Paying tribute to Alexis de Tocqueville for his seminal acuity on the history of France is nothing new. The Algerian War offers fresh justification to do so, for it demonstrates that his classic theory about the dialectic between centralization and resistances to it has lost none of its authority. On this question, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie pursued his cultural history of the peripheral regions of the hexagon in search of what lent their resistance to statist administrative rationalization such traction. He found that the attempts of a millennium of regimes to pulverize, seduce, or constrain these far-flung regions have failed to obliterate their distinctive identities and local autonomy. Consider the recent clash between the national government and its regions over the prosecution of the Algerian War. Evidence shows that in certain marginal regions a majority of citizens acted in ways specific to their local affinities generating tactics that offset the strategies of their national leaders. For example, in the Rhône-Alpes citizens sought alternative ideas of the Republic framed by referents to their own region. A minority in the south conspired against

---

the government to keep Algeria French, even after a vast national majority approved the referendum to concede Algerian independence. Such practices illustrate Michel de Certeau's concepts of the strategies and tactics inherent in everyday life, whereby individuals recombine existing rules to create distance for themselves from institutional power.²

The Algerian War (1954–1962) resuscitated a clash of exceptional passion between Paris and Languedoc citizens. While historians have increasingly turned an eye toward the French-Algerian conflict, few have taken off their national lens to look at perspectives from the regions. What were views of the eight-year war in the Languedoc periphery? How did a regional identity – geographic, cultural, political, and economic affinities – affect attitudes to the war and citizens' idea of national identity?

In Languedoc, along France's Mediterranean boundary, questions about autonomy versus national integration figured prominently in citizens' wartime attitudes. Important leaders of the most radical camps rose out of Languedoc's hotbed of activism: those committed to the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and those who galvanized the right-wing ultranationalists to hold fast to French Algeria no matter the cost. Languedoc historians have since concluded that no other war in the twentieth century has had such a far-reaching impact on the fate of this region.³

The Algerian War erupted over the Muslim majority's demands for the independence of France's largest and

Kevin Callahan and Sarah Curtis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming).


oldest North African possession and its most important European settlement overseas. The Fourth Republic capsized amidst the leadership's uncompromising zeal for repressing the revolt. Its subsequent collapse brought General Charles de Gaulle to the helm in May 1958 and the Fifth Republic thereafter. De Gaulle's mythic and real authority led to a transformed Algerian policy that divested France of Algeria and the imperial vocation.

What historians like John Ruedy and Alistair Horne⁴ have taken to be axiomatic – that only de Gaulle's persuasions turned the French public against the military policy for retaining French Algeria – has proven erroneous. Newly available evidence shows that the majority had rejected the war in Algeria prior to de Gaulle's return from political exile. This shift did not, however, take place on the nation's periphery in Languedoc. Here the citizenry adamantly opposed any alternative even as the war ground on, paralyzed the nation, and fueled vigilantism, atrocities, and wanton destruction in Algeria and in France. When push came to shove – as it did when de Gaulle pressed on to terminate the war – the Languedoc minority bucked national authority and fostered lawlessness instead.

The Character of regional identity in the south of Languedoc, 1954

Languedoc lies in the south of France, encased to the north in a landscape of gorges and rugged mountains and to the south, still in the 1950s by a coastline of mosquito-infested swamps that largely obstructed the area's Mediterranean advantage. The region boasted a long

---

tradition of unrepentant resistance to centralizing conformity. In the Middle Ages papal authority ferociously repressed the fiercely independent Cathars, and in the sixteenth century Calvin himself had to rein in Languedocien Calvinists for being too revolutionary.\(^5\)

In Languedoc in the 1950s on the eve of the Algerian rebellion the flush of France's postwar economic boom, *les trente glorieuses*,\(^6\) was barely visible. No doubt this fact contributed to the existence of an imagined community of fierce independents critical of the impersonal modernizing state. Languedoc's relationship to Paris was ambivalent, fluctuating between enthusiasm for the treasure chest of handouts and antipathy for Paris' powerful tentacles. No other entity was a more useful canvas onto which citizens could project their own inner conflicts. Paris as the centripetal giant had for generations serviced their apprehensive discussions of French self-understanding. If Paris had not existed, it would have had to be invented. This discomfort with a capitalist, rationalist, and consolidating state favored conservative elites who were willing to obstruct the evangelism of Paris and its schemes for development and economic restructuring. The region produced over half of the nation's low-quality wine (*vin ordinaire*); wine accounted for most of the local revenue, but that revenue was thirty-five percent below the national average.\(^7\) Still, the vintners staged riots rather than compromise with the state on prices. Moreover, any

---


government inducement to pull up the vines was regarded as flagrant attack on Languedoc's heritage. The depression in the wine industry affected every aspect of life, for over half the citizenry depended on wine, with others touched by its fate.  

The Mediterranean port of Sète provided an important source of regional revenues. It was the only significant harbor between Marseille and Barcelona, and the oil tanker traffic, refineries, fishing boats, and cargo vessels between Africa and the Middle East reflected the area's strategic importance. Apart from these resources, antiquated textile and pottery industries persisted almost entirely thanks to the protected market in Algeria. Municipal leaders nonetheless rebuffed attempts to modernize the local economy. Pervasive distrust of the new technocrats and the tenacity of local interests favored right-wing populist Pierre Poujade who counted three out of every ten shopkeepers and small tradesmen as supporters of his anti-government movement. Chain stores like Monoprix, Prisunic, and LeClerc were effectively pulverizing their profits.

Against all odds, modernization did make inroads. Rural leaders like Philippe Lamour had successfully lobbied the state for an irrigation canal from the Rhône to Montpellier. The tributaries that fed farmlands and the dams in the Cévennes created a fertile, fruit-growing zone in the lower Rhône and in the formerly dry plains below Nîmes. A six-fold increase in production emboldened cultivators to

---


Proceedings of the Western Society for French History
organize cooperatives, which brought higher profits. To the west, however, farmers in the poor soil above Béziers denounced the irrigation system and blocked dissident neighbors' access to state development.\textsuperscript{11}

A core of intellectual vitality in the region revolved around the University of Montpellier.\textsuperscript{12} The liberal arts faculty and the faculties of medicine and law attracted students of different socioeconomic and ethnic origins to this enclave of ideas and cultural diversity. Local politics found their way into the institution, but faculty and institutional politics formed out of wider networks that affected students and town alike.

Attitudes toward Algeria mirrored these political and economic realities.

**The Impact of the Algerian conflict in Languedoc, November 1954 to March 1956**

The war exploded irrepressibly at the southern periphery of France where the integrated population of locals, Pieds-Noirs, and Algerian Muslims lent immediacy to the crisis. In 1954 after the loss of Indochina, over a third of the French public had conceded that all the colonies would eventually break away.\textsuperscript{13} But citizens made a sharp distinction between the colonies and Algeria. When rebellion erupted there, the overwhelming majority shared the view of their leaders like Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France who announced that "Never will any French government yield on the principle that Algeria is France."

\textsuperscript{11} Ardagh, 136, 137.
\textsuperscript{12} Renamed University of Paul Valéry.
\textsuperscript{14} Pierre Mendès-France, speech to the National Assembly, 12

*Volume 33 (2005)*
Similarly, Minister of the Interior François Mitterand maintained, "In Algeria, the only possible negotiation is war."\(^{15}\) Republican education had done a superb job of imparting this "Algeria is France" fiction to generations of French citizens, but the struggle soon revealed a colonial legacy of greed, racism, and brutality in France overseas.

Two months into the rebellion, pollsters at the private firm the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) began their systematic canvassing of public opinion on the war. At that time only five percent of the French followed the news on Algeria in the press.\(^{16}\) *Le Monde*, *l'Humanité*, and the rest of the national media noted the outbreak of terrorism but dedicated minimal coverage to *les événements*.\(^{17}\) Even the prime minister delivered his regular radio chats on subjects like the fight against alcoholism rather than the insurgency in Algeria.\(^{18}\) In Languedoc, however, citizens were immediately riveted to the events unfolding across the Mediterranean. Their regional press put Algeria on the front page and made the conflict a frequent subject of editorials. For example, Max Martin proclaimed that "The defense of the Republic" was at stake in Algeria.\(^{19}\) In that same vein, *La Dépêche du Midi* warned its readers: "The situation in the departments of Algeria deteriorates hourly. The acts of the terrorists intensify at a dramatic pace. Insecurity abounds, and Muslim and French

---

\(^{15}\) François Mitterand, speech to National Assembly's Commission of the Interior, 5 Nov. 1954, in Ibid.

\(^{16}\) *Sondages* 4 (1958): 36.

\(^{17}\) French leaders denied that France was fighting a war in Algeria. Instead, they referred to the eight-year conflict as "les événements."


\(^{19}\) *Le Midi Libre*, 11 Feb. 1955.

*Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*
blood flows with no let up in sight.”

In contrast to the national media, this early attention to Algeria in the local press indicates awareness among municipal authorities of popular concern.

It is not that astonishing that Languedoc's citizens should have been fascinated with the fate of French Algeria. They were relatively poor and sympathetic with their compatriots on the other side of the Mediterranean who, like them, resented the condescending attitude of national leaders. The influx of Pieds-Noirs to the region gave its politics a distinct flavor. Algeria was the destination for the bulk of regional production and the source of strong wine to beef up their own weak version. Agricultural and commercial goods were shipped to Algeria, and the distribution and sales of products from Languedoc depended on favorable Algerian networks. Algeria provided the revenue that propped up the mediocre vineyards in Languedoc, funded the small landholders, and kept the tottering manufactures alive. In effect, Algeria permitted the persistence of independent conservatism that kept the modernizing state at bay. Neither the farmers nor the shopkeepers or vintners alone set this relationship in motion, however. Rather, it was geography: the Mediterranean flowed between the two populations and allowed easy shipment of goods and people. For these reasons, the Algerian rebellion was a crisis for Languedoc of monumental proportions.

Economic ties, however, are not enough to explain local politics. Another striking feature of the region was its integration of locals with immigrants of diverse ethnic and geographic origins. In Languedoc, the tactics of wine-producing organizations maneuvered and consolidated

beliefs that France should spare nothing to repress the nationalist insurgency. There was an influential Pied-Noir population at the University of Montpellier, which aimed to energize or antagonize anyone willing to listen, inevitably including the numerous North Africans in their midst. Their raucous demonstrations and outbursts of jingoism, militarism, and racist aggression met with consistent reserve from the several hundred North African students and workers in the area. Beneath the exterior calm of the Muslim population were their leaders who worked locally and internationally with Algerians and those sympathetic to their cause. One of these leaders, law student M. M. K., slipped in and out of France to London and Algeria. At the Bandung conference in Indonesia, he served as the FLN delegate to secure recognition for an independent Algeria from the leaders of the Third World. Another Algerian, Mohammed Khemisti, a student in the faculty of medicine and general secretary of UGEMA, the national Muslim student union, eventually became Minister of Foreign Affairs in Algeria’s first government. With the exception of some student activists, however, the region generally reacted angrily to rebels' demands for an independent Algeria.

Imperialist nationalism as regional identity: the war escalates in 1956

In August 1955 Prime Minister Edgar Faure ordered reserve forces to Algeria in the wake of the insurgents'
Constantine massacre. The escalation of the violence belied official claims that France controlled Algeria. Popular opposition to Faure's deployment policy was swift with the mothers, wives, and fiancées of the soldiers joining numerous citizens troubled by the deployment. In Languedoc, however, the reservists and their families embraced the call to serve as their patriotic duty and denounced any other conviction as betrayal.

The rebellion intensified despite the deployment, and the ensuing months revealed French inability to thwart the mobilization of the Algerian population into the insurgents' camp. The number of attacks multiplied: two hundred rebel attacks took place in April 1955, but October saw nine hundred incidents, and the count in December climbed to a thousand. Moreover, the geography of the rebellion expanded from Constantine to Oran, and rural engagement deepened in Kabylia and Constantine. Only 20,000 strong, the fellagha compensated for their small numbers with superior mastery of the terrain and the FLN's tightening control over the masses. Further aid from abroad came in arms and freshly trained fighters who streamed across the permeable borders from Tunisia and Morocco.

Despite this situation, national voter preference on Algerian policy in the January 1956 elections was clear. The unusually large turnout elected leaders who opposed the military solution. Poujadists and Communists won a share of the vote, however, that sufficed to spoil the success of the new Republican Front government and handed Prime Minister Guy Mollet a fragile coalition with which to

26 AN F1cIII 1273 (July-Oct. 1955).
govern. Consequently, candidate Mollet's opposition to the "imbecile war in Algeria," evident in his pre-election articles and speeches, evolved toward a stance of studied ambiguity when he attempted to govern.  

Prime Minister Mollet's Algerian line emphasized the indissoluble union between France and Algeria without which France would slip from a second- to a third-rate power: "France gambles on its destiny with the Algerian drama."  

Departing from the mainstream, the peripheral minority in Languedoc had voted for national candidates whose ardor for French Algeria matched their own. The new mayor of Montpellier, independent François Delmas, was an outspoken critic of any deviation from military force. His political machinery controlled the region's urban core and its surrounding communes. Under his watch, vigilantism operated with impunity to harass anyone who criticized military policy or defended free speech for the local Algerians, including the Communist communes, intellectuals, left-leaning university students and faculty, and the non-European students from the overseas territories.

Authorities in Languedoc could not easily explain the pronounced affinity for Algeria or the exaggerated militarism evidenced by the majority of its citizenry, but they informed Paris that the intensified war efforts met with resounding approval in the region. Local youth responded

---


to their draft notices with a spirit of naïve adventure and enthusiasm for combat. In this period as well, the Fourth Republic promulgated emergency legal measures against popular protests; the repressions, fines, and imprisonments in France and Algeria caused more deaths and injuries than the Paris street riots and their provincial counterparts in February 1934. In this situation, the relative absence of anti-war activity can hardly be interpreted as an index of the war's popularity. Concern about public disorder was not the cause of government suppression of civil liberties. Authorities permitted robust political provocation among those who championed French Algeria. They turned a blind eye to those thugs who bullied their opposition into street fights, blocked public thoroughfares, threw rocks, and beat up those attending antiwar meetings. The new policy recalls Reinhold Niebuhr's warnings about the fate of democratic liberty: "An ideal democratic order seeks unity within the conditions of freedom; and maintains freedom within the framework of order." In its zeal to pursue its Algerian policy, the French leadership did neither.

The notorious incidents orchestrated by the University of Montpellier's right-wing student organization exemplified the non-action of the authorities. In January Muslim university organizations across France declared a nationwide boycott of classes and rallies in favor of Algerian sovereignty. All university student bodies

31 AN F1c111 1273, Rapport sur la situation dans l'Hérault (Mar.-May 1956).
respected the Muslim students' right to strike with one exception: the students at the University of Montpellier. Under the leadership of law student Jean-Marc Mousseron, the ultra right-wing cohort staged counter-demonstrations with the Montpellier city council and the police fully sympathetic to the explosive implications. Onlookers sensed the tension between groups mounting when thousands of students brandishing patriotic posters and the tricolor gathered at the city center war monument. This raucous crowd paraded through the street and then bashed in the door where the Muslim students held their meetings. Violence mounted as fighting erupted in the streets and demonstrators smashed nearby cars. Injuries and hospitalizations resulted as authorities remained out of sight until hours after the circus had begun.35 Although the university students had behaved like undisciplined thugs, the mesmerized crowds and the local press nonetheless admired the militant stunts as acts of patriotism. The Midi Libre, depicting the "inhuman character of the rebels' behavior," carefully distinguished the acts of the European students from those of their North African counterparts.36 Pro-French Algeria crowds in Languedoc appropriated patriotic symbols like war monuments, the tricolor, and the Marseillaise to legitimate the violence of their ritual militarism. Distinct from this regional trend, the national media proclaimed the incidents a national embarrassment. Throughout the spring Montpellier became the locus of public struggles between the organized left of both students and adults and the activists on the right. In March 1956,


36 Le Midi Libre, 22 Jan. 1956.

Proceedings of the Western Society for French History
Mousseron and his cohorts staged similar demonstrations in Paris, Bordeaux, and at universities across France. They were coached in their radicalism by Pierre Lagaillarde and Jean-Jacques Susini, the future leaders of the Secret Army Organization (OAS), as well as their ally, Jean-Marie Le Pen. A number of these Montpellier activists secured teaching posts at the University of Algiers where they prolonged their engagement in the cause of winning support for French Algeria.37

In the early months of 1956 a majority of French citizens took greater notice of deteriorating French control in Algeria, sensitivity already typical of Languedoc citizens.38 Capitulating to the mob in Algiers, Guy Mollet's Socialist government, supported by the Communists, moved to intensify the combat to a full-scale war and to multiply armed forces overseas.39 Le Monde and the mainstream media adopted the conservative position that the fate of France and the free world depended on Algeria. "The sending of troops to Algeria," according to Le Monde, "[was] necessary for avoiding a defeat which [would] be as humiliating and costly as a lost war."40

Mollet's policy resulted in the largest civilian call-up ever demanded to defend territory outside the hexagon and a vast redirecting of the nation's resources away from economic recovery and expansion to military spending instead. The draft committed 500,000 troops, in large part

38 From region to region, the prefectoral reports cite the early months of 1956 as the turning point for popular interest in the war. See, for example, AN FlcIII 1254 Bouches-du-Rhône, AN FlcIII 1264 Doubs, and AN FlcIII 1271-77 Haute Garonne, Gironde, Ile-et-Vilaine, Isère (Nov. 1954-Apr. 1956). Ageron, 259.
39 Ageron, 260.
civilians, to preserve French Algeria. The new policy drained 300 million francs from the treasury. It also implicated families across the nation, triggered inflation and higher living costs, and drained personal savings. The recruits came from the first generation to come of age after the Second World War. Born before the war and growing up under the Occupation, these children had known an era of intense hardship. Guilt even haunted certain youth for having been too young to join the Resistance. Ambivalence or opposition to combat also figured in their attitudes. Dodging military service, however, carried the taint of cowardice or appearing unpatriotic, and fear tempered enthusiasm for combat in Algeria as well.

1957-1958: opinion in the light of the Cold War and collapse of the Fourth Republic

In 1957, support for the war rapidly dissipated. The debacle of the Suez Canal crisis shifted most citizens' opinions against the military solution. In the midst of the Suez crisis Algeria suddenly assumed new significance as an international conflict in the Cold War. Suez helped to crystallize popular attitudes against the war in Algeria. Further confirmation of this position came with international reprobation against France as the media projected the paroxysm of violence and systematic torture taking place in the Battle of Algiers. Worldwide opposition to French sovereignty in Algeria was critical to the FLN's eventual political victory. Finally, prosecuting the war was draining the economic, military, and political health of

---

42 Winock, 8.
the nation. Military spending, continuous since 1956, put the public debt at fifty-eight percent of national revenues. The budget deficit, 650 billion francs per annum between 1952 and 1956, grew thirty percent to 925 billion. This lopsided balance sheet capsized the franc, generating double-digit inflation; prices for retail goods rose fifteen percent.

In this situation, Raymond Aron was among the first critics to indict the war in public. His *La Tragédie algérienne* appeared in May 1957, and it roundly condemned the lies of the leadership and its risky Algerian venture. "A citizen is obligated to die for his country; he is not obligated to lie for it." Aron sustained physical abuse from gangs of right-wing students and vitriol from the right-wing press for his candid analysis of what went wrong in Algeria. Others, like Raymond Cartier of *Paris Match*, who contended that France should withdraw from Algeria because colonialism did not pay, joined Aron. Their analyses nourished the suspicions of citizens who were skeptical of their leaders. There was a growing sense that the war was to blame for governmental instability, inflation, reversals in economic growth, and the tarnishing of the universal values that defined France.

In Languedoc, however, these concerns were not paramount; instead the public prioritized French Algeria, no matter the costs. Discontent with the domestic situation grew in the region but did not translate into anti-war sentiment. Communists threatened labor strikes, and they

---

preyed upon the discouragement of the dockworkers at Sète and the coalminers and salt workers in the Camargue. Yet the overwhelming majority in Languedoc clung to their brand of nationalism characterized by racism, stubborn pride, and xenophobia. Furious at *Le Monde* editor Hubert Beuve-Méry's support of de Gaulle's Algerian policy, one Languedoc reader queried, "Is the abandonment of all the lands and people who live under our flag your new fashion to assure the grandeur of France?"

**The Exodus: resolution, renewal, and betrayal**

De Gaulle's return from political exile revitalized a citizenry ready for a decisive and inspiring leader. The referendum of September 1958 received a 79.25% "yes" vote and handed the general the special executive powers and the institutionally robust Fifth Republic he had insisted on to resolve the Algerian situation. Without even knowing his intentions, France had summoned him back to power to resolve this question. The process of terminating the war, however, proved disappointingly slow. Obstacles constrained

---

49 Centre d'histoire de l'Europe du vingtième siècle BM99, letter to Beuve-Méry, 28 Nov. 1957.

*Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*
and even dictated the general's choices. Prominent among these were the difficulties posed by his own disdainful citizens, whose violence, destruction, and atrocities ended any possibility that a European community might remain in Algeria; their discontent threatened to ignite a civil war in France. Embittered Pieds-Noirs who arrived in Languedoc encouraged ordinary citizens to sympathize with certain of their destructive tendencies. Memories of Vichy and the hostility of the Europeans of Algeria toward de Gaulle distorted the relationship between them and the general from 1958 to 1962. Most of the colonial bureaucrats had remained in office after Vichy for lack of qualified replacements. The old guard had become the new order under the Fourth Republic. Such irritants in Algeria and among partisans of French Algeria in Languedoc and elsewhere substantially eroded de Gaulle's diplomatic efforts to preserve French interests in Algeria. Yet supporters of French Algeria held de Gaulle and the Pompidou government responsible for the chaos into which the OAS plunged Algeria and for the flight of Europeans from their native Algerian soil. The complicated demographic stew in Languedoc had a different idea of France from that of their democratically elected leader, President de Gaulle.

By January 1961 the majority of French citizens realized that French Algeria was soon to disappear, and they overwhelmingly approved a referendum on the right of Algerians to determine their own fate. They subsequently favored by ninety percent the Evian Accords in April 1962. But among registered voters in Languedoc only forty-three percent voted "yes" in 1961 while just over twenty-three percent abstained. Again in April 1962, twenty-four percent abstained and twenty-six percent opposed the promulgation

Volume 33 (2005)
of the Evian Accords.\textsuperscript{50} Reasserting their opposition to de Gaulle, Languedoc was one of only two regions to vote "no" on his heavily lobbied referendum of October 1962 to elect the president by universal suffrage.\textsuperscript{51}

**Conclusion**

The resolution of the Algerian crisis ultimately demanded a synthesis of traditional and modern France. The diverse parts of France came together under de Gaulle to define France without Algeria. Along the way, the war had fractured traditional alignments on the right and left, sundered political parties, split apart religious authorities, and pitted youth against youth. The conflict galvanized new alliances and gave way to reconstructions of national identity that embraced regional variants. That reconfiguration played out in distinctively regional ways in Languedoc where a vociferous peripheral minority opposed de Gaulle's pragmatic achievement of integration. Some plotted against the Republic on behalf of French Algeria and went to prison or into exile.\textsuperscript{52} This phenomenon cannot entirely be explained by economic or social factors. Strongly urban and exclusively rural pockets shared this position. Deeply rooted traditions clearly generated a distinct political culture that sympathized with the Europeans of Algeria and with the idea of French Algeria.

In the wake of its citizenry's ultra-nationalist activism, Languedoc became a bastion for the breakaway Secret Army Organization. Native son Jacques Soustelle created


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 361-2.

its civilian counterpart, the Comité de Vincennes. Both organizations unequivocally rejected Algerian secession. The local popularity of the OAS and its civilian allies evidenced the region's uncommon position: disavowal of the reality that French Algeria was over, a fact that the majority of French citizens accepted. Politicians of varying stripes such as Robert Lacoste, André Morice, and Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury overlooked their previous differences to lead this anti-government alliance. They exemplified the Algerian War's reordering of alliances across the political spectrum. Along with new immigrants from the former colony, most voters in Languedoc rebuked de Gaulle's referenda to transfer power in Algeria and to end the war. Instead, they denounced him as a traitor and clamored for French Algeria to the bloody end.

Linkages between Algeria and this southern periphery were clearly in evidence. Throughout the conflict Languedoc municipal leaders worked energetically to attract the fleeing Pied-Noir population to their communities. Between 1954 and 1962, a massive and disorderly flood of 23,000 repatriated French citizens settled in the greater Montpellier area alone; demographic growth throughout the region exploded as a result of the war. The immigrants dramatically affected attitudes and influenced behavior. Indeed, no Gaullist candidate carried a majority in this region until 1980. Even today, the area remains a stronghold of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front, a loyalty born in the crisis of Algeria. The Pieds-Noirs have contributed enormously to the rejuvenation and vitality of this region. In this particular periphery of the

---

54 Ibid.
55 *Histoire de Montpellier*, 378.
hexagon, where in the 1950s the population was among the most conservative, imperialistic, and poor, the loss of French Algeria proved anything but disastrous. In their own way, Languedoc citizens have played a significant and enduring role in the remaking of the Republic.