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The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France

Todd Shepard

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Todd Shepard : The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. This is an absolute must read. By F. A. N. I grew up in France during these years but I had to read this book to understand what had happened. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Best coverage of subject. By mimi k. This work made a big splash when it was published. Everyone in the field agreed it would make an impact on everyone's understanding of events surrounding that period in time... the when, why and how the French government decided to pull out of Algeria after 130 years of colonization. It remains a very important contribution to the field, essential reading. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars. By Ruben M. Garcia. Historically correct but it's very dry reading.

In this account of the Algerian War's effect on French political structures and notions of national identity, Todd Shepard asserts that the separation of Algeria from France was truly a revolutionary event with lasting consequences for French social and political life. For more than a century, Algeria had been legally and administratively part of France; after the bloody war that concluded in 1962, it was otherwise eight million Algerian residents deprived of French citizenship while hundreds of thousands of French *pieds noirs* were forced to return to a country that was never home. This rupture violated the universalism that had been the essence of French republican theory since the late eighteenth century. Shepard contends that because the amputation of Algeria from the French body politic was accomplished illegally and without explanation, its repercussions are responsible for many of the racial and religious tensions that confront France today. In portraying decolonization as an essential step in the inexorable "tide of history," the French state absolved itself of responsibility for the revolutionary change it was effecting. It thereby turned its back not only on the French of Algeria—Muslims in particular—but also on its own republican principles and the 1958 Constitution. From that point onward, debates over assimilation, identity, and citizenship once focused on the Algerian "province/colony" have troubled France itself. In addition to grappling with questions of race, citizenship, national identity, state institutions, and political debate, Shepard also addresses debates in Jewish history, gender history, and queer theory.

"Although he acknowledges that France's 'civilizing mission' never lived up to its press notices, Todd Shepard is probably correct when he notes that the war exposed once and for all the conceit that France's 'Republican universalism' could unite peoples of different races, cultures, and languages around a single vision of national unity." Douglas Porch, *Times Literary Supplement*, September 21, 2007. "A detailed, inventive, and engaging analysis of the debates surrounding the thorny issue of who could be French and under what conditions that arose as eight years of armed conflict drew to a close." *French History*. "With the tremendous interest in French colonialism and identity, in the relationship of the former colonies to the French nation and in colonial and postcolonial discourses, Todd Shepard's timely and significant work will be of interest to a wide range of scholars. Using Algeria as a case study, Shepard shows how the history of French imperialism and anti-imperialism was rewritten after Algerian independence by bureaucrats, politicians, and journalists in such a way as to present decolonization as 'a predetermined end point' that was inevitable, rather than as the failure of a genuine project of national integration in the colonies." *Modern and Contemporary France*. "The need for historically specific accounts of decolonization has arguably never been more urgent. The *Invention of Decolonization* illuminates how 'the end of French Algeria' reconfigured the social, sexual, and political orders of postwar France. Todd Shepard thereby joins the story of the Algerian War and its aftermath not just to histories of postcolonialism, but as provocatively to contemporary debates about national belonging, racialized citizenship, confessional politics, and state-sponsored efforts at remembrance, repatriation, and reconciliation." Antoinette Burton, Professor of History and Bastian Professor of Global and Transnational Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. "Todd Shepard's examination of the way representations of Judaism, sexual orientation, and gender figured into political debates about decolonization is pathbreaking. Shepard makes a compelling analysis of how the war in Algeria and efforts to resolve the issues it raised were crucial to the making of the Fifth Republic. His excellent book is exemplary of new developments in conceiving and writing the history of France and Algeria." Donald M. Reid, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. "Todd Shepard's powerful book shows both how the decolonization of Algeria became thinkable in metropolitan France and why the French failed to come to terms with the contradictions inherent to the republican project, as they simultaneously distanced themselves from responsibility for the war. Shepard convincingly reveals the war's crucial role in recasting definitions of French identity and citizenship, which continue to shape current debates about racial inequality, exclusion, assimilation, immigration, and the place of Islam in France." Caroline Ford, University of California, Los Angeles. "Todd Shepard, in this highly original and well-researched account, uncovers how France, attempting to hold together its empire after World War II, tried to become more inclusive—extending citizenship rights and a form of affirmative action to Muslim Algerians, only to reverse itself after losing Algeria in 1962. Abolishing by fiat Muslims' citizenship rights, now acting as if 'colony' and 'metropole' were necessarily starkly separated, France redefined itself as a singular nation in a more unambiguous and more exclusionary manner than had been the case before." Frederick Cooper, New York University, author of *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. "The Algerian War has attracted huge attention in France during the last ten years. Most historians, however, have assumed that their task is simply to describe the

workings of an apparently unstoppable process and they have, to a large extent, concentrated on the behavior of the French army. Todd Shepard's book approaches this debate from a new angle. Partly by looking through a wide lensone that encompasses everything from Brigitte Bardot to Gaston Monnervilleand partly by taking the arguments in defense of Algrie Franaise seriously, he shows how departure from Algeria helped to create a new idea of Frenchness. This is an important book with implications for the current state of France as well as for many aspects of French history between 1830 and 1962."Richard Vinen, King's College, LondonFrom the Back Cover"The need for historically specific accounts of decolonization has arguably never been more urgent. The Invention of Decolonization illuminates how `the end of French Algeria' reconfigured the social, sexual, and political orders of postwar France. Todd Shepard thereby joins the story of the Algerian War and its aftermath not just to histories of postcolonialism, but as provocatively to contemporary debates about national belonging, racialized citizenship, confessional politics, and state-sponsored efforts at remembrance, repatriation, and reconciliation."--Antoinette Burton, Professor of History and Bastian Professor of Global and Transnational Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign "Todd Shepard's examination of the way representations of Judaism, sexual orientation, and gender figured into political debates about decolonization is pathbreaking. Shepard makes a compelling analysis of how the war in Algeria and efforts to resolve the issues it raised were crucial to the making of the Fifth Republic. His excellent book is exemplary of new developments in conceiving and writing the history of France and Algeria."--Donald M. Reid, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill "Todd Shepard's powerful book shows both how the decolonization of Algeria became thinkable in metropolitan France and why the French failed to come to terms with the contradictions inherent to the republican project, as they simultaneously distanced themselves from responsibility for the war. Shepard convincingly reveals the war's crucial role in recasting definitions of French identity and citizenship, which continue to shape current debates about racial inequality, exclusion, assimilation, immigration, and the place of Islam in France."--Caroline Ford, University of California, Los Angeles "Todd Shepard, in this highly original and well-researched account, uncovers how France, attempting to hold together its empire after World War II, tried to become more inclusive--extending citizenship rights and a form of affirmative action to Muslim Algerians, only to reverse itself after losing Algeria in 1962. Abolishing by fiat Muslims' citizenship rights, now acting as if `colony' and `metropole' were necessarily starkly separated, France redefined itself as a singular nation in a more unambiguous and more exclusionary manner than had been the case before."--Frederick Cooper, New York University, author of Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History "The Algerian War has attracted huge attention in France during the last ten years. Most historians, however, have assumed that their task is simply to describe the workings of an apparently unstoppable process and they have, to a large extent, concentrated on the behavior of the French army. Todd Shepard's book approaches this debate from a new angle. Partly by looking through a wide lens--one that encompasses everything from Brigitte Bardot to Gaston Monnerville--and partly by taking the arguments in defense of Algrie Franaise seriously, he shows how departure from Algeria helped to create a new idea of Frenchness. This is an important book with implications for the current state of France as well as for many aspects of French history between 1830 and 1962."--Richard Vinen, King's College, LondonAbout the AuthorTodd Shepard is Associate Professor of History at Temple University.