

## *Research Statement*

### **Contested Decolonisation: empire effects, local protests and transnational perspectives**

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My research turns on a deceptively simple question: why did Europe's overseas empires endure in the face of mounting internal opposition? In seeking answers, my work addresses three related subjects: processes of contested decolonisation; the nature of the colonial state; and forms of local protest and rebellion. My approach is comparative, the objective being to discern patterns of imperial disintegration and dissent.

The research thus explores the comparisons, international and transnational, between forms and experiences of warfare in the 'late colonial states' to emerge in the mid-twentieth century. This method renders colonial dissent more complex and yet, paradoxically, more comprehensible. At the local level, it helps clarify how internal security operations, broadly defined, were appropriated by communities to advance their own interests. At the broader imperial level, it indicates that such appropriation was sometimes facilitated, even manipulated, by colonial authorities in a bid to regulate the pace and extent of decolonisation. The resulting analysis suggests that what in revolutionary vernacular were dubbed 'wars of liberation' and in western official terminology 'police actions', 'civil emergencies' or 'troubles', are better understood as variants of civil war in which the imperial power was but one of several competing violence actors.

With Professor Blanchard I hope to collaborate in our shared interest in the dynamics of conflict in colonial Algeria. We will re-examine the nature of insurgency and counter-insurgency in the colony after 1945. My sense is that Algeria was imploding into civil war by this point, a process accelerated by chronic food shortages and population displacement. To confirm this, the research I intend to complete, predominantly in colonial police, gendarmerie and local government records, aims to demonstrate the interactions between patterns of colonial violence, the emergence of civil war, and the nature of French military behaviour towards insurgent opponents.

During my stay in Sciences Po Saint-Germain-en-Laye, I will lead a research seminar on "intelligence and surveillance studies": it will be attended by year two students and will be open to colleagues interested in this field. I look forward to working with the Centre de recherches sociologiques sur le droit et les institutions pénales (CESDIP), whose interests in the study of policing, legal systems, and forms of state repression I share. The CESDIP offers the ideal location to discuss the legal and ethical dimensions to the treatment of combatants and civilian populations during colonial counter-insurgency campaigns thanks to the expertise of its own members and through the links with other senior researchers such as Professors Sylvie Thénault (forced population removal) and Raphaëlle Branche (colonial torture and rights abuses in wars of decolonization). During my stay in Paris, a workshop funded by the Leverhulme Trust could be hosted by the CESDIP. It will examine the laws of war, their application, and their violation during the suppression of colonial insurgencies.