

# **Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare**

*A case study of the French Army in Algeria 1954-1960*

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**Defence R&D Canada – Centre for Security Science**

Contractor Report

DRDC CSS CR 2012-020

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## Abstract

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This paper proposes a case study to illustrate the usefulness of sociological institutional analysis as a method to uncover “blue force” challenges to deal with irregular warfare. The French Army’s adaptation to revolutionary warfare in Algeria, starting in 1954, is used to illustrate both the application of the methodology and how institutional forces can hinder as well as overwhelm transformation for irregular warfare. The analysis emphasizes three key dimensions of the French Army’s institutional adaptation: the regulative, normative and cognitive. These empirical elements are used to show how they interacted and influenced the institutional implementation of the French COIN structures.

## Résumé

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Ce document propose une étude de cas afin de démontrer l’utilité de l’analyse institutionnelle du cadre sociologique comme méthode servant à connaître les défis qu’a dû relever la « force bleue » pour gérer une guerre irrégulière. L’adaptation de l’armée française lors de la guerre révolutionnaire ayant débuté en 1954, en Algérie, illustre l’application de la méthodologie et la manière dont les institutions peuvent nuire ou submerger une transformation face à une guerre irrégulière. Cette analyse met l’accent sur trois points essentiels de l’adaptation institutionnelle de l’armée française, c’est-à-dire les aspects réglementaire, normatif et cognitif. Ces éléments empiriques démontrent comment ils interagissent et influencent la mise en œuvre institutionnelle des structures COIN de la France.

## Executive summary

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### **Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare: A case study of the French Army in Algeria 1954-1960**

**Eric Ouellet; Pierre C. Pahlavi; DRDC CSS CR 2012-020; Defence R&D Canada – CSS; December 2012 .**

**Introduction or background:** This paper proposes a case study to illustrate the usefulness of sociological institutional analysis as a method to uncover “blue force” challenges to deal with irregular warfare. The French Army’s adaptation to revolutionary warfare in Algeria, starting in 1954, is used to illustrate both the application of the methodology and how institutional forces can hinder as well as overwhelm transformation for irregular warfare. The analysis emphasizes three key dimensions of the French Army’s institutional adaptation: the regulative, normative and cognitive. These empirical elements are used to show how they interacted and influenced the institutional implementation of the French COIN structures.

The notion of social institution is a fundamental one in social sciences. Society is possible only if there is a degree of cohesiveness and predictability in its fundamental dynamics. Such cohesiveness and predictability are often described as the two pillars of social order. Institutions are in many ways a formalization of these two pillars, as they are made both of rules and sanctions that govern behaviours, and of ways of thinking and feeling that govern attitudes. Behaviours and attitudes, in turn, reinforce each other in maintaining the internal integrity of the institution.

**Results:** This case study on the French military adaptation during the Algerian war is about a past conflict, and thus it is first and foremost an historical analysis. However, institutional analysis provides a tool to understand historical decision-making regarding how to wage irregular warfare that goes much beyond the prescriptive premises of the rational decision-making model. The case study illustrates those present-day challenges regarding irregular warfare can be effectively studied by using institutional analysis. If military planners and analysts do their work only within the parameters of the rational decision-making model, they are at risk of supporting decisions that are critically flawed.

As Richard Scott wrote, “organizations require more than material resources and technical information if they are to survive and thrive in their social environments. They also need acceptability and credibility”. Irregular warfare brings fundamental challenges inside and outside the institution, but these challenges are first and foremost about the legitimacy of the institution. This legitimacy is something quite diffused and oftentimes difficult to identify, but it is very real in allowing or preventing decisions and actions to happen. The irregular enemy, by using means that are asymmetric to ours, seeks to shaken the legitimacy of our armed forces, which in turn paralyzes them in the long term.

Institutional change, as this study of the Algerian conflict shows, does not necessarily lead to strong bases for anchoring legitimacy. The French Army won the war in Algeria, but France still lost its colony. The Algerian conflict shows that institutional legitimacy is a multifaceted dynamic. If legitimacy can be reinforced within the institution, it can be diminished at a greater

rate outside the institution. Military institutions engaged in irregular conflicts are probably the most at risk of falling into this dual dynamic of legitimacy, as these conflicts are not purely military in nature. If one adds to the mix that NATO is made of several institutions, the risk appears to be even greater. The search for the most common denominator of legitimacy, although politically sound, may be NATO's Achilles' heel.

# Sommaire

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## Analyse institutionnelle et guerre irrégulière : étude de cas sur l'armée française en Algérie, de 1954 à 1960

Eric Ouellet; Pierre C. Pahlavi; DRDC CSS CR 2012-020; R & D pour la défense Canada – CSS; Décembre 2012 .

**Introduction ou contexte :** Ce document propose une étude de cas afin de démontrer l'utilité de l'analyse institutionnelle du cadre sociologique comme méthode servant à connaître les défis qu'a dû relever la « force bleu » pour gérer une guerre irrégulière. L'adaptation de l'armée française lors de la guerre révolutionnaire ayant débuté en 1954, en Algérie, illustre l'application de la méthodologie et la manière dont les institutions peuvent nuire ou submerger une transformation face à une guerre irrégulière. Cette analyse met l'accent sur trois points essentiels de l'adaptation institutionnelle de l'armée française, c'est-à-dire les aspects réglementaire, normatif et cognitif. Ces éléments empiriques démontrent comment ils interagissent et influencent la mise en œuvre institutionnelle des structures COIN de la France.

La notion d'institution sociale est essentielle en sciences humaines. Une société peut exister uniquement s'il y a un certain niveau de cohésion et de prévisibilité dans sa dynamique fondamentale. Ces deux éléments sont souvent considérés comme les piliers de l'ordre social qui forment, de diverses manières, des institutions fondées sur des règles et des sanctions régissant le comportement, ainsi que sur des façons de penser et des sentiments déterminant l'attitude. Pour leur part, le comportement et l'attitude se renforcent mutuellement en assurant l'intégrité interne des institutions.

**Résultats :** Cette étude de cas sur l'adaptation de l'armée française durant la guerre d'Algérie porte sur un conflit passé. Ainsi, il s'agit d'abord et avant tout d'une analyse historique. Cependant, l'analyse institutionnelle permet de comprendre les prises de décision historiques qui visent à entamer une guerre irrégulière allant bien au-delà de la prémisse normative du modèle de prise de décision rationnelle. Cette étude démontre que ce type d'analyse permet d'examiner efficacement les défis actuels que présente la guerre irrégulière. En respectant uniquement les paramètres du modèle de prise de décision rationnelle, les analystes et les planificateurs militaires risquent de soutenir des décisions erronées.

Comme l'a écrit M. Richard Scott, « les ressources matérielles et l'information technique ne suffisent pas pour assurer la survie et la réussite d'organisations dans leur environnement social. L'acceptabilité et la crédibilité sont également nécessaires. » La guerre irrégulière présente, au sein et à l'extérieur des institutions, des problèmes fondamentaux qui portent avant tout sur la légitimité qui est parfois diffuse et souvent difficile à identifier. Cependant, elle est très réelle pour permettre ou prévenir l'exécution de décisions et d'actions. L'ennemi irrégulier qui utilise des méthodes asymétriques aux forces armées cherche à ébranler la légitimité de celles-ci et les paralyser à long terme.

Cette étude sur le conflit algérien montre que les changements institutionnels ne renforcent pas nécessairement les bases permettant d'ancrer la légitimité. L'armée française a gagné la guerre en Algérie, mais la France a perdu sa colonie. Ceci met en évidence la dynamique

multidimensionnelle de la légitimité institutionnelle. S'il est possible d'accroître la légitimité au sein des institutions, il est également possible de la réduire plus rapidement à l'extérieur de celles-ci. Les institutions militaires participant à des guerres irrégulières sont probablement les plus à risque de tomber dans cette double dynamique de légitimité, puisque ces conflits ne sont pas de nature strictement militaire. Si l'on considère le fait que l'OTAN est formée de diverses institutions, alors le risque semble encore plus grand. La recherche du dénominateur de la légitimité, malgré le plan politique, est possiblement le talon d'Achilles de l'organisation.

# Table of contents

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Abstract .....	i
Résumé .....	i
Executive summary .....	ii
Sommaire .....	iv
Table of contents .....	vi
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Institutional Analysis as a Framework .....	1
1.2 The Three Pillars of Institutional Analysis.....	2
2 The Case study.....	4
2.1 The cultural cognitive Pillar .....	4
2.2 The Normative Pillar .....	6
2.3 The Regulative Pillar.....	7
3 Integrated Analysis: Legitimacy inside and outside .....	10
4 Conclusion.....	14
References .....	16





# 1 Introduction

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As irregular warfare requires, by definition, a degree of adaptation from the conventional to the non-conventional, success in defeating the enemy is in part dependent on the friendly forces' capability to adapt to a new context. Organizational adaptation, however, is not simply a matter of reorganizing structures, or modifying C2 and doctrine. Such adaptation also requires dealing with deep and oftentimes very subtle institutional forces that prevent effective change from taking place. Sociological institutional analysis provides a powerful tool to uncover such institutional forces. Beyond uncovering institutional forces that hinder transformation, the sociological prism is also useful to understand how some institutional forces can also lead to unwanted adaptation that can be equally problematic in an irregular warfare context.

The French Army's adaptation to irregular warfare in Algeria, starting in 1954, is used to illustrate both the application of the methodology and how institutional forces can hinder as well as overwhelm transformation for irregular warfare. Using sociological institutional analysis as a key framework, the analysis emphasizes three key dimensions of the French Army adaptation to irregular warfare in Algeria: the regulative (rules, regulation, policies, either formal or informal), normative (values, norms, formally and informally espoused), and cognitive (worldviews, shared thought patterns). The empirical material used for this case study consists of a combination of military publications, archive documents emanating from the French Army's History Section (SHAT) based in Vincennes (France) and some retrospective sociological analysis of the French Army's COIN during the Algerian conflict. From the initial embracing of revolutionary warfare theories to the institutionalization of psychological action, this study analyzes the evolution of the conceptual debate that took place within the Military Staff and the theoretical contribution of French irregular warfare theorists. These empirical elements are used to show how they influenced the institutional implementation of the new irregular warfare approach, emphasizing the weight of these normative and cultural-cognitive dimensions. The establishment of the COIN structures illustrates the regulative dimensions of the institutional adaptation to irregular warfare, a particular emphasis being placed on the extension of psychological warfare through the creation of the 5<sup>th</sup> *Bureau of Psychological action*. The combined study of these multiple factors will allow tackling the crucial question of legitimacy and clarifying the role of institutional constraints in the failure of the French COIN. More generally, through this theoretical approach, the French case study will aid understanding of the logic of stability and the dynamic of change resulting from the interaction among the normative, cultural, cognitive and regulative pillars of institutions.

## 1.1 Institutional Analysis as a Framework

The notion of social institution is a fundamental one in social sciences. Society is possible only if there is a degree of cohesiveness and predictability in its fundamental dynamics. Such cohesiveness and predictability are often described as the two pillars of social order.<sup>1</sup> Institutions are in many ways a formalization of these two pillars, as they are made both of rules and sanctions that govern behaviours, and of ways of thinking and feeling that govern attitudes. Behaviours and attitudes, in turn, reinforce each other in maintaining the internal integrity of the institution.

The internal integrity of an institution, however, is never assured, and must be protected, as an institution can also be influenced by environmental forces. Émile Durkheim, the founder of modern sociology, emphasized that any institution can exist only if it serves a social function that can be legitimized. Hence, institutions expend a lot of efforts in protecting their legitimacy in order to face environmental pressures. An institution will engage in substantial adaptation only if the threat coming from the environment against its institutional legitimacy is perceived as presenting more risks to its survival than the risks associated with fundamentally upsetting its internal integrity. In other words, institutions change only if they have no other options available.

Sociologists have studied changes within institutions for quite a long time, through what is known as institutional analysis. Since the 1980s, institutional analysis has been used to explain how both public and private organizations take economic and managerial decisions. Implicit in this approach is that there are non-rational, non-economic, and non-psychological

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<sup>1</sup> See Michael Hechter and Christine Horne, "The problem of Social Order", in Hechter, Michael and Christine Horne, *Theories of Social Order* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003); and Dennis H. Wrong, *The Problem of Order* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

factors that explain why firms in a given industry, or public agencies, tend to organize themselves the way they do. Yet, however powerful this approach may be, very few sociologists have applied it to the military institution.

The military institution is a component of the state, especially if one considers Max Weber's classical definition that it is a social entity having the monopoly of legitimate violence. Hence, the military institution, as a component of the state, has as its primary social function to maintain the legitimacy of the state by the use, actual or potential, of legitimate violence.<sup>2</sup> How an institution legitimizes its existence is therefore closely linked to the social environment in which its parent state finds itself. For instance, the military institutions in representative democracies do not face the same challenges as those in dictatorial regimes. These issues are well known to the students of civil-military relations, especially after Samuel Huntington's landmark book *The Soldier and the State*. As well, it is also known, following another milestone work, by Morris Janowitz, how military institutions maintain their internal integrity when facing challenges from their parent civil society, such as the integration of women and minorities in their ranks. What is not so well known, however, is how the military institution maintains its internal integrity when the challenges are coming from facing a new type of enemy that does not conform to the usual definition of the state-centric military warfare.

## 1.2 The Three Pillars of Institutional Analysis

Although there are several schools of thought in sociological institutional analysis, one of the few authors who succeed in providing a comprehensive framework to study institutions is Richard Scott,<sup>3</sup> professor emeritus at the University of Chicago.

Scott's framework follows the main pillars of social order, but provides more details for one of them. The first pillar is defined as regulative and encompasses the notion of social predictability. It is made of both formal and informal rules, regulations, laws, and sanction systems. Scott divides the second pillar of social order related to its cohesiveness into two distinct pillars of institutional analysis, namely the normative and the cultural-cognitive. Social cohesion is possible if a number of implicit values and norms are shared about what is desirable and legitimate, and these shared notions form Scott's second pillar. The third pillar in Scott's model, the cultural-cognitive, refers to shared preconceived notions, thought patterns, and worldviews that also contribute to maintaining social cohesiveness. Combined together, these three pillars of institutional analysis provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the actions and decisions within an institution.

The key unit of analysis in institutional analysis remains the key decisions taken by the key actors, which lead to real actions or inaction. This in turn requires a degree of qualitative interpretation, but it is similar to interpretation done in the well-established field of organizational analysis.

The main variables that determine why these real actions or inaction take the turn they do are based on the three pillars of institutional analysis, and are considered as interdependent variables. For instance, rules and regulations can limit what is thinkable (cultural-cognitive), while the rules themselves can also be seen as an expression of some underlying norms and values. To overcome these overlapping dynamics, institutional analysis analytically divides the three pillars, and uses some specific indicators for each.<sup>4</sup> From the point of view of the regulative pillar, the indicators are not only the formal and informal rules, regulations, laws and sanction systems, but also how rules and sanctions are invoked when taking decisions. The normative pillar indicators are related to social expectations about espousing shared norms and standards of action. The invocation of "appropriateness" and the "normal" way of doing business are typical indicators. Lastly, the typical cultural-cognitive indicators are specific beliefs, worldviews, thought patterns and the invocation of what is "right", "good" or "true".

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<sup>2</sup> The genesis of the Western state as a military state has been extensively analyzed by Charles Tilly in *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> See Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas and Interest* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Marc Schneiberg and Elisabeth Clemens, "The typical tools for the Job: Research Strategies in Institutional Analysis", *Sociological Theory* 24/3 (2006), 209.

Using the French Army's counterinsurgency experience, the following sections show how useful is Scott's framework to study the influence of a set of non-material factors on the adaptation of a western military institution in a non-conventional context.

## 2 The Case study

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To ease understanding of the institutional adaption of the French experience in Algeria, the cultural-cognitive and normative dimensions will be presented first, as the regulative reality came historically after norms, values and cognitive patterns were challenged within the French armed forces.

### 2.1 The cultural cognitive Pillar

During the immediate pre-war phase the maturation of the embryonic doctrine of French counter-revolutionary warfare benefited from a set of contextual cognitive and cultural factors, the first being the rediscovery of France's colonial methods developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The theories of the founding fathers of the colonial school, such as Gallieni, Bugeaud and Lyautey, were still echoing within the military circles. But the specific constraints of the Algerian rebellion revived their classic pacification methods in which the local population is an essential element. Those officers belonging to the Indigenous Affairs corps, in particular, ardently defended psychological action which they linked to the idea of political action developed by Gallieni. Like the latter, they believed that a country is not conquered and pacified when a military operation has decimated or subjected its inhabitants by means of terror, concluding that barely has the fighting stopped that the seeds of rebellion start germinate in the masses, reinforced the bitterness accumulated by the brutal action of force...<sup>5</sup> Faithful to the colonial school theories and its strategy of winning hearts, a number of theorists were convinced that the pacification of Algeria should once again include an enlightened psychological action capable of addressing the causes of rebellion rather than its consequences. Stressing the importance of preparing for war among the population to prevent its joining the other side, the theory of *guerre dans le milieu social*<sup>6</sup>, or *war in the crowd*<sup>7</sup>, developed by Colonel Jean Nemo, merits particular mention.

Another important factor that influenced the French COIN in Algeria was the experience with revolutionary warfare in Indochina. The unsuccessful French military experience there was not only a shock for a nation still believing in the righteousness of the colonial cause, but also for the military involved it was an uncomfortable discovery of an enemy not abiding by the same military ways. The discovery of Vietminh techniques of mass persuasion, and the profound ideological nature of the conflict, confronted the French Army with a dimension of war purely theoretical until then. Many in the military viewed as a wake up call Giap's comments to the effect that France was defeated in Indochina because its Army was not enough practicing politics.<sup>8</sup>

A final cognitive factor enabling the acceptance of psychological warfare was the linkage made with the wider context of the Cold War, in spite of the fact that both the Indochina and Algerian conflicts were essentially colonial in nature. After Indochina, some French military thinkers transposed the Vietminh methods into a general theory of *revolutionary warfare* stirred up by international communism. This theory gives arguments for a geostrategic interpretation of communism and its global expansion.<sup>9</sup> Statements such as those from the Soviet Marshall Bulganin that political-military warfare is the only form of war thinkable in an age of "ultra-imperialism"<sup>10</sup> were instrumental in psychological warfare's gaining acceptance within French military circles. Within this logic, the Algerian FLN was perceived as simply a pawn in the global ambitions of Moscow. The Communists were using an indirect approach and psychological methods to outflank the Western defense in the Middle East and Africa. The Algerian nationalist aspects of the conflict were ignored, or even

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<sup>5</sup> *Instruction du 22 mai 1898*, quoted in Edward Mead Earle (dir.), *Les Maîtres de la Stratégie*, tome I (Paris: Champs Flammarion, 1985), 277-278.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Nemo (Colonel), "la guerre dans le milieu social", *Revue de Défense nationale*, mai 1956 : 605-653.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Nemo (Colonel), "la guerre dans la foule", *Revue de Défense nationale*, juin 1956: 721-734.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Raoul Girardet, *La crise militaire française 1945-1962 - Aspects sociologiques et idéologiques* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1964) 90.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Villatoux, "L'institutionnalisation de l'arme psychologique pendant la guerre d'Algérie au miroir de la guerre froide", *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 4 (2002): 40.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted by Guy Weber (capitaine), "La thèse de Boulganine", *Revue de Défense nationale* (avril 1956) : 475.

considered as a decoy to mislead Western forces.<sup>11</sup> For the theorists of revolutionary warfare in 1956-57, the subversive threat was so pervasive that anything that was cognitively dissonant with their views was overlooked.

Therefore, and especially after the failure of France, Britain, and Israel to contain the Arab nationalist movement through the Suez operation in 1956, the psychological action methods developed to deal with revolutionary warfare not only appeared ready to use, but were also politically justifiable. Psychological action, which was until then perceived as being only a sub-component of the French military CIMIC activities, became the key tool for dealing with revolutionary warfare. In fact, it was perceived as the only tool that could effectively counter the subversive activities of the enemy. A new form of less “soldier-like” warfare was thus easier to interpret within the “mainstream” military affairs of the day (i.e., as an anti-Communist tool). In such a context, the emphasis on psychological warfare rather than pure kinetic force was also to become a dogma,<sup>12</sup> to the point where traditional military values of the profession of arms were seriously challenged.<sup>13</sup>

It is in this context that the conflict in Algeria became a unique occasion for the theorists of irregular warfare to validate their new theories as to how to handle revolutionary warfare, with psychological warfare being the key operative approach. This new canon was to confer on the Army – in the eyes of the leading thinkers of revolutionary warfare – a central political and ideological function within the Nation. This new role, however, was not only a “technical” one. Psychological action, which was hitherto regarded as a mere *cog in the civil administration of National Defense*,<sup>14</sup> turned into the only tool capable of countering an adversary’s subversive attacks, thus conferring on the Army a major political role. The Army’s new political role was interpreted within the context of deep civil-military tensions, some of which were an integral part of the military identity. The introduction of psychological warfare was, therefore, possible because it was in line with a common self-concept within military institutions typically expressed through a strong sense of moral superiority, particularly when the comparison is made with civilian institutions. The defenders of the revolutionary warfare dogma thus saw the Army as having a key role and responsibility in transforming young men into citizens through the universal military service.

Incubated in this favourable context, the revolutionary warfare “virus” rapidly spread and contaminated the intellectual strata of the French Army. Officers like Colonel Lacheroy and general Chassin were among the first to catch it. They later wrote in a famous 1954 piece in the *Revue militaire d'information*, that “the time has come for the Army to stop being ‘la Grande Muette’ [the Great Mute]; the time has come for the free world to resort to some of its adversary’s methods, if the free world does not want to be crushed. But one of those methods, and undoubtedly the most important, resides in the ideological role which, behind the Iron Curtain, is relegated to military forces.”<sup>15</sup> More importantly, Chassin also added that the Army must become a centre to regenerate the nation threatened by Communist subversion.

A theoretical revolution therefore emerged characterized by an increasing interest in revolutionary war from the junior ranks and spreading to higher levels through a phenomenon of hierarchical recurrence (*réurrence hiérarchique*).<sup>16</sup> Diffused by a handful of advocates, a new approach imposed vis-à-vis the psychological weapon as a necessary standard, which would, in turn, have a profound institutional effect on the entire hierarchical structure of the French Army. Among these, Captain Jacques Hogard was preaching the urgent need to transform military mentalities and the political-military structures.<sup>17</sup> For him, the only way to manage counter-insurgency warfare was to create a “perfect union” between the nation and the Army<sup>18</sup> through the implementation of an administrative-military hierarchical structure. In general, even before the events in Algeria, and in a context of heightened Cold War, many were advocating a change in the military structures to incorporate full-fledged psychological warfare. Captain Prestat, for instance, was known to proclaim that

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<sup>11</sup> Villatoux, “L’institutionnalisation de l’arme psychologique”, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 312.

<sup>13</sup> Girardet, *La crise militaire*, 174.

<sup>14</sup> Maurice Mégret, *L’action psychologique* (Paris: Fayard, 1959), 117.

<sup>15</sup> L.M. Chassin (General), “Du rôle idéologique de l’Armée”, *Revue militaire d’information* 240 (October 1954): 13.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Villatoux et Marie-Catherine, *La république et son armée face au péril subversif : guerre et action psychologiques en France 1945-1960*, Paris : Indes Savantes, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Hogard (Commandant), “Guerre révolutionnaire ou révolution dans l’art de la guerre”, *Revue de Défense Nationale* (septembre 1956): 1505.

<sup>18</sup> This notion is known in France as the “lien Armée-Nation,” (the Army-nation link) which was at the centre of many debates. For a more recent version of this debate, please see Claude Weber, “Armed forces, nation, and military officers: France at the crossroad”, in E. Ouellet, *New Directions in Military Sociology* (Toronto: de Sitter, 2005), 209-229.

Western nations must urgently create fully developed psychological warfare organizations and be ready to seriously invest in them, if they did not want to be outflanked by their enemies.<sup>19</sup>

Like an epistemic community, the revolutionary war theorists influenced the ideological evolution of the armed forces; but one of them will play a more important role than the others. From 1955-56, in the majority of new structures of action and psychological warfare, Colonel Lacheroy, real mentor to the Minister of National Defense (Bourges-Maunoury) had a key impact on the whole process. His theories were uncovered in the speeches of the Minister of Defense, including one published in 1956 in the *Revue militaire d'information* where he defines his vision for a modern army. He explained that the French Army was not adapted to face present and future conflicts, in which the political, economic, social and especially psychological factors play a decisive role. The Army must control the human environment while the government must reorganize the national defence based on a dual strategy: to provide its leaders with training in politico-psychology and to develop a close collaboration between the civilian authorities and the military within mixed staff structures.<sup>20</sup> In 1956, the theorists of revolutionary warfare won the day. The Committee of Psychological Action (Comité d'action psychologique de la Défense nationale), chaired by Lacheroy, was assigned the crucial task of developing a doctrine on psychological action. This centrality of the most emblematic theorist of the doctrine of revolutionary war symbolizes the importance of the cognitive pillar in the institutionalization of psychological warfare during this first embryonic phase.

Clearly, the “technical” normative shift related to espousing psychological warfare was occurring within a deeper and more stable set of cultural-cognitive values. What really changed was the desire to act in accordance to these values, and allow expression of more critical views about the standard separation between the political and military realms. As Steinberg underlines, “actors rarely, if ever, remain silent as they make policy or build regulatory regimes. They think, meet, argue, make claims, define options, conduct studies, tell stories, and generate discursive output, including reports, interviews, minutes, and newspaper commentaries. In producing this output, actors reveal how they perceive problems and make (or fail to make) connections among concepts, objects and practices. They also articulate models, fairness principles, and criteria for reasonableness or efficiency.”<sup>21</sup> In the case of the French COIN and irregular warfare in Algeria, the influence of statements made by the thinkers of the revolutionary war was far from negligible. Their theoretical texts are distributed in military schools, the conferences serve as a theoretical basis for training future officers who, imbued with their ideas, began to integrate the new precepts as a normative reference.

## 2.2 The Normative Pillar

Spurred on by these converted theorists, and mostly through the training and educational system of the French Army, military officers achieved a nascent normative consent on how psychological warfare ought to be used. By 1954-55 the study of revolutionary warfare was fully integrated in the French War College (ESG) curriculum. This official recognition by the Army High Command signaled the beginning of a much broader diffusion of ideas about this type of warfare.<sup>22</sup> Theorists of revolutionary warfare such as Mao were studied in French military schools, and the lessons from Indochina, in particular, were the object of intense attention in preparing the officer corps to deal with the expansion of communism.<sup>23</sup> The Centre d'études asiatiques et africaines (CEAA), to become later the Centre militaire d'information et de spécialisation pour l'outre-mer (CMISOM), was quite instrumental in disseminating ideas about the new type of warfare. Most speakers were Indochina veterans who were influencing younger officers to embrace the notion that new ways of thinking about war were badly needed.

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<sup>19</sup> Vincennes, France, French Army's History Section (SHAT), carton stratégie II, *La guerre psychologique en Indochine. Ses opérations et ses résultats*, p. 22, quoted in Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 318.

<sup>20</sup> In Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 370.

<sup>21</sup> Schneiberg and Clemens, “The typical tools for the Job: Research Strategies in Institutional Analysis”, 211.

<sup>22</sup> Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 320.

<sup>23</sup> Mégret, *L'action psychologique*, 22.

The formal curriculum was also accompanied by the distinct intent to rejuvenate the justness of the French cause in Algeria. The goal was to instill a renewed patriotism among those who were fighting in Algeria and who were called to support “a collective moral stance”.<sup>24</sup> In military schools, young officers were taught to consider the Algerian rebellion as the product of a pan-Arab and pan-communist conspiracy, while encouraged to develop their allegiance to France and the West in general. This combination of pragmatic curriculum and normative reinforcement could be seen also in some of the military specialized training centres. For instance, the Centre d’instruction de pacification et contre guérilla (CIPCG) in Arzew, Algeria, created in 1956, had the double task of teaching about revolutionary warfare and the means and methods of psychological warfare, but also to get the complete intellectual support of the officer corps for the pacification approach defined by the High Command. Hence, the learning of pragmatic techniques was embedded into ideological indoctrination. In other words, the French Army adaptation to irregular warfare was a mixture of anti-Communist methodologies, French patriotism, and standard psychological warfare procedures that were in many ways disconnected from reality.<sup>25</sup> A new “orthodoxy” was born, and like any other orthodoxy, it was largely out of phase with reality.

Now it is important emphasizing that, if the use of the psychological weapon was being progressively assimilated by some segments of the military establishment and elite, the support for this specific counter-insurgency method was in no way unanimous. Young officers and Indochina veterans adapted quite easily to these new concepts that, for the former, were an important part of their training, while the latter had experienced their effectiveness and were resolved to put their experience to profit to avoid another humiliation. However, draftees and reservists had more difficulties understanding the rationale of revolutionary action and psychological warfare. In December 1956, despite the fact that psychological operations structures were overall in place, an overview of the activities of *Itinerant Officers* (OI) clearly demonstrated the slow pace of the integration of psychological warfare principles in Algeria: In response to a precise questionnaire, the OI, back from their first mission in their units, estimated that only 45% of officers were familiar with the principles of revolutionary warfare while only 25% of them really applied those principles. Lastly, the hopes for civil servants’ cooperation appear to have been highly compromised, as the civil administration did not believe in revolutionary warfare, if not manifesting open hostility to a process in which it clearly had a minor stake.<sup>26</sup>

What institutional analysis mainly demonstrates is the difference of understanding and acceptance of the use of the psychological weapon. Following an institutionalist perspective, “legitimation ‘explains’ the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectified meanings. Legitimation justifies the institutional order by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives.”<sup>27</sup> In the case of the French revolutionary warfare, it is clear that the fate of the “new doctrine” was determined, to a large extent, by the general disbelief and reluctance emanating from those outside of the small circle of its supporters. The huge majority of army personnel never really understood why they had to care about psychology, education, social engagement, and politics, and become the “nation’s Jack-of-all-trades”.<sup>28</sup> The normative pillar consistently hindered the complete institutionalization of the 7th weapon which, *de facto*, was never fully accepted as a norm.

## 2.3 The Regulative Pillar

From a regulative point of view, the doctrine first benefitted from the weakness and opportunism of the shaky 4<sup>th</sup> République. This tottering regime needed the psychological weapon in order to restore its increasingly questioned authority and political legitimacy. Encouraged by the urgency of the situation, the legal authorities rushed to establish the essential fundamental structures for psychological warfare in only fifteen months. The first *psychological section* was constituted in haste in February within the High Command, mostly as a result of a series of operational failures. Throughout the year, the section did not receive any clear guidance as to how it was to be used. There was an interdepartmental committee for psychological action but it met very infrequently.<sup>29</sup> An increasing consensus developed about the need for structural reorganization of psychological warfare apparatus but it did not materialize before 1956,

<sup>24</sup> Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 376.

<sup>25</sup> Frédéric Guelton, “The French Army ‘Centre for Training and Preparation in Counter-Guerrilla Warfare’ (CIPCG) at Arzew”, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25/2 (2002): 39. It is important to note that the Centre eventually modified its curriculum in a way that was much more effective in preparing French military personnel for the Algerian conflict.

<sup>26</sup> SHAT, 1H 2533, *Synthèse des idées émises à la réunion des OI* les 17 et 18 décembre 1956.

<sup>27</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 92-93.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Raoul Girardet, *La crise militaire*, 191.

<sup>29</sup> SHAT, 1S 1, *Note pour le chef de l’état-major*, organisation de l’action et de la guerre psychologique dans les forces armées.

when Maurice Bourges-Maunoury was named Minister of Defence and provided the means to make it happen. A *psychological action committee* was created in January, led by the General Chief of Staff<sup>30</sup> to ensure horizontal coordination, while a *psychological action service* (SAPIDNFA) was created in April under the direct control of the Minister of Defence. The service was led by Colonel Lacheroy who was given a lot of freedom of action. As he was answering directly to the Minister, he was clearly in a powerful position to implement psychological action in Algeria.

One of the key difficulties was the weakness of the civilian administration, particularly in regions where the majority of the population was Muslim. The new civilian French governor of Algeria, Jacques Soustelle, had for his main objective to regain the trust of the Muslim population. To achieve his goal he transformed the indigenous auxiliary forces into mobile rural police under the command of French officers, and created a joint civil-military command for the Aures and Kabylie regions. Eventually extended to the entire country, these command structures relied on Sections Administratives Spéciales (SAS) and Sections Administratives Urbaines (SAU) in cities. The SAS and SAU were a mixture of human intelligence-gathering apparatus simultaneously providing healthcare services, education, local governance, and some reconstruction work. They were to play a key role in the pacification effort.<sup>31</sup>

From a legal standpoint, Algeria was simply the 10<sup>th</sup> military region of France, with one regional Bureau of Psychological Action (created in March 1955) and three regional bureaus, established in each of the main cities of Algeria (Algiers, Constantine, and Oran). There were three specific official tasks for those offices: *support the morale of the French troops by providing them with a better understanding of the Algerian problem; influence Muslim rural populations to maintain their trust in France and create a feeling of repulsion towards the insurgents; and provide shock psychological and symbolic actions against the insurgents to destroy their morale, and their belief in the righteousness of their cause.* In December, a mixed staff was created within the general government while, at the regional level, departmental committees periodically regrouped civil and military authorities. The Mollet government quickly expressed its willingness to develop political and psychological action. The staff working in the Bureau psychologique d’Afrique du Nord increased dramatically in February 1956 while two important structures were added: loudspeaker and leaflet units and roaming officers (*officiers itinérants*). Their use was specified by a provisional notice dated 26 June 1956, which for the first time made the distinction between psy-war and psychological action. By clarifying these type of concepts and giving a precise definition to the psychological weapon, the *Text All Weapons (Texte Toutes Armes - TTA) 117*, also called *Provisional Instruction on the Use of the Psychological Weapon*, officially promulgated on 29 July 1957,<sup>32</sup> was the first to establish a regulatory framework.<sup>33</sup>

During the summer of 1957, the Chief of the Cabinet, Maurice Bourges-Maunoury, made the decisive step in the inclusion of psychological weapon in the organic structure of the armed forces<sup>34</sup> with the establishment of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus, specializing in psychological warfare and instituted across the military establishment. On July 12<sup>th</sup> 1957, a French Diffusion Center (CDF) attached to the Prime Minister’s Office was created in order to govern all actions with regards to psychological warfare. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus were created within the General Staff of the Army, the military regions and divisions in France, and the French forces in Germany. Their link with the psychological action and information of National Defence was provided by EMFA’s Bureau of Psychological Action, raised for this purpose to the rank of fifth division.<sup>35</sup> Psychological officers were also assigned to military schools, large units, and then within the staff organization of subdivisions, departmental military commands, and training centres. The psychological weapon (also

<sup>30</sup> SHAT, 1R 31, *Décision ministérielle numéro 186*, DN-CAB-EMP-TS, 23 janvier 1956.

<sup>31</sup> An example is provided in Alexander Zervoudakis, “A Case of Successful Pacification,” in Martin Alexander and J.F.V. Keiger, *France and the Algerian War. Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 54-64.

<sup>32</sup> SHAT, 1H 2409, *Instruction provisoire sur l’emploi de l’arme psychologique*, Le général d’armée Ely, chef d’état-major général des Forces armées, 29 juillet 1957.

<sup>33</sup> On the surface, the new instruction was officialising the role of the 7<sup>th</sup> weapon. In fact, it was also limiting its increasing autonomy through the “unity of action” principle. As such TTA117 can be considered as one of the first attempts to regain the upper hand by a regulative power fearing that the 7<sup>th</sup> Weapon was running out of control. SHAT, 1H 2409, *Instruction provisoire sur l’emploi de l’arme psychologique*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> SHAT, 6T 521, *Décision ministérielle numéro 1557-DN-CAB-SAPI*, 6 juin 1957.

<sup>35</sup> SHAT, 1S3, *Note de service numéro 977-EMFA-5D*, 27 août 1957.

referred to as the 7<sup>th</sup> weapon) was thus inserted in the organic structure of the armed forces. It is worth mentioning that “[t]he creation of a distinct branch exclusively oriented toward psychological warfare appeared to be the consecration of Lacheroy’s conceptions.”<sup>36</sup> These original structures made the psychological weapon the central pillar around which the anti-revolutionary war was to be organized.

These 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus were concretely articulated around three sections: a psychological section (charged with matters of morale boosting and psychological actions) that prepared the Army to use psychological weapon; an information section that informs the command structure; and an international relations sections, charged with tightening the links between the armed forces and the nation. Within the 10<sup>th</sup> military region (i.e. Algeria), a specific structure applied. The new Algiers 5<sup>th</sup> Bureau (despite its dependency on the mixed psychological action committee) was integrated into the Joint Staff (EMI). Its work was divided into three somewhat different operational sections (studies, action, and international): The first was to elaborate the doctrine, prepare the plans of action and organize the instructions for all units; the second worked essentially in the midst of the civilian population (communications, diffusions, social groups, social and cultural activities and actions); while the third ensured the liaisons with the press and, more generally, with all French and foreign civilian intelligence organizations.

According to official organization charts, the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus were essentially dedicated to psychological action, as defined in the *TTA 117*, while psychological warfare operations (intoxication, rendition, and reunification) were tasks assigned to the Second and Third Bureaus. Quickly, however, these two components of the staff system became subservient to the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureau. As Villatoux notes, “Could this have been otherwise? The 5<sup>th</sup> Bureau was designed to deal with subversion whose primary characteristic is to attack all the potential vulnerabilities of the adversary. The 5<sup>th</sup> Bureau therefore had a holistic approach with regards to the management of the armed forces. Nothing must escape it; all is subject to be within its purview since all things may have a psychological dimension, and hence, its tendency to double other services [...] and to dictate their conduct.”<sup>37</sup> If the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus had a tendency to drift from the tactical to the strategic area, and then the political field, this was particularly true in Algiers, where it transformed itself simultaneously into a command and operational structure. The 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus were progressively seizing the intelligence work done by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bureau, and the operational planning work of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bureau. Their influence also extended clearly into the strategic realm “because they believed, explains François Géré, to possess the intellectual keys to open the door to victory in the ongoing conflict. [And they were tending] to exclusively own the definition of the war’s strategic goals.”<sup>38</sup> As the inevitable consequence, the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus, finally engaged in “a dangerous, yet logical, incursion into the sphere of political decision-making.”<sup>39</sup> The normative idea that the Army had to be in charge to handle this national peril, and the cognitive bias outgrown from the Indochinese conflict where psychological actions should be at the centre of military action found their concrete regulative implementation through the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureau system. An extreme form of whole-of-government construct was born.

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<sup>36</sup> Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 451.

<sup>37</sup> Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 432-433.

<sup>38</sup> François Géré, *La Guerre Psychologique* (Paris: Economica, 1997), 275.

<sup>39</sup> Géré, *La Guerre Psychologique*, 275.

### 3 Integrated Analysis: Legitimacy inside and outside

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For three years the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus supervised the use of the psychological weapon writ large throughout Algeria. A multitude of initiatives were implemented in both psychological action and warfare. Nevertheless, despite undeniable operational successes, the psychological weapon very quickly faced mounting accusations before being eventually dismantled in 1960. How can one explain this failure in spite of its substantial military contribution to the fight against the Algerian insurgency? Institutional analysis puts forward an analysis that takes into account a much more complex transformational dynamic, especially concerning the interweaving cultural, cognitive, normative, and regulative constraints. Undoubtedly, the combined weight of these constraints conditioned the choices of the various actors involved in the French COIN, and in a large measure influenced the turn of events.

If we adopt Zelizer's (1979) model which consists of evaluating the legitimacy of a given institution by taking into account the number of arguments that surrounds it, it seems that the French psychological warfare never enjoyed any real legitimacy. "Once an organizational form, industrial norm, or political regime acquires legitimacy," explains Zelizer, "equally visible things tend to occur: people stop fighting, debates cease, and organizations wither..."<sup>40</sup> Almost immediately after the set-up of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus, voices began to rise to condemn its political and ideological drifts. In spite of the full support from the military chain of command, and from many elements of the defence intelligentsia, revolutionary warfare and psychological actions were not strengthening the legitimacy of the military institution.

In general, it is institutions that set the limits of what is acceptable or not, in legal and moral terms. Through the lens of agency-structure relations, "that puts emphasis on the influence of institutions in defining acceptable social behaviours,"<sup>41</sup> sociological institutionalism sheds an important light. "According to this perspective, institutions, through cultural and cognitive codes that they generate and reproduce, draw the boundaries of the political by inculcating in actors specific ideas with regards to the legitimacy of a given action."<sup>42</sup> There is first a clear contradiction between the cultural and cognitive codes that generated the new institutions of psychological warfare and operations on the one hand, and the codes that animated the civilian French and international public opinion on the other. "The question of torture and harsh interrogation tactics plagued the French military efforts in Algeria and on the home front. The short-term necessity of obtaining the information [...] proved to be strategically counterproductive and put into question France's moral legitimacy."<sup>43</sup> The French Army, working under much fewer constraints, was in a way giving itself a Trojan horse: by having such latitude it also became the sole institution responsible for success or defeat in Algeria. But such freedom of action never came with full independence from the rest of the French society. Thus, the Army in Algeria remained normatively accountable.

What a closer examination of the French COIN experiment shows is that the Army remained also normatively accountable to itself. The sentiment shared by the majority of those implicated in psychological warfare and operations points to the rejection of the very techniques associated with this type of warfare. This may indicate that despite administrative institutionalization, psychological warfare was never integrated as a deeply rooted norm. As Captain Braquilanges notes: "It seems to me that after having analyzed the adverse method ... it is impossible for us to practice such monstrosity: We could no longer pretend to be the defenders of human dignity and the freedom of thoughts."<sup>44</sup> For most of the military, the psychological weapon must be adapted according to a traditional cultural-cognitive framework,

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<sup>40</sup> Schneiberg and Clemens, "The typical tools", 212.

<sup>41</sup> André Lecours, "L'approche néo-institutionnaliste en science politique : unité ou diversité?", *Politique et société* 21 (2002) : 3-15.

<sup>42</sup> Lecours, "L'approche néo-institutionnaliste en science politique", 15.

<sup>43</sup> Angela Rabasa and al., "Money in the Bank: Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations", *RAND Counterinsurgency Study* 4, National Defense Research Institute (2007), 24. In Kenneth M. Detreux (Lt Colonel, United States Marine Corps), "Contemporary Counterinsurgency (COIN) Insight from the French-Algerian War (1954-1962)", U.S. Army War College Class of 2008, 18.

<sup>44</sup> *Méthodes psychologiques utilisées pour forcer l'adhésion des esprits*, 17, 18, ESG, FV 702, quoted in Villatoux, *La république et son armée*, 325.

based on Western values. Faced with methods that are sometimes very far from such principles, normative compliance and integration did not occur. This contradiction between the regulative and the normative is undoubtedly largely responsible for the failing experience. “Actors who are aggrieved but not co-opted are an important source of pressure for institutional change.”<sup>45</sup> This is an important point to keep in mind in the context of institutional analysis: methodologically it is also important to measure how norms and cognitive biases are truly integrated.

What’s more, the use of the psychological weapon made the Army a true “State within a State” which, in turn, generated an adverse reaction from the legal power. The 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus put the psychological weapon in a position of autonomy, hence the reason for its reputation as veritable parallel hierarchy. The management priority of the population (education, social assistance, government) and psychological action (control of the media, information, propaganda) resulted in the delegation of the most extensive responsibilities to the armed forces, responsibilities normally assumed by the civilian authorities. The military state held, so to speak, all the prerogatives of a civilian state, with one exception, that of making political decisions. Gradually, this symbolic step was taken with the establishment of what K. Koonings and D. Kruijt called a “political army.”<sup>46</sup> If the regulative framework facilitated this process, the major turning point nevertheless occurred in January 1957, when, in order to crush an insurgent uprising in the Casbah in Algiers, the government granted full powers to General Jacques Massu, thereby giving the Army the power for which supporters of revolutionary warfare were clamouring. As noted by Field and Hudnut, “From that day, and until General De Gaulle firmly established the foundations for his powers, there were two governments in France.”<sup>47</sup> This incursion of the armed forces in the political sphere is today considered as one of the principal reasons for the failure of the French counterinsurgency experience.<sup>48</sup>

During the central period between January 1957 and August 1958, the French counter-insurgency experienced a series of resounding successes, and it became an enabler in the emancipation and the political engagement of the Army, whose increasing power in the face of a weakening government in metropolitan France led it to rethink the original rationale for its initial mission, namely, to keep Algeria within France. Having demanded from successive governments since 1956 that they be provided with clearer directions, and in return been offered nothing but vague and changing objectives, the Army decided, in late 1957, to establish its own political doctrine: the ideology of Integration, born of revolutionary warfare.<sup>49</sup> Opaque at first, it then crystallized upon the “French Algeria” theme, and its mission was based upon three fundamental objectives: *to preserve French sovereignty in Algeria, to extend full civil equality to Muslims, and to promote social and economic progress*. The Army was confident that such a programme would enable it to counter both the FLN’s separatist aspirations and the civil authorities’ failure to act.

The objective sought by the Integration doctrine satisfied the need for the armed forces to establish a clear and straightforward direction, something politicians had been unable to do, but, at the same time, it clearly constituted a new subject of criticism against the French COIN approach and a source of délégitimation. From 1959, military journals that had, in the previous five years, been a stronghold of the Revolutionary War started falling into the hands of its detractors. An incendiary article published in October by General Langlois shows the growing disapproval about the abuses associated with the practice of French counter-insurgency and the adoption of the strategy of integration: “Let’s go for the war of brains? Let’s go for loud-speaker campaigns? Warrior must be tamed? Well no, dear theorists, I am not following you any more ...”; and then adding “Mr. Theorists, please leave your studies where, far from the front, you dissect wars...”<sup>50</sup> Expressing a general weariness, the author believed it was high time for the Army to renounce its “revolutionary” mistakes and place itself again under the regulative authority embodied by General de Gaulle.<sup>51</sup> In the last weeks of 1959, the government’s intention to neutralize the 7<sup>th</sup> weapon converged with this movement of opinion to form a wave of hostility directed against the remnants of the revolutionary war.

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<sup>45</sup> Schneiberg and Clemens, “The typical tools”, 218.

<sup>46</sup> K Koonings and D. Kruijt, *Political Armies. The Military and Nation Building in the Age of Democracy* (London and New York: Z Books, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Field and Thomas C. Hudnut, *L’Algérie, de Gaulle et l’Armée* (Paris: Arthaud, 1975), 36.

<sup>48</sup> Pierre C. Pahlavi, “The French counterinsurgency Strategy: 1954-1961”, *Canadian Military Journal*, 8/4, (Winter 2007).

<sup>49</sup> See Pierre C. Pahlavi, *Entre conquête des esprits et esprit de conquête: la guerre révolutionnaire de l’armée française en Algérie* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2004).

<sup>50</sup> Simplet (Gen. Langlois’ pseudonym), “Guerre révolutionnaire, guerre psychologique ou guerre *tout court*?”, *Revue Militaire d’information* 309 (octobre 1959), 101.

<sup>51</sup> Simplet, “Guerre révolutionnaire, guerre psychologique ou guerre *tout court*?”, 102.

Institutions are transformed by actors when the latter do not perceive the former as able to defend and generate those very goals for which institutions were established in the first place. Institutional change is thus the result of voluntary actions on the part of the actors involved, when simple adaptation is not enough to maintain the legitimacy of the institution. In this regard the fate of the 7<sup>th</sup> weapon is largely determined by the shift that occurred in 1958 at the level of legal power. In May, the political regime responsible for the adoption and institutionalization of the revolutionary warfare collapsed replaced by the 5<sup>th</sup> République. From the moment he assumed power, De Gaulle was determined to subdue the Army, which had become too outspoken and too doctrinaire for his liking. He was clear on the issue, and did not mince his words: “The Army must realize that its role is purely technical. It is there to follow orders... The Army is a tool!”<sup>52</sup> Well aware of the potential of the psychological weapon, General De Gaulle also recognized the risk of “ideologization” it implied. He had therefore come to his decision long ago and on this he would not budge. He would save the Army from itself and its political aspirations. It is important to underline that de Gaulle was able to “tame” the Army relatively quickly because the normative and cognitive transformation was only partial, and that De Gaulle “redirected” the Army in a direction that was familiar: an obedient instrument of the civilian state to wage conventional warfare.

From the fall of 1958, the Army was ordered to renounce any political involvement. In the ensuing months, the President undertook a genuine purge within the French Army, in order to rid it of any revolutionary “tumour.” By the end of December 1958 all senior leaders associated with the concept of Revolutionary Warfare and the Integration Ideology were removed from their positions. Immediately after this cleansing exercise, De Gaulle undertook a series of measures to re-establish the distinction between civilian and military responsibilities, and to significantly redefine the French Army’s strategy by giving precedence to traditional warfare. His objective was clearly “refocusing the military attention from politics to operations, and [with the hope that] a resounding military success would enable the Army to easily accept political concessions, their honour having been preserved.”<sup>53</sup> In July 1959, a new set of guidelines, namely the *Instruction on the Foundations, Goals and Limits of Psychological Action*, marked another step in the neutralization of the psychological weapon.<sup>54</sup> Psychological action was limited to boosting the soldier’s morale and to strengthening his will to fight.

On 16 September 1959, De Gaulle clarified his position by proposing self-determination, including the possibility of secession, for Algeria. As noted by scholars Doise and Vaïsse, “The statement by the Head of State marks the end of illusions and the beginning of the break-up between the Army for Algeria and the political power ...”<sup>55</sup> In other words, the French political institution reinstated its legitimate power over the military institution. In early 1960, the last group of Revolutionary Warfare proponents undertook decisive action and revolted against the authority of Paris. De Gaulle, who would not allow some “excited individuals” to dictate his policy or to question his sovereignty, quickly regained control of the situation in great part because most of the military institution was not transformed by the revolutionary warfare movement, only its most vocal elements were. On 29 January, he delivered a televised speech while wearing his uniform, and ordered members of the armed forces to fall into line: “I am speaking to the Army, who is winning in Algeria through brilliant efforts. Some of its elements, however, are ready to believe that the war is their war and not France’s, that they are entitled to have a policy that is not France’s. Let me say this to all our soldiers: Your mission is not equivocal, nor does it require an interpretation.”<sup>56</sup> As historian Anthony Clayton later wrote, “De Gaulle rightly considered the incident an excess of the school of Revolutionary Warfare.”<sup>57</sup> Now that this school had proved to all that it was a nest of factious revolutionaries, the General would seek to destroy it quickly. On 15 February 1960, the axe finally fell. De Gaulle took the official and irreversible decision to disband the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureaus, the last bastion of revolutionary warfare. A new decentralized system emerged in April 1960. It dealt with government information agencies and services, such as the Bureau Presse-Information [Media-Information Office]. From its inception, the new system, an obedient instrument

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<sup>52</sup> Jean Doise and Maurice Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire 1871-1969*, (Paris: Imprimerie nationale 1987), 462.

<sup>53</sup> Anthony Clayton, *Histoire de l’Armée française en Afrique - 1830-1962* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 508.

<sup>54</sup> SHAT, 1H 2410, *Instruction – Objet: Fondements, buts et limites de l’action psychologique*, signed by P. Guillaumat, July 28, 1959.

<sup>55</sup> Doise and Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire*, 464.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Doise and Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire*, 466.

<sup>57</sup> Clayton, *Histoire de l’Armée*, 228.

following the will of the government, would support the policy of self-determination for Algeria; it then helped prepare the ground for the Evian agreements and the independence of Algeria.

## 4 Conclusion

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This case study on the French military adaptation during the Algerian war is about a past conflict, and thus it is first and foremost an historical analysis. However, institutional analysis provides a tool to understand historical decision-making regarding how to wage irregular warfare that goes much beyond the prescriptive premises of the rational decision-making model. Although this approach can contribute to richer historical analysis, the key question remains how it can be useful for present and future irregular conflicts for NATO and its member states. Without proposing an exhaustive answer to this question, it is possible to point out a number of present-day issues that could be analyzed by using institutional analysis.

An obvious parallel between Algeria and the present can be found in the notions of “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) and “Global Insurgency.” These normative notions emerged out of the defence intellectual milieus of the English-speaking Western nations. The idea that Western states are waging a war against terrorism or a global insurgency is not shared to the same degree in the defence intellectual milieus of most NATO nations of continental Europe. The notion that terrorism is essentially a judicial problem to be dealt with by the normal national security apparatus is the predominant perspective in these non-English-speaking countries. Although there are a number of political issues related to the use of military force in Afghanistan by ISAF troops, the normative split is reproduced quite faithfully on the ground. The English-speaking NATO nations tend to approach their mission as counterinsurgency, while the others are construing it as one of peace and stabilization. This observation is not terribly original, one might say, but the institutional analysis allows us to go a step further.

It is the authors’ understanding that some of the non-English speaking nations involved in Afghanistan, including a few members of the Partnership for Peace, are involved in direct military action through the use of their respective special operations forces (SOF). It can be speculated that the military institution of these countries wants “a piece of the action” too, in spite of the official position of their parent states and general attitude towards the conflict in their parent societies. SOFs are the ideal mean to do just that. From a normative standpoint, these military institutions can remain “true to themselves” as an expression of the profession of arms.

One of the dangers of this potential posture is that, like in Algeria, it can be integrated in the cultural-cognitive realm. These military institutions may start to see SOFs as the “ideal” military force of the future and invest substantial amount of resources in these unique military capabilities. Some NATO nations appear to lean this way already. In a way comparable to the Algerian conflict, over time this cultural-cognitive bias may become a serious liability. For instance, in a different conflict in the near future, SOFs of the “hit and run” type may be less useful than the Green Berets “social infiltration” type of SOF. In fact, too many of the former type may be quite counterproductive in the context of “winning hearts and minds.” Then there is always the possibility of entering into a vicious circle, where NATO nations have only SOF to offer for direct military action. This may in turn influence the planning and conduct of military missions in ways that are not necessarily productive in a context of irregular warfare. In the worst case scenario, such cultural-cognitive bias can become an integral part of NATO doctrine and therefore be fully integrated into the regulative realm. The above case is, of course, only an example. To be validated it would require a proper study in its own right. Nevertheless, it illustrates those present-day challenges regarding irregular warfare can be effectively studied by using institutional analysis. If military planners and analysts do their work only within the parameters of the rational decision-making model, they are at risk of supporting decisions that are critically flawed. Military history is full of examples of such blind decision-making. One can think of the maintenance of large cavalry units while the devastating effects of machine guns were quite well-known; or the use of armoured units as mobile artillery rather than using them as the modern version of cavalry. A more recent example is that of the Israeli forces’ waging a manoeuvre war against the fortified Hezbollah, in spite of the extensive intelligence available to Tsahal. War, whether regular or irregular, is oftentimes accompanied by innovations. The greatest impediment to innovation remains our own institutional challenges. If we can see them ahead of time, we may be in a better position to adjust to reality rather than adjusting to what we want reality to be.

This issue is not unique to military organizations facing an irregular opponent. As Richard Scott wrote, “organizations require more than material resources and technical information if they are to survive and thrive in their social environments. They also need acceptability and credibility”<sup>58</sup>. Irregular warfare brings fundamental challenges inside and outside the institution, but these challenges are first and foremost about the legitimacy of the institution. This legitimacy is something quite diffused and oftentimes difficult to identify, but it is very real in allowing or preventing decisions and actions to happen. The irregular enemy, by using means that are asymmetric to ours, seeks to shaken the legitimacy of our armed forces, which in turn paralyzes them in the long term.

Institutional change, as this study of the Algerian conflict shows, does not necessarily lead to strong bases for anchoring legitimacy either. The French Army won the war in Algeria, but France still lost its colony. The Algerian conflict shows, too, that institutional legitimacy is a multifaceted dynamic. If legitimacy can be reinforced within the institution, it can be diminished at a greater rate outside the institution. Military institutions engaged in irregular conflicts are probably the most at risk of falling into this dual dynamic of legitimacy, as these conflicts are not purely military in nature. If one adds to the mix that NATO is made of several institutions, the risk appears to be even greater. The search for the most common denominator of legitimacy, although politically sound, may be NATO’s Achilles’ heel.

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<sup>58</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 61.

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3. TITLE (The complete document title as indicated on the title page. Its classification should be indicated by the appropriate abbreviation (S, C or U) in parentheses after the title.)  <b>Institutional Analysis and Irregular Warfare: A case study of the French Army in Algeria 1954-1960</b>		
4. AUTHORS (last name, followed by initials – ranks, titles, etc. not to be used)  <b>Ouellet, E; Pahlavi, P.C.</b>		
5. DATE OF PUBLICATION (Month and year of publication of document.) <b>December 2012</b>	6a. NO. OF PAGES (Total containing information, including Annexes, Appendices, etc.)  <b>37</b>	6b. NO. OF REFS (Total cited in document.)  <b>54</b>
7. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (The category of the document, e.g. technical report, technical note or memorandum. If appropriate, enter the type of report, e.g. interim, progress, summary, annual or final. Give the inclusive dates when a specific reporting period is covered.)  <b>Contractor Report</b>		
8. SPONSORING ACTIVITY (The name of the department project office or laboratory sponsoring the research and development – include address.)  <b>DRDC TIF Meta-Organizational Collaboration and Decision Making: Project 10af</b>		
9a. PROJECT OR GRANT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable research and development project or grant number under which the document was written. Please specify whether project or grant.)	9b. CONTRACT NO. (If appropriate, the applicable number under which the document was written.)  <b>SLA between DRDC and RMC</b>	
10a. ORIGINATOR'S DOCUMENT NUMBER (The official document number by which the document is identified by the originating activity. This number must be unique to this document.)  <b>DRDC CSS CR 2012-020</b>	10b. OTHER DOCUMENT NO(s). (Any other numbers which may be assigned this document either by the originator or by the sponsor.)	
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This paper proposes a case study to illustrate the usefulness of sociological institutional analysis as a method to uncover “blue force” challenges to deal with irregular warfare. The French Army’s adaptation to revolutionary warfare in Algeria, starting in 1954, is used to illustrate both the application of the methodology and how institutional forces can hinder as well as overwhelm transformation for irregular warfare. The analysis emphasizes three key dimensions of the French Army’s institutional adaptation: the regulative, normative and cognitive. These empirical elements are used to show how they interacted and influenced the institutional implementation of the French COIN structures.

Ce document propose une étude de cas afin de démontrer l’utilité de l’analyse institutionnelle du cadre sociologique comme méthode servant à connaître les défis qu’a dû relever la « force bleue » pour gérer une guerre irrégulière. L’adaptation de l’armée française lors de la guerre révolutionnaire ayant débuté en 1954, en Algérie, illustre l’application de la méthodologie et la manière dont les institutions peuvent nuire ou submerger une transformation face à une guerre irrégulière. Cette analyse met l’accent sur trois points essentiels de l’adaptation institutionnelle de l’armée française, c’est-à-dire les aspects réglementaire, normatif et cognitif. Ces éléments empiriques démontrent comment ils interagissent et influencent la mise en œuvre institutionnelle des structures COIN de la France.

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