Picturing Decolonisation

The iconographic narratives of the Algerian War of Independence in French History Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses how the legacy of Algerian decolonisation has visually resonated in history textbooks published in France since 1970. With increasing tensions between Algeria and France and the role of colonialism remaining a central point of contention in French public debates, the memories of the Algerian War of Independence are as relevant as ever. Their transmission in textbooks has long been a source of controversy in France. As they are multifaceted mediums subject to political, economic, and social interests, this thesis aims to highlight that historical narratives in textbooks are in constant flux — and that visuals are not neutral conveyors of history. The main question guiding this research is: *how have French history textbooks visually represented Algerian decolonisation since 1970? How has that representation evolved?* Through a qualitative approach, this study analyses textbook iconography over 50 years to trace and outline the development of how textbooks visually engage with the history of the Algerian War of Independence.

The research reveals that the visual representation of Algerian decolonisation gradually shifted to depict the more controversial and obscured events of the conflict, continuously anchored in a French context. The findings highlight a cautious and non-linear remediation of the war according to contemporary societal self-descriptions and issues. They demonstrate how politics of memory, through the demands of external actors, has shaped visual representations, and the role of various textbook elements in constructing overarching narratives. This thesis contributes to existing research on French textbooks through its visual approach and analysis of recent textbooks, and emphasises the need to study how visuals contribute to the construction of historical narratives in this educational medium.

KEYWORDS: *Decolonisation, France, Algeria, history textbooks, representation, memory politics, visual culture*

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1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In 1983, historian Pierre Assouline asked "*Faut-il brûler les manuels d'histoire?*"[1] French veterans of the War of Independence in Algeria had threatened to burn down a publishing house in response to the contents of a new high school history textbook it had printed. The integration of the conflict in the high school curriculum that year reignited memories and debates twenty years after Algerian independence. In 2021, almost forty years since then, historian Benjamin Stora gave the French president his report on the "memory of colonisation and the Algerian War." One of his conclusions: grant more time and space to the topic in history textbooks.[2]

Since Algerian independence in 1962, the memory of the war has been a site of conflict in France, and textbooks an arena of these postcolonial politics.[3] Within the context of ongoing postcolonial discourses in the 2000s about (de)colonisation, the French state has attempted to legislate official narratives for education — through textbooks and curricula — on issues such as slavery and Algeria. This coupling between state and education is not recent. Since the 19th century, history education has long been an essential tool in nation-building, conceiving national identities in historical narratives.[4] In French secondary schools however, these institutional aims are less explicitly nationalistic, tending more towards humanist and universalist values.[5] This view still shapes historical narratives toward a collective sense of identity, but it often contradicts itself, notably in the transmission of sensitive facets of French history — such as Algerian decolonisation — making a study of that transmission a complex task. Due to the incendiary nature of the subject however, many scholars

[1] [Should we burn history textbooks?] Pierre Assouline, "Faut-il brûler les manuels d'histoire ?", *L'Histoire* 39 (1983), https://www.lhistoire.fr/faut-il-br%C3%BBler-les-manuels-dhistoire.
[2] "Mémoire de la colonisation et de la guerre d'Algérie," [The memory of colonialism and the Algerian War] elysee.fr, 17 October 2022, https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/10/17/memoire-de-la-colonisation-et-de-la-guerre-dalgerie.
[3] Marcus Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 5, no. 1 (1 March 2013): 14–32, https://doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2013.050102.
[4] Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio, and María Rodríguez Moneo, eds., *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, International Review of History Education (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub, 2012), 93.
[5] Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon, "A Traditional Frame for Global History: The Narrative of Modernity in French Secondary School," in *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, ed. Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio, and María Rodríguez Moneo, International Review of History Education (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub, 2012), 119.

have studied the transmission of colonialism and the Algerian War of Independence in textbooks, but their visual contents remain an entirely understudied field — and the same is true for textbook research as a whole. Additionally, French textbooks after 2013 are rather understudied, as most research on this topic dates to the early 2000s and early 2010s.

This thesis thus seeks to understand how French history textbooks *visually* implement history in schools as a form of knowledge (re)production since 1970 and until 2020, looking at the topic of Algerian decolonisation, and how this has changed alongside/because of public debates about memory, remembrance, and history.

The following sections of this chapter will enunciate the research question and propose a theoretical framework that forms the underlying basis of my analysis. Subsequently, a three-part review of the developments in the field of textbook research: in general, with visuals, and in France. Finally, an overview of the sources and methodology used are presented.

1.2 Research question

This paper's research question is as follows: **How have French history textbooks visually represented Algerian decolonisation since 1970? How has that representation evolved over time?**

In order to answer this question, this paper will be divided into three sub-questions.

1) How has this representation evolved between 1970 and 1982?
2) How has this representation evolved between 1983 and 2004?
3) How has this representation evolved between 2005 and 2024?

Because the research question focuses on the *evolution* of representation, the sub-questions allow for the paper to develop chronologically. Each of these time frames is based on significant events in textbook production in France, with the idea that they should therefore also represent important changes in the representation of Algerian decolonisation.

In the first (1970-1882), despite the recency of the conflict, the war was rather consistently textually present in *troisième* textbooks. Because it represents the first

years of discussing Algerian independence, this is a period of experimentation and reckoning for history textbooks. From an analysis of the iconography of 1970-1982, this paper will construct a foundation from which to compare the proceeding developments.

The second (1983-2004) explores how the visual narratives shifted drastically. In a context of growing national debates on education, notably through school history textbooks and curricula, the topic of Algerian decolonisation is integrated into the high school curriculum.[6] Key dates such as the 30-year anniversary since Algerian independence and opening of archives in 1992 spark growing memory clashes that are reflected in textbook production.

The third (2005-2020) is structured with the memory law of 23 February 2005 in mind. This law sought to require school curricula to recognise the positive role of French colonialism.[7][8] Though the law was repealed, it sparked nation-wide public debates about school curricula and textbooks within the context of collective memory and national history.[9] A re-evaluation of these curricula and textbooks would give greater prominence to colonial history after 2005,[10] notably recognising the memories of certain groups, such as the *harkis* and *pieds-noirs* — the major proponents of the law.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The following concepts form the theoretical assumptions of this thesis, clearly defining the terms related to colonialism, and namely the idea of representation, the basis upon which the analysis and arguments are conducted below.

Colonialism, decolonisation, and postcolonialism

[6] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 24.
[7] 'Loi N° 2005-158 Du 23 Février 2005 Portant Reconnaissance de La Nation et Contribution Nationale En Faveur Des Français Rapatriés', accessed 24 January 2025, https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000444898/#JORFARTI000002059357.
[8] Stiina Löytömäki, "French Memory Laws and the Ambivalence About the Meaning of Colonialism," in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History after 1945*, ed. Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 95–96.
[9] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 26.
[10] Sara Mechkarini, "The Representation of the Algerian War in French High School History Textbooks," *History Compass* 19, no. 12 (2021): 5, https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12696.

Colonialism describes the system, the political, cultural, and social ideology, and the practice by the West of subjugation, exploitation, and discrimination in the world. It is based on an idea of race that views the colonial world — and all people in it — as fundamentally and intrinsically inferior.[11] It is a transhistorical concept that is difficult to place, as it largely began in a post-Renaissance world, and carries on to this day, though often developed and modified into neo-colonialism. Importantly, it is a separate system from earlier forms of colonies held by civilisations.[12] **Decolonisation** refers to the subsequent "process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all forms."[13] It has often grown in and out of anti-colonialist movements: a form of political struggle by the colonised against colonialism. In Algeria, this was largely articulated in a nationalist discourse, anchored by a narrative of modernity — a rather common framework in post-war decolonisation movements.[14]

From colonialism, **postcolonialism** was developed. However, it is important to first distinguish that postcolonialism is not a chronological term. The prefix 'post' does not refer to an 'after colonialism,' and postcolonialism rather refers to a lens through which to analyse the effects of colonialism in the world, be it cultural, social, political.[15] Postcolonial studies emerged in the 1970s, though its roots go back to the 50s, with notable works such as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).[16] It is now widely used in analyses of various disciplines as they engage with the impact of European colonialism on the world. This form of analysis is often described as postcolonial reading, which seeks to understand the impact of colonisation on all types of documents, both visual and textual.[17]

Representation

To understand representation, consider first an example: a lifelike painting of an orange. We know that by drawing an orange, an artist does not recreate an edible orange, but a still life can yet reproduce a very realistic interpretation of an orange. Though it is not exactly an edible orange, some might say it could be a very accurate

[11] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Fourth edition, Routledge Key Guides (Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge, 2025), 79.
[12] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 78–83.
[13] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 106.
[14] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 106–9.
[15] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 266.
[16] Fanon's work has been essential in discussions of race and representation in colonial discourse and has additionally examined these in the context of Algeria.
[17] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, 270–71.

reproduction of an orange. Yet how "true" of a representation is it truly? To attempt to answer this question is to first ask: what is a representation? What meanings do representations hold? How are they made? What does it mean to be represented? According to Sturken and Cartwright:

> "Representation refers to the use of language, marks, and images to create meaning about the world around us. We use words to understand, describe, and define the world as we see it, and we also use markings and symbolism this way. […] We 'see' the material world only through representations. There is no direct knowledge of the world without representations, whether they are abstract or mimetic. We construct the meaning of things through representing them."[18]

To represent something is the ability to describe or imagine it, by writing, visuals, hand gestures, or speaking. When representation is mimetic, it simply reflects the social groups, practices, and events that it depicts as Stuart Hall explains in "New Ethnicities." This conception translates into a critique of the inadequate representations of the "truth" of these groups, practices, and events, and encourages the production of more "authentic" representations.[19] He distinguishes another conception: a constructivist idea of the politics of representation, positing that representations play an active role in shaping the social worlds they claim to reveal. Thus, media or artistic depictions can be considered a terrain of struggle, where conflicts on interpretation and meaning play out, aimed at delineating the dominant meaning attributed to what constitutes the object of a given representation. With this perspective, the search for "authentic" representations is futile.

To put it very simply, the way in which groups, people, cultures, are depicted shapes how they are in turn interacted with politically, socially, economically, legally, etc.[20] Representations can have real, tangible consequences for those depicted. This means that representation can be a powerful tool, and the medium through which it is

[18] Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Third edition (New York Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18–19.
[19] Stuart Hall, David Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., "New Ethnicities," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Comedia (London ; New York: Routledge, 1996), 446–47.
[20] M. Ayaz Naseem, Addela Arshad-Ayaz, and Jesús Rodríguez, eds., *Representation of Minorities in Textbooks: International Comparative Perspectives* (Santiago de Compostela, 2016), 6.

transmitted plays an active role. In textbooks, processes of exclusion and inclusion are intrinsic to the creation of a national narrative.[21] For example, minorities and their contributions are often globally and systematically left out of nation-building myths in favour of the patriarchal, white, standard in textbooks.[22]

Edward Said, one of the founders of postcolonial theory, has been central in discourse about representation. He argued in his seminal work, *Orientalism*, that cultural representations were essential processes of colonial power, and that representation is never neutral.[23] Visual representation, especially, is considered to hold a certain degree of "truth" (a conception that will be further explored in this thesis). The idea that "pictures don't lie" has allowed photography to hold a generalising tendency, especially when maintaining stereotypes and assumptions.[24] Therefore, for this thesis, Said's conceptualisation of representation is crucial.

1.4 Literature review

This section will provide three brief historiographies of textbook scholarship. First presenting the field of **textbook research** overall, then focusing on **visuals in textbook research**, and finally **French textbook research**.

Textbook research

State-sponsored schooling, since its inception in the nineteenth century has given nations a tool in creating a shared collective identity centred around the idea of the nation. Disseminating national narratives and conveying shared memory became especially potent in history classrooms — and through their textbooks.[25] However, teaching history has never been quite so clear-cut. Schools, and notably classrooms, have long been sites of intersecting interests and power: this has been evident in the production and scholarship on textbooks.[26]

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[21] Naseem, Arshad-Ayaz, and Rodríguez, *Representation of Minorities in Textbooks*, 8.
[22] Michael Apple, *The Politics of the Textbook*, ed. Linda Christian-Smith, First edition (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 6.
[23] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 272.
[24] Dennis Röder, "Showing Africa: The Visual Presentation of Africa and Africans During the Period of Imperialism in German History Textbooks," in *History Education and (Post-)Colonialism: International Case Studies*, ed. Susanne Popp, Katja Gorbahn, and Susanne Grindel (Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2019), 322, https://doi.org/10.3726/b15125.
[25] Peter Seixas, "History in Schools," in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History after 1945*, ed. Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 273.
[26] Seixas, "History in Schools," 274; 282.

Since the 1920s, textbooks have been the subject of studies and re-evaluations. In a post-WWI context, the League of Nations promoted comparative textbook revision and research to reduce biases and stereotypes.[27] In a similar vein, the UNESCO later continued to encourage — this time post-WWII — textbook research based on the same principles of international cooperation.[28] This conciliatory tradition, as Stuart Foster described, was typical of this period, influenced by the hateful underpinnings of two World Wars. It sought to present more objective and fairer tellings of history in textbooks: narratives that could be agreed upon globally.[29] Though over time textbook research grew away from this conceptualisation, and toward a critical tradition. This tradition aimed to look at more than just textbooks, questioning "how historical knowledge is controlled and influenced by dominant socio-cultural and ideological forces."[30] This second tradition is characteristic of most textbook research today.

The emergence of textbook research as a field is clearly cemented in the founding of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in 1975, and its creation of the journal, *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* (International Textbook Research) in 1980. But generally, the early historiography of textbook research can be found within the wider research of history didactics. Indeed, they are often sources of analysis for in this field as they serve a form of translation of curricula in schools. This purpose grew to be recognised and implemented in research in the 1970s, with early notable works such as Micheal Apple's 1979 *Ideology and Curriculum*. Apple's work was one of the first to truly expand upon and present the notion that textbooks are not neutral educational tools and require more than textual analysis: it emphasised the need for a certain social and cultural awareness. His work built upon a contemporary newfound understanding of the realities of education and schools.[31] He posited that based on this new understanding, researchers could begin to "to get a more thorough understanding of how […] schools create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination."[32]

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[27] Falk Pingel, *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*, 2nd rev. and updated ed (Paris: UNESCO, 2010), 8.
[28] Pingel, *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research*, 11.
[29] Stuart Foster, "Dominant Traditions in International Textbook Research and Revision," *Education Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (1 March 2011): 7, https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v2i1.21959.
[30] Foster, "Dominant Traditions," 9.
[31] Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 4th ed (Milton: Routledge, 2018), 2.
[32] Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 3.

Apple showed that this ‘how’ can be found through the struggle for textbooks, for example.

Ideology is centred more on history didactics rather than textbook research, as the field of textbook research alone gained much further momentum in the later 1980s. *The Politics of the Textbook* (1991), edited by Apple and Linda Christian-Smith, appears to be an early introduction to textbook research as we know it today, at least in its foundational methods and ideas. Here, past studies of textbooks were criticised, in which researchers were unconcerned with the context of their production and publication. They argued that textbooks should be understood as mechanisms that perpetrate/undermine dominant ideologies, groups, and cultures, and mirror power relations. They are results of compromises, subjugations, and dominance. An emphasis was placed on the production of textbooks: as economic commodities and produced by groups with interests (that may be both converging and diverging).[33] This is paramount in the use of iconography in textbooks; a selection of visuals might encounter criteria beyond their use in teaching history. An understanding of textbooks as products of a crossroads between politicisation, education, economics, and memory is central to this paper.

After the 2000s, textbook research seems to continue building upon past works, but increasingly through a postcolonial lens. This postcolonial turn has become central to most contemporary textbook research, notably as discussions of (de)colonisation have become subject to national debates and conflicts throughout the globe. The study of the Other, orientalism, colonialism, and exclusions in textbooks lend themselves especially well to postcolonial theory, as scholars Young Chun Kim et al., have found, in their analysis of South Korean world history textbooks (2013). To deconstruct Eurocentric biases, a postcolonial perspective is needed: one that can provide multiple narratives, acknowledge non-European histories, and empower educators and students.[34] Indeed, there is increased interest in the depiction of narratives. Textbooks present narratives that can be multimodal, fragmented, and reconstructed, for example.[35]

[33] Apple, *The Politics of the Textbook*, 4–6.
[34] Young Chun Kim, Seungho Moon, and Jaehong Joo, "Elusive Images of the Other: A Postcolonial Analysis of South Korean World History Textbooks," *Educational Studies* 49, no. 3 (May 2013): 214, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2013.783838.
[35] Kim, Moon, and Joo, "Elusive Images of the Other," 239.

As a field, textbook research grew out of purely textual analysis with little regard for the medium of the textbook, and into a complex and multifaceted approach that reflected the production and meanings of textbooks themselves. This research has also recently tended more toward an exploration of the authoritative nature of textbooks and its role in subjugating and excluding groups and narratives. However, the field has mostly tended toward textual or quantitative methodologies of analysis.

Visuals in textbooks

Indeed, while textbook research has been a strong international field since the at least the mid-20th century, the use of visual sources in textbook research is comparatively still nascent. In its early stages, visual analysis was largely quantitative, and complementary to textual analysis in the 70s and 80s. Many investigations of textbook iconography focus on the ratio of text to images, such as D. R. Wright's "Visuals in Geography Texts: The Case of Africa" (1979), and Yves Gaulupeau's "L'histoire en images à l'école primaire" (1986).[36] Both authors use quantitative methodologies, analysing for example the number of pages per image by level of instruction.[37] Gaulupeau's approach was however supplemented by a short qualitative analysis of thematically-significant images, making his research rather unique for its time.

The aims of these researchers seemed globally oriented toward improving pedagogy and education rather than critical textbook revision or research. Textbooks are perceived solely as a medium for teaching in these analyses: biases and stereotypes in visuals are not a central concern. Although, there is a growing sentiment that this should be a concern; both texts underline the lack of visual analysis in the field of textbook research. Both Gaulupeau and Wright call for more attention to these visuals, with the latter stating that "the increasing 'hidden curriculum' in the *texts* of geography books has not been matched by critical study of *visual* images."[38]

Increasingly over time, scholars of textbook research began responding to these concerns— in an accelerated way in the 1990s — and more critical studies of visual

[36] [History in images in primary school]
[37] Yves Gaulupeau, "L'histoire en images à l'école primaire. Un exemple : la Révolution française dans les manuels élémentaires (1870-1970)," [History in images in primary school. An example: the French Revolution in primary school textbooks] *Histoire de l'éducation* 30, no. 1 (1986): 34, https://doi.org/10.3406/hedu.1986.1409.
[38] D. R. Wright, "Visual Images in Geography Texts: The Case of Africa," *Geography* 64, no. 3 (July 1979): 205, https://doi.org/10.1080/20436564.1979.12219546.

are undertaken, notably with a racial, gendered, or colonial lens.[39] However, this research still lacks a critical, qualitative, analysis of visuals. In a 1993 article, Gaulupeau analyses for example the use of portraits, and what they represent. Yet, even when comparing the portraits of Emir Abdelkader (an Algerian leader who led the military struggle against the French invasion in the 19th century) and Thomas R. Bugeaud (the military leader who fought against him), his analysis is performed through the lens of the text and its narrative. No comment is made on the different representations of the two military men, and the undeniable colonial gaze affixed on Abdelkader.[40]

But visual analysis became increasingly popular in the early 1990s due to what many call the "iconographic turn"[41] — though it has been called many names: "pictorial,"[42] "visualistic," "imagic".[43] This turn saw visual studies becoming separate from the study of art history, and applied to various disciplines, such as textbook research.[44] In parallel to the textual analysis of textbooks, researchers began applying a postcolonial framework to their visual analyses. Dennis Röder, in "Showing Africa: The Visual Presentation of Africa and Africans: During the Period of Imperialism in German History Textbooks," (2018) exemplifies this new approach. In his article, he applies a postcolonial analysis of various German textbooks and their representation of colonialism in Africa. Primarily, Röder presents a range of issues with the use of photographs and visuals in textbooks, following a set of solutions that, if implemented, could provide a more comprehensive representation of the different narratives about Africa and colonialism. Eurocentrism is still prevalent in modern textbooks, and while Röder emphasises that students today "are to constantly and critically develop their

[39] See for example Dorworth, Vicky E., and Marie Henry, "Optical Illusions: The Visual Representation of Blacks and Women in Introductory Criminal Justice Textbooks," *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 3, no. 2 (November 1992): 251–60, and Ferree, Myra Marx, and Elaine J. Hall, "VISUAL IMAGES OF AMERICAN SOCIETY: Gender and Race in Introductory Sociology Textbooks," *Gender & Society* 4, no. 4 (December 1990): 500–533.
[40] Yves Gaulupeau, "Les manuels scolaires par l'image : pour une approche sérielle des contenus," [School textbooks through images: for a serial approach to content] *Histoire de l'éducation* 58, no. 1 (1993): 103–35, https://doi.org/10.3406/hedu.1993.2661.
[41] Ulrike Mietzner, ed., *Visual History: Images of Education* (Oxford Bern Berlin Frankfurt am Main Wien: Lang, 2005), 111.
[42] Mischa Gabowitsch, "Visuals in History Textbooks: War Memorials in Soviet and Post-Soviet School Education from 1945 to 2021," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 15, no. 1 (1 March 2023): 102, https://doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2023.150106.
[43] Mischa Gabowitsch and Anna Topolska, "Visual Literacy in History Education: Textbooks and Beyond," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 15, no. 1 (1 March 2023): 6, https://doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2023.150101.
[44] Gabowitsch and Topolska, "Visual Literacy in History Education," 6.

reflective historical consciousness and their historical identity,"[45] visuals often slip past, and are capable of reinforcing stereotypes and narratives. Röder argues that a glimpse of these pictures easily reinforces stereotypes and unwanted narratives.[46] Additionally, various textbook elements are spotlighted: captions, accompanying exercises, allowing for a fuller inquiry into the construction, representations, and effects of visuals. This approach is a clear progression from — and response to — the quantitative outset of visual analysis in the 1970s and 80s. Indeed, Röder pointed out that the captions for these textbook images are often written with passive constructions, allowing for shocking images of crimes done to workers to avoid blaming or giving responsibility to colonial perpetrators, for example.[47] Röder's use of surrounding elements has greatly inspired this paper's analysis, and his observation is essential, as textbook iconography about Algerian decolonisation often evokes brutal scenes from the war. We will analyse how their captions complement or counterbalance this violence.

While textbook iconography has undergone growing scrutiny, especially after the "iconographic turn" of the 1990s, it remains a relatively untouched field up until 2010s and 2020s, where many textbook and education-centric journals have begun publishing a growing number of articles about visuals in textbooks.[48] Overall, these have been increasingly qualitative, in a similar fashion to this paper's approach. However, these analyses are often focused on a small number of images.

French textbook research

French history textbooks (and curricula) have been the source of debate, reform, and research since the 50s, though research truly escalated in the 60s, after Algerian independence. Indeed, it took place in an increasingly decolonial context, accompanied by a growing academic re-evaluation of the national educational system and its discussion of colonial ideology.[49] The history of colonialism and the Algerian War of Independence[50] often figure in this discourse.

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[45] Röder, "Showing Africa: The Visual Presentation of Africa and Africans During the Period of Imperialism in German History Textbooks," 331.
[46] Röder, "Showing Africa," 332.
[47] Röder, "Showing Africa," 328.
[48] See Kleppe (2010), Cooper et al. (2013), Gabowitsch (2023), Gabowitsch and Topolska (2023).
[49] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 17–18.
[50] In her book of the same name, Sylvie Thénault (2005) argues that the previous names used to designate the conflict of 1954-1962 present only partial perspectives, such as "Algerian Campaign,"

In a post-WWII France, Fernand Braudel began to rethink the colonial narrative taught in schools, as part of the *Annales* school, which began in the 60s to question the traditional French national historiography. *Grammaire des Civilisations*[51] was first published in 1963 and presented a novel long-term historical perspective. Through his work, textbooks began to teach students that history, in (de)colonised nations such as Algeria, had not in fact begun with colonisation.[52] Rather, the term "civilisation" in classrooms and textbooks aimed to place the contemporary in the perspective of long history, introducing students to the ancient civilisations of sub-Saharan Africa, for example. The Braudelian approach changed the way that history was taught in French classrooms in the 60s and 70s, and especially the way that (de)colonisation was conceptualised after decolonial movements struck the French empire.[53] But the discussion of colonial ideology in textbooks remained controversial. In 1979, Charles-Robert Ageron (considered to be one of the first and leading scholars of Algerian history) in '*France coloniale ou parti colonial?'* explored the role of textbooks in propagating colonial ideology, showing that the apology of colonialism was still consistent in its content, despite the Braudelian approach.[54]

However, the 1980s saw a renewal of textbook discourse and research. In 1983, the Ministry of Education reformed the curriculum for high school students — and subsequently the content of textbooks — to include history from 1939 to 1983.[55] This sparked national debates, be it supporting or criticising this direction, and further scholarship on the contents of textbooks. Indeed, French textbook research tended to situate itself within larger public debates, often taking place as a response to current events. "Faut-il brûler les manuels d'histoire?" asked Pierre Assouline in the 1983 titular article, after Algerian war veterans threatened to burn down a publishing house.

"Algerian War," "War of Liberation." By contrast, "Algerian War of Independence" encompasses all facets of this historical event: "it was a war in which Algerian independence was at stake, between the nationalist struggle and that of France to maintain Algeria under its tutelage."; Sylvie Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, Nouvelle édition, Champs histoire (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), 14–15.

[51] [The Grammar of Civilisations]

[52] Maurice Aymard, "La longue durée des civilisations: Réalités du passé, défis du présent," [The long duration of civilisations: realities of the past, challenges of the present] *Diogène* n° 218, no. 2 (1 August 2007): 142–43, https://doi.org/10.3917/dio.218.0142.

[53] Laurence De Cock, "Un siècle d'enseignement du « fait colonial » dans le secondaire de 1902 à nos jours," [A century of teaching colonialism in secondary school from 1902 to the present day] *Histoire@Politique* 18, no. 3 (2012): 8, https://doi.org/10.3917/hp.018.0179.

[54] Charles Robert Ageron, *France Coloniale Ou Parti Colonial?*, 1. éd, Pays d'outre-Mer (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1978).

[55] Assouline, "Faut-il brûler les manuels d'histoire ?".

To answer this rather incendiary question, he underlined the production process, highlighting competitiveness between publishing houses as motivators in their different representations of history.[56] This analysis is striking for its time. Assouline engaged with various textbook features and facets: captions, the placement of iconography, textbook covers, and the composition of publishing houses' workforce, just to name a few. The end of Assouline's article declared that, no, history textbooks should in fact, not, be burned. But it sparked a political debate, with many critics calling for the integration of more contemporary and controversial topics in French history in textbooks.[57]

Once again, matters surrounding French history textbooks became a source of public debate in the early 2000s. Although, in parallel to textbook research as a field, French textbook research took on an increasingly postcolonial lens. Notably, the 2005 memory law discussed above renewed academic research on the contents of textbooks and curricula.

Indeed, in a 2013 paper on "The Challenge of Decolonisation: School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," Marcus Otto seeks to redefine the nature of textbooks and identifies them as more than educational material. Textbooks appear as a (mass) medium, which means they "act in their specifically institutionalized manner as authorities of selection and filtering for the generation of societal self-descriptions that are considered to be sufficiently relevant and legitimate to the society in question."[58] Otto asserts that this medium is highly conducive and reflective of the public controversies in France, and they have become, in this national context, objects of postcolonial politics of memory.[59] And he identifies the debate about the Algerian War of Independence as a central issue, which has turned from a simple historical event into "the crucial exemplar of a controversial 'burning issue' in the knowledge transported in school textbooks."[60] Though he does not discuss exactly how this is executed visually, this concept of "burning issues" returns often in the iconography: from torture

[56] Assouline, "Faut-il brûler les manuels d'histoire ?".
[57] Mechkarini, "The Representation of the Algerian War in French High School History Textbooks," 3.
[58] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 16.
[59] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization," 16.
[60] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization," 25.

to *pieds-noirs*. We will explore how below, with an understanding of textbooks as vehicles of postcolonial politics of memory in France.

Reforms and debates surrounding national education, textbooks, and curricula have been so consistently occurring in France that most work on French history textbooks (notably about Algeria) nowadays tend to look at their evolution.[61] This approach is likely because understanding today's history textbooks is impossible without comprehending these debates; and today's history textbooks are a mirror through which to comprehend contemporary French society's politics. This paper will seek to explore how this is visually carried out, with specific care taken to consider only what is represented in the iconography — as it can be easy to seek to confirm arguments established in scholarly works about textual representations.

To do so, a specific methodology will be applied to iconography from a wide array of textbooks between 1970 and 2020: both of which will be explored in the following section.

1.5 Sources and methods

Sources

The sources used in this thesis are French history textbooks for secondary school. From 1970 to 1982 only textbooks for *troisième* students (14–15-year-olds) will be looked at. This grade is the only level at which Algerian decolonisation was taught until 1982. From 1983 onwards, only textbooks for *terminale* (general stream) students (17–18-year-olds) are analysed. A combination of age and significance of the grade — due to the *baccalauréat* — make these textbooks essential to this paper's study.

The ENS Lyon carries a catalogue inherited from the National Institute for Educational Research (INRP)[62] which boasts an immense collection of over 8 000 textbooks dating from 1721 to 2025. This paper draws from this collection exclusively. However, some apparent gaps are noticeable in the breadth of its catalogue, with some years being overrepresented — and others in turn underrepresented. This has affected the scope of this thesis, notably due to the lack of textbooks from 1962-1970.

[61] Such as "L'évolution des manuels d'histoire du lycée. Des années 1960 aux manuels actuels," (2007), "Un siècle d'enseignement du « fait colonial » dans le secondaire de 1902 à nos jours" (2012), "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," (2013), "The representation of the Algerian War in French high school history textbooks" (2021), etc.
[62] The institute was dissolved in 2010 and is now the French Institute of Education (IFÉ).

Additionally, some years are simply missing for secondary school history textbooks, such as 1985-86, 1999-2002, and 2005-2007. It should also be noted that only analysing sources from a single archive likely mirrors specific (and possibly biased) archival practices: such as excluding certain textbooks because of their contents.[63] Regardless, my archival research permitted me to study over 100 textbooks. Ultimately, I retained and analysed 62, including some that contained no visuals about Algerian decolonisation.[64]

	N° of textbooks	N° of images
1970-1982	20	24
1983-2004	23	63
2005-2019	13	83
Total	53	170

The visual analysis could be pursued if the textbook corresponded to three criteria: 1) have been published between 1970 and 2020, 2) was for *troisième* or *terminale* (general stream), 3) discussed decolonisation in Algeria between 1945 and 1962. If a textbook fit the criteria, I then proceeded to identify the visuals and their location within a chapter or subchapter. The type of iconography featured varies, but the most common are photography, posters, cartoons, or newspaper covers. In addition are the captions and accompanying questions. Images were kept if they were in a (sub)chapter about decolonisation, and/or about the war in Algeria: therefore some images depict events outside of 1954-1962.

Methodology

This thesis' approach draws on Gillian Rose's *Visual Methodologies* (2016), using qualitative visual analysis. Rose's critical visual methodology posits that there are three sites that make the meaning of an image. Drawing on this analysis, this collection will be analysed in a three-pronged approach: focusing on the site of production, the

[63] This is entirely hypothetical, and simply for argument's sake in a discussion of possible limitations to my methodology, as the archive and the INRP do not disclose their archival practices regarding their textbook collection anywhere.
[64] The total number of textbooks in the table refers only to textbooks with visuals about the Algerian War of Independence featured in them.

site of the image itself, and the site of audiencing. Each of these sites has additionally three modalities that shape it, which will be analysed: technological, compositional, and social. It should be added that these sites often intersect and overlap and are not strict categories for analysis. [65] Individual visual analyses following this method will then be followed by a comparison with others, across different textbooks, spanning different periods. Secondly, the images will be contextualised by sub-question within a broader political, cultural, and social background, which will include textbook production.

First, the site of production concerns itself with how an image is produced. It examines how the manner of creation of an image contributes to its effect and meaning. For example, the technology used in production, such as photography, may affect the degree of "truth" perceived in an image. In a textbook, this may in turn support the narrative of a proposed caption.[66] Second, the site of the image considers how visuals develop their own effects and meanings. The compositional modality is key here. What is depicted? Who? Where is it situated? A focal point is made on the iconography itself, and by itself. This is difficult in this research, as the collection of images have been found within textbooks; the location of an image might seem almost inextricable from its meaning. However, this is separation is essential for this thesis' methodology as it will allow for a search of common themes, figures, locations. Third, the site of audiencing adds external factors into the meaning of visuals. The collection iconography is importantly situated within textbooks, which plays into the technological and social modality of the analysis. The meaning of an image is observed and interpreted differently based on how it is displayed.[67] This analysis will therefore include analysis of captions, and in some cases, student tasks.

For this thesis' purpose, this method allows for a necessary separation of the *visual* and the *textbook*, allowing for a better analysis of visuals *in* textbooks as a whole. Production and image will serve as a first step in close analysis, to create a better approach to the meaning of the standalone image. Then audiencing, a combination of the effects produced by the location of the iconography in: a (sub)chapter, size on the page, link to other images, caption, accompanying questions.

[65] Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 5th edition (Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC Melbourne: Sage, 2023), 13.
[66] Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 15–19.
[67] Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 22.

How an image is presented in a textbook is central to understanding how its meanings and connotations. It is possible that an analysis of the site of audiencing complements or contrasts the meaning of the image alone.

However, it is important to highlight that a close qualitative analysis can also obscure larger patterns and tendencies. This methodology in fact relies on isolating visuals from their intended context. The function of a textbook is to be used in a classroom, by teachers and students. By separating these visuals from their physical and social contexts, certain intended meanings in the production process can be lost. Additionally, by singling out images according to certain chapters, there is a risk of losing the larger system of representation that is provided by the overarching narrative of a textbook. For example, *terminale* textbooks from the new millennium have chapters on colonisation; these sections discuss how colonial systems exploited and dominated groups across the world in the name of civilisation. Some textbooks propose different historical interpretations for the beginnings of the collapse of the colonial world, while others offer visuals that show how Picasso was inspired by Nigerian Ibo art.[68] To narrow my research on representations of decolonisation specifically, undermines these larger narratives and contexts, and such close, qualitative, analysis can perhaps ignore patterns and trends.

It is additionally important to note that as educational tools, textbooks are granted a certain authority, as the valid and complete version of a society's knowledge.[69] Therefore, the contents and various elements of history textbooks are taken as more accurate representations of the past than other sources. Though this paper focuses on visuals, the surrounding elements are also subject to this misconception. In studying representations, of which the truth-values are always contested,[70] it is thus vital to understand textbooks as biased tellings of history, written by groups of authors, constructed by publishers with commercial interests, and based on prescriptive curricula.

The following chapter will first contextualise this thesis by presenting an overview of the French education system, textbook production, as well as a brief historical overview of the Algerian War of Independence. The empirical chapters 3, 4, and 5 will

[68] Thierry Gasnier, *Histoire, Tle L-ES-S*. Rosny-sous-Bois: Bréal, 2008.
[69] David R. Olson, "On the Language and Authority of Textbooks," in *Language, Authority and Criticism: Readings on the School Textbook*, ed. Suzanne de Castell, Allen Luke, and Carmen Luke, 1. publ (London: Falmer Press, 1989), 238.
[70] Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, 19.

each focus on an analysis of textbooks from 1970-1982, 1983-2004, 2005-2020, respectively. Finally, Chapter 6 will provide a summary of the findings and subsequently draw conclusions.

2 Chapter 2: Historical overview

This chapter will provide a brief background in certain topics for a more complete understanding of the discussion in the empirical chapters below. First, it will explore the general schooling system of the *Education Nationale* and the textbooks used by its students in classrooms. Second, it will present a (very) brief history of Algerian decolonisation, touching upon the historical events that are mentioned throughout the analysis.

2.1 French schools and textbooks

French schools are divided between primary and secondary education. Children remain in primary school for five years until they are about 10-11 years old. Secondary school is then split into two levels: *collège* (middle school) and *lycée* (high school). *Collège* lasts four years, typically from ages 11-15, with each year being named in a descending order. *Sixième* is the first year, and *troisième* is the final year of middle school. Children then follow a three-year course of high school, from ages 15-18. The three years of *lycée* are similarly named in a descending order: *seconde* (the first year), *première* (the second), and *terminale* (the final year). The *lycée* offers three streams: general, technical, and vocational (this paper will only focus on the general stream). The final two years of high school (*première* and *terminale*) focus mainly on the *baccalauréat*, a national academic qualification obtained at the completion of high school and successful passing of a series of exams over the course of the two years.

Within these different grades, textbooks are a common classroom feature. However, the production process of textbooks is almost exclusively located within publishing houses. To write, diverse groups of teachers are typically brought together with different educational backgrounds and levels of instruction (for example university professors can write *collège* textbooks). An additional expertise in pedagogy and didactics seem to be a shared trait among textbook writers.[71] The number of authors has always varied drastically. In 1998, it was observed that each textbook typically saw from three to fifteen contributors, with an average of four or five.[72] The contents of textbooks are therefore largely written by teachers, whose only obligation set by the ministry is to abide by the curriculum.

[71] Dominique Borne, "Le Manuel Scolaire : Programme de Travail, 1997-1998, Thème 2" (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, de la recherche et de la technologie, 1998), 12.
[72] Borne, "Le Manuel Scolaire," 12.

In France, numerous publishers propose textbooks within their array of products. Though the number used to be higher, competition has reduced the amount: from 1983 to 2006, the amount of publishers working on textbooks for *terminale* dropped from twelve to eight.[73] Teachers are thus given the choice from a variety of textbooks, creating fierce competition between publishers. There is therefore a priority in catering to teachers, with perfect adherence to the curriculum or catering to students' needs taking a backseat. This commercial logic is incredibly impactful when it comes to the inclusion of iconography. "Un beau manuel compte"[74]: not only do these clients look for aesthetically pleasing pages, but with regular updates to textbooks and changes to the curriculum, teachers often seek out recognisable, popular images. For publishers, regularity can be an advantageous, cost-effective approach, as iconographic diversity is expensive, and the type of image is at their sole discretion. Textbook authors are encouraged to use images that are in the publisher's collection: an image from the *New York Times* might provide an international perspective, but it will be more expensive to use than a photograph from a previous edition.

In both *collège* and *lycée*, textbooks are regularly used in the classroom. This is especially true for history. A 1983 survey found that at least 75% of teachers considered textbooks "indispensable, irreplaceable, useful and rather valuable."[75] In 2009, a different survey determined that 78% of history teachers used textbooks "almost always," and the remaining 12% "often."[76] That textbooks are "indispensable" specifically in history can largely be explained by the variety of documents. Several reports have found that history teachers use textbooks as repositories of exercises, examples, and sources to give to students, largely ignoring the written lessons.[77]

[73] Marie-Christine Baquès, "L'évolution des manuels d'histoire du lycée. Des années 1960 aux manuels actuels," [The evolution of high school history textbooks. From the 1960s to today's textbooks] *Histoire de l'éducation*, no. 114 (1 May 2007): 129, https://doi.org/10.4000/histoire-education.1249.
[74] "A beautiful manual counts for something," as quoted from a teacher who has authored and directed the production of several history textbooks, from an informal discussion.
[75] Joël Cornette and Jean-Noël Luc, '"Bac-génération 84". L'enseignement du temps présent en terminale', 1985, 114, https://doi.org/10.3406/xxs.1985.1238.
[76] Michel Leroy, "Les manuels scolaires: situation et perspectives" [School textbooks: situation and perspectives] (Inspéction générale de l'éducation nationale, 2012), 70, https://www.education.gouv.fr/les-manuels-scolaires-situation-et-perspectives-6017.
[77] Baquès, "L'évolution des manuels d'histoire du lycée. Des années 1960 aux manuels actuels," 138; Cornette and Luc, '"Bac-génération 84". L'enseignement du temps présent en terminale," 111.

2.2 The history of the Algerian War of Independence

The beginning of the Algerian War of Independence is generally accepted to be November 1st, 1954, a night referred to as the "Toussaint Rouge."[78] Across Algeria, thirty police and military barracks were attacked, and resulted in the deaths of seven people. It is considered a coordinated attack by Algerian nationalists from the then nascent FLN (National Liberation Front).[79] The government in France responded by sending further military troops in Algeria, though it was not yet aware that November 1st had plunged them into yet another war. Indeed, France had just suffered a military defeat in Indochina and lost its colony. But the relationship between Algeria and the metropole was considered different for numerous reasons. First, Algeria had been a colony since 1830. Second, its geographic proximity to France gave the metropole more control than it had over distant colonies like Indochina.[80] Third, this proximity brought many settlers to Algeria who, in some cases, had been in Algeria for generations by the time the war erupted. Finally, Algeria was politically governed as a part of the French territory, while Morocco and Tunisia were not. All these factors made Algeria an undeniable and inseparable part of France — at least for the French.[81] The colonial system in place did not treat the population of Algeria equally however. A legal, political, and social divide between 'Muslim'[82] and 'European' Algerians was entrenched in Algerian society and increasingly felt by Muslim Algerians.[83] These tensions help to explain the beginning of the war.[84]

Despite the violence of the first year of the war, many denied that France at war until August 20th, 1955.[85] Thousands of Algerian peasants travelled to Constantine and killed many Europeans and Algerians sympathetic to colonial rule. The attack was organised by the FLN, and the French response was tenfold. Estimates count up to 12 000 civilian victims.[86] This event marked a point of no return in the war. In the

[78] Benjamin Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2012); Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 19.
[79] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 37–39.
[80] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 22–23.
[81] Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous*.
[82] The term 'Muslim Algerians' did not in fact only refer to Algerians who were Muslim, but rather any Algerian not of European descent.
[83] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 20–35.
[84] It should be noted that the war was not a 'sudden' rupture in the relationship between metropole and colony: since 1830 Algerians protested colonial rule. Thénault describes the colony as "two societies living side by side, in inequality." Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 35.
[85] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 47.
[86] Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous*, 6.

succeeding year, “extraordinary powers” were granted to the army in Algeria to “put down the rebels,” effectively waging war with Algerians.[87] Whereas the army began fighting the FLN in the Algerian countryside, the anti-colonialist organisation changed tactics in late 1956, increasing its attacks in urban centres such as Algiers. Adapting to this shift, the general Massu led a division of paratroopers to take control of the city. This urban conflict is known as the “battle of Algiers.” Arbitrary violence, bombings, murders were conducted on both sides in a cycle of retaliations.[88] The battle ended a year later but the victory had been obtained by horrific means and paid for by the lives of thousands — European and Algerian alike. The French army used torture during its interrogations (and even before the battle of Algiers), and many in France and Algeria were quick to denounce it when witnesses came forward as early as 1955.[89] However, an increasing number of Muslim Algerians came to support the French army by joining its ranks as the war progressed. These partisans of French Algeria became known as *harkis*.

Despite the superiority of its army, the French government began to lose the war in other ways. In January 1958, a group of Algerian nationalists captured four French soldiers and brought them over the Tunisian border.[90] In an effort to chase down the nationalists, the French army entered newly independent Tunisia and bombed a village of civilians (including children) on February 8th, 1958.[91] The international backlash was enormous, and France found its cause and itself very weakened. Facing a political crisis, the French government was increasingly unable to cope with the war. The French army and European Algerians, sensing this powerlessness began to doubt the regime’s capacity to win the war, and feared that they would be abandoned.[92] These feelings helped set into motion the 1958 crisis. On May 13th, 1958, the army found itself in a position of sole power over the city of Algiers, as the Governor General had been summoned to Paris. A massive protest led by European Algerians took place in the city that day, and with the support and guidance of the army, it took control of the Governor General’s building: symbol of the colonial power in Algeria. The

[87] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, 54–55.
[88] Stora, *La guerre d’Algérie expliquée à tous*, 19; Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, 117.
[89] Stora, *La guerre d’Algérie expliquée à tous*, 20–22.
[90] Tunisia was supporting Algeria politically and economically.
[91] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, 151.
[92] Stora, *La guerre d’Algérie expliquée à tous*, 23; Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, 156–59.

weakened government was unable to answer, and the general of the army called for the return of Charles de Gaulle, former president and leader of the French resistance during WW2. He accepted with certain conditions, namely calling for the end of the Fourth Republic and instalment of a stronger constitution that would grant the president more power; a Fifth Republic was established, of which he would be the first president.

Compared to his predecessors, de Gaulle was in fact more willing to negotiate with the FLN — to the chagrin of those who had called for his return. In 1959, he pronounced his support of Algerian self-determination. For the first time, the French government considered Algerian independence a possibility. Once again, partisans of French Algeria found themselves fearful of independence, the choice being between "the suitcase or the coffin."[93] But the attachment to Algeria ran deep, and many refused to consider leaving what they considered to be their generational home. Additionally, divisions began to show in the army, with some being against de Gaulle's resolution of the conflict.[94] Their fears would come one step closer to reality as in January 1961, 69% of the Algerian population voted for independence.[95] In response, the army attempted a coup in April 1961, taking control of parts of Algiers. But their coup failed, lacking the support of the troops who supported de Gaulle. Beaten, but not entirely defeated, some of the leaders of the coup would form the OAS[96] that year, a terrorist organisation determined by any cost to oppose de Gaulle and Algerian independence. In the two final years, the violence escalated. Multiple massacres were committed. In Paris, the conflict continued. Algerians living in France were continuously targeted, and a curfew was installed exclusively for them. On the night of October 17th, 1961, an Algerian protest against the curfew was brutally repressed by the police. Protesters were shot, drowned in the Seine, arrested, deported from the metropole.

Independence was obtained (in part) in March 1962. Resolving to end the conflict, negotiations took place in Evian (France), and an agreement was signed on March 18th. But the Evian Accords did not bring a definitive end to the war.[97] Another

[93] "La valise ou le cerceuil" slogan often associated with the *pieds-noirs* that emerged after the Sétif massacre (1945).
[94] Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous*, 27–28.
[95] Compared to 75% in the metropole: Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous*, 31.
[96] (Secret Army Organisation)
[97] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 248–51.

massacre occurred March 26th on rue d'Isly in Algiers when a group of pro-OAS protesters were shot and killed by French soldiers. That French soldiers were killing French people spurred many *pieds-noirs* to leave.[98] The term *pieds-noirs* typically refers to European settlers born in Algeria. The Evian Accords had granted them the possibility of obtaining Algerian citizenship, but most chose to leave Algeria in the face of growing violence. Indeed, in April 1962 over 90% of Algerians voted once again for independence in a referendum for the Evian Accords, sparking more violence from the OAS and extremists.[99] Most European Algerians thus chose to leave and migrate to the metropole: to a country they were ethnically from but that most did not know. While the migration of the *pieds-noirs* was assured by the French government and army, the *harkis* (Muslim Algerians who supported the French army) were largely abandoned.[100] Considered by the FLN to be traitors, many who remained in Algeria were murdered after independence for their commitment to the colonial cause. Those who managed to migrate to France were not supported: most lived in poverty, excluded from French society. In Algeria, the existence of *harkis* contradicted the constructed image of a united population for independence. In France, their existence was a source of discomfort and guilt over their abandonment.[101]

Independence was officially achieved in July 1962, when a final referendum on independence received almost 99,72% of the votes in favour.[102] On July 5th, it was confirmed. However, the violence was not over. That same day, in the city of Oran (Algeria), a group of Muslim Algerians entered neighbourhoods where Europeans remained and murdered and kidnapped many. But July 5th is generally accepted as the end of the war, a brutal and violent seven-year long conflict. The echoes of its complexities continue to this day on both sides of the Mediterranean.

With this historical background in mind, this paper will proceed with the empirical chapters, analysing how this complex history is visually represented.

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[98] Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous*, 35.
[99] Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous* 19.
[100] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne*, 266–67; Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous*, 35–37.
[101] However, no steps were taken to integrate them; Stora, *La guerre d'Algérie expliquée à tous*, 38.
[102] "Indépendance de l'Algérie : un nouveau chapitre entre joie et tristesse," accessed 3 June 2025, https://imagesdefense.gouv.fr/fr/independance-algerie-pieds-noirs-joie-tristesse-1962

3 Chapter 3: Just keep smiling: the positive narrative of defeat, 1970-1982

Until 1999, what transpired in Algeria between 1954 and 1962 was referred to by various names that evoked the memorial tensions and trauma of the war. In France, the nomenclature heavily demilitarised the conflict: the "Algerian events," "the police operations," or "the pacification,"[103] were all names for what is now referred to as the Algerian War (of Independence). With this denial and minimisation, how then would textbooks begin visually representing these "events"? This chapter will present how images of Algerians celebrating their independence, contrasted to the tragedy of the *pieds-noirs*, support French values and narratives of modernity. The visual portrayal of the French army will also be highlighted, first offering a rather tame image of the military, and growing to become more violent.

3.1 Publishing and production

As discussed in the previous chapter, textbook production is a complex and layered process with many intersecting interests and actors. This is notable in the choice of visuals. Their production process remains an essential factor to consider — certainly when considering the prevalence of patterns over many textbooks. To elucidate this complex process, this section will highlight the role of the publisher, by comparing two textbooks by two different publishers. The intention here is to establish an underlying basis from which the rest of this paper's analysis will follow.

▲35. 13 mai 1958. Manifestation monstre à Alger. Pieds-Noirs et militaires s'emparent du pouvoir à Alger : ils veulent "l'Algérie Française".

Figure 3.1. Magnard, *Le monde du XXe siècle: 3e*, 1980.

The first textbook features only one image of Algerian decolonisation in the relevant chapter. The subject of the photograph is rather unique for the time and chapter, capturing a politically significant moment in the war, the May 1958 crisis. An organised march is depicted, with large banners and signs supporting French Algeria, held by marching men in the French tricolour tank tops. Soldiers march with them, the army being one

[103] Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d'indépendance algérienne, 14*.

the central figures in the coup. It is the only image of Algeria in the chapter, in what is an otherwise visual-rich textbook.

The second textbook is from 1977, written and published by the African and Malagasy Educational Institute (IPAM). Between 1977 and 1980 the *troisième* curriculum focused on decolonisation the same way, making the comparison between the two textbooks possible. Overall, the chapter on decolonisation in this textbook features three images in which Algeria and Algerians are depicted. The first is of North African soldiers in World War II (fig. 3.2), as clarified in the caption: "North African fighters on the Italian front during the winter of 1943-44." Though the image might not exactly represent Algerians, the generalisation of North Africans is both applicable to Algerians and indicative of the colonies' participation in WWII (of which Algeria was key).


2. Combattants nord-africains sur le front d'Italie pendant l'hiver 1943-1944.

Figure 3.2. IPAM, *Histoire 3e*, 1977.


4. Réunion d'Algériens à Maison Carrée.

Figure 3.3. IPAM, *Histoire 3e*, 1977.

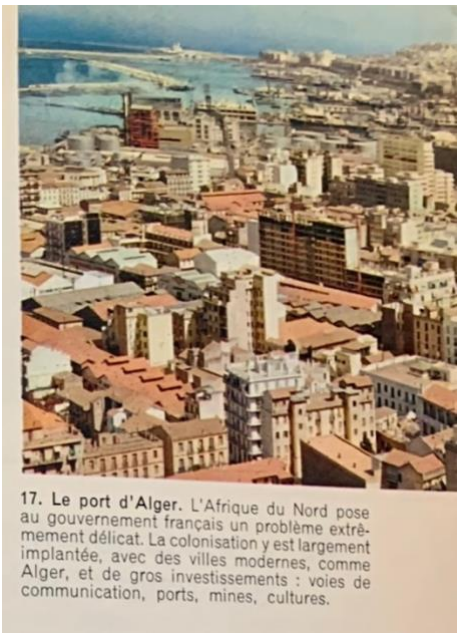

17. Le port d'Alger. L'Afrique du Nord pose au gouvernement français un problème extrêmement délicat. La colonisation y est largement implantée, avec des villes modernes, comme Alger, et de gros investissements : voies de communication, ports, mines, cultures.

Figure 3.4. IPAM, *Histoire 3e*, 1977.

The second image features a crowd of people, with the accompanying caption stating simply, "Reunion of Algerians at Maison Carrée" (fig. 3.3). Finally, the third photograph depicts the urban port of Algiers, with many large buildings and the Mediterranean in the background (fig. 3.4). The caption justifies the use of the image, as it underlines the modernity and importance of Algiers as a colony: "The port of Algiers. North Africa poses an extremely delicate situation for the French government. Colonization is widely established there, with modern cities, like Algiers, and large investments: communication routes, port, mines, culture." Together, these images offer a visual narrative and representation of Algerian decolonisation that is unlike any

that will be approached in this paper. The focus is on Algerians and Algeria only. By showing Algerian soldiers participating in World War II and highlighting its modernity, Algeria is depicted as economically and politically significant for the metropole. This is reinforced in the caption of figure 3.4, which states that this importance "poses an extremely delicate situation for the French government." Altogether, these visuals provide a narrative explaining the willingness of the French to engage in a war over the potential loss of Algeria: as the colony is shown to have important economic ties and resources that France has need of. Additionally, Algerians themselves are ambiguously depicted: they are not labelled as victims, rebels, or assailants. They are not positioned in contrast to the French army, *pieds-noirs*, *harkis*, as these groups often are. As we will see throughout this thesis, this is rather unique. But it can be essentially accounted for by the publisher and authors of the textbook. Indeed, that it was published and written by the African and Malagasy Educational Institute is extremely relevant, because it stands to reason that an institute whose focus is on Africa and Madagascar would present historical events from their perspectives.

A comparison of the two textbooks and their overall visual representation of the war demonstrates a drastic difference in perspective. The first, less visually rich, depicts an important event in the Algerian War, but mostly for the French and its political system. The groups that participated in the Algiers putsch were partisans of French Algeria. Though the 1958 crisis became extremely relevant for Algerians and their independence, the event is representative of the unwillingness of the *pieds-noirs* and soldiers to lose Algeria; it is indicative of their perspective during the war. Contrastingly, the second textbook depicts the Algerian perspective. The reunion photograph (fig 3.3) places the viewer in the midst of the crowd: we are quite literally seeing things from the point of view of Algerians. Figures 3.2 and 3.4 represent the economic and political importance of the colony, showing why it was valuable for the metropole to keep Algeria within its control. Indeed, 81% Algerians today believe that Algerian independence was a "bad thing" for France.[104]

A comparative analysis of these two textbooks has demonstrated how the publishers' direction created vastly different representations of the Algerian

[104] Historia, "Regards croisés des Algériens et des Français à l'approche du soixantième anniversaire des accords d'Evian" [Crossed perspectives of Algerians and the French as the sixtieth anniversary of the Evian Accords approaches] (Harris interactive, 2021), 17, https://harris-interactive.fr/opinion_polls/regards-croises-des-algeriens-et-des-francais-a-lapproche-du-soixantieme-anniversaire-des-accords-devian/.

decolonisation, despite similarities in curricula. Textbooks are granted a certain freedom in production, and changes in visual representations are not solely dependent on educational reforms: as we will see, shifts in visual representations can both precede or accompany changes in curricula. Publishers and textbook authors therefore hold significant roles in the final product that students and teachers use. This is important when considering the intentionality of the narratives and representations that these textbooks curate. Though they are typically a key tool in the nation-building process of education,[105] textbooks are ultimately subject to the interests of their authors and publishers in France, and their content cannot always be put down to nationalistic aims. Underlying patterns and narratives can be observed — and they can reflect national values or support contemporary ideas — but a certain care should be taken to refrain from simply assigning responsibility directly to the curricula or the *Education Nationale*. If there are trends, it could be rather characteristic of what the authors (consisting mainly of teachers) consider significant at the time; or what publishers believe what might be commercially viable.

With this conceptualisation of textbook narratives and representation in mind, the rest of this chapter will proceed with an analysis of images of celebration, the *pieds-noirs*, and the army.

3.2 A modern view of defeat

Between 1970 and 1982, visuals about Algerian decolonisation were not all that common in textbooks; and yet, images of Algerians celebrating their independence are pervasive among that small number. The repeated choice to represent the resolution of the conflict is therefore somewhat indicative of the representation of Algerian decolonisation in this period. What narrative do these images propose about Algerian decolonisation? And how is that narrative presented? This section will answer these questions by analysing three images, found in textbooks from 1971 (fig. 3.5 and 3.7) and 1980 (fig. 3.6).

The first depicts a group of men marching down a street (fig. 3.5). Some are holding and waving Algerian flags, and many are smiling. In the background above

[105] Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio, and María Rodríguez Moneo, eds., *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, International Review of History Education (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub, 2012), 93.

them a large French flag still floats. According to the caption, this image was taken on the 18th of March 1962, the day the Evian accords were signed. Interestingly, there is only one clear Algerian flag in the image. Though there are a few to the left hidden amongst the crowd, they are not as prominent as other images that depict scenes of celebration. Ironically, the French flag stands out distinctly against the blue sky behind it, in contrast with the buried Algerian flags.

Figure 3.5. Nathan, *Histoire: de la révolution au monde d'aujourd'hui*, 1971.

Young children, with toddlers in the very foreground of the second image (fig. 3.6), celebrate independence in a march. The colours of the Algerian flag enliven the image. The crowd stretches on behind, and there appears to be onlookers on the sides of the march. The caption reads: "The joy of independence in the streets of Algiers." In contrast to the images of celebration where adult men are pictured, the presence of children highlights the joy in the scene. The idea that children are innocent tends to allow for more empathy, as it exempts them from the complexity of the situation. The positivity of the scene is therefore emphasised by the focus on children,

Figure 3.6. Nathan, *Histoire géographie 3e*, 1980.

embodying the joy of independence and highlighting the silver lining of decolonisation (from the perspective of the French). Images such as these are effective in representing the Algerian War as a simple tale of a colonised nation finding independence — rather than the complex multifaceted narrative of how that independence was achieved. This is accentuated by analysing the site of audiencing. Situated at the opening of the chapter, the photograph occupies more than half of the page. Where the chapter provides a textual history of the Algerian War of Independence, there are no accompanying visuals. Students are encouraged to view decolonisation through the lens of Algerian joy after gaining independence, but the realities of the war are undistinguished within the text.

Comparatively, the third image presents more of a narrative challenge (fig. 3.7). The photograph depicts a group of people with two key elements: a massive monument in the background, and a square Algerian flag rising above the horizon line. “1830-1930” features at the top of the monument, implying that it was erected for the hundred-year celebration of French colonisation in Algeria. The flag is held by a person sitting on the ground. While the other photographs featured people in motion, the scene here appears more still and calm. Emotionally however, it is just as charged. The caption adds, “Independent Algeria. FLN veterans in front of the Sidi-Ferruch stele, near Algiers.” The explicit mention of the FLN openly makes this image narratively complex. Figure 3.5 and 3.6 feature people whose membership to the FLN is unknown: their implication in the war cannot be identified. But the FLN is considered a central actor in the continuous arbitrary and brutal violence that defined this war. It is generally accepted that their terrorist attacks and actions caused innumerable civilian and military deaths in Algeria and in France. With these implications in mind, the association of the theme of celebration with the FLN might be less widely accepted than photographs of children unabashedly celebrating.

L'Algérie indépendante. Anciens combattants du F. L. N. devant la stèle de Sidi-Ferruch, près d'Alger – monument dressé en 1930 pour commémorer le centenaire de l'expédition de 1830.

Figure 3.7. Isaac, *Histoire 3e*, 1971.

What narrative do these images propose about Algerian decolonisation? Why would French textbooks seek to highlight what is ultimately a French defeat?[106] To answer, we must first understand the idealised values of the French nation in education. Since the Enlightenment, universalism has been a central component of the French political and intellectual tradition.[107] As explored by Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon, in addition to the Republican values of *Liberté, Egalité,* and *Fraternité*, the ideals of democracy, solidarity, justice, and most importantly, human rights have been promoted by curricula since at least 1890. The basis of history in secondary school is not in nationalism, but rather in human rights, economic and scientific progress, equality. The positivity of decolonisation can be represented because it supports the idea of France as "the imaginary native country of Human Rights."[108] Along with the negative effects of colonisation, such as torture, because when the narrative is constructed from a universalist perspective, "all victims, outcasts, dominated or oppressed people [...] in French classrooms are considered as the People."[109]

Narratives of progress and modernity are therefore emphasised. Reconsider figure 3.5. Symbolically, it perfectly encapsulates this conception of France as the country of human rights and modernity. The French flag flies large and clearly above the joyous Algerians: a reminder of the reason they achieved independence. Within the French and global context of the 60s and 70s, this imagery supported the contemporary paradigm of modernity. Indeed, as Marcus Otto remarks, decolonisation became associated with modernity.[110] The 50s and early 60s were a significant historical turning point for France, with the end of the Fourth Republic and the loss of its colonial empire. Additionally, in the face of its weakening position in the international opinion and still reeling with the events of World War II, the nation was forced to reconsider itself and the postwar decades. Decolonisation was thus interpreted as "the expression of a crisis in (Western) civilisation [and] began during the 1960s and 1970s

[106] Though some might argue that France was not militarily defeated, the fact that it engaged in a military war to fight the Algerian independence movement clearly hints at an unwillingness to lose its colony. While independence was ultimately "negotiated," the loss of Algeria is still a *defeat* when considering factors other than the military arena of the war – and that it lost what it originally wanted to keep.
[107] Tutiaux-Guillon, "A Traditional Frame for Global History: The Narrative of Modernity in French Secondary School," 110.
[108] Tutiaux-Guillon, "A Traditional Frame for Global History," 111.
[109] Tutiaux-Guillon, "A Traditional Frame for Global History,"111.
[110] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 20.

to increasingly interact with the paradigm or theory of modernization."[111] Coinciding with the post-war economic boom, decolonisation became a symbol of modernity in France, and this was reflected in textbooks.[112]

Beyond their contents, looking at an element in the site of image of these photographs highlights the celebration and narrative of universalism and modernity: the colour. Between 1970 and 2020, the visuals of Algeria in textbooks are almost entirely in black and white. Posters and drawings are most often in colour, and most photographs remain monochrome. The photographs that are coloured are disproportionately of celebratory scenes. Of the 20 textbook photographs analysed between 1970 and 1982, only 4 are coloured, with 3 of those 4 depicting celebrations of independence. It should be noted that colour photography became common around the early 60s, which could explain this phenomenon. Of all the images taken of the Algerian War of Independence, those of the celebration of independence would have been taken the latest: the availability of such technology might have been more limited in 1954. It should additionally be noted that production factors such as the cost of printing colour versus black and white might explain the prevalence of the latter.[113] However, this same economic constraint makes the repeated choice of printing coloured images of the same scenes all the more significant. Indeed, why choose *coloured* images of celebrations? The answer can likely be found in understanding the desired effect that black and white images produce in textbooks.

The new technology of coloured images increasingly displaced the use of monochrome photography in the 60s and 70s, slowly making black and white seem like the colour of the past and history.[114] Colour images, therefore, came to be seen as closer to our reality, creating an impression of a more knowable past. In studying how social media accounts colourised photographs of the Indonesian National Revolution and why they did so, Susie Protschksy noted that "social media colourisers explicitly regard colour as a tool for enhancing the past's accessibility," with the intention of making the past appear more real to viewers.[115] Black and white images can make events seem further from our reality and more distant, while coloured

[111] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History," 20.
[112] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History," 21.
[113] Borne, "Le Manuel Scolaire : Programme de Travail, 1997-1998, Thème 2," 14.
[114] Susie Protschky, "The Revolution Will (Not?) Be Colourised: Photographs from the Indonesian National Revolution (1945–49) on Social Media," *History of Photography* 47, no. 4 (2 October 2023): 346, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2024.2385730.
[115] Protschky, "The Revolution Will (Not?) Be Colourised," 347.

images can create a sense of proximity and relatability. Therefore, the choice to include coloured images of celebrations provides a contrast with the unfavourable events of Algerian decolonisation that are relegated to the monochrome past. The colour highlights the positive facets, allowing those moments to appear closer and more significant, while diverting attention away from the negative facets, and pushing them further back into the past. Though this might not be applicable to all visuals in textbooks, the rate at which photographs of celebration are in colour versus any other event is undeniable and persists even after 1982.

Additionally, looking at the side of audiencing, figures 3.5 and 3.7 are the only images of Algeria in entire chapters on decolonisation. The singular focus on this scene makes celebrations of independence and the end of the war the centre of attention: quite literally spotlighting the positive aspects of decolonisation rather than the negatives (such as the *harkis* and torture). Some images alone do present more complex narratives — whether intentional or not — such as figure 3.7, with its depiction of members of the FLN. Altogether however, the singularity of these photographs in their respective textbooks suggests an effort to offer a simple narrative of modernity that appeals to contemporary French values and ideals.

3.3 The tragedy of the *pieds-noirs*

Despite this use of celebratory images in a modern and universalist nationalist narrative, a concession is made in the visualisation of the *pieds-noirs*. Their tragic story is consistently depicted from the 1970s onward. Figure 3.8 depicts a dense mass of men and women, crowded by suitcases and bags. With a boat docked, the shot captures their disembarkment in a port. The quantity suggests that this is a large movement of people, while the presence of men, women, and some children in the background reveals that these families are moving. The caption provides additional context: “Repatriates from Algeria arrive in Marseille July 13th, 1962.” The camera’s distance from the crowd creates a sense

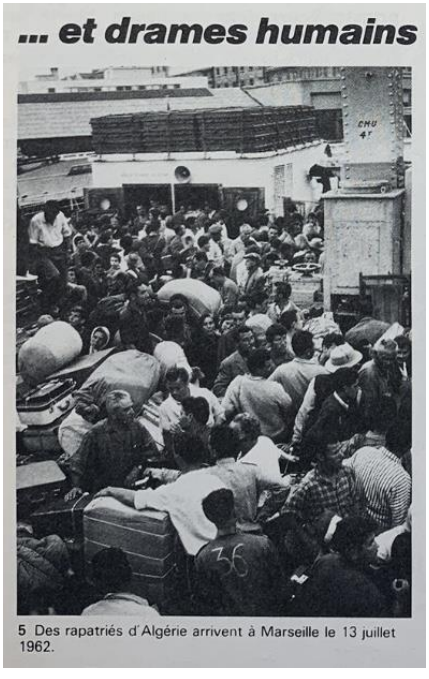


Figure 3.8. Hatier, *Histoire géographie: 3e*, 1980

Figure 3.9. Delegrave, *Histoire géographie 3e*, 1980

of distance from the people however; by comparison, figure 3.9 is more likely to evoke emotion in its viewer by way of its closeness to the subject. It features suitcases lying in the foreground, and two men facing each other, but the right-hand side is where the camera is truly pointing. An elderly woman sits on a chair with a boat in the background, and her face is clear to the viewer. Her expression could be interpreted differently, but her physical isolation, her bags at her feet, and fixed stare create an empathetic image. The context of the caption, which describes the scene as "the tragedy of the repatriates," adds to the sense of loss that the photograph conveys. Indeed, the tragedy of the *pieds-noirs* is almost always depicted as the loss of their home, represented by their physical arrival in France or departure from Algeria by boat, with suitcases in hand. And the adjective "tragedy" accompanies most images. For figure 3.8, it is not in the caption, but in the larger structure of the page, which presents decolonisation as either "military defeats…" "... and human tragedies." The imposed viewing of Algeria not as a military defeat but as a loss for France is noteworthy here, and consistent with the efforts to demilitarise and undermine the causes and realities of the Algerian War of Independence. Rather, the visualisation of Algerian decolonisation is a sorrowful loss, for France and for the *pieds-noirs* who lost their home.

3.4 An evolving image of the army

In contrast to the rather consistent representation of the *pieds-noirs* and Algerians in celebration, the visualisation of the armed forces in textbooks undergoes a slow, but significant, change between 1970 and 1982. Below are four images of the French army in Algeria that exemplify this shift. It is important to note that the iconography representing the militarised dimension of the Algerian War of Independence overwhelmingly tends to depict French soldiers. Though some Algerian soldiers are pictured (fig. 3.7.), they are ultimately uncommon. The first image (fig. 3.10) shows two soldiers facing an Algerian civilian. A soldier appears to be checking the civilian's papers. Behind the man is a child, other civilians, and more soldiers. While this image

is simple and lacks an explicit conflict between the subjects, the implication captured here is the army's policing role in the streets of Algeria. An analysis of the site of the image presents a rather peaceful interaction, attempting to show the French army keeping the peace: an effort highlighted by the caption, "Operation of pacification." Though the French army is directly pictured, both caption and photograph seem to demilitarise their role. Indeed, this precise shot plainly depicts a nonviolent, placid interaction, supporting the representation of the army as peacekeepers.

Figure 3.10. Masson, *Histoire 3e*, 1971.

Comparatively, figure 3.11 gives more room for interpretation as the photograph leaves out a subject: who or what the soldiers are facing. However, the tags on the buildings in the background stand in for Algerian nationalists, as they call for a liberation of political prisoners and "honour to the FLN." Though the tags effectively serve as a symbolic representation of the FLN and Algerian nationalists, by removing the Algerian subject from the frame of the photograph, the French soldiers are given a larger margin of consideration from the viewer. A subject that is not there leaves room for imagination: viewers must fill in the blanks on who the soldiers are facing, and why they are there. A more panoramic image of the situation, in which there could be a group of Algerian fighters (for example), would highlight the combative role of the army. Additionally, because the tags serve to embody Algerian nationalism, the movement is dehumanised and more difficult to empathise with.

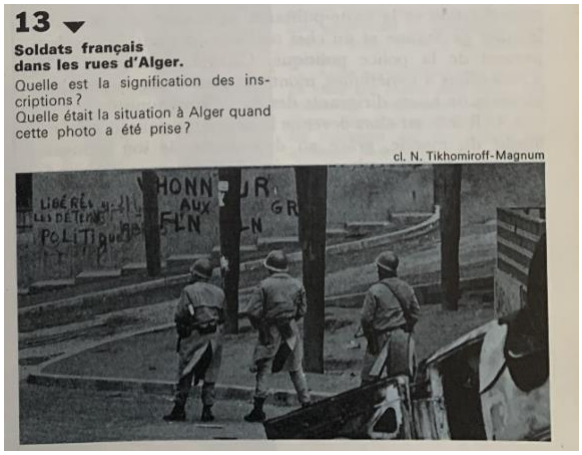


Figure 3.11. Bordas, *L'époque contemporaine: 3e*, 1971.

The two photographs examined below are from textbooks a decade later, which tended to depict the French military in explicit conflict with Algerians. Figure 3.12 captures a group of French soldiers, identifiable by their uniforms and equipment. Their focus is on a row of men bound on the ground, attended by an officer kneeling next to the captive closest to the camera. In the background, the frame reveals a mountainous location. The exact context of the picture is rather unclear, but the sheer

Figure 3.12. Nathan, *Histoire géographie: 3e*, 1980.

number of soldiers versus the number of captives is striking. One of the bound men appears to have blood running down his face. Indeed, the image points to what might have been a rather violent interaction between the soldiers and the men. It also identifies the bound men as victims: by virtue of their captivity and clear position of numerical inferiority. However, the image alone provides no justification, rationalisation, or legitimization for the violence or their captivity — leaving the viewer to infer one. Rather, an analysis of the site of audiencing provides a reason — through the caption: “Soldiers interrogating suspects in the djebels. Doesn’t everyone become a suspect in such a war?” The known, violent, aspect of the war is used as an explanation for the use of violence against these specific Algerians.

Similarly, figure 3.13, which depicts a soldier and an Algerian woman engaging in what appears to be a heated discussion, is accompanied by a neutralising caption: “French paratroopers in a Kabyle village, in Algeria.” A mother, with her child clinging to her back, seems to argue with the soldier. She stands in between two stone houses, as though she is protecting the entrance from the uniformed men. There are several of them watching the interaction. Though the photograph is void of physical violence, it clearly shows a struggle, depicting the tensions between Algerians and the French army.

Figure 3.13. Colin: Hachette, *Histoire géographie: 3e*, 1980.

Though a shift can be seen in the situations that French soldiers are pictured in, the army clearly remains a protagonist: the visuals offer a narrative of the war through their eyes. This is not to say that their actions and roles are exalted: indeed, as seen in figures 3.12 and 3.13, they are not portrayed as heroes. The question “Doesn’t everyone become a suspect in such a war?” in the caption of 3.12 seems to imply a lack of choice for the soldiers: the violent and complex nature of this war requires them to be suspicious and careful with anyone. Similarly, 3.13 features a soldier arguing

with a woman and her child, not exactly the embodiment of violence. This characterisation, as protagonists in morally complex situations parallels the representation of the Algerian War after 1962 in another visual medium: film. As early as 1960, French soldiers and battles were the central figures of almost all movies made about the war.[116] Benjamin Stora argues that on the big screen until 1980, the soldier is "an 'anti-hero,' incapable of experiencing complex, contradictory situations," and similarly to the above textbook images, that these films feature little Algerians, or serve only to further the character development of the French soldiers.[117] Though there were limits to their depictions. The 1966 Italian and Algerian movie, *The Battle of Algiers*, showed cold, professional soldiers, engaging in violent acts such as torture, and was continuously boycotted and protested by French audiences.[118] As we will see in the following chapters, torture has been a controversial and sensitive topic that often follows the visual representation of soldiers. This drawn parallel clearly shows that despite France's general efforts to demilitarise Algerian decolonisation, visual media such as film and textbooks ultimately made the army a centrepiece in their discourse of the conflict.

3.5 Conclusion

Early textbook iconography on the Algerian War of Independence ultimately offered an uncritical vision of decolonisation, to prioritise the themes and dynamics that portray France as positively as possible according to its contemporary self-description. The imagery in this period translates the war, the eventual defeat, and migration of *pieds-noirs* to fit into a narrative of France as a nation of modernity and human rights, as well as a victim. First, the positive aspects of decolonisation are highlighted by focusing on the event of independence, with large, colourful images of celebrations in the streets of Algeria. Second, France is not portrayed as an aggressor in the war. The portrayal of the *pieds-noirs* as a tragic story and the demilitarisation through an emphasis on pacification undermines the responsibility of colonial power in the war.[119] France is

[116] Benjamin Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli: la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie*, Nachdr., La découverte poche Essais 57 (Paris: La Découverte, 2011), 226.
[117] Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, 227.
[118] Stora, *La gangrène et l'oubli*, 225.
[119] It should additionally be noted that because Algerians are not very present in the iconography, they additionally cannot be characterised as the aggressors in the war, constructing a narrative of the war focused on the events of the conflict itself, staying as far away from any discourse of its causes.

therefore visually presented as 1) being pro-independence 2) not the aggressor in the war 3) its people being the victim of forced migration, all facets constructing an overall positive narrative of the Algerian War of Independence within French history. Supporting independence for colonised people is part of universalist values, a central tenant of French political and intellectual tradition. Idealised values of French citizenship are represented, promoting them for students, and therefore can be said to be participating in a form of creating a shared sense of identity.

However, these narratives are not necessarily so clear-cut, as seen through the growing representation of the violent military. Instead, it serves to consider this "positive" narrative not only as a way of reconciling with the loss of the French empire, but as a means of representing the current Fifth Republic as modern and universalist, in comparison to the colonial and stubborn Fourth Republic.[120] The increasing undertones of violence in the visual representation of the army still correspond to this narrative, characterising the Fourth Republic as violent, and the Fifth its modern opposite. In the 1980s and 1990s, the thread that connects these various facets of the Algerian War of Independence begins to waver however, as the contemporary politics of France begin shifting: from seeking to understanding why the war began to understanding the war itself. The visual representation that follows this shift will be the focus of the following chapter.

[120] As a reminder, the Fourth Republic ended in 1958 after the Algiers Putsch (May 1958 crisis), and de Gaulle came back as President, creating a Fifth Republic, in which Algerian independence began being negotiated.

4 Chapter 4: Put it out!: cooling the burning issues, 1983-2004

The early 1980s were a key turning point in the transmission of the Algerian War of Independence and decolonisation in textbooks. In this period, textbooks appear to be attempting to navigate through the increasingly "burning" issues of the conflict. This chapter will explore how, by first presenting the growing tensions in French society about memories of the war, followed by an analysis of the violence in images, and finishing by understanding how images are juxtaposed with each other and additional elements in the site of audiencing to neutralise their potential controversial meanings.

4.1 Clashes in remembrances

In 1983, a national education reform introduced the Algerian War to high school curricula, which had previously only been taught in the first cycle of secondary school.[121] Not only was it introduced, but it was selected as a topic that students could encounter during their final exams. In order to give their students the best chances at succeeding in the *baccalauréat*, teachers often felt a responsibility to cover these topics, sometimes sacrificing other themes that are not covered in the final exam (mostly due to time constraints).[122] Therefore, due to the intense focus on the *baccalauréat* in *terminale*, decolonisation was rather consistently taught in classrooms — sometimes at a rate of 98%.[123] However, this curriculum reform coincided with several factors that made the decolonisation of Algeria a particularly "burning" issue in French memory for the next two decades, and this chapter will argue that it in turn shaped the visual representation of the conflict in textbooks.

First among those factors was Algerian immigration to France and their participation in society, including education. Immediately after the end of World War II, the French economy boomed for thirty years: this period is called the "Trente Glorieuses."[124] This economic phenomenon generated jobs in France, and combined with the instability of the Algerian War, Algerian immigration to the metropole grew tremendously. In 1962, there were an estimated 350 000 Algerians in France. By 1982,

[121] Assouline, "Faut-il brûler les manuels d'histoire ?'"
[122] Cornette and Luc, "'Bac-génération 84' L'enseignement du temps présent en terminale," 108.
[123] Cornette and Luc, "Bac-génération 84," 107–8.
[124] [The glorious thirty]: term coined by Jean Fourastié in 1979, describing the postwar period of strong economic growth and rise in living standards experienced by most developed countries between 1945 and 1975.

this number had more than doubled to 800 000.[125] While Algerian immigration had been significant before 1962, the war intensified existing tensions in French society between the multitude of different groups involved: notably between “Muslim” and “European” Algerians. Moreover, this led to a growing number of Franco-Algerian children in classrooms.[126] Teachers were faced with the sensitive matter of teaching children whose parents could have fought against each other in Algeria. How could the children of *pieds-noirs*, *harkis*, OAS or FLN fighters learn about the Algerian War in one classroom and from one textbook? As one professor expressed in a 1985 survey: “I'm afraid of shocking my students [...] or at least some of them, by taking too blunt a position. It's necessary to present events in a way that's acceptable to both a young pied-noir and a young Algerian.”[127]

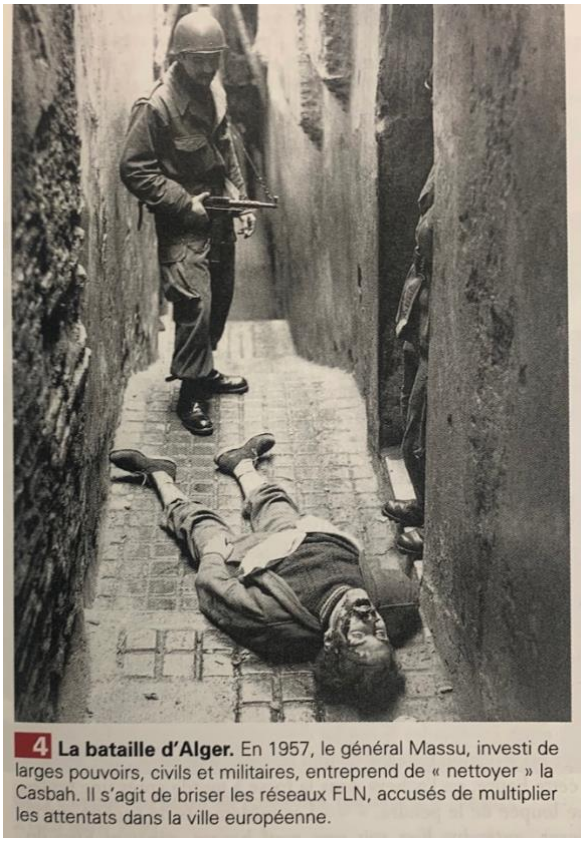
Second, 1992 marked the 30th anniversary of the Evian accords. This date sparked a renewal of memorial clashes in France that persisted for decades. These clashes were first spurred by the opening of the Historical Service of Army (SHAT)[128] archives from 1992 to 2002. The documents would serve to help progress knowledge of the military aspects of the conflict, and most importantly spark interest in the study of the war.[129] Academic publications about the war increased. Additionally, time became an important factor: because of their growing age, those who had fought and survived thirty years prior were increasingly motivated to share their memories of the war.[130] Theirs were confronted with conflicting memories from other survivors: public debates escalated, and the controversies increased. For instance the trial of Maurice Papon, a World War II civil servant, granted the media a platform to shed light on the responsibility he held for the October 17th massacre.[131] In 2000, the front page of *Le Monde* would shock French and Algerian society. It published the story of Louisette

[125] Philippe Dewitte, "1945-1974, les Trente Glorieuses," 2005, 100, https://doi.org/10.3406/homig.2005.4876.
[126] Dewitte, "1945-1974, les Trente Glorieuses," 101.
[127] Cornette and Luc, "'Bac-génération 84.' L’enseignement du temps présent en terminale," 120.
[128] Now known as the Historical Service of Defense (SHD).
[129] They would close the archives after a decade due to growing backlash (notably from veterans) concerning the unveiling of documents about torture; Thénault, *Histoire de la guerre d’indépendance algérienne*, 5.
[130] Additionally likely spurred by the discussions of the Holocaust and testimonies of survivors in the 1990s; Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History after 1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 278.
[131] De Cock, "Un siècle d’enseignement du « fait colonial » dans le secondaire de 1902 à nos jours," 14.

Ighilariz, an Algerian fighter who was tortured.[132] Her testimony provoked public outrage and added to the growing calls for a collective remembrance of the war that included previously neglected facets — such as the October 17th massacre and torture. The 90s were indeed a watershed moment for the memory of Algerian decolonisation, enshrined in the official proclamation of the Algerian War by the National Assembly in 1999: rather than referring to it as the "war without a name" or the common "Algerian events."[133]

4.2 Torture and the army

From the 1980s onward, the more controversial and violent aspects of the French army's operations in Algeria were visually highlighted. The change is indeed rather noticeable: while some violence already began to show in images from the 70s and early 80s, it became more explicit, notably in the early 2000s. The two photographs below, from 2004, exemplify this shift. A key element to the depiction of violence during this period are the explicit signs of an altercation between soldier and victim. Figure 4.1 is an extremely gruesome photograph, showing what is likely a dead man. His eyes are closed, but his face is marked by blood, flowing from what seems like a gash in his forehead. The position of his body, feet splayed out, head tilted upward, seem to indicate he is dead (or at least unconscious). The viewer mirrors the soldier standing over the body of the man, looking down at him. The expression of the soldier is unreadable as his face is shadowed,



4 La bataille d'Alger. En 1957, le général Massu, investi de larges pouvoirs, civils et militaires, entreprend de « nettoyer » la Casbah. Il s'agit de briser les réseaux FLN, accusés de multiplier les attentats dans la ville européenne.

Figure 4.1. Nathan, *Histoire Terminale ES-L*, 2004.

[132] "20 juin 2000 : Louisette Ighilahriz raconte comment elle a été sauvée de la torture par un inconnu pendant la guerre d'Algérie," [20 June 2000: Lousiette Ighilahriz tells how she was saved from torture by a stranger during the Algerian War] from 28 July 2014, accessed 10 February 2025, https://www.lemonde.fr/festival/article/2014/07/28/20-juin-2000-louisette-ighilahriz-retrouve-la-trace-de-son-sauveur_4463627_4415198.html.

[133] Françoise Lantheaume, "Les difficultés de la transmission scolaire : le lien Algérie-France dans les programmes d'histoire et les manuels en France au XXe siècle," [The difficulties of education transmissions: the Franco-Aglerian connection in history curricula and textbooks in France in the 20th century] in *La France et l'Algérie : leçons d'histoire : De l'école en situation coloniale à l'enseignement du fait colonial*, ed. Frédéric Abécassis et al., Hors collection (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2007), para. 20, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.enseditions.1295.

but his rather casual posture exudes an impression of indifference toward what lies before him.

Similarly, the caption is also rather apathetic to the scene it describes: “The battle of Algiers. In 1957, the general Massu, given civil and military powers, began a ‘clean-up’ of the Casbah. The intent is to sever the links of the FLN, who are accused of several attacks in the European city.” With textual context, it can be assumed that the soldier is French and the man on the floor is Algerian and seems to hint to him possibly a member of the FLN. Or rather more generally, seems to provide a justification for the violence. Regardless of whether he was an Algerian nationalist, the caption denounces the terrorist attacks of the FLN. The characterisation of Algiers (the capital of Algeria) as a “European” city indicates the perspective this text claims: it is as if this unconscious man is made to bear the responsibility of all Algerian violence.

The tonal shift between the caption and the contents of the photograph is jarring, although it is possibly a result of the politicisation of the Algerian War in textbooks and memory clashes since the 80s and the pinnacle of their convergence in the early 2000s. Indeed, in 1983 the contents of a Nathan textbook were discussed in the French National Assembly for its explicit mention of the Sétif massacres[134] and French practice of torture.[135] Subsequently, the content of textbooks was under high vigilance. Especially from veterans of Algeria, who formed Algerian War Youth Education (GAJE), a group that analysed and reflected on textbooks every month.[136] As a reminder, 1983 was also the year of Pierre Assouline’s “Should we burn history textbooks?” as a response to veterans of Algeria threatening to burn down a textbook publishing house. It could be surmised that efforts such as these limited the textual references to torture and emphasised a “neutrality” which could aid in understanding tone of the caption compared to the image. While images of this kind were already pervasive, their campaigning would likely have a direct effect in later textbooks, as we will see in the next chapter. During this period, the iconography seems to denounce the violence of French soldiers quite clearly.

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[134] For some, the Sétif massacres, on May 8th, 1945 is the starting date of the war. As France celebrated Liberation Day in 1945, Algerians protested colonial rule. In the city of Sétif, the police retaliated and shot protesters. Protesters retaliated by rioting throughout Algeria: killing 102 and injuring 110 European Algerians. The subsequent massacre committed by the French military killed Algerians by the thousands, with estimates varying between 10 000 and 45 000.

[135] De Cock, "Un siècle d’enseignement du « fait colonial » dans le secondaire de 1902 à nos jours," 11.

[136] De Cock, "Un siècle d’enseignement," 10.

For example, figure 4.2 once again explicitly depicts Algerians as victims of French acts of violence. Two Algerians sit on the floor with their hands or arms seemingly bound — one of the men is visibly bleeding from the head. Behind them are soldiers. The caption states: “Muslim suspects after an interrogation in the Guelma region (Algeria), March 28th, 1958.” An exercise on the page asks, “What does this photograph suggest about interrogation conditions during the Algerian conflict?” The simplicity of the question is remarkable and to a certain extent, meaningless; as a standalone image, it already implies violence and perhaps the use of torture, since the men are bound and therefore prisoners. On one hand, both the sites of image and audiencing (caption, and question) seem to dance around an explicit mention of such an act, and on the other hand, the presence of all these elements together — that they were approved — seems to point students to knowing about the use torture. These contradictory components are likely an attempt to neutralise what was, for many, a boiling point of contention: to cool down burning topics in French society. Indeed, this “cooling” effect is pervasive of the visual representation of the Algerian War during this period, but is also applicable to text, as Françoise Lantheaume first observed.[137] Images representing different perspectives serve to cater to the diverse memories of the War and represent controversial topics, but they are constantly counterbalanced and contrasted with each other. If a visual source depicts French victims of violence, it will be counterbalanced in another image, caption, exercise. The following textbook excerpt perfectly encapsulates this pattern.

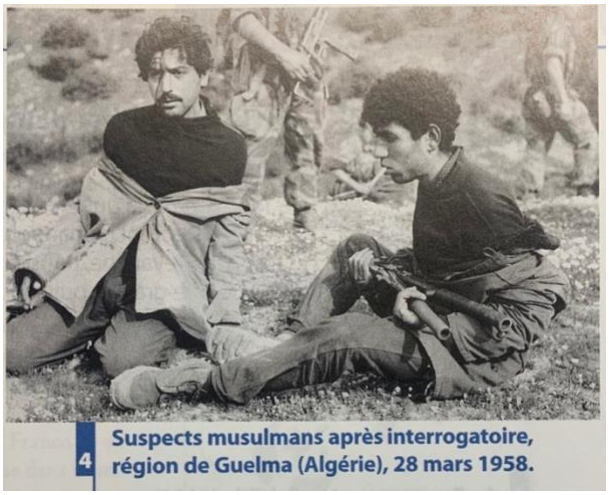

Figure 4.2. Nathan, *Histoire Terminale S*, 2004.

4.3 A double page of neutralisation

This section will analyse the entirety of the visual components of a “double page”[138] in a 1998 textbook to exemplify the counterbalancing effect explored above, which

[137] Lantheaume, ‘Les difficultés de la transmission scolaire’, para. 12.
[138] Most textbooks subchapters are contained to the breadth of two adjacent pages: functioning as one large page. Intended for students to open their textbook and be able to have all the information on one subject on the two pages.

includes two images, a poster and a photograph (fig 4.5 at the end of the section). Figure 4.3 is a poster from 1957, captioned “Propaganda for the French army in Algeria,”[139] The poster is altogether minimal in visuals with only one drawing. A grasshopper is depicted with the face of a human, a bandana covering the lower half of its face. This drawing likens Algerian nationalists to grasshoppers, pests known to be extremely harmful to agriculture. The text on the poster compares the grasshopper’s destruction of crops to the aid that the FLN took from Algerian peasants to support the independence movement. By drawing on zoomorphic imagery, this poster dehumanises Algerians: building on a contrast between human and animal, ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Indeed, the reduction to pests especially calls to a more specific “verminisation”: a form of dehumanisation linking (typically racialised) groups to animals generally considered disgusting or hated such as insects, rats, leeches.[140] Drawing on this racist, injurious imagery, the French army calls on those who have had resources exploited by fighters to “resolutely side with the pacification army.”

Figure 4.3. Bréal, *Histoire Tle L-ES*, 2004.

Figure 4.4. Bréal, *Histoire Tle L-ES*, 2004.

Comparatively, figure 4.4 is a photograph from 1959, simply captioned “An FLN attack in Algiers in 1959.” The image is equally shocking however, capturing what is likely to be a dead or badly injured body on a stretcher, surrounded by French officers. Behind them, a large crowd looks on. A pool of blood and scattered papers on the ground next to the stretcher emphasise the chaos and violence of the portrayed scene. Though the victim is mostly covered

[139] Additionally defines ‘fellaga,’ term found on the page: “Fellaga designates an Algerian peasant fighting for the independence of his country.”
[140] Nick Haslam, "The Social Psychology of Dehumanization," in *The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization*, by Maria Kronfeldner, ed. Maria Kronfeldner, 1st ed. (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2021. | Series: Routledge handbooks in philosophy: Routledge, 2021), 135, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492464.

by a sheet, a part of their legs and flowery clothes are visible: an element that seems to point to a civilian casualty. The FLN — as is indicated by the caption — is responsible for this attack on this civilian. Juxtaposed, these visuals seem to represent the capacity of 'both sides' to be violent and drastic in their measures.

But while the visuals themselves are significant, it is necessary to zoom out and look at the wider site of audiencing, to understand how their juxtaposition on the page creates a "cooling" narrative about the burning issue of the Algerian War. First, it is part of a larger chapter on "Decolonisation and the emergence of the Third World". Titled "How can the spiral of violence in Algeria be explained?", this subchapter — which consists just of this double page — focuses solely on the Algerian War and is the only one to illustrate the topic within the whole textbook. It features various textual and visual documents, and a small introductory paragraph on the history of the war. The visuals take up a relatively large amount of space, but the page consists mostly of text. The two images are diametrically opposed, each representing a different side of the fighters in the war. This is evident through the questions that accompany the images and documents. The question for figure 4.3 asks "How was France treating Algerian independence fighters?", while the question for figure 4.4 asks "Why was torture used by the French and the FLN? How can it explain the sensitivity about the war in the French and Algerian memories?". Let us posit here the intended answers to understand how these visuals were meant to be interpreted by students: France treated Algerian independence fighters harshly, and torture was used by both sides because each committed crimes against the other, generating long-standing intergenerational feelings of injustice and anger. Additionally, figure 4.4 depicts the brutal violence which is likely to invoke empathy and emotions.

The overall picture painted for a student is one of reciprocity, in which a perpetual cycle of unjustifiable violence caused and maintained the Algerian War. The events of decolonisation are pictured through a human rights lens, which, Lantheaume argues, "introduces compassion in place of historical analysis and constructs a system of equivalences between actors who now all fall into the category of victims."[141] By framing the Algerian War in moral terms, textbooks opened the door for the discussion of controversial issues such as torture. Indeed, this moralisation replaced more nuanced historical inquiries: instead of analysing how a democratic government came

[141] Lantheaume, 'Les difficultés de la transmission scolaire', para. 19.

to use torture or how the FLN also began using it, a moral condemnation of both sides is undertaken. Correspondingly, the title of the subchapter ("How can the spiral of violence in Algeria be explained?") treats the causes of the war similarly: the adjective "spiral" reinforcing the inevitability of endless retaliations. In investigating how the Algerian War began and continued, no visuals are shown of French colonialism (and no textual mentions are made). Again, this subchapter is rather reflective of visuals in textbooks at this period: visual and textual references of over a century of French domination and exploitation are largely absent. This absence is consistent across textbooks I studied between 1983-2004.[142]

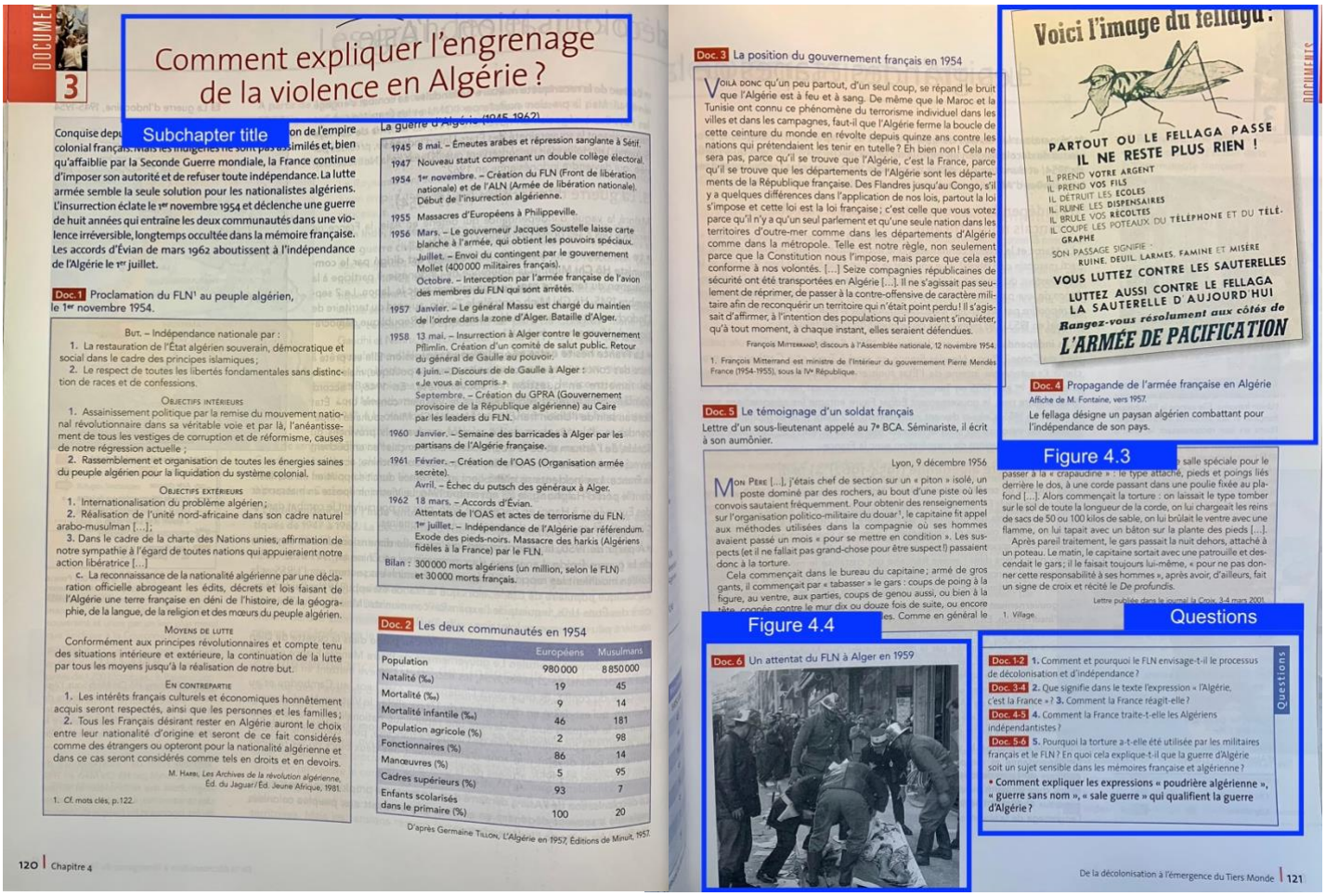

Figure 4.5. Bréal, *Histoire Tle L-ES,* 2004.

4.4 Propaganda: an exercise in critical thinking

Between this period, the visual representation of the decolonisation additionally shifted toward posters, drawing, and forms of propaganda rather than photographs alone. This section will therefore focus on the site of production of textbook iconography, to

[142] Applicable only to chapters about decolonisation, not entire textbooks.

note how different types of visuals are used. Though indicative of a larger iconographic turn worldwide, two factors explain this shift in French textbooks. First, this period features a significant increase in the use of visuals in textbooks overall. In a report on textbooks in 1997 and 1998 by the general inspector of the *Education Nationale*, it was noted that there was an important upsurge in the number of visuals and the amount of they took up.[143] That a multiplication of the number of visuals created a diversification in the type of visuals is logical — notably with improving technology and availability of different sources over time. Second, this same report also highlighted that textbooks had begun to favour the use of documents and activities over explanatory text of a period or an event.[144]

The visuals that accompany the text on the Algerian War during this period are used in remarkably critical and engaging ways — though the extent of an image's purpose is of course subjective. Because of the increased number of questions and exercises to support the iconography and textual documents, teachers began to give their students time alone with their textbooks in classrooms to do such exercises.[145] And, the encouraged autonomous work of students with textbooks through documents and exercises offers a lens of decolonisation that is also seen through propaganda and posters, rather than photography alone. Especially as the topic of decolonisation and the Algerian War are introduced to the *terminale* program, visuals for these textbooks are even less illustrative, and serve more as learning tools to practice skills necessary for the *baccalauréat*.

The use of propaganda increased during the 1980s and onwards, and this can be partly explained by the simplicity of its message. The visual presented here is a poster from 1957, captioned "Algeria is France." Photographs in textbooks, while often used for depicting "the past," are often complex because, as Roland Barthes explains, photographs typically host a number of connoted meanings.[146] While a photographer might have an objective in mind, what is ultimately pictured can capture a subjective narrative and hold many interpretations and meanings (connotations). Comparatively, propaganda is most effective when it conveys simple messages.[147] When illustrating

[143] Borne, "Le Manuel Scolaire : Programme de Travail, 1997-1998, Thème 2," 14.
[144] Borne, "Le Manuel Scolaire," 15.
[145] Borne, "Le Manuel Scolaire," 15.
[146] Roland Barthes and Stephen Heath, *Image, Music, Text: Essays*, 13. [Dr.] (London: Fontana, 1977), 22–23.
[147] Terence P. Moran, "Propaganda as Pseudocommunication," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 36, no. 2 (1979): 187.

history and offering multiperspectivity, propaganda can be a useful tool to present a clear-cut idea of a certain side or perspective. And indeed, this poster (fig. 4.6) is quite simple and minimalist. Though its colours are bright and eye-catching, the palette is quite limited. The key elements are highlighted with a white outline, standing out brightly against the blue background. The text on the image states: “The French army in Algeria,” “Pacify,” and “Unite.” Through this poster, the French are shown to resist independence and war. The soldier is placed on the drawn map of Algeria: symbolising the physical presence of French troops in the colony. A handshake in the foreground — symbolising a possible re-unification and cooperation between France and Algeria — demonstrates the French desire for an end to the independence movement. The use of “unification” points to decolonisation as a division within a previously unified whole. The independence movement is depicted as a rebellion that goes against the idea of Algerians and the French being part of one same country.

Figure 4.6. Nathan, *Histoire, terminales: Le monde de 1939 à nos jours*, 1998.

However, the use of this propaganda poster in this chapter does not necessarily seek to validate the perspective that it presents. Rather, next to the image are three questions that encourage students to critically engage with it: “How is the composition of this document important?” “What contradictions appear in this poster?” “What elements show the will of the French to keep Algeria as a colony?” Typical of this period, the questions seek to develop students’ analysis skills and historical reasoning. It must be noted that these questions might not be done by students or asked by teachers, but the title of the subchapter (bloody divorces) highlights to students the contradictory nature of this document nonetheless.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined how textbook visuals between 1983 and 2004 represented the violence that characterised the Algerian War of Independence — with a growing intensity until 2004 — whilst simultaneously "neutralising" their more controversial connotations. Photographs of French soldiers were often in violent contexts, typically depicting their brutality by showing bloodied Algerians. But a larger examination of the site of audiencing (elements such as questions and captions) counterbalanced the brutality, for example by providing justifications for the violence. These neutralising dynamics were also found to be enacted through the increased use of propaganda.

Similarities between this period and 1970-1982 are present, notably in the human rights lens. However, while in the earlier decades it supported national ideals, and therefore employed textbooks in a nation-building effort, we have seen here that this lens was later adopted in a more moralising perspective, creating a "system of equivalences between actors,"[148] effectively placing the blame on everyone and no one. This granted textbooks the ability to hint at more controversial topics in French society, such as torture. Indeed, this evolution — from "positive to neutral" to put it very reductively — can be explained in part by the political context of the late 80s and early 90s explored in the beginning of the chapter. These debates highlight the nature of textbooks as (mass) media, especially in France, where since the 1960s, the curricula's insistence on contemporary history in textbooks has impacted their contents.[149] Scholars of French textbooks since then have found that currently significant public discourses and controversies have been represented in text,[150] and this chapter has shown that this is equally applicable to visuals.

[148] Lantheaume, "Les difficultés de la transmission scolaire," para. 19.
[149] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization," 17.
[150] Among some of those authors: Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s"; Lantheaume, "Les difficultés de la transmission scolaire"; Sandrine Lemaire, "Du Joyau Impérial à l'amnésie Nationale: L'image de l'Algérie Dans Les Manuels Scolaires Français," *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 26, no. 1 (2004): 31–57; Mechkarini, "The Representation of the Algerian War in French High School History Textbooks"; Baquès, "L'évolution des manuels d'histoire du lycée. Des années 1960 aux manuels actuels"; Cornette and Luc, "'Bac-génération 84'. L'enseignement du temps présent en terminale".

5 Chapter 5: Well, that's how I remember it: the many "truths" of the war, 2005-2019

By the turn of the century, memorial tensions about the Algerian War of Independence grew to a boiling point, and its increased politicisation drew efforts to legislate the transmission of those memories in education. This chapter will argue that both prescriptive law and reform impacted the representation of the Algerian War of Independence in textbook iconography to produce a visually multiperspective narrative, with the intention of encompassing numerous collective memories. It will finally present a brief evolution of the chapters that Algerian decolonisation is discussed in.

5.1 Educational laws and reforms

The new millennium saw a more top-down approach in the changes to the transmission of Algerian decolonisation in textbooks and classrooms, largely spurred by groups that felt their memory of the war was not being represented. Efforts were therefore made to legislate these memories in 2005. Indeed, the fourth article of the 23 February 2005 law stated that: "School curricula will acknowledge in particular the positive role of the French presence overseas, particularly in north Africa, and accord to the history and sacrifices of combatants in the French army originating from these territories the important place to which they have a right."[151] Considering themselves victims of history, groups of French repatriates had long sought indemnities for the pain endured during and after the war: the *pieds-noirs*, *harkis*, and notably veterans of Algeria.[152] And in fact, the primary function of this law was to officially respond and legislate their memorial demands, to recognise and legitimise their collective memory.[153] However, this memory law was vehemently protested by researchers, historians, and teachers, who opposed its prescriptive nature and one-sided view of

[151] Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés, [Law n° 2005-158 from 23 February 2005 bearing recognition of the Nation and national contribution in favour of French repatriates], accessed 24 January 2025, https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000444898/#JORFARTI000002059357, as cited in Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization," 27.
[152] Löytömäki, "French Memory Laws and the Ambivalence About the Meaning of Colonialism," 96.
[153] Mechkarini, "The Representation of the Algerian War in French High School History Textbooks," 5; Löytömäki, "French Memory Laws and the Ambivalence About the Meaning of Colonialism," 95–96; Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 27.

colonialism.[154] Highly politicised public debates were conducted, and the article was ultimately repealed. But the attention brought to the subject by academics and lobbying organisations ultimately paved the way for revisions to the curricula — and in turn, textbooks.[155]

The changes to textbooks (and its iconography) were not immediate, but a curriculum reform in 2011 marked perhaps the most explicit, instantaneous, and significant change to the representation of the Algerian War of Independence in textbooks. To be applied by the 2012-2013 school year, the reform prescribed a new thematic place for Algerian War of Independence in the curriculum: in the study of "the relationship of societies to their past," and more specifically the study of memory. Subsequent textbook chapters were titled "The historian and the memories of the Algerian War". From one textbook, sub-chapters include: 1) "The memory of the war in Algeria," 2) "The memory of the war in France," 3) "The *pieds-noirs* and the memory of the Algerian War," and a look at 4) "The memory of the war in French music." And within these new textbooks, various iconography dominated the pages. This chapter will analyse what visual representation those pages offer.

To preface my analysis however, a comment needs to be made on the reform in *terminale*, as it drastically changed the content in textbooks. Indeed, no longer are chapters necessarily discussing the events of the Algerian War of Independence, but rather *how* these events are *remembered*. If the subject focus has changed, is it appropriate to talk of an evolution? It could be argued that in order to establish a more accurate evolution, I should analyse textbooks in which the Algerian War was taught similarly to previous periods. Indeed, after the reform, the war was taught in a more traditional and historical manner in other grades (in secondary school). However, Algerian decolonisation remained a central subject of knowledge in *terminale*. As seen below (fig. 5.1 and fig.5.2), most post-reform textbooks featured some kind of visual and textual summary of the major events of the war. If the reform thus required that students know the history of the topic, then it can be logically deduced that the Algerian War of independence remains the topic at hand, but slightly reframed.

[154] Mechkarini, "The Representation of the Algerian War in French High School History Textbooks," 5.
[155] Mechkarini, "The Representation of the Algerian War," 5; Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 27.

Figure 5.2. Nathan, *Histoire géographie: Term*, 2014

Figure 5.1. Nathan, *Histoire Term: L-ES*, 2012

Indeed, post-reform textbooks thus addressed the war through a plurality of perspectives — rather than attempting to thread a single historical narrative. The textbook representation after 2012 can therefore also simply be seen as a different approach to understanding the echoes of the war (such tensions that have already been hinted at in visuals since 1970). Rather, the memorial conflicts are plainly made explicit and expanded on here. Therefore, it is indicative of a representational shift — though a highly drastic and sudden one — and it is appropriate to talk of an evolution from 1970.

5.2 Visual multiperspectivity

The most significant evolution in the visual representation of the Algerian War of Independence is the plurality of the perspectives and groups depicted in the images. The diversity alone of the visual sources is impressive: book covers, murals, monuments, comic strips, album covers, word clouds, street signs, other textbooks… Gone are the similar images of celebration, tragic *pieds-noirs* on boats, French soldiers in Algiers. But the subjects are again rather limited; exhaustively, the four represented groups are *harkis*, *pieds-noirs*, veterans of Algeria, and Algerians (although there is a numerical drop after veterans). And the dynamics of their visual representation significantly changed. Two elements characterise this representational shift.

Firstly, the 2012 reform would grant them more space in textbooks, to create a multiperspective view of Algerian decolonisation. In some editions, subchapters are dedicated to studying the memory of the *pieds-noirs* and *harkis* exclusively or are often discussed in subchapters about the memory of the war in France. This meant that for the first time, the *harkis* were visually represented in textbooks.[156] And by including images of the *harkis*, these textbooks both legitimised their existence and collective memory, and supported a pluralistic narrative of the Algerian War of Independence. Indeed, their inclusion allowed students to come to their own conclusions of the events of Algerian decolonisation. Each perspective — such as how the war is remembered by the *harkis* (and other French repatriates, fig. 5.3), or how it is remembered in Algeria (fig. 5.4) — should build on each other to create a pluralistic understanding of 1954-1962. By offering multiple sub-chapters, in which images of the Algerian memories of the war are presented and confronted with pictures of *harkis*, *pieds-noirs*, and commemorations of veterans, these post-2012 textbooks attempted to offer a similar "common history" (fig. 5.3 and 5.4).

Figure 5.3. "In Algeria, the memory of the 'War of Independence,'" pictures of the war memorial in Algeria and an Algerian textbook. Hachette, *Histoire Tles L/ES : regards historiques sur le monde actuel*, 2012.

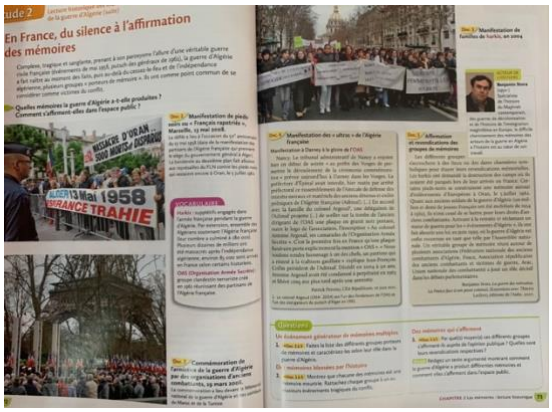

Figure 5.4. "In France, from silencing to affirming memories," pictures of commemorating veterans, and protests by harkis and pieds-noirs. Hachette, *Histoire Tles L/ES : regards historiques sur le monde actuel*, 2012.

Indeed, such a multiperspective construction of history in textbooks was in fact an approach that has gained popularity in the early 2000s, notably with particularly controversial histories. To reconcile their memories of WWII, a Franco-German bilateral textbook commission was created, producing since 2006 textbooks with a shared and "common history" of the war.[157] A less successful version was also attempted in Israel and Palestine: with the final product presenting two narratives side by side, written by Israeli and Palestinian teachers respectively,

[156] Similarly to references to torture, textual references to the *harkis* largely precede their visual representation.
[157] "La coopération franco-allemande," Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, accessed 5 June 2025, https://www.education.gouv.fr/la-cooperation-franco-allemande-5141.

5 Un passé qui demeure sujet à controverse
En juin 2011, des pieds-noirs manifestent contre l'inauguration d'une statue du général de Gaulle, place de la Libération à Nice.

Figure 5.5. Nathan, *Histoire géographie: Term*, 2014

Figure 5.6. Belin, *Histoire: Term: L, ES, S*, 2016.

with a third empty column for students to write their thoughts and reactions on the differences and similarities between the two versions.[158] There is therefore a recognition of the way in which multiperspective representations of historical events can help in reconciling "burning" issues, such as the Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The second characteristic of the shift in the visual representation of these groups in textbooks is that the photographs used were from the 21st century. The textbook response to the memorial demands of these groups was to represent the very act of demanding and negotiating their memories. Represented here are *pieds-noirs* (fig. 5.5), *harkis* (fig. 5.6), and veterans of Algeria (fig. 5.7). The coloured photographs all depict a protest and/or commemoration of their respective memories of the war from the early 2000s. Each image identifies the subject of the photograph through a textual, visual clue in the site of image or audiencing: "*pieds-noirs*" or "*harkis*" in the caption, and decorated soldiers and the tricolours in the background, respectively. Indeed, a feature of these recent photographs is that these groups' belonging to their shared repatriate identities is substantiated by themselves or textually. To put it simply, we know that these are *harkis* because it is written in the caption, in the image, or in the written lesson. But there are no images of *harkis* from 1954-1962, or of Algeria during this time, to connect the present to the past that it claims. Visually, the *harkis* of today are represented. That is not to discredit their connection to their history, but it is to note that the memory of the past does not seem to require a *visual* of the past.


3 Un mémorial national pour les combattants morts en Afrique du Nord
Jacques Chirac, quai Branly à Paris, le 5 décembre 2002.
Le président Jacques Chirac inaugure le 5 décembre 2003 le Mémorial national de la guerre d'Algérie et des combats au Maroc et en Tunisie. Sur des bandes lumineuses défilent les noms de 23 000 soldats morts, dont 3000 harkis. Le 5 décembre est déclaré l'année suivante Journée d'hommage aux morts pour la France en Afrique du Nord.
1. Comment se manifeste sur cette photo la reconnaissance de la guerre d'Algérie par la France ?

Figure 5.3. Belin, *Histoire: Term: L, ES, S*, 2016.

While the *harkis* were represented for the first time, the French army, a central figure in the visual representation of the

[158] See Shoshana Steinberg and Dan Bar-On, 'The Other Side of the Story: Israeli and Palestinian Teachers Write a History Textbook Together', *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 1 (1 April 2009): 107, in which the very interesting story of this shared effort is detailed.

Algerian War of Independence continued to be depicted, but with markedly nonviolent photographs. As we have seen, portrayals of soldiers and fighters have been common throughout textbooks since 1970, likely in part because their presence in the colony was strongly felt in both France and Algeria. We have seen how their visual depiction went from pacifying to violent between 1970 and 1982 and suggesting torture in the subsequent period of 1983 to 2004. Often, these characteristics were showcased through their interactions with others; soldiers were shown in conflict with Algerians, standing next to bloodied and bound Algerians.

Before proceeding with my analysis of their representation in textbooks between 2005 and 2020, it is worth noting the visual findings established above are not entirely similar to more recent studies. Indeed, it was emphasised in Chapter 1 that little research has yet been done with such recent textbooks. However, in a 2021 study, Sara Mechkarini found that before the 2000s, most textbooks neglected to show the military side of the Algerian War. In showing how post-2000s textbooks revealed that violence, she cited only *visual* examples, dating from 2013.[159] By contrast, this thesis has shown how the military has been rather consistently visually present in textbooks since 1970. Strikingly, her article focused overwhelmingly on textual analysis, citing images in the discussion of the military representation of the war. It is therefore important to study visuals, but it also highlights the particular representational strategies of textbooks when it comes to violence and the visualisation of the French army — but this will be further discussed in this chapter's conclusion.


DOC 5 L'appel au contingent en Algérie

À partir d'avril 1956, à la demande du « ministre résident » en Algérie, Robert Lacoste, les jeunes Français en âge de faire leur service militaire ou venant juste de l'effectuer sont envoyés en Algérie. 52/2 désignent les rappelés nés entre le 1er février et le 27 juin 1932.

Figure 5.4. Magnard, *Histoire Tles L, ES, et S : le monde contemporain de 1945 à nos jours*, 2008.

Notably after 2008, the French army is depicted through its soldiers, who are increasingly humanised. The site of image in figure 5.8 exemplifies these changes. The photograph captures uniformed soldiers stepping off a boat. That these soldiers are pictured at the exact moment of their arrival in Algeria supports an

[159] Interestingly, the two visual examples she uses have been analysed in this paper, the propaganda poster for the French army and the photograph revisited many times in this thesis of the dead man and soldier in an alley; Mechkarini, "The Representation of the Algerian War in French High School History Textbooks."

empathetic reading: we are seeing them before their participation in any violence, as young men. Additionally, the photograph invites the viewer to consider the violence that awaits them. The hefty burlap sack carried on their shoulders appears not only as a physical burden, but symbolic of the heavy charge given to these young men in fighting a war. It should also be considered that this was a little over ten years after the end of World War II. The horrors of the war would likely not have given these men a sense of enthusiasm toward their service. By picturing soldiers at this stage, obligated to do their duty but before their real engagement in violence, the French army is no longer represented as a monolith, but humanised to the individual level.

Between representing the *harkis* for the first time and humanising the French army, these shifts in visual representation can likely be interpreted as successes of long-term memorial lobbying. For example, we have seen throughout this paper that French veterans of Algeria have long been attentive to their representation in textbooks: from threatening to burn down a publishing house, to establishing monthly textbook reading groups. The specific focus on "combatants in the French army" in the text of the 2005 memory law can largely be seen as a response to their continuous campaigning. And this campaigning is even showcased in textbooks, with photographs of *harkis* and *pieds-noirs* protesting for events of the war they consider ignored to be remembered (see fig. 5.5 and 5.6). These textbook visuals are therefore a response to — or at least a consequence of — the politicised memorial debates that proceed the 2005 memory law.

5.3 Depicting "new" versions of the past

We have seen across multiple chapters how the image of French soldiers has changed by primarily analysing the site of image — looking at their subjects and composition. Another means of exploring the evolution of visual representation over time in textbooks is to analyse how the same photograph is used over time, and the different messages it offers. What is interesting is how their use changes across different contexts and sites of audiencing — and most importantly what new interpretations of the Algerian War of Independence they provide. This image is used in a 2004 and 2008 textbook, but in four years, the narrative it evokes changes drastically, due to a different caption. Let us first revisit the image, first analysed in chapter 4. An armed soldier stands above an unarmed man lying on the floor of an alley. Whether he is

dead or alive is unknown, but there are clear signs of violence on his face. The context of the photograph is also unknown: did the soldier attack the man, or did he come across his body when the image was captured? Since it cannot be known from the image itself, the interpretation is left to the viewer. As a standalone photograph, it could be estimated that a student might consider one of two common assumptions: 1) the French soldier attacked an innocent man, 2) the French soldier attacked the man, but because he was dangerous. In 2004, the caption supported a narrative closer to the latter. It was explored in the previous chapter that the captioning provided a rather apathetic view of the scene and seemed to justify the violence. In 2008, the caption tends towards the former assumption, stating that "the army received extraordinary powers [...] the 'battle of Algiers' was characterised by arbitrary violence of an exceptional intensity." By explicitly linking the army and the infliction of violence, the caption guides the viewer to read the image as meaning the soldier has attacked the man, and likely unprovoked (using arbitrary as a qualifier). In both cases, the caption functions here to "anchor" the various possible meanings (or interpretations) to direct the viewer to choose the "correct" one, to use Roland Barthes' language.[160]


3 **... et réalité** (Photographie d'une patrouille de surveillance à Alger, le 27 janvier 1957.)
L'armée reçoit les pleins pouvoirs en matière de police pour démanteler les réseaux. La « bataille d'Alger » de 1957 est de ce fait marquée par une violence arbitraire et d'une exceptionnelle intensité.

Figure 5.9. Hatier, *Histoire Tle L-ES-S*, 2008.

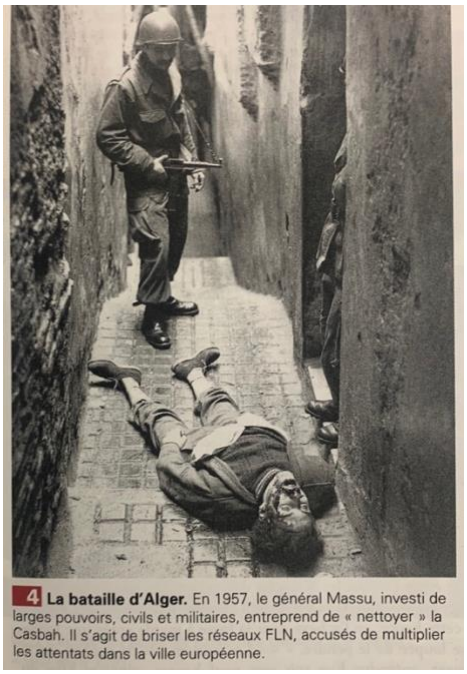
4 **La bataille d'Alger.** En 1957, le général Massu, investi de larges pouvoirs, civils et militaires, entreprend de « nettoyer » la Casbah. Il s'agit de briser les réseaux FLN, accusés de multiplier les attentats dans la ville européenne.

Figure 5.10. Nathan, *Histoire Terminale ES-L*, 2004.

In the case of the 2008 photograph (fig. 5.9), the correct interpretation seems to be that the kind of brutal, apathetic, and arbitrary violence depicted in the image is the "reality," of the war, as the text in bold under the image points out — the proposed narrative being that it represents the true history of the Algerian War of Independence. This is emphasised by the site of production of the visual: the nature of photography. Indeed, photographs are often considered conveyors of facts and truth. This is due in part to the mechanical nature of the camera, which is considered

[160] Barthes and Heath, *Image, Music, Text*, 39–40.

to accurately reproduce exactly what it captures. However, as Sturken and Cartwright explain, photographic truth is in fact a myth.[161] Using an example of a Civil War-era photo that was found to have been carefully posed and composed before the shot was taken, they show that truths can be "faked." Though the camera recorded exactly what was seen in that moment, it would not be accurate to call the final image a representation of the "truth."[162] Though we might often use photographs as evidence, "images can be differently interpreted, and may reasonably support different and even contradictory "truths."[163] Notwithstanding, in the context of history textbooks, photography seems to be often relied on to represent past events, due to its perceived documentarian nature. Precisely, the "reality" in the 2008 photograph, as described by the caption (as mentioned above) relies on this perceived truth-value of photographs, to evoke an impression of "revealing the truth" of the war.

Indeed, photography utilised in this period largely to represent previously excluded events from the historical narratives of textbooks, notably after the 2011 reform. Of the 54 visuals collected from 2012-2019 textbooks, only 4 are photographs taken during the Algerian War of Independence. Among those four, three refer to events that were previously omitted from textbooks: the October 17th, 1961 and the rue d'Isly massacres. Two of those will be analysed below.

The photographs are violent, with dead bodies strewn on the ground, blood streaming from one in figure 5.11. The high tonal contrast in figure 5.12, emphasising those surveying the scene and almost blurring the bodies in the foreground, highlights the casual brutality of the violence. Indeed, the urban setting of both photographs, picturing bodies among cars and streets spotlights the shocking nature of these killings, in showing that they have been enacted in the middle of the city with civilian victims. These are shocking images that do not shy away from depicting violence.

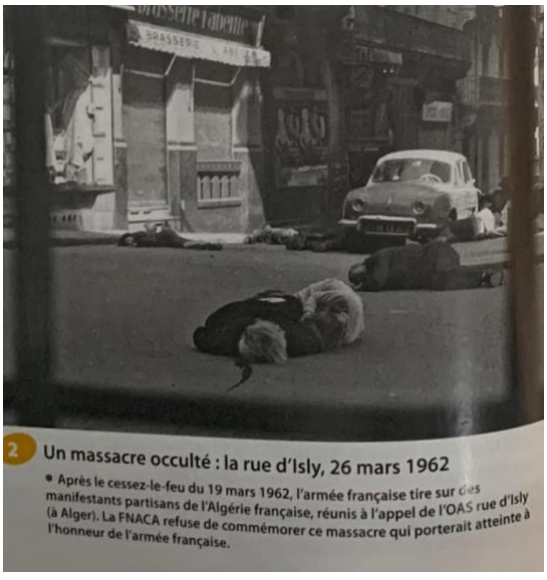

Figure 5.11. Nathan, *Histoire Term: L-ES*, 2012.

Such explicit photographs are often not used in the representation of other events in the Algerian War

[161] Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, 26.
[162] Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, 26.
[163] Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, 26.

of Independence — except, as we have seen, in depicting French soldiers. Then, such images were likely used to reveal the violent nature of the colonial army — a fact that was originally undermined and neglected. Here, an analysis of the site of audiencing seems to show that these photographs share that "revealing" aim, as the captions make explicit that they seek to represent what has been previously neglected in history textbooks: one of the captions calls this event "occulté"[164] (fig. 5.11). Additionally, an analysis of the site of production supports the revelatory aim of these visuals. Hinging on the common idea of photographic truth explored above, the use of photography emphasises here both the historical and factual nature of the events. A drawing of the massacres would likely not have produced a similar shocking and "revealing" effect of what had previously been hidden away.


Doc. 2 **La répression de la manifestation du 17 octobre 1961.**
À l'appel du FLN, environ 30 000 Algériens tentent de manifester à Paris en dépit du couvre-feu imposé aux « Français musulmans » par le préfet de police, Maurice Papon. Selon la version officielle, les affrontements avec les forces de police auraient fait 2 morts du côté des manifestants.

Figure 5.12. Hachette, *Histoire Tles L/ES: regards historiques sur le monde actuel*, 2012.

In an effort to visually represent previously ignored events of the war in Algeria, a narrative of truth and uncovering is established in these textbooks. By exposing these subjects, notably with gruesome and violent photographs, it appears that there was a certain willingness in the production to spotlight the darker, complex, and concealed facets of the war. By doing so, these textbooks are effectively remediating these massacres. To understand how they do so, a presentation of this concept is necessary. When media convey information, they are "mediating" between the viewer and the past experiences they represent. This shapes how and what we remember in the future.[165] *Re*mediation is the later mediation of that mediation; for example, when a documentary shows a clip of a breaking news television segment. Thus, history textbooks are tools of remediation: they are therefore not passive transmitters of history, especially when considering their roles as tools of the education system and

[164] There are different possible translations to this word, "concealed," "obscured," "hidden," though none seem entirely accurate to the overall message of the caption and the word itself which points to an intentionality in the act of "hiding" or "obscuring".
[165] Astrid Erll et al., eds., *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 3, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110217384.

as mass media.[166] As mass media, *how* and *what* history they represent is a contribution to cultural and collective remembrance: as Maren Röger argues, "by repeating pictures and interpretations [they] create and/or perpetuate icons and historical narratives."[167] In her analysis of how German and Polish magazines represented and remediated a (supposedly) suppressed tragedy, she emphasised two central components of medial remembrances that are applicable to the remediation of these massacres. First, through the remediation of "forgotten" events, the media "preserved [the events'] existence as a memory site,"[168] therefore continuing their participation in the collective memory. Second, she found that media remediate events typically when there are "occasions for remembering:" often anniversaries or more significantly, current political events.[169] It can then be reasoned that a specific situation in France spurred the remediation of these particular historical events.

How then, is the remediation of these massacres relevant to the political context in France? What purpose is there in visually representing Algerian decolonisation as it had not been before in textbooks? The answer lies in the postcolonial politics of memory in France since the early 2000s — as it has in the rest of this chapter, and in much of this thesis. Objects of societal conflict in France, such as immigration, the perceived threat to national identity, and notably the Algerian War, are not only intrinsically interwoven, but also linked to politics of memory: which are inherently connected to the transmission of history in textbooks.[170] By representing events such as the rue d'Isly massacre, in which *pieds-noirs* were killed by French soldiers, as well as the October 17th massacre, where Algerians living in France were killed, the visual representation of the Algerian War of Independence corresponds to a variety of collective memories and remembrances — acknowledging the "victims of history" and the injustices they suffered.

[166] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 16.
[167] Maren Röger, "News Media and Historical Remembrance: Reporting on the Expulsion of Germans in Polish and German Magazines," in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll et al. (Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 189, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110217384.
[168] Röger, "News Media and Historical Remembrance," 196.
[169] Röger, "News Media and Historical Remembrance," 190.
[170] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 26.

5.4 Chapters: a segmented history

Before concluding this chapter and proceeding with the overall conclusion of this thesis, this section will explore how the structural position of the Algerian War of Independence in textbooks evolved from 1970 to 2020. The focus will be on where the topic was discussed (in what chapters), and how the themes of these chapters affected the visualisation of Algerian decolonisation. These changes occurred extremely gradually and heterogeneously across textbooks and time, making them impossible to consign to one sub-question alone. However, as the shifts began in the 1980s and continued until the early 2000s, an analysis of this particular element creates an appropriate recontextualisation of the themes discussed through the empirical chapters above before the conclusion — presenting a brief but complete evolution: serving almost as a summary of sorts.

Since the 1983 reform and in the two decades following it, the structural position of Algerian decolonisation began gradually shifting in textbooks. The topic was either broached in a chapter about decolonisation, or French politics (specifically the transition from Fourth to Fifth Republic), or in some cases, segmented throughout both themes.

Decolonisation chapters presented international independence movements. With all-encompassing titles such as “Decolonisation and the Third World,” and “Asia and Africa since 1945,” these chapters presented various decolonisations events across the globe. Despite such a large scope and range of historical events, some topics featured rather consistently, notably Indian independence and the French defeat in Indochina. Images in particular of Gandhi and Vietnamese soldiers were common, often opposed as representations of a decolonisation binary. Indeed, in the 1970s and early 1980s, decolonisation chapters presented independence movements with a binary approach, citing two kinds of decolonisations: negotiated and violent. These two adjacent photographs (fig. 4.7) from a 1980 textbook exemplify this visual opposition: with Gandhi acting as a symbol of peaceful decolonisation, and the endless column of Vietnamese soldiers with heavily burdened bicycles, accompanied by the caption, “Vietnam:

Figure 5.7. Istra, *Histoire, géographie: économie, éducation civique: classe de 3e,* 1980.

new methods of combat," representing violent decolonisation. As clear visual symbols of this binary, they were often in placed direct opposition in such chapters.

Within this context, the Algerian War of Independence is therefore understood as part of an international wave of decolonisation. While this served to make sense of the war within a larger global process, the opposition to "negotiated" decolonisation — represented through the British-Indian example — functioned to provide a deterministic view of Algerian independence. As Lantheaume argues: "[Algerian decolonisation] is interpreted as the local symptom of a nation refusing to become a middle power in a bipolarized world and the sign of an archaism associated with the Fourth Republic, which the modernity of the Fifth Republic allows it to overcome."[171] Comparatively, the decolonisation process of Indian independence is seen as a British achievement, one of the causes of the nation's contemporary world power. Indeed, a study of British teaching materials, including textbooks, since the late 1940s found that until the 60s, decolonisation was interpreted as the result of a long-planned overseas project, an expression of British success[172] — a narrative that could not be presented in French classrooms due to its prolonged military fight against independence. As we have seen in Chapter 3, this criticism of a stubborn, archaic, French empire served as a means to reconcile with the loss of its colonies and present the new Fifth Republic as modern and universalist.

However, the memorial tensions that grew in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought up many controversial facets of the war. For example, debates about torture and its inclusion in textbooks were fierce, notably after the 1983 reform, and the way textbooks structured the topic was a clear reflection of the ongoing debates. As mentioned above, Algerian decolonisation became slowly segmented among two themes: global decolonisation and French politics. Alternatively, a third option was often adopted in the 1990s, in which part of the war was discussed in one of these two themes, and the more controversial aspects were relegated to documentary "dossiers" ("folders"), as seen in Chapter 4 (fig. 4.5). These "folders" seem characteristic of the debates surrounding the transmission of the Algerian War of Independence in textbooks: positioned in a third, neutral space. Indeed, as Marcus Otto puts it, this

[171] Lantheaume, "Les difficultés de la transmission scolaire," para. 18.
[172] Carsten Mish, "Die Dekolonisation Des Empire in Britischen Geschichtsbüchern Seit 1947," [The Decolonisation of the Empire in British History Textbooks since 1947], in *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 30, no. 3 (2008): 743.

period was marked by a growing "debate about the Algerian War […] turning the conflict into what we might consider to be the key historical paradigm of decolonization within the nation's politics of memory and likewise the crucial exemplar of a controversial 'burning issue' in the knowledge transported in school textbooks."[173] By situating the war in an in-between chapter, these textbooks exerted their function as media, effectively reconciling the pressing societal need to discuss the events of this decolonisation, with the controversial realities and underpinnings of those events.

However, around the 1990s and early 2000s, the Algerian War became increasingly represented by itself, emphasising the uniqueness of the event in French memory. Indeed, the visual representation of the war as a violent conflict of decolonisation is slowly abandoned for an analysis of the war as a unique event in French history. This is typically constituted by a focus on the 1958 crisis (or Algiers Putsch) or simply partisans of French Algeria.[174]

Figure 5.8. Bréal, *Histoire Tle L-ES-S,* 2008.

Figure 4.8 captures the enormity of the crisis and the numbers of the French partisans that participated in the coup, submerging the reader into the crowd by filling the frame with protesters. The large identical signs of de Gaulle's face add to the sense of scale and immensity of the crisis. Strikingly, the textbook this image features in has no double pages solely on the Algerian War of Independence: only representing the events of 1954-1962 with an image of pieds-noirs in a chapter on decolonisation, or in chapters about the 1958 changes in Republic. This image is in a subchapter on Algerian decolonisation and the two Republics, bringing together the two themes that were so often separated. And indeed, visuals from this period seemed to depict the war in Algeria more through French partisans — in France and Algeria — and showed less and less Algerians. Visually, less attention is given to Algerians, their motivations, and struggle for independence.

[173] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s," 25.
[174] The Algerian War of Independence was politically significant for the French metropole in ways beyond the loss of a colony. Indeed, the political turmoil amongst the variety of impassioned actors in Algeria brought about the end of the Fourth Republic and birth of the Fifth during the 1958 crisis. Additionally, military operations were planned to take control of Paris and massacres were committed in the capital in direct relation to the events in Algeria.

The Algerian War of Independence is increasingly situated in relation to French national history from the later 1990s and onwards. Hence its visual representation focuses *less* on Algerians and *more* on French partisans and the echoes of the war in France; especially after 2005, the war is visually taken further out of the Algerian context.

5.5 Conclusion

This final empirical chapter has shown how textbook iconography between 2005 and 2020 have represented Algerian decolonisation through an increasingly explicit present (contemporary) lens, resulting in a highly multiperspective visual narrative. This was explored through photographs of the *pieds-noirs*, soldiers (veterans and active alike) and the *harkis*, a group whose visual representation was neglected up until the post-2000s. As we have seen in previous chapters, the iconography was overwhelmingly from the 20th century, most from 1954-1962. After 2005 — and especially after 2012 — the imagery is increasingly from the 21st century, depicting the current politics of memory through protests and commemorations. Photography from 1954-1962 is rare and only used if it reveals previously neglected facets of the war. As shown above, the remediation of these massacres is intrinsically linked to the postcolonial politics of memory in France, and textbook visuals here are explicitly responding to these memorial demands. By depicting previously neglected groups, they fulfil the memorial demands brought up in the repealed fourth article of the 23 February 2005 law. Additionally, this chapter presented an evolution of a more general factor in the visual representation of Algerian decolonisation, the chapters. It explored how decolonisation chapters first opposed the Franco-Algerian conflict to Indian independence and saw how contemporary debates in the late 1980s and 1990s seem to have brought the transmission of the war to a standstill, neither a part of a global decolonial movement, or a part of the national narrative. It finally showed how early 2000s textbooks positioned the war: demonstrating how it sought to represent Algerian decolonisation increasingly through French history.

As the politics of memory about the Algerian War of Independence grew in the early 2000s, with education becoming an arena of those politics, the authority granted to textbooks made them a tool in the legitimisation of collective memories, with visuals holding an important role in these memorial strategies. As was pointed out in this

chapter, an article titled “the representation of the Algerian War in French history textbooks” — a subject almost identical to this thesis except in methodology — found that most textbooks neglected to show the military side of the Algerian decolonisation before the 2000s. Meanwhile, this paper has continuously pointed out that the French army has been prevalent in the iconography since 1970. This significant dissimilarity in findings is striking. First, it points to a general tendency of textbooks to perhaps favour a representation of the more violent facets of (de)colonisation through visuals. This might be due to the shocking factor of such explicit depictions of violence, emphasising the denunciation of such acts. Secondly, it highlights the importance of studying visuals in textbooks: especially if their study provides vastly different conclusions in such similar research subjects.

This paper will follow with the concluding chapter. First, it will offer a summary of the findings across the empirical chapters. With this summary in mind, it will tie the analysis of the empirical chapters together to provide the final conclusions. The closing section will evoke the limitations of this study and offer avenues for further research.

6 Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary and conclusions

Before providing this paper's final conclusions, it would serve to first reiterate the research question: **How have French history textbooks visually represented Algerian decolonisation since 1970? How has that representation evolved over time?** In tracing evolving textbook visual representations of Algerian decolonisation since 1970, the analysis presented above has indicated evident trends as well as divergences in the transmission of the War of Independence across time. **Chapter 3** showed how images of celebrations, the *pieds-noirs*, and soldiers first represented the war in Algeria according to contemporary national narratives that sought to reconcile France with the loss of its colonial empire and political upheavals in the 60s. First through the demilitarised depiction of the French military offensive, and increasingly through renewed self-descriptions of France as the country of human rights and modernity. **Chapter 4** subsequently analysed how this shifted, as the former demilitarised narrative no longer applied in the context of growing societal debates and revelations about the war in the late 80s and 90s. This chapter focused on showing how the visual representations of the war carried connotations of these controversies whilst simultaneously neutralising them with surrounding elements. The human rights lens was reframed to serve this neutralising function, in effect moralising the war and rendering it a narrative of unjustifiable violence from both sides. Finally, **Chapter 5** demonstrated the multiperspective nature of the visual representation after 2005, with a focus on depicting groups and events that were previously underrepresented or omitted from textbook narratives, with examples discussed such as the *harkis,* the October 17th and rue d'Isly massacres.

This final section will present the overarching conclusions that can be drawn from these empirical chapters. Summarised, the results show clearly that the visual representation of Algerian decolonisation is in constant flux, but certain parallels among the changes can be traced, indicating a more general tendency. Overall, the visualisation of the Algerian War of Independence in textbooks has increasingly become multifaceted, growing to represent various memories of the war and the elements that constitute them: such as the violence of the French army, the repression of massacres, the existence of the *harkis*. It additionally fluctuated from being characterised as part of a global decolonisation movement to an event within French

history. This shift can for example be observed in the position of the war among themes and chapters in textbooks, but also in the lessened representation of Algerians over time, as the focus on decolonisation emphasised the fight for/against independence, while the French context highlighted events important to residents of the metropole (such as the Algiers putsch). Yet regardless of these evolutions, these visuals have always been representative of a francocentric perspective. Indeed, to answer the second part of this thesis' research question, "*how* has that representation evolved over time?" these described shifts can be explained by one factor: evolutions in French contemporary societal self-descriptions and debates. With each chapter, this paper has continuously presented the political and historical contexts and shown how they have served to explain significant representational changes. From visualising Algerian decolonisation within a global movement to a uniquely French context, the contemporary political and memorial discourses explain such a shift. Clearly, though visual representations of the Algerian War of Independence have changed over time they have remained fundamentally rooted in a French perspective.

What does this evolution tell us about the role of visuals in the representation of history in French textbooks? That in the same manner as text — and perhaps sometimes to a higher degree — iconography is a significant tool within the larger function of textbooks in remediating history according to the contemporary societal issues considered legitimate to its self-description. In the first post-Algerian War decades, French society was mainly concerned with decolonisation itself, reconciling with the loss of its colonial empire. The focus was therefore more on the Algerian War of Independence as a decolonial movement, easily justified by the larger, global decolonisation movements of the postwar period (rather than a consequence of the unequal colonial system of the French empire). This is exemplified by the presence of Algerians witnessed in earlier visualisations of the war, whether through their physical presence in photographs or mentions of the FLN's violence. Algerians are further represented in celebratory images, used to present France as a country of human rights and modernity: posthumously supporting independence and the development of the "Third World." Though the colonial power clearly fought against independence, these facts are visually downplayed, highlighting the "pacifying mission" of the military and emphasising the tragedy of the *pieds-noirs*. Over time, the positive narrative of decolonisation served to criticise the stubborn, archaic, French empire, presenting the

current Fifth Republic as modern and universalist. Indeed, in a time of such political upheavals, the imagery reinforced traditional French ideals and values.

However, such a singular visual narrative of the war was no longer applicable in the later decades, marred by consistent and growing memorial conflicts. In response, visuals have since then presented a multiperspective Algerian War of Independence: whether to counterbalance each other in the late 80s and 90s, or to legitimise collective memories in the 2000s and onwards. Paradoxically, this multiperspectivity therefore readdressed Algerian decolonisation from a francocentric view. For example, representing French soldiers as most in the metropole would have seen them, as young men about to encounter danger rather than a cold, violent, and monolithic military. This shift is noticeably striking after 2008, with textbooks between 1983 and 2005 embodying representational characteristics from both a decolonisation and francocentric perspective, acting as a more transitory period. Indeed, when politics of memory began taking form within French society from the 1980s onwards, the iconography explored in this paper shows textbooks attempting to navigate between different collective memories and cultural remembrances: becoming, as Marcus Otto has demonstrated, objects of these postcolonial politics of memory.[175]

To reiterate my claims: the visuals explored in this paper can be seen as a negotiation between different groups and their collective memories of the Algerian War of Independence. This has been characterised by an overarching French perspective on the conflict, even when textbooks explicitly attempted to present a multiperspective narrative.

In the first chapter, I offered a description of representation emphasising that how people and events are depicted shaped how they were in turn interacted within society. I have shown in this paper, through an analysis of the evolution of visuals over time, that the images presented in textbooks have not only impacted discussions about Algerian decolonisation in French society, but their representations have in turn been shaped by these very discussions.

6.2 Limitations and further research

Though this thesis has offered new perspectives on visual representation in textbooks, especially regarding the Algerian War of Independence, the limited scope of my

[175] Otto, "The Challenge of Decolonization School History Textbooks as Media and Objects of the Postcolonial Politics of Memory in France since the 1960s".

research and paper have certainly affected how much I have been able to study. This section will present the limitations of this thesis and suggest further research angles and possibilities.

In studying 50 years of visuals, this paper has only studied a small selection of the iconography in textbooks across the decades. As discussed in Chapter 1, the archive from which I gathered these textbooks is unfortunately limited, first restricting my scope to 1970-2020, and second lessening the total number of images analysed. My discussion of larger representational shifts is therefore contained to a specific selection of textbooks and could have perhaps benefited from a wider breadth of sources. Indeed, though my focus is visual, I have emphasised the obscured production processes of textbooks, and the individual dynamics of their use in classrooms. An informal discussion with a history teacher who has participated in the production of history textbooks gave me invaluable insights into textbooks iconography, in both their selection process and teaching contexts.[176] Due to the scope of my thesis this information simply provided me with background knowledge, but more formal research into these dynamics could bring new insights regarding the use of visuals in education and representation. Such as, a combined study of how teachers engage with textbook imagery in classrooms and/or how iconography is chosen in textbook production, compared to what standalone representation they offer in textbooks and how these meanings differ from their (intended) use.

The quantity of themes, subjects, and groups represented in the 170 images selected is an additional limitation, as the scope of this paper is too restricted to possibly discuss all the differences and similarities across 50 years of visuals. While the resulting choices were made with an effort to exemplify as many significant changes in visuals as possible, the definition of “significant” is ultimately subjective. It is likely that the images and themes I analysed were chosen because they confirmed my preconceived notions, or precisely because they challenged them. Further research on the subject could assuredly benefit from a wider selection of textbooks and larger study of their contents (such as intentionally complementary chapters).

A comment should additionally be made regarding the chronological divisions that framed my empirical chapters. As it was briefly mentioned in Chapter 5 (section

[176] For example, he explained how he often recontextualised images in his classroom, reinterpreting the messaging in the textbook.

5.4 Chapters: a segmented history), certain evolutions in textbook iconography cannot be relegated to one time period and are in fact incredibly gradual and non-linear. Due to the multifaceted nature of textbook production and constant curricula changes, the contents of textbooks are still highly heterogenous, even in the same year. Additionally, changes in content are often linked to historiographic innovations, which take time to write into textbooks. This is for example evident in the iconographic shift after 2005. Clearly, visuals mostly changed after 2008, when a reform was introduced. Though the 2005 memory law was very much a cause of the reform, years passed before it had any real effect on textbooks visuals. While it was helpful and practical to segment my thesis into different periods, the rigid nature of selecting specific years might have limited my analysis of an evolution. Rather than looking for ways in which visuals generally evolved, I often looked for changes that conformed to my timeline. To a certain extent, this likely discounted non-linear changes, favouring instead indicators of a more progressive evolution.

Finally, due to my limited scope, I was unable to delve further into the bilateral textbook commissions briefly mentioned in Chapter 5. However, I believe an analysis of the visuals used in those textbooks could be incredibly informative; especially as these committees seem to have more transparent production processes than traditional textbooks. I do not believe a study has been done on the topic thus far, but it could bring new insights into research on representations and their implications in such bilateral efforts to create “common histories”.

Nevertheless, I hope that this thesis has shown that visuals in textbooks are not simply illustrative or decorative elements used to distract students from heavy paragraphs in text. Their study is absolutely imperative to holistically understanding how textbooks represent not only contentious historical events, but any group, discipline, ideology — in fact, any topic.

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