

Frantz Fanon and the Algerian Revolution: An Analysis of the Interaction Between Pan-African Thought and Revolutionary Violence

Hadjira Ghouraf

University of Oran 1 Ahmed Ben Bella, Algeria

Email : ghouraf.hadjira92@gmail.com

Soumission : 19/10/2025 Acceptation 22/03/2026 Publication : 29/08/2026

Abstract

The study examines Africanist thought and its role in opposing colonialism and European domination, as well as its endeavour to restore the value, identity, and culture of the African human being in the face of capitalist exploitation and civilisational alienation. This contributed to strengthening awareness of belonging and of a shared African destiny, and to the emergence of positions opposed to imperialism and racism. It also examines the reflection of Africanist thought on the Algerian Revolution, with a focus on Frantz Fanon, the influence of the Algerian cause on him, and the influence of his ideas on the Revolution, particularly the concept of counter-violence as a means of liberation, psychological and cultural purification, and the reconstruction of collective identity. The study employed the historical descriptive-analytical and comparative methods to highlight Fanon's intellectual legacy and its relationship to the Algerian Revolution.

Keywords: Africanist thought, Frantz Fanon, Algerian Revolution, colonialism, national liberation

Introduction

Many figures contributed to shaping Africanist thought, which sought to restore the African individual's identity, culture, and affiliations and to struggle against racism and colonialism. Among the most prominent figures imbued with this thought was Frantz Fanon, who is regarded as a literary, philosophical, and psychological reference in the struggle against colonialism and in encouraging peoples to free themselves from forms of racism, oppression, and civilisational containment. This emerged from his experience in Algeria, which influenced him and, in turn, he influenced.

The problem addressed by this study centres on the reflection of Africanist thought in the Algerian Revolution, whose dimensions cannot be separated from African influence, and on the extent to which Frantz Fanon was influenced by the Algerian cause, which would, in turn, be reflected in his influence upon it. The study therefore focuses on the ideas that distinguished Frantz Fanon as a figure deeply imbued with Africanist thought.

This research adopts the historical method based on description and analysis and attempts to reconcile the requirements of the descriptive method, imposed by the need to reconstruct the

historical event and the historical writings concerning it, with the requirements of the analytical method in analysing historical events and linking them to an analysis of the concept of identity and its components. It also draws on the comparative method, which requires comparison among historical writings to form a comprehensive view, while attempting, as far as possible, to maintain methodological neutrality in dealing with historical facts and scholarly material and to avoid preconceived judgements.

1. Africanism: Origins and Intellectual Foundations

There is no doubt that racial hatred on the part of Europeans towards Africans, the desire for exploitation, and the attempt to demean them intellectually and civilisationally prompted many African intellectuals to resist the lack of self-confidence produced by European racism. One example was the Ghanaian scholar Kwegyir Aggrey, who took pride in his African identity and called for Africa's advancement so it could render great service to humanity. The Ghanaian poet Armattoe, meanwhile, displayed a strong attachment to Blackness in his poetry, in contrast to European attachment to whiteness; this was evident in his poem "In the Depths of the Black Man" (Saoudi, 1978, pp. 156–158). These and other examples sought to restore the value of the African individual in the face of the European supremacist view imposed on other peoples, particularly Africans, and fuelled by exploitative capitalism under the cover of missionary campaigns in Africa, which employed discourses of superiority to enslave Africans.

With the advent of the nineteenth century, modes and instruments of production underwent qualitative development, and the laws and mechanisms of capitalist growth required an end to enslavement and a shift towards the colonisation of the continent and the depletion of its resources to feed the European machine. To achieve this objective, repression was employed on the one hand, while on the other an attempt was made to strip Africans of their African identity and spirit and to transfer Christian heritage to Africa (Al-Kahlout, 1992, p. 10). These practices encouraged the emergence of a range of movements and ideas opposed to them.

Africanist thought emerged as a movement aimed at the unity of African peoples and resistance to colonialism. It was led by thinkers of African origin, most notably Sylvester Williams, Marcus Garvey, Jean Price-Mars, and W. E. B. Du Bois. The London Conference of 1900, convened by Sylvester Williams, is regarded as one of the earliest major milestones in the history of Africanist thought, as it discussed the colonial seizure of African lands (Zouzou, 2009, p. 16).

Another current of Africanism, aimed at reuniting Black people, emerged in 1920 through the American Marcus Garvey. This current was based on the idea of the collective return of Black Americans to Africa, where a nation would be established for them. It generated among Africans an awareness of themselves, pride in belonging, and a shared sense of a single African destiny (Zouzou, 2009, p. 17). These ideas influenced the Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah (Oultache, 2017, p. 317), who rejected the exploitation of Africa to achieve capitalist prosperity (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 20) and the policy of enslavement imposed on African peoples. He maintained that the social effects of colonialism were no less important than its political and

economic effects, in the context of a colonial policy aimed at diminishing the value of Africans (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 32).

The Pan-Africanist current sought to achieve unity among African peoples throughout the world and adopted a position opposed to European imperialism, domination, and racism. This was reflected in Thompson's rejection of colonialism and the slave trade. The current sought to achieve African unity by redressing the injustices resulting from slavery and colonialism and by liberating African peoples (Maimela, 2013, pp. 34–35).

Africanist thought extended to Paris, where young people from various African and New World countries gathered. Their cultures were diverse, but they shared common features: Blackness, the French language, a colonial heritage, and life on the margins of French society (Saoudi, 1978, p. 162). They therefore sought to investigate African history and to develop an awareness of African heritage. When speaking of Africa in this context, Latin peoples are not excluded, as Africanist thought was adopted by African peoples who had absorbed Latin culture.

Among the most prominent representatives of this thought were Jean Price-Mars from Haiti, Aimé Césaire from Martinique, and Léopold Sédar Senghor from Senegal. They formed a cultural, literary, and philosophical group (Saoudi, 1978, pp. 168–169). From this gathering emerged a newspaper entitled "The Black Student". Césaire used the term Africanism in "Return to the Native Land" in 1939, in which he described colonialism as a process that turns human beings into objects (Caute, 2018, p. 49). This group did not assume a political character until after the Second World War (Saoudi, 1978, pp. 168–169).

Africanist thought, therefore, concerned African culture and identity, as well as a shared African history, through a range of intellectual and social movements that emerged in Africa and across the African diaspora worldwide, whose ideas were defended by numerous figures. Basil Davidson regarded this thought as a means of protest and a weapon in the struggle for equality (Davidson, 1964, p. 71), as well as a call to recover the past and glorify the ancestors. This was embodied in the poetry of Senghor and Léon Damas and in the criticism of European modernity and capitalist civilisation expressed in the poetry of Raymond Queneau (Saoudi, 1978, pp. 164–167).

2. Frantz Fanon: Intellectual Formation and Militant Trajectory

At the outset of his discussion of Fanon, David Caute states: "... Fanon, however, was created by the white man." By this he means that the Fanonian cry, with its violence, its revolutionary and philosophical dimensions, and its psychology that rejects compromise and half-measures, was nothing more than a product of the white man's arrogance and brutality (Caute, 2018, p. 8). In this context, a brief biography of Frantz Fanon is presented here, as his ideas will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this study.

Frantz Fanon was an intellectual, psychiatrist, and social philosopher from Martinique. He was imbued with Africanist thought and experienced racism and colonial humiliation from an early age, which made him an opponent of colonialism in its various forms. He moved to Lyon,

France, to study medicine, where he continued his political activity and maintained contact with students from the colonies and political activists (Al-Droubi & Al-Atassi, n.d., p. 10).

He graduated as a psychiatrist and was appointed to the hospital in Blida, Algeria. There, his revolutionary consciousness deepened, and he came to understand colonialism as a single phenomenon. From his study of his patients, he realised that colonialism distorted human nature, which prompted him to join the ranks of the National Liberation Front. He initially carried out his activities clandestinely before openly declaring his commitment to the struggle and submitting his resignation from his position as head of the psychiatric hospital in 1956 (Al-Droubi & Al-Atassi, n.d., pp. 10–12). He struggled alongside Algeria until he died in 1961 and was buried in the cemetery of the Algerian freedom fighters.

3. Manifestations of Africanist Thought in Frantz Fanon's Writings

Frantz Fanon's thought is centred on a critique of colonialism as the principal cause of the distortion and containment of African culture and identity. For him, colonialism was not merely political and economic; it was also cultural and psychological, drawing oppressed peoples into a cycle of psychological conflict. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he presents numerous examples of psychological trauma, states of delirium, and mental illness that he encountered while working at the hospital in Blida (Fanon, n.d., pp. 203–235).

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he calls for psychological liberation from colonial pressures and for the rejection and removal of the imposed colonial identity through the construction and reconstruction of African identity in all its elements, enabling African peoples to take pride in it and free themselves from the complex of cultural dependence on the colonial West. The book addressed peoples in whom an inferiority complex had taken root because local culture had been buried (Fanon, 2004, p. 20). In this context, his ideas intersect with Malik Bennabi's concept of colonisability. Fanon argues that not all peoples are fit to be colonised; those who are so disposed possess this need, for Europeans were desired in the unconscious of their colonies (Fanon, 2004, p. 104).

Frantz Fanon maintained that political, military, and cultural colonial violence, together with the extermination and distortion of history and identity that accompanied it, had to be confronted by counter-violence on the part of colonised peoples as a means of political and psychological liberation and the recovery of collective identity. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he emphasised the necessity of confronting colonial violence with revolutionary violence.

The liberation sought by Frantz Fanon could not, in his view, be achieved without solidarity and cooperation among African peoples. He went beyond African solidarity by calling for solidarity among all peoples suffering from colonialism, whether in Asia or Latin America (Fanon, n.d., p. 254), because they shared a common destiny in the face of growing colonial violence and the dominance of imperialism as the highest degree of hegemony, which sought to eliminate all the foundations that might enable those peoples to rebuild their political, economic, and cultural existence.

On this basis, Frantz Fanon emphasised the necessity of political liberation followed by economic and social liberation (Fanon, 2004, p. 13), enabling these peoples to rid themselves of the colonial legacy in all its forms, represented by economic and cultural dependency, and to rebuild postcolonial societies on solid foundations. The struggle, therefore, remained ongoing (Fanon, n.d., p. 83).

Frantz Fanon's Africanist thought was based on rejecting colonialism and exploitation and on defending culture, identity, and citizenship as foundations of liberation and independence. Fanon was also influenced by African liberation movements and sought to support and shape them, as is clearly evident in his relationship with the Algerian Revolution.

4. The Algerian Revolution in Frantz Fanon's Experience

Frantz Fanon's arrival in Algeria marked an important turning point in his militant trajectory, as it enabled him to observe the conditions endured by colonised peoples closely. In addition to the racism he had experienced in France, this strengthened his conviction that he needed to contribute through his thought to influencing peoples by defending liberation causes.

As a psychiatrist, he witnessed the psychological suffering caused by the repressive French colonial policy in Algeria. This led him to adopt group therapy as a means of healing from colonialism (Fanon, 2004, p. 157), because individual treatments had proved ineffective in a colonial-type social environment (Fanon, n.d., p. 200). Such healing, he held, could be achieved only through liberatory violence.

Fanon did not regard isolation from the modern world, withdrawal into the self, or the development of identity and its history as a solution to the condition of Africans and colonised peoples. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he presented an intellectual project that addresses reason and deconstructs the racist intellectual system from a scientific perspective grounded in a solid philosophical foundation and supported by persuasive psychological dimensions (Caute, 2018, pp. 28–29).

It should be noted in this context that Fanon's thought, its study, analysis, classification, and criticism, has been monopolised by Western academia, even though this thought was shaped by the experience of resistance to colonialism in Algeria. This monopoly has reduced Fanon's thought and experience to anger and violence, two characteristics that Western thought persistently ascribes to many non-Western thinkers and revolutionaries (Caute, 2018, p. 8).

Frantz Fanon left his work at the hospital and joined the National Liberation Front, adopting the defence of the Algerian cause, which he regarded as a model of counter-violence and liberation. The Algerian Revolution influenced the development of his ideas on liberation, which in turn affected the Revolution through his support for it. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he states: "In these recent years, I have had the opportunity to see honour... These are the exceptional qualities of the Algerian fighter... who protects his homeland and sacrifices himself for his brothers" (Fanon, n.d., p. 237).

The influence of the Algerian Revolution is evident in *The Wretched of the Earth* through Frantz Fanon's adoption of violence as a means of liberation, psychological and cultural

purification, the reconstruction of collective identity, the restoration of the dignity of the Algerian people, and the affirmation of their national selfhood. Fanon also regarded the Algerian Revolution as a model of military and cultural resistance to policies of Frenchification and Christianisation, through which Algerians preserved their national identity, unity, and values of citizenship despite colonialism.

Frantz Fanon held that colonised society was required to confront colonial thought and build the Algerian nation on authentic foundations. He considered that the Algerian family had preserved its cohesion and constituted a fundamental nucleus for struggle and mobilisation. In *A Sociology of a Revolution*, Fanon addressed the paternal relationship and its role in mobilising Algerians for struggle (Fanon, 1970, pp. 99–103). This illustrates the influence on Fanon of Algerian society's adherence to its social and cultural foundations, and of the role of the Algerian family in adopting and mobilising for the struggle despite the risks it entails.

Fanon maintained that France's objective in Algeria was to eliminate the Algerian people's authenticity and heritage by dismantling forms of existence that reflected their national foundations. He cited the veil, which represented Algerian women (Fanon, 1970, p. 27) and which France sought to prohibit, as a manifestation of cultural and civilisational alienation stemming from women's role in Algerian society.

Fanon stated that what convinced him of the idea of armed struggle was Algeria's Islamic culture, although he rarely referred to it. This may be explained by the fact that left-wing culture in the twentieth century regarded religion as reactionary, while Fanon sought to export Algeria's revolutionary model to African countries. It is possible that he regarded Islamic culture as a local culture and therefore focused on universal concepts, also as part of his effort to address Western elites and persuade them of the justice of the Algerian cause (Caute, 2018, p. 20).

By the time Fanon joined the Revolution, it had moved beyond the local dimension and had become a matter of global politics and diplomacy, especially among African countries. He perceived the African dimension of the Algerian Revolution and its openness towards Africa, which had begun to consider drawing inspiration from the Algerian experience. Fanon thus found himself confronting his aspirations for African unity and his need for solidarity with oppressed peoples. This was confirmed when the National Liberation Front entrusted him with missions in various African countries (Al-Mili, 2007, pp. 24–25).

The Algerian Revolution helped shape and strengthen Frantz Fanon's thought, serving as a practical model for his struggle against colonialism and imperialism. In it, he found an application of his ideas concerning revolutionary violence as a means of liberation from colonial domination and control. Fanon's influence on the Algerian Revolution was therefore a direct reflection of the influence it had exerted upon him.

5. The Contribution of Fanonian Thought to Framing the Liberatory Discourse of the Algerian Revolution

Fanon did not simply move beyond Enlightenment Marxist thought to join the National Liberation Front; rather, he worked diligently to establish a convincing epistemological and

ethical basis of compatibility with the Algerian project, which, as he explains in *The Fifth Year of the Algerian Revolution*, was a jihadist project adopted by Islamists. What enabled him to understand the Algerians' aspirations for freedom was his ability to detach himself from and rid himself of racist European ideas (Caute, 2018, pp. 9–10).

Fanon's path towards conviction in armed struggle did not pass through left-wing Marxist thought, which views class struggle as dialectical, historical, and material. Instead, through his support for Algeria he moved beyond the framework of Marxist-Leninist thought, which opposes revolutions of the labouring classes. He regarded the Algerian Revolution as a combination of Marxist organisation and framing and popular spontaneity; this spontaneity was the product of a long history of struggle undertaken by the Algerian people (Caute, 2018, pp. 18–19).

He considered the peasantry the only revolutionary class because the exploited person realises, before anyone else, that violence alone is an effective means (Fanon, n.d., p. 56). According to Fanon, this class would constitute strong support for the Algerian Revolution because of the collective pain inflicted by the French determination to break the will of the Algerian people and marginalise their resistance (Fanon, 1970, p. 121). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he argues that the massacres of 8 May and the acts of repression carried out by France did not crush the people's uprising but accelerated the growth of revolutionary consciousness (Fanon, n.d., p. 67).

Frantz Fanon's influence on the Algerian Revolution began when he joined the National Liberation Front and became one of the most prominent supporters of the Algerian people's struggle. He devoted his writings to conveying the suffering of this people to the world. *The Wretched of the Earth* was among the most important works, characterised by literary violence as a means of expressing colonial violence and the legitimacy of counter-violence in light of colonial practices and their psychological, social, political, and economic effects. This type of writing contributes significantly to giving justice to legitimate causes and granting them a global dimension. Raising awareness of the Algerian cause was therefore among Frantz Fanon's most important contributions.

The internationalisation of the Algerian cause was not based solely on Frantz Fanon's intellectual works. As a friend of the Revolution, he also provided substantial diplomatic support through his work as its representative abroad, seeking to secure international backing. Given the presence of radio, which Fanon described as "the speaking world of the coloniser" (Fanon, 1970, p. 69), strategies were needed to make the Algerian resistance known.

From the time he joined the Algerian Revolution, Fanon was a committed politician and activist. He worked to deepen his political culture and then devoted himself to the Revolution's press, serving on the editorial board of *El Moudjahid* in Tetouan. When the newspaper moved to Tunis in 1957, Fanon, alongside his work for it, contributed to treating Algerian freedom fighters who were referred to Tunisian hospitals after being wounded (Al-Mili, 2007, pp. 22–24).

Fanon was entrusted with numerous tasks, including representing the Algerian Revolution at many international conferences. His first contact with Africa within the framework

of the Algerian Revolution came at the end of 1958, when he was appointed a member of the Algerian delegation to the African conference held in Ghana's capital. There he met Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, the representative of the Congolese National Movement, Félix Moumié, head of the Union of the Peoples of Cameroon, and Robert Holden of Angola, as well as representatives of the Kenyan independence movement (Al-Mili, 2007, p. 25).

His diplomatic representation of the Algerian Revolution continued through several missions during 1960, including in Guinea and Addis Ababa. He became known for his speech at the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference in Accra, Ghana, in 1960, after being appointed ambassador of the Provisional Algerian Government to Ghana in 1959. There, Fanon asserted that violence was the only path to liberation (Al-Droubi & Al-Atassi, n.d., p. 12).

As a psychiatrist, Fanon contributed to the psychological support of National Liberation Front militants and understood the factors affecting human motivation by focusing on the objective of liberation and on strengthening the sense of belonging, national unity, and popular support, which could constitute a source of superiority over colonialism.

Fanon exerted a significant psychological influence on members of the National Liberation Front, especially because the revolutionary ideas concerning identity and national culture that distinguished Algerian militants were conceptually inseparable from Frantz Fanon's ideas. This strengthened the psychological, cultural, and intellectual influence and helped to frame and mobilise young people to adopt liberation ideas. According to Fanon, mobilisation for the war of liberation instilled in the conscience of every individual the idea of a common cause, a national destiny, and a national history (Fanon, n.d., p. 83). In this context, Ahmed Ben Bella stated of Fanon: "Fanon was not merely a comrade in the battle, but a guide and mentor, because he left us an intellectual and political legacy that constitutes a guarantee for the Algerian Revolution" (Al-Droubi & Al-Atassi, n.d., p. 17).

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, Africanist thought can be regarded as an important reference for rebuilding Africa and preserving its identity and culture. It also contributed to the revival of African heritage and to strengthening efforts towards liberation, and Frantz Fanon was among its most prominent representatives.

Fanon embodied a model of counter-violence as a means of liberation, psychological and cultural purification, and the reconstruction of collective identity, influenced by the experience of Algerian society in confronting French colonialism. He also helped shape the Algerian Revolution through his literary works, diplomatic activity, and role as a psychiatrist. He expressed the suffering of the Algerian people and supported their sense of belonging and motivation for liberation. Fanon should therefore not be regarded merely as a figure friendly to the Algerian Revolution, but as an Algerian figure through his struggle and liberatory legacy.

References

- Al-Droubi, S., & Al-Atassi, J. (n.d.). Introduction. In F. Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*. Madarat for Research and Publishing.
- Al-Kahlout, A. A. (1992). *Christianisation and colonialism in Black Africa*. Publications of the Faculty of Islamic Call.
- Al-Mili, M. (2007). *Frantz Fanon and the Algerian Revolution*. Ministry of Culture Publications.
- Caute, D. (2018). *Frantz Fanon* (A. Kayali, Trans.). Madarat for Research and Publishing.
- Davidson, B. (1964). *Which way Africa: The search for a new society*. Penguin.
- Fanon, F. (1970). *A sociology of a revolution* (D. Qarqout, Trans.). Dar Al-Tali'a.
- Fanon, F. (2004). *Black skin, white masks* (K. A. Khalil, Trans.). ANEP Publications.
- Fanon, F. (n.d.). *The wretched of the earth*. Madarat for Research and Publishing.
- Maimela, D. (2013, November). Pan-Africanism of the 21st century: Challenges and prospects. *The Journal of the Helen Suzman Foundation*.
- Nkrumah, K. (1963). *Africa must unite*. Frederick A. Praeger.
- Oultache, S. (2017). Kwame Nkrumah and his role in Ghana's independence. *Journal of Maghreb History*.
- Saoudi, M. A. G. (1978). *Issues of Africa*. Alam Al-Ma'rifa.
- Zouzou, A. H. (2009). *History of colonialism and liberation in Africa and Asia*. Office of University Publications.