Document Based Questions (DBQ)

Embodying the Nation:
George Washington, Abd el-Kader, and Gandhi

Directions: Carefully read the following documents and answer each prompt question. These questions will serve as guides to help you answer the final essay question.

Essay question:
Evaluate and compare the motivations, methods and roles of George Washington, Abd el-Kader, and Gandhi as leaders of their respective national independence movements.

America’s George Washington, Algeria’s Abd el-Kader, and India’s Mohandas Gandhi are all considered to be the “father of the nation” by their respective countries. Abd el-Kader is even called “Algeria’s George Washington.”

Each leader fought against a stronger military colonial power to achieve their country’s independence. Each one had a different set of characteristics and accomplishments that legitimized their claim to lead the anti-colonial movement; and each won acclaim from their enemies as well as their supporters for the strong moral tenor of their leadership.

Washington and Gandhi were successful in their struggle for independence, while Abd el-Kader negotiated an armistice and voluntarily laid down arms to avoid useless suffering. All three still serve as powerful symbols of nationalism and unity. Are the qualities that made them successful leaders in their own times still important characteristics for leaders today?

In this DBQ, we will examine the less well-known Abd el-Kader and how he was seen by his contemporaries, and compare his leadership to that of the more famous figures of George Washington and Mohandas Gandhi.

Historical Background:

Abd el-Kader was born in September 1808 near the city of Mascara, Algeria. His father, Muhi al-Din al-Hasani, was a marabout, a respected religious leader. At eight years old, Abd el-Kader's father began tutoring him in the Islamic religious tradition. He was a brilliant student and by the age of 13, Abd el-Kader had become a qualified teacher and commentator on the Quran and hadith (the actions and sayings of the prophet Muhammad). Abd el-Kader’s learning, though, did not come from books alone, a great deal of his curriculum was devoted to hunting, survival in the desert, and horsemanship.

At the age of 14, Abd el-Kader’s father sent him to the provincial capital, Oran, to continue his religious education. It was there that he saw first-hand the temptations of city life and the laxity of Islamic religious practice of many of the citizens of Oran. These things, along what he saw as the arrogance of the Turkish rulers, bothered the young student.
In 1826, he and his father went on pilgrimage to Mecca. On the way, the party visited political and religious notables and holy shrines in Egypt, Syria and Iraq. This gave Abd el-Kader the opportunity to discuss religious and political ideas with people from different Islamic sects, nations, and beliefs.

While Abd el Kader and his father were on pilgrimage, the French occupied Algeria in the hope of exploiting the ports on Algeria's coast and the fertile interior, to replace colonial territories it had lost in America. The tribes from around the plain of Ghriss asked Muhi al-Din to lead the struggle against the French. The old sheikh instead put forward the 25-year-old Abd el-Kader, who was enthusiastically accepted as emir ala mu'minin, or commander of the faithful.

By 1834, both Abd el-Kader and the French general in Oran, Louis Alexis Desmichels, needed a truce, but neither could afford to be seen as the weaker party. Desmichel's troops were being decimated more by disease than fighting; Abd el-Kader needed peace and legitimacy to build his state. In the end, Desmichels wrote the emir and, through Algerian Jewish intermediaries, the two leaders agreed on a treaty. However, the final text of the treaty did not fully reflect the original agreements. In the event, both sides claimed victory, and Abd el-Kader used the time of truce to train his army and reign in rebellious tribes.

The French, however, did not keep their promise and what ensued instead were several years of battles, ambushes and guerrilla tactics between the two parties. By 1841, France finally decided that only total war, full colonization and a merciless 'scorched earth' policy versus the indigenous people would pacify Algeria. They sent the hard-liner General Bugeaud to Algiers to begin a ruthless and successful campaign to take Abd el-Kader's interior strongholds.

Eventually, Abd el-Kader negotiated an armistice and voluntarily laid down arms to avoid useless suffering. In return, he negotiated free passage to Damascus for his extended family and followers who wanted to join him in exile, with a promise to never return to Algeria and cause trouble. Public opinion in France, however, feared that the emir would be a danger if allowed to live in exile in the Middle East. At what they thought was a re-provisioning stop at Touloun, the emir and his retinue were imprisoned at Fort Lamalque and later the chateau of Henry of Navarre in Pau, France. Abd el-Kader had been betrayed.

While imprisoned in Pau, Abd el-Kader became a celebrity. People streamed from all over France and beyond to visit him and left impressed with his determined endurance, his erudition, and his spirited, often playful, conversations. Finally, Napoleon III agreed to liberate him on the condition that he never return to Algeria. Abd el-Kader and his family moved first to Bursa, in Ottoman Turkey, and eventually to Damascus.

This, however, would not be the end of Abd el-Kader's noble deeds. In July 1860, simmering tensions over political reforms exploded and anti-Christian riots broke out in the city. Abd el-Kader, a strong believer in religious tolerance and brotherhood, gave shelter to over a thousand Christians and diplomats in his mansion. He also made several forays into the Christian quarter to lead Christians to safety, and stood fast against the mob. In recognition of Abd el-Kader's courageous actions, the French bestowed on him the Légion d'honneur, one of the nation's highest honors.

Abd el-Kadir died on May 26, 1883 in Damascus, revered by all for his courage, dignity and intellect. His remains were repatriated to Algeria in 1966.
PART A------ COMPARING VIEWS OF ABD EL-KADER

DOCUMENT 1

The following is an article from The London Times, published on November 28, 1873 describing Abd el-Kader’s leadership of the resistance to the French.
For more than two years there was peace between the French and Abd-el-Kader. The former were engaged in the conquest of Constantine; the latter in the augmentation and consolidation of his military force. War broke out again in October, 1839, and Abd-el-Kader swept upon the French power with a ferocious resolution and resistless energy paralleled only by Hyder Ali's famous descent upon the Carnatic or the revolt of the Sepoy Army in Bengal. The whole fabric of French authority was shattered in an hour, and the European population found no safety, no centre of strength, save in the walled cities and the intrenched camps. The valor of the European troops was signally displayed; but the Arabs were not driven back to their mountainous deserts till in 1841 Bugeaud returned to the seat of war with full powers, large reinforcements, and a desperate purpose. Then began that terrible warfare which has won for the Algerian veterans of France a doubtful fame. An army of 100,000 men, trained in the newest school of civilized war, and armed with all the resources of modern science, flung themselves on the brave but undisciplined Arabs. Scruples of mercy and tenderness were energetically cast aside, and the determination to strike terror into the rebels at whatever cost to humanity was proclaimed by Generals and eagerly accepted by soldiers. Over the darker deeds of that furious struggle history would willingly throw a veil; but justice may be done to the gallantry of Bugeaud's army and to the vigor of its commander. Abd-el-Kader fought obstinately and bravely for empire and independence, but his power
was steadily beaten down. One by one his strongholds were wrested from him: his army melted, or rather was worn away, and before Bugeaud had been a twelvemouth in Algeria he had driven the Emir over the frontier into Morocco. The Moorish Sultan was jealous of the French power, and aided Abd-el-Kader to raise another army, with which he twice invaded the Algerian territory. He was defeated, however, both by Gen. Bedeau and the Duc D'Aumale, and, though for some years he carried on a sort of guerrilla war on the borders, his hopes rapidly sank. Bugeaud resolved to put an end to the Moorish intervention, and his invading army decisively defeated the Sultan on the Isly, in August, 1844. A treaty was the result, the terms including the expulsion of Abd-el-Kader from Morocco. Three years later, in spite of dauntless and desperate struggles, the troops of Gen. Lamoricière succeeded in hunting down the fallen chief, who surrendered on the condition that he was to be allowed to retire into exile in Egypt or Syria.

How does the writer describe Abd el-Kader military exploits? The military strategies of the French? What language choices of the writer show where his sympathies lie?

DOCUMENT 2

This excerpt is from The Parlour Review, and Journal of Music, Literature and the Fine Arts, published in Philadelphia on January 13, 1838:

Abd el Kader is a man of great courage though his mind is rather legislative than military. Although his soul has been strongly schooled yet in the painful circumstances in which he has been frequently placed he has had some moments of depression. His morals are pure and rigid, he has but one wife whom he tenderly loves. His family consists of a daughter of four or five years old and a son born a short time before the entrance of the French into Mascara. When he was in the city he resided with his family in a sufficiently handsome house but not the palace. He lived without guards and altogether like a private individual. Every day at an early hour he repaired to the palace or beylik to attend to the affairs of his government and give audience. In the evening he returned to his house and to privacy.

Abd el Kader always dresses with simplicity. His costume is purely Arabian without any sort of
ornament or mark of dignity the only luxury he displays is in his arms and horses. For some time he had a bournous Moorish cloak of which the tassels were of gold but he cut them off in the following manner. One of his brothers in law whom he had made Kaid of a powerful tribe affected a show and state which excited murmurs. He sent for him and rebuking him for his conduct added, “Take example from me. I am richer and more potent than you and look how I am attired. I wish not to preserve even these miserable golden tassels which you see on my cloak.” Saying this, he cut them off; and from that time he has not carried the smallest particle of gold or silver about him.

Abd el Kader is fond of study to which he dedicates the few moments of leisure which his agitated life affords him and in all his expeditions he takes with him a little library. Then also his state is much more royal than it is in his capital. He dwells in a superb and convenient tent. A very elegant little study has been constructed in it where he works. When he is encamped and the day is not occupied in military operations he thus distributes his time. Entering into his tent after the march of the day he keeps but one domestic near him and devotes some moments to the cares of cleanliness. He then sends for his secretaries and his principal officers in succession and works with them until four o’clock then he presents himself at the entrance of the tent and says the public prayer, afterwards he preaches for half an hour taking care to choose a religious text which naturally leads him to those ideas which he wishes to diffuse in regard to polities and war. No one however is obliged to listen to his sermons. A few moments after he seats himself at table in company with his principal secretary, Miloud Ben Arach, his brothers when they are with the army and generally one of his agas.

Q. 1: How does the author describe Abd el-Kader’s appearance and lifestyle? What inferences would one draw about his moral character from this portrayal?

Q. 2: How does this writer’s view of Abd el-Kader as a leader differ from that of the writer in The London Times, above?

DOCUMENT 3

Within France, of course, there were very different ideas about Abd el-Kader. This excerpt is from Alexis de Tocqueville’s Essay on Algeria:

...In order to turn these people to advantage, one must either destroy the tribal divisions in their hearts or excite in all the tribes at once a common passion that will hold them together artificially and violently, despite the vices of their social organization that are constantly dividing them.

Abd-el-Kader—clearly a character of the rarest and most dangerous sort, a mix of sincere and feigned enthusiasm, a sort of Muslim Cromwell—has understood this marvelously. In all his external actions, he exhibits the prince far less than the saint: he constantly hides behind the
interest of the religion for which he says he acts. It is as interpreter of the Koran, with the Koran in hand, that he orders and condemns; he preaches reform as much as obedience; his humility increases with his power. The religious hatred that we inspire created him, it raised him, it sustains him. To quell it would be to renounce his power. Therefore, he won't quell it but will constantly revive it, and he will always fight us, secretly or explicitly, because peace would leave the tribes to their natural instincts and soon dissolve the support on which he relies.

Q1. How does de Tocqueville’s view of Abd el-Kader contrast with the view of the writer of the Parlour Review article? Why do you think this is so?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Q2. How does de Tocqueville view the relationship between Islam and politics? Do you think he would feel the same way about religion and politics in France?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

DOCUMENT 4

Image 1: Statue of the Emir Abd el-Kader, Algiers.
Q. How do these two portraits reflect the artists’ views of Abd el-Kader? Use specific examples and details to support your analysis.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

PART B: COMPARISON OF WASHINGTON, GANDHI, AND ABD EL-KADER’S IDEAS OF LEADERSHIP AND VIRTUE

DOCUMENT 5

Following is an excerpt from George Washington’s Farewell Address from 1796 in which he announces his intention of declining a third year in office and gives advice to the American people:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion.
Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

......

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it - It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

Q1. For Washington, what qualities does the virtuous nation possess?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

DOCUMENT 6

From his headquarters in Mascara, Abd el-Kader dictated an official proclamation of his authority to lead the jihad against the French colonizers:

Praise be to God alone and blessings from on high to the Prophet Mohammed after whom there is no other prophet.
To the tribes and to their sheiks, notables, and ulemas, may God enlighten you, guide and direct your counsels and give success to your deeds and actions.
The citizens of the districts of Mascara, the eastern and Western Plain of Ghriss, and their neighbors and allies, the Beni Chokran, the El Bordjas, the Beni Abbas, the Yacubies, the Beni Amer, the Beni Medjaher, and others have elected me unanimously and appointed me the govern their country. They pledged themselves to obey me in success and in distress, in prosperity and adversity, and to consecrate themselves and their sons and their properties to the great and holy cause of defending our faith and our soil.
We have, therefore, assumed this heavy responsibility, hoping it may be the means for uniting the Muslim community and of preventing dissensions among them and of affording general security to all the inhabitants of the land, of putting an end to lawlessness, and of driving back the enemy who has invaded our country in order to subjugate us.
As a condition of our acceptance, we have imposed on those who have delegated to us the supreme governing power the duty to conform all their actions to the precepts and teaching of the book of God and of administering justice in their various spheres according to the law of the Prophet, to wit: loyally and impartially to the strong and to the weak, to the nobles and the poor this condition has been accepted by them.
We hereby invite you to partake in this pledge, or compact, between ourselves and these tribes. Hasten, therefore, to show your allegiance and obedience, and may God help you to prosper in this world and the next. My great goal is to reform and to do good to the extent that good lies within me. My trust is in God, and from Him and Him only do I expect reward and success.
By the order of the Defender of our Religion, our sovereign and Commander of the Faithful, Abd el-Kader ibn Muhi al-Din. May God grant him victory. Amen.

Q1. What goals does Abd el-Kader set for himself as the emir of Algeria?

Q2. Based on this text, how do you think Abd el-Kader would define the ideal nation? How does this compare with Washington’s argument?

DOCUMENT 7

In this excerpt, Mahatma Gandhi described why he believed that nonviolence would be more effective than military struggle against British colonial rule:

In the application of Satyagraha, I discovered, in the earliest stages, that pursuit of Truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of Truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but one's own self.

Satyagraha and its off-shoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. . . . The movement of nonviolent non-cooperation has nothing in common with the historical struggles for freedom in the West. It is not based on brute force or hatred. It does not aim at destroying the tyrant. It is a movement of self-purification. It therefore seeks to convert the tyrant. . . . The essence of nonviolent technique is that it seeks to liquidate antagonisms but not the antagonists themselves. In nonviolent fight you have, to a certain measure, to conform to the tradition and conventions of the system you are pitted against. Avoidance of all relationship with the opposing power, therefore, can never be a Satyagrahi's object but transformation or purification of that relationship.

Q1. For Gandhi, why is nonviolence better than a military struggle for freedom?

DOCUMENT 8

This excerpt is from a letter written by Abd el-Kader to the Bishop Pavy describing his reasons for protecting the Christians in Damascus in 1860:
That which we did for the Christians, we did to be faithful to Islamic law and out of respect for human rights. All creatures are part of God's family and those most loved by God are those who do the most good for his family. All the religions of the book rest on two principles—to praise God and to have compassion for his creatures...The law of Mohammed places the greatest importance on compassion and mercy, and on all that which preserves social cohesion and protects us from division. But those who belong to the religion of Mohammed have corrupted it, which is why they are now like lost sheep. Thank you for your prayers and good will toward me...

Q1. What was Abd el-Kader’s rationale for protecting the Christians of Damascus?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Q2. How can one reconcile Abd el-Kader’s jihad against the Christian French in Algeria with his protection of the Christians in Syria?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

PART C: ESSAY QUESTION

Essay question: Evaluate and compare the motivations, methods and roles of George Washington, Gandhi and Abd el-Kader as leaders of their respective national independence movements.