind, and where the revolutionary enjoyed complete freedom of action – could do the same in the *métropole*. In this manner, it was possible to see the same loss of control to revolutionary forces unfurling globally:

The “revolutionary war” is thus triggered the whole world over. Russia, China and certain satellites are already secure “bases” and numerous countries are in the process of “rotting” (*pourissement*), whilst the U.S.A. and perhaps Great Britain represent “provisionally occupied” zones [...] A new world conflict (in the classic sense) would necessarily take place in this way, and would have the look of an Indochina war on a world scale, combining, according to the regions and the degree of rotting, a “war of movement” (which would in appearance resemble classic operations) and guerrilla action, both acting below “atomic” forms, but making full use of the “techniques” of conquest and control of the masses.<sup>55</sup>

Confronting this reality required that some misconceptions about the nature of the communist threat be dropped. For one thing, Hogard suggested, it was wrong to think that French communists were ‘neither of the right, nor the left, but of the east.’ This formula obscured the

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<sup>53</sup> Hogard, ‘Guerre Révolutionnaire’, 1511.

<sup>54</sup> J. Hogard, ‘Le soldat dans la guerre révolutionnaire’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (Feb., 1957), 212. The *Union Française*, he noted, ‘includes the *métropole*, of course!’

<sup>55</sup> Hogard, ‘Guerre Révolutionnaire’, 1503, 1508. It might be added that, for all that his book was intended to promote an epic sweep of insurrectionary wars throughout human history, Gabriel Bonnet exhibited an awareness that ‘what has happened in Indochina, in Algeria, may happen tomorrow in France’ and that the future war would bring the nuclear and the revolutionary aspects together. See, Bonnet, *Les Guerres Insurrectionnelles*, 8.

truth that ‘the communists are not “of the east” but *everywhere*, in France and throughout the world.’ The notion of the fifth column had to be abandoned: ‘the international communist party is not in the service of Russia [...] it is international communism that conducts “its war”. The “Soviet Bloc” represents but one part of its power: its “bases”.’<sup>56</sup>

Jean Némó expanded on these themes. Having joined the colonial infantry after graduation from Saint-Cyr in the *promotion* of 1924-1926, Némó was of similar vintage to Lacheroy. His service took him to Tonkin before the Second World War and on two further post-war tours, from 1946 to 1948, and from 1952 to 1955. In 1956 he attended the *Institut des hautes études de la défense nationale*. Unlike other prominent theorists, he garnered no direct practical experience of the war in Algeria: in 1958 he was promoted Brigadier General as commander of the Antilles-Guyana group, implementing a ‘service militaire adapté’ for the DOM-TOMs.<sup>57</sup> Over two articles in consecutive issues of the *Revue de Défense Nationale* in 1956, Némó developed an idea of the revolutionary war as a *guerre dans la foule* (war amongst the crowd) of global dimensions. His starting point was an analysis of the Indochina defeat which closely followed Lacheroy’s original formula. France was ‘practically alone in having encountered communism in action, in a vast *guerre en surface* [surface war/war without fronts] of a style and a scale hitherto unknown.’ The army was thus in a privileged position to understand that triumph of the Viet Minh came ‘because they used their profound knowledge of the psychology and the structure of Vietnamese society, mobilised in a total war.’<sup>58</sup> From this blueprint, Némó was able to argue for a concept of war which was, on one level, population-centric: this ‘war “amongst the crowd” makes of this crowd and its opinion the true stake.’ Yet this was a conception couched within the language of totality. As a consequence of the population being the stake, it was: ‘Illusory to want to find, for

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<sup>56</sup> Hogard, ‘Cette guerre’, 1311.

<sup>57</sup> Villatoux, ‘Hogard et Némó’, 20-22. G. Mathias, ‘David Galula et Jean Némó, deux visions différentes des méthodes de contre-insurrection en Algérie?’, in A. Champeaux (ed.), *Les Maquis de l’Histoire. Guerre révolutionnaire, guerres irrégulières. mélanges offerts au lieutenant-colonel Michel David* (Paris, 2010), 233.

<sup>58</sup> J. Némó, ‘La Guerre dans le milieu social’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (May., 1956), 606, 609. For a brief analysis of the *guerre en surface*, an idea inspired more by experiences of occupation and resistance during the Second World War than by pre-war colonial experiences, see M.-C. Villatoux, *La Défense en Surface. Le contrôle territorial dans la pensée stratégique française d’après-guerre (1945-1962)* (Paris, 2009)

the complex problems that present themselves, a simple solution; it is neither political nor military; it must be total, and current vocabulary can find no other word to qualify it.<sup>59</sup> ‘Total’ was not just a recognition of the means by which the Viet Minh had achieved politico-military mobilization; it was also a prescription for how any such war had to be fought.

Némo’s second article emphasized another measure of totality: scale. Nevertheless, he was at pains to make clear that within the bounds of ‘totality’ his concept of scale was different. Total war was habitually presented as ‘the extension of conflicts through increases of those carrying arms and of the number of persons directly implicated in the war.’ This was akin to traditional warfare writ large, with no attempt made to modify traditional concepts. Even in the nuclear age, visions of total war - in which limited numbers of professionals wielded ultra-modern, ultra-scientific equipment - rested on the augmentation of war’s destructive character. Yet the post-war record revealed multiple local conflicts which were decidedly low-tech, revolved around the people, lasted for years rather than days, and dispensed with traditional notions of military fronts. These conflicts confounded soldier and civilian alike, whose general response was to attempt clear categorisation:

One and the other say to each other these are the processes specific to “colonial” wars and retain for war, “real” war, that which takes place in the *métropole* or in Europe, the ideas that they have learnt to consider as sacrosanct.

There is thus an opposition between forecast and fact. Why not admit that what happened in Indochina, what is happening in North Africa could happen in Europe? It is quicker to deal with a difficult problem than to deny it!

In reality, we find ourselves in the presence of two crucial phenomena: the development of atomic and nuclear weapons on one hand, the intensification of ideological conflicts and their use for clearly “operational” ends on the other. It

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<sup>59</sup> Némo, ‘La Guerre dans le milieu social’, 621-2.

would be just as dangerous to deny one as to minimise the other. Tomorrow's war must be expected to use both in combination.<sup>60</sup>

What N emo was proposing was, he claimed, a 'new geometry of warfare' which blurred the boundaries between nuclear and guerrilla, regular and irregular, *m etropole* and colony. Understanding this new geometry would prove crucial in facing up to a future war of an intensely ideological character:

Appealing to all human resources, mobilising all energies, not by virtue of an order issued by a government authority but by the will of the individuals themselves to work for the triumph of a cause, employing weapons of great power and considerable scope, it deserves without doubt the label of "total war" or "global war."<sup>61</sup>

Within this global-total war France was in the thick of it. The United States and the USSR constituted the nodes (*r eduits*), the geographical poles of the two opposing coalitions. Between these, however, lay vast 'marches', 'the oceanic expanses on one side, and the allied countries, satellites or neutral,' encompassing Western Europe, on the other. For the USA and the USSR the object was to destroy the opposing pole and to occupy the marches, 'if possible with the assent, indeed the help of a sufficient portion of the population.' In the marches, meanwhile:

The dominant fact remains that the war will take place in the crowd, amongst the populations which, instead of being, as in the past, simple reservoirs of soldiers and labour and at the same time possible victims of blows, will participate effectively in operations, under a new form. It is the population that would be mobilised using

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<sup>60</sup> J. Nemo, 'La guerre dans la foule,' *Revue de d efense nationale* (June, 1956), 723-4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 727.

modern techniques, obtaining voluntary support from it, but mobilizing its social structure still further than in traditional armies.<sup>62</sup>

Given the urgency with which they felt the revolutionary war encroaching upon home soil, it is perhaps unsurprising that such writers were averse to half-measures in dealing with the revolutionary threat. Hogard, for instance, was adamant that negotiation was no solution. The revolutionaries held no thoughts of ‘partial victory’, seeking power for themselves only and the exclusion of all opposition. As such:

If we deal with relatively moderate personalities, they are quickly ‘purified’; if we listen to the real chiefs of the movement, they envisage negotiation only as a means to increase their prestige and their influence over the populations, and to discourage our troops and our friends. [...] *Negotiation thus accelerates the process of the revolutionary war*; and allows the rebels to trigger the general counter-offensive much more quickly.<sup>63</sup>

The only solution was to adopt an uncompromisingly offensive posture. This meant eschewing more economic-based efforts aimed at the gentle persuasion of communities. Thus Chassin warned against the huge Western error in thinking that the first necessity was to fill men’s stomachs. Rather, he argued ‘it is the heart which must be filled first. If we want men to give their lives, something other than beefsteak or refrigerators must be offered to them. Appeal must be made to their deep feelings and a goal given to them to reach which seems grand and just.’<sup>64</sup>

Outwardly, this suggested that the political engagement of the people offered the key to victory, yet the revolutionary war theorists believed that the crowd was not influential, but rather existed

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 727-8.

<sup>63</sup> J. Hogard, ‘Guerre Révolutionnaire et Pacification’ in *Revue Militaire d’Information*, No.280 (Jan., 1957), 14.

<sup>64</sup> L.-M. Chassin, ‘Vers un encerclement de l’occident?’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (May, 1956), 548.

to be influenced. Lacheroy's assertion in the first phase of his *scénario-type de guerre révolutionnaire* that 'in the beginning, there is nothing' was indicative of the manner in which the theorists heaped their attention on 'methods and techniques, to the detriment of a study of the political, sociological, and economic terrain in which they are employed.'<sup>65</sup> People were pawns, and ideology a scientific instrument in a war of manipulation.

Such radical remedies served to underline how far the advocates of the modern war felt that the techniques of the old colonial conflicts were insufficient for confronting the war in progress. When used in France's wars of decolonization, even where a degree of success had been achieved, for example during the *année de Lattre* of 1950-1951 in Indochina, the long term effects appeared limited. Jean de Lattre de Tassigny brought to Indochina longstanding techniques of French colonial warfare honed in Morocco between 1921 and 1926, under the command of one of the master practitioners, Hubert Lyautey.<sup>66</sup> In fact, a number of his practices, such as the creation of *groupes mobiles* for rapid action, coupled with the establishment of a 'de Lattre line' of blockhouses and forts for the defence of the Red River delta, were strikingly reminiscent of the practice of Lyautey's own mentor, Joseph Gallieni, in Tonkin six decades previously.<sup>67</sup> De Lattre's leadership and actions in 1951 succeeded in preventing the fall of Hanoi and offered a setback to Giap's forces, prematurely assembled for a mass confrontation, but he could not save French Indochina. He had achieved only 'a temporary stalemate.'<sup>68</sup>

Not that such methods were entirely defunct or without utility: the record of both the Indochina and Algeria Wars offers ample evidence of continuity of pre-Second World War

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<sup>65</sup> R. Girardet 'Civil and Military Power in the Fourth Republic' in S. Huntington (ed.), *Changing Patterns of Military Politics* (New York, 1962), 133-4.

<sup>66</sup> For de Lattre, see A. Clayton, *Three Marshals of France. Leadership After Trauma* (London, 1992), 27-30, 148-164. G. Salisbury Jones, *So Full A Glory: A Biography of Marshal de Lattre de Tassigny* (London, 1954), 33-43, 251-258. F. Logevall, *Embers of War: the fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York, 2012), 260-292.

<sup>67</sup> See M. Finch, *A Progressive Occupation? The Gallieni-Lyautey Method and Colonial Pacification in Tonkin and Madagascar, 1885-1900* (Oxford, 2013), 138-159. Douglas Porch considers that a 'lingering ancestral memory' of Gallieni's oil spot tactics formed 'an article of faith in a French army that never considered its context; and which partly accounts for military failure in North Vietnam. Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 167-8.

<sup>68</sup> Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 167.

practices. Indeed, Porch goes so far as to suggest that ‘Operation Castor was nothing less than an updated oil spot – that is, the gradual expansion of a zone of pacification out of a secure base area through co-ordinated military, intelligence-gathering, economic, and political methods.’<sup>69</sup> The adoption of *quadrillage* in the Algerian countryside later that decade, a combination of grid-marking and designated patrolling, coupled with mass resettlement, bore the hallmarks of an earlier age, albeit on a grander scale.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Craddock and Smith suggest that General Jacques Massu’s “surface method” adopted during the urban Battle of Algiers in 1956-7 represented ‘merely an extension of the standard pacification approach in the rest of Algeria [...] the *quadrillage* (squaring) system that involved the establishment of manned posts at 200 sensitive points across the city and 180 daily patrols of six men each.’<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, urban *quadrillage* was an adjunct effort to the wider army attempt to mould the principles of *guerre révolutionnaire* to an urban setting, while rural *quadrillage* can be seen as part of a ‘very reactive and dispersed strategy against the ALN’ which would only be remedied under the Challe Plan of 1959.<sup>72</sup>

On the ground, the old colonial methods could achieve a degree of geographical consolidation and impose a temporary order, but they were unable to fully confront the challenges posed by the new warfare – a contention reflected in the gradual reorganization of the curriculum of the CIPCG at Arzew away from tactical and towards psychological instruction.<sup>73</sup> Given the emphasis placed by theorists on the novelty of modern war, this is perhaps unsurprising.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, the French theorists of the 1950s also owed certain debts to pre-1939 currents of military-political thought which help explain their post-1945 path to totality, although these currents were more metropolitan than colonial.

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<sup>69</sup> Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 170.

<sup>70</sup> For the French army’s operational approach during the Algerian War see M. Thomas, ‘Order before reform: The spread of French military operations in Algeria, 1954-1958’, in David Killingray and David Omissi, eds., *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c. 1700-1964* (Manchester, 1999), 199-204. By November 1957, 175,000 people had been relocated in the Constantine department alone.

<sup>71</sup> Craddock and Smith, “No fixed values”, 85.

<sup>72</sup> M. Alexander and J.F.V. Keiger, ‘France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 25, 2 (June 2002), 15-17.

<sup>73</sup> Guelton, ‘The French Army centre at Arzew’, 37-47.

<sup>74</sup> It is also perhaps noteworthy that any debts to the earlier generations of colonial soldiers appeared largely to have gone unacknowledged.

One such debt lay in the roots of psychological warfare. Charles Lachero's major reference point for the means by which totalitarianism achieved control was a book focused specifically on the European experience of the 'maturation' of totalitarian systems during the 1930s. Sergei Chakhotin's *The Rape of the Masses* sought to analyse how 'Fascism rapes the mind of the masses with its baleful propaganda' using a framework which, Chakhotin explained in the preface to the English edition, aimed 'to relate political action to the modern data of the exact sciences, to see whether, perhaps, political action is not primarily, like all human action, a form of biological behaviour.'<sup>75</sup> His starting point was an investigation into how 'physiological psychology' could be brought to bear on the individual, following the work of his mentor Ivan Pavlov on conditioning reflexes in animals, developing inhibition or suggestibility. From the individual, he elevated the analysis to collective psychology. Although informed by Gustave Le Bon's work on the psychology of crowds, Chakhotin disagreed with his tendency 'to attribute to the crowd all the evils from which we suffer, and to hold it entirely responsible for the failures in the social and political life of our epoch,' which he saw as indicative of 'an exaggeration of the influence the crowd can really exert over the life of the State.' The reality was:

a diminution in the real influence of collectivities on public life: they are growing more and more into docile instruments in the hands of usurpers, dictators, who unscrupulously make use of their more or less intuitive apprehension of psychological laws, together with their control of the formidable technical equipment afforded by the modern State, to manipulate the individuals composing a people by a method we have called psychical rape.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> S. Chakhotin, *The Rape of the Masses: The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda* (London, 1940), xv, xvii. Chakhotin's work appeared in French as *Le Viol des Foules* a few weeks before the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. His preface to the English edition was written in December of the same year.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 34-35.

The only solution lay in adopting appropriate counter-measures: ‘to meet them with violent propaganda, to counteract their tendency to psychological rape by equivalent action on the psychism of the masses, but without recourse to lying.’ Here was the twist: in contrast to the totalitarian fascisms, the truth could be found in ‘the great myth of Socialism, of Love and humanity, of Liberty’, realisable courtesy of scientific techniques.<sup>77</sup>

Even after the cataclysm of 1939-1945, for some French army officers the tools of ‘psychological rape’ remained as relevant as ever. In 1948 an infantry officer named Antoine Argoud wrote a two part article for the *Revue de Défense Nationale* entitled ‘La Guerre Psychologique.’<sup>78</sup> His argument cleaved tight to Chakhotin’s formulation, encompassing the objective psychology of Pavlov’s conditioned responses, collective psychology and the control of crowds and masses, and on to propaganda, the essential tool of psychological warfare. The basis of psychological warfare was simple:

[It] consists in the application to masses or crowds of the theory of conditioned reflexes. This has only been possible, with precision, from the day on which the development of scientific progress permitted the diffusion of ideas on a sufficient scale. The radio post, the press and the cinema are the indispensable auxiliaries to the theory of conditioned responses.<sup>79</sup>

Up to 1940, the Nazi regime appeared to offer the most startling example of how psychological warfare could succeed, and in the aftermath of the Second World War the Soviet Union

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 284, 288. Originally a White Russian, Chakhotin (1883-1974) reconciled himself to the Soviet regime in the early 1920s. Having left for Zagreb University at the end of 1919, he nevertheless remained abroad for most of the next thirty years. In so doing he avoided the fate of many of his returned *émigré* intellectual colleagues during the purges of the 1930s. In 1941 he was arrested by the Gestapo and subsequently survived a concentration camp, returning to Russia in the late 1940s and taking a position at the Moscow Institute for Biophysics of the Academy of Sciences, where he worked until his death. See H. Hardeman, *Coming to Terms with the Soviet Regime: The “Changing Signposts” Movement among Russian Émigrés in the Early 1920s* (DeKalb IL, 1994), 78, 161, 186.

<sup>78</sup> A. Argoud, ‘La Guerre Psychologique (I)’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (Mar., 1948), 291-300. A. Argoud, ‘La Guerre Psychologique (II)’, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (Apr., 1948), 460-471.

<sup>79</sup> Argoud, ‘La Guerre Psychologique (I)’, 296.

represented the greatest threat. Argoud was equally aware of the success of the United States in studying ‘scientifically and systematically [...] the most appropriate means to ruin the moral of the adversary, amongst troops as well as in the rear, or to preserve the morale of their own nationals.’<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, he saw that, owing to the marshalling of public opinion under its democratic system, the USA had been ‘one of the first countries to have applied the art of propaganda to the government of civil society in a systematic manner.’ Whilst he stressed that the American example ‘offers no similarity, besides the technical aspect, with the propaganda of Hitler or Stalin,’ it nevertheless offered proof that propaganda need not be enacted solely through the negative means of violence and censorship. Manipulation might equally consist of positive means: documentation, information, education.<sup>81</sup>

As early as 1948, it was clear to Argoud that psychological warfare continued to play a crucial role in the struggle of liberal democracy against communism, and required that the government employ all means of propaganda - radio, press, theatre, posters – throughout the *Union française* or risk disappearing from the ‘world chessboard.’<sup>82</sup> A future leader of the OAS, Argoud was far from a stranger to the revolutionary war in the late 1950s and early 1960s: with his first posting to Algeria in 1956 he began to reorient his thoughts away from the possibilities of armoured warfare in Europe which had preoccupied him in the years immediately preceding his arrival. He spent the next half decade attempting ‘to change the army’s doctrine using the principles of *guerre révolutionnaire*.’<sup>83</sup> Arriving in March 1956, by September he had written a report on ‘The Military Problem in Algeria’ in which he implored the command to focus their efforts on rallying the people above targeting the rebels.<sup>84</sup> Although the report made no explicit reference to psychological action, Argoud’s earlier interest can only have strengthened his belief in the pursuit of the political and social dimensions of the struggle. For men such as Lacheroy, Hogard, Némou

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 294.

<sup>81</sup> Argoud, ‘La Guerre Psychologique (I)’, 299. Argoud, ‘La Guerre Psychologique (II)’, 466-469.

<sup>82</sup> Argoud, ‘La Guerre Psychologique (II)’, 470-471.

<sup>83</sup> Craddock and Smith, “No fixed values”, 103.

<sup>84</sup> A. Argoud, *La décadence, l'imposture, et la tragédie* (Paris, 1974), 121-123, 130-132.

and Argoud, the Chakhotin-esque idea of the manipulability of the masses showed not only how the new war had been radicalised, but equally how radicalization offered the key to victory.

Another pre-Second World War debt lay in the contention, succinctly put by Hogard, that ‘*the state of peace*’ no longer exists.’<sup>85</sup> Here, the revolutionary war theorists subscribed to ideas about the enlarged parameters of warfare that had been bestowed upon the world by totalitarianism, a development as much European as colonial, and enunciated by André Beaufre.<sup>86</sup> Less than a month before the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, Beaufre published an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in which he argued that a new intermediate stage in international conflict, called *la paix-guerre* (peace-war, or war in peacetime), had been created. This was the product of industrial nations’ increasing capacity to wage technologically-driven, highly destructive warfare that could result only in military stalemate, and that would require such efforts to win, and incur such losses and destruction, that even the most advantageous of peace conditions would not be worth the cost. The *paix-guerre* rested on the idea that in such a climate the fear of catastrophic war would allow for manoeuvring by which a nation might achieve the ends of war through the capitulation of the opponent and without recourse to open conflict, so long as a ‘critical point’ leading to total war could be avoided.

To Beaufre this situation was in some sense analogous to strategy as practiced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when battle was the worst possible outcome and the best strategists wore down their opponents without recourse to it. The conditions under which the *paix-guerre* operated were of course different, as competing nations sought to bring various means of pressure to bear upon their opponents - which Beaufre labelled *guerre politique*, *guerre économique*, *guerre diplomatique* – all of which operated outside the parameters of war classically conceived. Nevertheless, it was his hope that the existence and observance of the *paix-guerre* might even

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<sup>85</sup> Hogard, ‘L’armée française devant la guerre révolutionnaire’, 80.

<sup>86</sup> Beaufre’s long military career began in 1935, and included post-war service in both the Indochina and Algerian Wars, and subsequent posts at SHAPE and on the NATO Standing Committee. See B. Holden Reid, ‘The Legacy of Liddell Hart: The Contrasting Responses of Michael Howard and André Beaufre’, *British Journal for Military History*, 1, 1 (Oct., 2014), 76-9.

have a de-escalatory effect on armed conflict so that ‘we will be able in the future to witness relatively important military conflicts, conducted with both sides careful to engage only limited effectives.’ He even harboured the hope that ‘if passion or destiny leads to the outbreak of a total war and that the military resolution seems uncertain or far-off, it will transform itself into a measured war, with limited military and political objectives.’<sup>87</sup>

This optimistic prognosis was swiftly dashed by subsequent events. Several decades later, however, Beaufre was able to present the concept as a valid prediction of ‘the pattern of the cold war’ in which war was ‘total [...] in other words it will be carried on in all fields, political, economic, diplomatic and military.’ His resolution was that ‘equally therefore strategy must be total.’<sup>88</sup> Indeed, where Beaufre was most consistent, in the 1960s as in the 1930s, was in his emphasis on the enlarged dimensions of strategy. The *paix-guerre* might be instrumental in ushering in a new era of limited wars, but such conflicts would have to be conducted within much wider strategic parameters. To put it another way, these limited wars consisted within a total strategy which could no longer be confined to military operations:

Since war engages all domains, strategy must embrace the game fully, as much to guide the choice of factors to be used as to bind the various elements of manoeuvre to each other. This *total strategy*, as we can call it, is not only necessary for the direction of total war, but also for the conduct of the new war, of a form so insidious and diverse that we have been able to believe that it was nothing but a deceptive aspect of peace.<sup>89</sup>

Reacting to the ‘new war’ was not a matter of choice, but a necessity thrust upon liberal democratic societies in the face of totalitarian regimes which refused, by their very nature, to

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<sup>87</sup> A. Beaufre (Anon in publication), ‘Une forme nouvelle des conflits internationaux. La paix-guerre’, *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 Aug., 1939), 766-783.

<sup>88</sup> A. Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy* (London, 1965), 13-14.

<sup>89</sup> Beaufre, ‘La paix-guerre’, 787.

respect any boundary between states of war and peace. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the realm of the *guerre politique* – ‘the most characteristic process of the *paix-guerre* [...] that is to say intervention in the internal politics of the opposing country.’<sup>90</sup>

After 1945, although the enemy had changed, the enlarged parameters of conflict remained. If there was a difference between Beaufre’s 1930s understanding and that of the revolutionary war theorists of the 1950s, however, it lay in the attitude of those confronting the insidious war.<sup>91</sup> Beaufre’s conception of the *paix-guerre* as an intermediate stage in war appeared as a vehicle to approach conflict at the broadest possible level without advocating the notion of a *constant* state of war on the liberal-democratic side. In essence, and despite that the idea of total strategy itself blurred the line between the state of war and the state of peace, it offered the hope that you did not have to join them in order to beat them. Even by the time Argoud was writing about psychological warfare, that distinction was disappearing. Psychological warfare had rendered war ‘total’ and ‘permanent’ in a more immediate sense, meaning that the government now had a duty to put psychological warfare into practice for its own ends, and as part of its daily routine. The revolutionary warriors took these ideas on and pushed them forward, and in so doing were seduced by the call to unlimited response that such an escalatory logic demanded. For Lacheroy and his contemporaries the revolutionary war marked ‘a step further, but an immense step in the direction of this total war towards which, alas, the world seems unavoidably to be heading.’<sup>92</sup> In a sense, the theory of revolutionary war took *la paix-guerre* to the colonies, by way of psychological warfare, with radicalized results.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 771-774.

<sup>91</sup> It is interesting to note that, a decade after the end of the Algerian War, Beaufre offered some thoughts on revolutionary warfare, although this took the form of a much broader synthesis of revolutionary wars from the Middle Ages onwards and was not concerned with the French army theory of *guerre révolutionnaire*. Beaufre was sensitive to the effect of revolutionary ideology on contemporary conflict, particularly where the transmission of propaganda both to the metropole and neutral countries was concerned. Holding tight to the importance of ‘total strategy’ as an appropriate response, he characterized revolutionary war as ‘the modern form of war primitive war’ and that such war ‘which is limited on the materiel front [...] is unlimited in the psychological and moral domains.’ A. Beaufre, *La Guerre Révolutionnaire: les formes nouvelles de la guerre* (Paris, 1972), 42, 50, 3-81.

<sup>92</sup> Lacheroy, ‘La Guerre Révolutionnaire’, 311.

Of course, the totalizing theory of *la guerre révolutionnaire* cannot solely explain the dark avenues trodden by elements of the French army which led them to the use of torture and to the coups of 1958 and 1961. The theory may have served as a force driving its adherents in a radical direction, but the wider move towards radicalism on the part of the army can also be understood as a consequence of traumas experienced since the rupture of June 1940, if not before.<sup>93</sup> The political radicalism of the army, which was part and parcel of that move, also relied on other preconditions. Paret, for example, recognized that in rediscovering the ‘techniques developed and codified by French colonial officers before World War I’ the revolutionary warriors echoed tenets held by the earlier generation: chiefly ‘unity of command (which, in effect, meant military domination over civilian affairs)’ and the inclination to seek a role in national regeneration that could be traced back to Lyautey’s famous articles of the 1890s on the social and colonial roles of the army. Reborn ‘in a more virulent form’ in the 1930s’, this inclination endured through the Vichy regime and ‘survived the coming of the Fourth Republic, until gradually faith in the messianic power of the Army and willingness to use the Army for a *coup d’état* merged in the activist groups of the 1950’s.’<sup>94</sup>

Yet as this article has shown, whereas such developments may have in effect opened the door to political interventionism, the escalatory logic of the theory of revolutionary war gave adherents the impetus to walk through it. A certain concept of total war was at the heart of this. Since the revolutionary war was being fought both abroad and at home, it was all but inevitable that the revolutionary warriors would come to hold that the ‘proper indoctrination of the French nation was as important as indoctrinating colonial populations.’<sup>95</sup> The link they forged between colonial war and domestic security encouraged them to envisage their conflicts as national

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<sup>93</sup> The theory can also be understood as an appropriate response from a pre-nuclear army. As Kelly noted, there were ‘precise psychological conditions that made the theory highly compatible with French national needs of morale and prestige’: offering a justification for ‘the formulation of strategies de-emphasizing the technical perfection of new weapons and statistical measurements of power [...] It became a compliment to the French soldier and his military organization to proclaim this initiative as a specific national aptitude vis-à-vis the atom-intoxicated Anglo-Saxons.’ Kelly, *Lost Soldiers*, 9-10.

<sup>94</sup> Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare*, 103-8.

<sup>95</sup> A. Horne, *The French Army and Politics, 1870-1970* (London, 1984), 76.

emergencies. The army needed to assert its stewardship over a people either ignorant of the ideological war in which they were embroiled, or already indoctrinated by an opposing ideology. Thus N emo could argue that: ‘As regards in particular the army and its cadres, their roots must thrust deep into the real country (*pays r el*) [...] Through its army, just as through its politics, the country must be involved in the war; if not it becomes disinterested and this is the first step toward abandonment and defeat.’<sup>96</sup>

Perceptive individuals saw that it was rather the politicization of the army that offered a first step towards defeat, and in this sense the logic of the theory was self-defeating. Paret’s contemporary assessment was particularly astute. ‘What effect might a military  lite with a sense of mission, and a lack of trust in the reliability of its base, have on this base?’ he asked:

If the French Army were a revolutionary force its first move, according to *La Guerre R volutionnaire*, should be to conquer and secure this base. But the Army – whatever the opinions held by some of its members – is not really, in its essentials, revolutionary; and one may expect the doctrine eventually to break up over the contradiction of imposing revolutionary methods on non-revolutionary organizations.<sup>97</sup>

The decline of *la guerre r volutionnaire* - with the creation of a new Republic and the return of de Gaulle - appeared to bear that out, even if the interventionist tendency would return a few short years later.

Nor was it the case that the army in its entirety was ever fully won over to theory. In this regard, an apocryphal remark attributed to de Gaulle is perhaps telling. When approached by a junior officer who attempted to engage him on the subject, the General retorted: ‘I know of two types of warfare: mobile warfare and positional warfare. I have never heard of revolutionary

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<sup>96</sup> N emo, ‘La Guerre dans le milieu social’, 623.

<sup>97</sup> P. Paret, ‘The French Army’, 69.

warfare.<sup>98</sup> Although by now out of uniform, de Gaulle's sentiment may have been shared by many in service. Even during its ascendancy as a training centre, reports emanating from the CIPCG at Arzew suggest that 'the minds of a great many cadres, officers and NCOs, were not very receptive, were indeed hostile, to psychological warfare.'<sup>99</sup> At the same time, as a staging post for those whose trajectories culminated in a rift with Republican government, the influence of the theory is undeniable. Serendipitous events rendered both Galula and Trinquier as *centurions-manqués*.<sup>100</sup> Lacheroy the theorist and Argoud the practitioner, meanwhile, received death sentences in absentia for their part in the April 1961 coup attempt.<sup>101</sup> Understanding the totality inherent in their conception of revolutionary war makes some sense of the path they chose.

In the words of Dennis Showalter:

For almost a decade after 1954, French military intellectuals developed and pursued the concept of *guerre révolutionnaire*. This amalgam of ideological anti-Communism, socio-economic reform, psychological warfare and high-intensity military operations carried by élite forces, came in Algeria close to Clausewitz's most abstract vision of total war before collapsing because its rigorously logical intellectual coherence could not respond to untidy facts.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in B. Fall, *Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina* (Mechanicsburg PA, 2005), 370.

<sup>99</sup> Guelton, 'The French Army centre at Arzew', 39.

<sup>100</sup> Trinquier did not take part in the coup against de Gaulle in April 1961, nor did he join the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* (OAS), but he was active in Algiers during the putsch of May 1958 that brought de Gaulle back to power, helping to establish the Committee of Public Safety. By 1961 he had left the army and travelled to Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there to participate a separatist insurgency in a mercenary capacity. The venture proved brief and unsatisfactory for Trinquier, who was soon on his way back to Europe. Bernard Fall, in his preface to *Modern Warfare* considered that Trinquier was 'saved by circumstances. Galula was likewise 'saved by circumstances' not only during the coup attempt of 1961, but also in May 1958, although these appear to have been circumstances of his own making. On the former occasion, in common with many officers, he phoned in sick. In May 1958, meanwhile, he claimed to have 'slept through' the whole thing. No matter that he was a fringe player, Galula's potential involvement in these episodes demonstrate that he was not immune from radicalism. Indeed, Ann Marlowe reports that Galula's cousin claimed that Galula was close to Salan in 1958, although Marlowe could find nothing to confirm the connection. See Reis, 'David Galula and Roger Trinquier', 43. Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, 176. Marlow, 'David Galula', 44-5.

<sup>101</sup> Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare*, 112-3.

<sup>102</sup> D. Showalter, 'Dien Bien Phu in Three Cultures', *War & Society*, 16, 2 (Oct., 1998), 98.

The most untidy fact was that the conceptualisation of war they had created did not correspond to the reality of the conflict in Algeria. Throughout the 1950s the revolutionary war theorists drew on a narrative of totality which did not end in 1945 but was reaching apotheosis in the post-Second World War wars of empire. Much like the Viet Minh's own efforts, such an unconventional concept of total war underscores Hew Strachan's contention that a 'total war need not be modern: a modern war need not be total.'<sup>103</sup> Here was a war which was, in many respects, de-technologized – a total war of mind rather than materiel. Yet it was a total war that existed in mind alone. In 1960 Paret observed that 'although modern war has blurred the dividing lines between internal and external operations, these still exist', thus laying bare the fantasy of the theory.<sup>104</sup> It was one thing for military personnel to mobilise for a subversive war below the nuclear horizon, but quite another to expect French civil society to mobilize for an existential struggle. The dynamic of war might be totalizing for the Vietnamese and the Algerians, but it simply was not so for the French. For France's revolutionary warriors, however, the intellectual barrier between limited and unlimited war had crumbled, giving way to a total war they perceived as immediate, urgent, and very real.

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<sup>103</sup> Strachan, 'On Total War and Modern War', 351.

<sup>104</sup> Paret, 'A Total Weapon', 69.