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COLONIALISM TO TERRORISM

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LEGACIES OF EMPIRE: GREATER FRANCE FROM
COLONIALISM TO TERRORISM

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
COLLEGE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Abstract

Legacies of empire: Greater France from colonialism to terrorism

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In this thesis, I argue that the legacies of empire and colonization are influencing the development of French identity and are challenging notions of contemporary French society. I argue that these colonial legacies reached a watershed moment in 1989 with the headscarf affair and further provoked violent and socially divisive events such as the 2005 riots and the 2015 terrorist attacks. Furthermore, I argue that the effects of France's colonial past have created a psychological empire that is negatively affecting many of France's youths of immigrant origin. As a result of the psychological empire, French society is becoming increasingly stratified along ethnic, cultural, and political lines. This thesis takes a multidisciplinary approach to research on postcolonial French studies, using analysis from contemporary news sources, historical documents, literature, political events, legal cases, and personal recollections.

Introduction

In 2015, France experienced two devastating terrorist attacks on 7 January and 13 November (the total death toll reached almost 150, with over 350 wounded) that exposed the overwhelming social, cultural, and political tensions concerning French identity and culture. Following the November attack, President François Hollande announced that France was at war and promised “terrorism will not destroy France, because France will destroy it.”¹ As a result, President Hollande declared a state of emergency in France that lasted from November 2015 to February 2016, which gave French police forces the power “to conduct warrantless house raids” and to place “suspicious persons” under house arrest without official authorization from a judge.² By January 2016, more than 3,000 house raids were conducted with 400 people subjected to house arrest; however, only four investigations into terrorism have been

¹ Jethro Mullen and Margot Haddad, “France is at war,’ President Francois Holland says after ISIS attack,” *CNN*, accessed April 24, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/paris-attacks/>.

² Amar Toor, “France’s anti-terrorism laws leave Muslims in a state of fear,” *The Verge*, accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/22/16/world/paris-attacks/>.

opened.³ Evident from the extreme security measures, the French state appears to be *doing something*, but human rights protection groups - such as Human Rights Watch - assert that the France is not doing the *right thing*, as a “vast majority” of people subjected to house raids and to house arrests were French Muslims and persons of North African descent,⁴ and that these laws disproportionately impacted the Muslim population. While France is suffering from extremely polarized and divisive points of view about the future of French identity and culture, French Muslims consistently receive a majority of the blame and anger.

As many French Muslims have expressed sentiments of being unfairly targeted by French state and its institutions (over 200 complaints have been filed with the Collective Against Islamaphobia in France - an organization that offers both legal support and consulting services, since the November terrorist attacks), a large segment of the French Muslim population has also vocalized feeling

³ Amar Toor, “France’s anti-terrorism laws leave Muslims in a state of fear,” *The Verge*, accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/22/16/world/paris-attacks/>.

⁴ “France: Abuses under state of emergency,” *Human Rights Watch*, accessed April 28, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/03/france-abuses-under-state-emergency>.

alienated by the dominant cultural response following the attacks.⁵ For example, in January 2016, the French interior ministry released figures that show that “400 anti-Muslim crimes were committed last year [2015] in France,” which is more than three times the number of anti-Muslim attacks committed in 2014.⁶ Further unrest is evident from the social divide concerning the “I am Charlie” slogan that became popular following the January attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters. Instead of paying tribute to those associated with *Charlie Hebdo*, some segments of the population preferred the slogan “I am Ahmed” - the Muslim police officer who was also a victim of the *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attack - and stated that “I am not Charlie, I am Ahmed, the dead cop. Charlie ridiculed my faith and culture.”⁷ The growing societal polarization and political and religious extremism indicates a “rediscovery” of France’s colonial era, as it

⁵ Amar Toor, “France’s anti-terrorism laws leave Muslims in a state of fear,” *The Verge*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.theverge.com/2016/1/29/10860964/france-state-of-emergency-muslim-paris-attacks>.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Anne Penketh, “Policeman Ahmed Merabet mourned after death in Charlie Hebdo attack,” *The Guardian*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/08/ahmed-merabet-mourned-charlie-hebdo-paris-attack>.

must confront its “colonial past in order to get on with its future.”⁸ As Steven Erlanger and Katrin Bennhold state, “nowhere in Europe are the tensions greater than in constitutionally secular France, with as many as six million Muslims,” and “a painful colonial history in Algeria... and North Africa.”⁹

In this thesis, I argue that France is suffering from the closeness of its colonial past and has perpetuated the existence of a psychological empire that continues to influence contemporary social, political, and cultural aspects of French society, particularly pertaining to French identity and ideas of cultural (in)compatibility. I argue that contemporary issues such as the headscarf affair, the riots in the *banlieues*, and the terrorist attacks have acted as a catalyst for the increased visibility of social and political stratification and have strengthened the psychological empire, as well as perpetuating contemporary imperial mindsets. Furthermore, I contend that French overseas departments and territories are additionally challenging perceptions of French identity and

⁸ Robert Aldrich, “Conclusion: The colonial past and the postcolonial present,” in *The French Colonial Mind: Volume 2* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 348.

⁹ Steven Erlanger and Katrin Bennhold, “Dangerous Moment for Europe, as fear and resentment grow,” *The New York Times*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/08/world/europe/paris-attack-reflects-a-dangerous-moment-for-europe.html>.

nationality, as these regions consistently vocalize the desire for greater autonomy and recognition of cultural differences while continuing to vote to remain a part of the French Union and community. Additionally, I posit that far-right, extremist political parties, such as the *Front National*, are contemporary representations of imperial mindsets that are contributing to the polarization of French society by capitalizing on the growing sentiments of fear and instability. Exploiting its associations with colonial-era cultural mindsets, the *Front National* continues to gain power, as a result of the psychological empire and the growing schism within French society.

Methodology and paper structure

This thesis takes a multidisciplinary approach to research on postcolonial French studies, using analysis from contemporary news sources, historical documents, literature, political events, legal cases, and personal recollections. Although there is a need for continued research on issues within contemporary French culture, French identity, and the effects of France's colonial legacy, by taking a multidisciplinary approach, my thesis will offer a unique perspective

on the widespread social and political effects of colonialism and will contribute to future research on the subject.

Chapter one of my paper will argue that the effects of the contemporary psychological empire within France has reached a breaking point that has led to radicalized and divisive segments of society concerning French society, culture, and politics. Confronted with the closeness of its colonial past, the struggle between minority and majority groups within French society is now manifesting in increased levels of radicalized violence by minority groups and subsequent displays of oppression by the French state. In chapter two, I discuss the French overseas departments and territories and argue that these overseas regions demonstrate the fluidity and evolving perceptions of French identity and nature. Remnants of the colonial era, these regions exhibit the desire to remain connected to the French state, yet continue to present alternate visions of the French nation outside of metropolitan France. Despite a history of anti-colonial and anti-France political and social movements, these regions continue to offer alternate means of navigating French identity. In chapter three, I argue that far-right, extremist political movements have fundamental connections to France's colonial past

and contribute to the presence of colonial-era mindsets within the contemporary psychological empire. Calling for anti-immigration and anti-Islamic policies, the far-right is supported by colonial-era enthusiasts and segments of French society who have become burdened by fear of the *Other*. In conclusion, I posit that France must confront and acknowledge the negative implications of its colonial history on contemporary issues in order to move past the tensions and fears that are manifesting in extreme forms of violence and social stratification.

Chapter 1

The contemporary psychological empire in France

Introduction

Following a series of socially explosive events that occurred in the early 1990s and 2000s, Fadela Amara, leader of the *Ni Putes, Ni Soumises* French feminist movement, commented on the social situation of the inhabitants of the French *banlieues*, stating, “Parked in poor neighborhoods, abandoned by politicians... in a parallel economy... many young people think their lives are over. They no longer believe in a system that continues to exclude them.”¹⁰ The combination of the headscarf affair, the 2005 riots in the *banlieues*, and the 2015 terrorist attacks signify a turning point in French society and indicate that previously held perceptions of society, identity, and politics, are now being contested in twenty-first century France. In this chapter, I argue that these contemporary events are fundamentally linked to France’s colonial legacy and colonial-era

¹⁰ Fadela Amara, *Breaking the Silence: French Women’s Voices from the Ghetto* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 90.

perceptions of culture and identity, creating a psychological empire that stratifies French society along racial and religious lines.

In this chapter, I will first begin with a the series of French public school headscarf affairs, starting with the initial event of 1989 and ending with the ratification of the 2004-228 law banning all ostensible signs of religious affiliation. I argue that the headscarf controversies demonstrate a moment of increasingly visible social and religious divisions within France that are effects of the psychological empire. Furthermore, I argue that it demonstrates the invisibility and marginalization of minority groups, as very few French Muslim voices were heard throughout the debate. Next, I will examine the 2005 French *banlieue* riots, positing that contemporary French social, political, and geographic divisions are reflections of colonial France through the process of alienating and physically dividing social groups. Lastly, I will study the series of 2015 terrorist attacks within France, arguing that a psychological empire is currently manifesting in extremely violent events that provoke the polarization of political and cultural views.

The Headscarf Affair

In 1989, three veiled Muslim schoolgirls were expelled from the Gabriel-Havez school in Creil, France “on the grounds that their veils were not compatible with the *laïque* principals of the French state schooling system.”¹¹ Although the period from 1989 to 2004 is often understood as a “war of the veil,” the three women in question were wearing a scarf (a *hijab*) that covered solely their hair – not their face.¹² Therefore, the word ‘headscarf,’ rather than the veil, will be used throughout this chapter to describe the piece of clothing in question. While the three women had consistently worn the headscarf to school in the past, the principal, Eugene Chenière, stated that “he was upholding and enforcing the values of French secularism and republicanism,” and that “the French republic should be protected from the ‘insidious jihad’ represented by middle-school aged girls wearing the headscarf.”¹³ While the Muslim community in France in 1990 had only reached 4% of the population,¹⁴ and with only a “few hundred” schoolgirls actively wearing the headscarf in

¹¹ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 16.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ Joan Scott, *Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 22.

¹⁴ “5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe,” Pew Research Center, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>.

public schools,¹⁵ this 1989 expulsion was the first of many episodes concerning the role of Islam, the headscarf, and education in French public schools.

After the initial affair, the parents of the girls appealed to the *Council d'État*, which ruled in favor of the girls and defended the legal right to wear religious attire at school, citing examples of Catholic children historically wearing the crucifix and Jewish boys wearing the yarmulke.¹⁶ In its ruling, the Council voted to uphold the values of French *laïcité* by ruling that the state would not interfere in the affairs of the Muslim schoolgirls and would not attempt to intervene in religious practices.¹⁷ Although the issue of *laïcité* is found at the core of the headscarf controversy, there is no single definition that properly defines the word. As such, *laïcité* can have multiple interpretations – all of which can be argued as accurate. Contributing to complications in understanding the significance of the word in French, the English-language does not have a translation for

¹⁵ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 18.

¹⁶ Stephen Croucher, *Looking Beyond the Hijab* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 2009), 32.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

the word.¹⁸ For example, proposed by Jacques Chirac during a debate, one understanding of *laïcité* is that it “expresses our wish to live together in respect, dialogue, and toleration.”¹⁹ In contrast, others have proposed that “*laïcité* is the principle of a balance between the public sphere and the private sphere,” that “*laïcité* is based on a neutral public sphere, one free of all religious belief,” and that it is “an emancipatory process... a light to women imprisoned... hope for oppressed minorities.”²⁰ Though conceptions of *laïcité* differ, the common application and interpretation of *laïcité* during the later years of the headscarf debate was one of “freedom of teaching,” according to which the “Republican state had to intervene through the schooling system to ensure” necessary freedoms.²¹ For this reason, the French state ultimately voted to legalize the ban of headscarves in 2004, insofar as the headscarf within the classroom acted as an “inhibitor” to freedom.

Although the *Council d'État* initially ruled to protect *laïcité* by not interfering, the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, later

¹⁸ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 28.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 28 – 29.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

rejected this decision and decreed, “educators had the responsibility of accepting or rejecting veils in the classroom on a case-by-case basis.”²² With this decree, Jospin effectively rejected the stance of non-interference previously associated with French *laïcité* and facilitated future attempts to expel French Muslims from school. In this instance, Jospin unofficially enabled the perpetuation of a postcolonial empire within the French public school system, effectually allowing for the ban of symbols associated with Islam – a nontraditionally French religion – from the classroom. Though the debate concerns *all* ostentatious religious symbols, female Muslim schoolgirls are the main targets of this discussion. By allowing for the teachers to decide on a case-by-case basis, Jospin reinforced prejudice against Islam and against French students of immigrant origin.

In 1994, five years after initial headscarf controversy, “the same principal from Creil – Eugène Chenière – serving now as a deputy for the *Rassemblement pour la République*, proposed a bill that would legally ‘ban all ‘ostentatious’ signs of religious affiliation,’”

²² Stephen Croucher, *Looking Beyond the Hijab* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 2009), 33.

such as the headscarf.²³ Stating that the headscarf served to separate “visually and ideologically” Muslims from non-Muslims, the Minister of Education upheld the proposal.²⁴ Ten years later, in 2004, the “French Senate overwhelmingly passed Law 2004-228” that states, “In public school... the wearing of signs or behaviors by which pupils express openly a religious membership is prohibited.”²⁵ With this law, the Senate argued in favor of upholding *laïcité*, directly contradicting the *Council d’État’s* interpretation of a non-intervening form of *laïcité* in 1989. According to the French state, the school acts as a public domain and should therefore be free of all religious symbols, effectively separating church and state.²⁶ Whereas the 1989 *Council d’État* had previously argued that the state should not interfere in religious affairs, the 2004 French state argued that *laïcité* could only be upheld when religion did not enter the public domain of the school in any aspect.

From the beginning of the controversy in 1989 until the legal decision to ban all ostensible symbols associated with religion 2004,

²³ Joan Scott, *Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 10.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Stephen Croucher, *Looking Beyond the Hijab* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 2009), 33.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

opinions on the headscarf permeated the media, but one voice was noticeably absent: the voice of the French Muslim schoolgirls. For example, in 2003, President Jacques Chirac, assembled the Stasi Commission to determine the feasibility of creating a law banning religious symbols, as well to launch an “enquiry into the application of *laïcité*” in this context.²⁷ Operating from July 2003 to December 2003, the Stasi Commission contained 20 members, ranging from academics, educational administrators, politicians, lawyers, activists, and one business owner, representing both left- and right-wing political opinions.²⁸ The Stasi Commission conducted over 150 interviews, public and private, and reviewed thousands of letters concerning the issue of the headscarf. However, one initial complaint aimed at the Stasi Commission concerned the fact that, out of the teachers interviewed, the large majority held an anti-veil stance.²⁹ Furthermore, of the small number of female Muslim schoolgirls given a chance to voice their opinion about the role of the headscarf in

²⁷ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 22.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

school, they all confessed their “humiliation” associated with being “forced to wear the veil.”³⁰

Thus, apparent from the lack of pro-headscarf teachers, as well as the lack of interviews from Muslim schoolgirls who choose to wear the headscarf, I argue that the Stasi Commission served to perpetuate ideas of the French “civilizing mission” by “emancipat[ing] a generation of Muslim schoolgirls” from the tyranny and oppression of Islam, as well as to prevent France from succumbing to an “insidious plot to undermined the Republic.”³¹ The Commission thus revived colonial-era fears concerning Islam and led to a decrease in the visibility and presence of French Muslims within the metropole. In 2004, an estimated 5 million Muslims lived in France – approximately 8 % of the population – and today Muslims remain the “fastest-growing ethnic group” in the metropole.³² Although Muslims remain a small percentage of the total population, fear of the growing presence of the *Other*, i.e., North African immigrants, began to more visibility manifest in the 1970s and 1980s, coinciding with the first

³⁰ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 22.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

³² Stephen Croucher, *Looking Beyond the Hijab* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 2009), 5.

headscarf controversy. Due to the economic downturn and decreased need for foreign labor beginning in 1973, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing attempted to halt the influx of immigrants by refusing to renew previously approved residency permits,³³ a policy that ultimately failed. Although France had historically received a steady flow of immigrant workers entering the country, immigration until this point was largely seen as temporary and economically based.³⁴ Thus, when policies failed to successfully stop all immigration into France, sentiments of anxiety and anger entered some segments of the population, specifically during the economic downturn.

Furthermore, at the end of the 1980s, the French far-right political party, the *Front National*, gained social and political recognition that launched immigration into the forefront of French politics and French media. For example, arguing to uphold the values of traditional French culture, Jean-Marie Le Pen, the *National Front* Party President, called for the “forced repatriation” of

³³Virginie Guiraudon, “Immigration Policy in France,” *Brookings*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2001/07/0101france-guiraudon>.

³⁴ Richard Derderian, *North Africans in contemporary France* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 10.

immigrants.³⁵ Furthermore, Le Pen's political campaign focused on the fundamental differences between Islamic immigrants and traditionally Christian French citizens, citing these differences as the reason for France's increasing unemployment and thereby scapegoating the North African immigrant population. In addition to the increasingly violent and racially charged rhetoric of politicians such as Le Pen, between 1980 and 1993, North Africans in France "accounted for 78 percent of all officially recorded racial crimes," leading to increased fear and suspicions about the presence of North African immigrants and their ability to successfully "integrate" into French culture and identity.³⁶ With heightened feelings of doubt and fear came an increase in debates about laws and institutions aimed to protect "French identity."

Thus, it is no surprise that, in 2004, one Stasi Commission member stated, "The veil hid a forest, a dense forest, which was difficult to penetrate," and which needed to be controlled by the French Republic by means of banning all symbols of the *Other*, such as the headscarf. Although Bernard Stasi conceded that the

³⁵Richard Derderian, *North Africans in contemporary France* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 - 11.

headscarf could have multiple meanings, he ultimately determined that the headscarf was “an instrument of oppression” that needed to be removed from the Republic.³⁷ Ultimately, and despite the fact that very few schoolgirls were consulted about the act of wearing the headscarf, the French state arrived at the “inevitable conclusion” that the headscarf is unsuitable and incompatible with French educational structure. As a result the headscarf ban demonstrates the power of the “legacy of French colonialism, whose structures and administrations were consistently based on the idea that French authorities possessed an exact knowledge of the natives’ cultures and lives.”³⁸ Without the need to consult Muslim intellectuals and community leaders, pro-headscarf teachers, or Muslim schoolgirls who chose to wear the headscarf, the Stasi Commission successfully convinced President Jacques Chirac of the need to ratify the 2004-228 Law, certain that they were civilizing and rescuing Muslims from the oppression and savagery of North African culture.

Unable to extricate itself from its colonial legacy, the Commission’s decision to ban the headscarf worked to further

³⁷ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

establish a psychological empire of cultural division, establishing Islam as oppressive and incompatible with French Republicanism and education. While all ostensible forms of religious symbols were banned, the implementation of the law served primarily to stigmatize and alienate Muslim students. In an effort to uphold Republican *laïcité*, the law instead created a negative educational environment where Muslim schoolgirls became the target of prejudice and racism, complicating their ability to succeed academically rather than liberating them from oppression, rendering them invisible. Furthermore, by minimizing the visibility of Islamic symbols and by advocating for the survival of traditional French culture and *laïcité* (as seen by Le Pen), French citizens were able to critique Muslim immigrants without *directly* attacking Muslim immigrants and to marginalize French Muslims.

Beginning in 1989, the headscarf controversies signaled the beginning of a cultural revolt and a schism within French society. Haunted by its colonial past and forced to confront its history as a nation of immigration, France entered the 21st century with a ruling that indirectly targeted Muslim schoolgirls, further reinforcing a psychological empire that penetrated all social, cultural, and political

realms within the metropole. Officially claiming to uphold *laïcité* within French schools and to empower and liberate Muslim schoolgirls, the Stasi Commission unofficially hindered the attempts for French Muslim females to “integrate” in to French society. Considered the official French policy from the mid-1980s to the 2000s, the policy of integration “encourage[d] immigrants to abide by the law but retain their distinctive cultures.”³⁹ Instead of offering liberation, the 2004-228 Law resulted in “shame, guilt, and a burning sense of injustice,” transforming the school into a center of “hate” and “never-ending pain.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, the policy of *assimilation* gained popularity, which placed pressure on immigrants and French citizens of immigrant origin “to adopt quintessentially French behavior and traditions.”⁴¹ Ignoring the point of view of the Muslim schoolgirls, the Stasi Commission successfully silenced and oppressed the very audience it was aiming to liberate.

³⁹Sylvia Zappi, “French government revives assimilation policy,” Migration Policy Institute, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/french-government-revives-assimilation-policy>.

⁴⁰ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 33.

⁴¹Sylvia Zappi, “French government revives assimilation policy,” Migration Policy Institute, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/french-government-revives-assimilation-policy>.

2005 riots

On 27 October 2005, while fleeing from the police in the Clichy-Sous-Bois *banlieue* outside of Paris, Bouna Traore (15) and Zyed Benna (17) were accidentally electrocuted - an incident that sent the nation into a state of emergency due to the violent rioting that spread throughout the *banlieues* of *Clichy-sous-Bois*, *Montfermeil*, *Les Bosquets*, and *La Forestière*.⁴² An investigation following the incident, “concluded that they [Traore and Benna] had not committed any crime, but that they had fled simply because they had seen police.”⁴³ From 27 October to 16 November, “more than 9,000 vehicles, dozens of public buildings and businesses were set on fire.”⁴⁴ Upon declaration of a state of emergency, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin stated that the underlying issue fueling the riots was “France’s failure to provide hope” to the disenfranchised French citizens with immigrant origins living within the *banlieues* who are unable to find employment or to receive proper social and

⁴² Stephen Croucher, *Looking Beyond the Hijab* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 2009), 1 - 2.

⁴³ Angelique Chrisafis, “The trial that could lay bare France’s racial divide,” *The Guardian*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/15/trial-france-racial-divide>.

⁴⁴ Angelique Chrisafis, “Nothing’s changed: 10 years after French riots, banlieues remain in crisis,” *The Guardian*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/22/nothings-changed-10-years-after-french-riots-banlieues-remain-in-crisis>.

cultural recognition from the French state.⁴⁵ The 2005 riots demonstrated the “hopelessness of a generation” of the French youths living in the *banlieues* of Paris who are experiencing continued marginalization and joblessness due to “their address, skin color or their parents’ immigrant origins.”⁴⁶

Whereas the word *banlieue* is often translated as “suburb” in English, the living spaces are more akin to housing projects. A concept dating to the nineteenth-century, the *banlieues* were conceived in conjunction with the rise of the working-class population and the creation of a physically fluid “urban fringe,”⁴⁷ not based in any particular space. Insofar as the majority of the proletariat dominated the peripheral areas associated with industrialization, this “floating population” was known as the *banlieues noires*, an expression that indicated disease, danger, and *otherness*.⁴⁸ By the 1920s, the *banlieues noires* transformed into the *banlieues rouges* – still an “undefined space,” yet an area that contained growing cultural

⁴⁵ Stephen Croucher, *Looking Beyond the Hijab* (New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 2009), 2.

⁴⁶ Angelique Chrisafis, “Nothing’s changed: 10 years after French riots, banlieues remain in crisis,” *The Guardian*, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/22/nothings-changed-10-years-after-french-riots-banlieues-remain-in-crisis>.

⁴⁷ Richard Derderian, *North Africans in contemporary France* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 146.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

identity characterized by the working-class struggle.⁴⁹ However, between 1954 and 1975, due to economic and labor needs, immigration into France (primarily from North African countries) increased from 1.7 million to 4.1 million, resulting in the transformation of the *banlieues* from an “undefined space” associated with the working class to physical housing projects within *zones à urbaniser en priorité* (ZUP), or “priority zones for urbanization.”⁵⁰ These ZUP were located outside of the city centers, around the periphery of towns, where urbanization and industrialization could develop in isolation, away from the middle class. While initial critics of the ZUP commented on the pitfalls of the physical and social isolation of the housing, as well as the lack of transportation lines, few others vocalized dissent or opposition.⁵¹ Following the initial construction in the 1950s, the *banlieues* primarily were home to single, immigrant Muslim men who believed they were working in France temporarily until they could return to North Africa and reunite with their families. However, during the 1960s, a family

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 69.

⁵¹ Richard Derderian, *North Africans in contemporary France* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 146.

⁵¹ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 70.

regrouping policy gained popularity within the France, as the government began to encourage the immigrants to adhere to “traditional [French] values and cultural norms.”⁵² However, many immigrants retained their Islamic faith and areas such as cellars and garages were converted to Muslim prayer-rooms that ensured the survival of the familial Muslim faith and culture.

Furthermore, with an increasing population and a decreasing municipal budget, the conditions of the banlieues rapidly decreased and, by 1980, the *banlieues* transformed into zones of “car stealing, violence, theft, drug dealing and riots.”⁵³ Moreover, with the creation of *grands ensembles* – uniform apartment blocks – the banlieues became associated with “total disenchantment” and a lack of cultural or social identity.⁵⁴ With the final, physical construction of the *grands ensembles*, one witnesses the return of the *banlieues noires* and their association of *otherness*, violence, danger, and stigmatization. Not only do these banlieues represent a space of geographic

⁵² Sylvia Zappi, “French government revives assimilation policy,” Migration Policy Institute, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/french-government-revives-assimilation-policy>.

⁵³ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 70.

⁵⁴ Richard Derderian, *North Africans in contemporary France* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 148.

alienation, but also they represent social and economic alienation that continues to breed violence and hostility.

Due to the years of physical and social isolation, one now associates the *banlieues* with *la galère*, which is defined as a “highly volatile sense of detachment and frustration among suburban youths produced by an environment that excludes, alienates, and stigmatizes.”⁵⁵ *La galère* turns into anger and rage, leading to stereotypes of the *banlieues* that further reinforce a cultural separation that becomes impossible to overcome. Beginning in the late 1990s, the *banlieues* began to represent “the rejected, the underemployed, and the foreign,” leading to a rebirth of “colonial fears concerning Muslims” and the suspicion that the *banlieues* housed future terrorists.⁵⁶ Thus, in 2000, France enacted the “Vigipirate Operation,” which instituted forced identity checks within the metropole. As a result of the institution of forced identity checks, the primary targets were Muslims leaving the *banlieues* and entering city centers, leading to further alienation (both geographic and cultural) of the inhabitants within the *banlieues*.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 71.

Following the violence that erupted during the 2005 *émeutes* within the *banlieues*, Azouz Begag – the first cabinet minister with North African – observed that “entrenched socioeconomic inequalities compounded by widespread ethnic discrimination and decades of political neglect had bred a subgroup of disaffected youths whose resentment was such that they were ready to erupt into violence at the slightest provocation.”⁵⁷ The base of this group of disenchantment youth comprises third-generation teenagers of primarily North African origins who were born into the “ethnically stigmatized environment” of the *banlieues* and thus see little to no hope of escaping the disenfranchisement.⁵⁸ While these youths are French citizens and have received a French education, “this does not prevent them from being ethnicized by members of the majority ethnic population,”⁵⁹ as was demonstrated by the creation of the 2004-228 law banning the headscarf. Rejected by the majority White population, these youths become victims of the contemporary psychological empire that results in increased hostility and violence

⁵⁷ Azouz Begag, *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007) viii.

⁵⁸ Azouz Begag, *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007) ix.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

between the minority and majority ethnic groups within France. Just as the 2004-228 law created a political and social barrier between France and Islam, the *banlieues* serve as a physical and geographic barrier between minority and majority groups and strengthens the effects of the psychological empire within the metropole.

Whether the boundaries are cultural or geographic, contemporary racism targeting French citizens of immigrant origin exists as a means of constructing “new boundaries and dividing lines.”⁶⁰ Although these third-generation youths are French citizens, they continue to receive the treatment of second-class citizens by means of political and social prejudice and the geographic and social and cultural alienation of *the banlieues*. Already disadvantaged by this physical isolation, the ban against the headscarf acts as an additional inhibitor, perpetuating the existence of an empire of inequality. While these French youths have adopted the behaviors of the dominant culture, successful social mobility is continually

⁶⁰ Richard Derderian, *North Africans in contemporary France* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 25.

hindered by the creation of physical, social, and legal dividing lines, leading to anger and protest.⁶¹

Ni Putes, Ni Soumises

In 2002, Sohane Benziane, an 18-year old female Muslim was burned to death in a *banlieue* of Paris due to “rebellious” female behavior.⁶² Following the murder of Shane Benziane - a victim of the hypermasculine, violent, and oppressive behaviors of the men in the *banlieues* - inspired Fadela Amara to found *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (Neither Whores Nor Submissives) in 2003 as a means of fighting against *la galère* and *la rage* that has infected the *banlieues*. In the 1990s, coinciding with first headscarf controversy, Amara begin to notice a deterioration in male-female relationships within the *banlieues*. It is also important to note that, although Amara supports women who wear the headscarf, she believes that Islamic religious practices should respect the “norms of a secular society,” and therefore also supports the ratification of the 2004 headscarf law.⁶³

⁶¹ Richard Derderian, *North Africans in contemporary France* (NY: Palgrave, 2004), 25.

⁶² Fadela Amara, *Breaking the Silence: French women's voices from the ghetto* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 16.

⁶³ Fadela Amara, *Breaking the Silence: French women's voices from the ghetto* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 73.

Amara's support of the headscarf ban indicates the sheer divisiveness of the issue and the complexities surrounding these cultural events.

Hit hardest by the economic downturn, the banlieues began to breed physical violence as the younger generation struggled to cope with the loss of wages.⁶⁴ As the older men began to lose jobs as well, the former social status and authority associated with economic success vanished, and authority transferred to the eldest son within each family. With the new authority and power, these young men—neglected by the economy and society outside of the banlieues—began to impose extremely radicalized, oppressive, and regressive rules on the women.

As the social and economic injustice reached new heights entering the twenty-first century, the male youths within the *banlieues* were met with intersectional forms of prejudice. For example, due to their ethnic identities and physical isolation, these youths were born into an environment of extreme discrimination that created a sense of rejection and invisibility. However, the patriarchal structure of families (both French and immigrant) creates an

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

environment that encourages freedom of movement and action for young men.⁶⁵ Thus, when these men are rejected by mainstream society outside of the physical isolation of the *banlieues*, a sense of rage and injustice overwhelm the men, resulting in the manifestation of violence and oppression within their physical confines.

Furthermore, as these men experience the devastating effects of social rejection and isolation, Azouz Begag notes the susceptibility of these young men to pursue a radicalized version of Islam that provides an outlet for these frustrations. For example, Begag discusses the situation of Khaled Kelkal, a young Muslim from the *banlieues*. Murdered by the French police for suspected connections to terrorism, Kelkal had previously confessed to feelings of rejection and disconnection from society, as well as feelings of resentment for this isolation.⁶⁶ However, after meeting a Muslim imam, Kelkal “became consumed with the desire to destroy... a world that had failed to offer him a place.”⁶⁷ Rejected by the dominant society, the *banlieues* are transforming into an environment that produces

⁶⁵ Fadela Amara, *Breaking the Silence: French women's voices from the ghetto* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 68.

⁶⁶ Azouz Begag, *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 74 – 75.

⁶⁷ Azouz Begag, *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 75.

violence, anger, and the desire to avenge dignity and social status. Victims of the psychological empire, these younger men lose the ability to operate in French society outside of the *banlieues*, experiencing a disenfranchisement from the state that fosters disillusionment about future success.

2015 terrorist attacks

On January 7, 2015, two French citizens – Chérif and Said Kouachi – systematically murdered ten people at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* (including the editor), and were linked to two other murders and violent attacks the following day.⁶⁸ Known for its provocative illustrations satirizing religion, *Charlie Hebdo* had recently published a sexualized cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed, reinforcing the sense of marginalization within some segments of the French Muslim community and widening the “culture clash” between French freedom of expression and increased acts of religious extremism and. Following the terrorist attack, “*I am Charlie*” became a popular slogan; however, some French Muslims stated that it “sidelined the Muslim community, feeding into a general sense of

⁶⁸ “Charlie Hebdo attack: Three days of terror,” *BBC News Europe*, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30708237>.

discrimination that... helped create the conditions for radicalization in the first place.”⁶⁹ Thus, as Azouz Begag stated in *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance*, continued feelings of rejection by mainstream society can lead to feelings of resentment and the desire to harm those who benefit from the perpetuation of cultural empire and colonial conceptions of inferiority associated with Islam and French citizens of immigrant origin. Furthermore, following the act of terror, the *New York Times* wrote that the attacks indicated “a sense of increasing social and economic marginalization that many cited as a root cause of young people drifting toward extremism.”⁷⁰

Months after the January terrorists attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, on 13 November 2015, Paris experienced an additional attack consisting of six coordinated attacks dispersed throughout the city.⁷¹ Beginning at the *Stade de France*, three terrorists attempted to enter the stadium wearing suicide belts. Next, at the Bataclan concert hall,

⁶⁹ Anthony Faiola, “French Muslims feel deeply torn by viral ‘I am Charlie’ slogan,” *The Washington Post*, accessed May 7, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/they-are-not-charlie/2015/01/13/7c9d6998-9aae-11e4-86a3-1b56f64925f6_story.html.

⁷⁰ Adam Ellick and Liz Alderman, “Crisis in France Seen as Sign of Chronic Ills,” *New York Times*, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/15/world/europe/crisis-in-france-is-seen-as-sign-of-chronic-ills.html>.

⁷¹ Daniel Boffey and Henry Zeffman, “How the terror attacks in Paris unfolded,” *The Observer*, accessed March 9, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/14/paris-attacks-timeline-of-terror>.

three terrorists opened fire in the venue, murdering eighty-nine people and holding twenty hostages.⁷² After the Bataclan, the terrorists targeted four restaurants and cafes and opened fire on one boulevard. The final number of deaths reached 129, with 368 wounded.⁷³

While France recovers from the reality of the multiple terrorist attacks in 2015, it is clear that the cultural and political disconnect experienced within the banlieues has transmuted into *la rage*, creating a set of divergent populations that no longer belong to the same, unified community of France. In the aftermath of these attacks, the rhetorical and psychological legacies of colonialism have become apparent, specifically within the rhetoric of the far-right political party, the *Front National*, discussed more in-depth in chapter 3.

Conclusion

Beginning in 1989 with the first headscarf affair, France has continued to demonstrate a society reminiscent of a colonial empire based on perceived beliefs of cultural incompatibility. With the

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ Mary Marcus, "Injuries from Paris attacks will take long to heal," *CBS News*, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/injuries-from-paris-attacks-will-take-long-to-heal/>.

ratification of Law 2004-228, French politicians essentially silenced the voices of the Muslim community, insisting on liberating Muslim schoolgirls from the “oppression” of the headscarf in lieu of respecting individual religious freedoms. In doing so, however, the French state instituted a legal ban on all “inappropriate” signs of the *Other*, strengthening the existence of a psychological empire that promotes social stratification along ethnic and religious lines. Furthermore, by legalizing the headscarf ban, French Muslim schoolgirls are rendered invisible, based on the fact that many young women are unable to attend school unless they are wearing the headscarf. Additionally, as indicated from the 2005 riots in Paris, the lack of attention given to the French *banlieues* has perpetuated the notion of geographic and social isolation, disadvantaging the younger generations within the *banlieues* from accessing French society in a meaningful way. Instead, these younger generations are finding refuge through the exertion of violence and in extreme and radicalized forms of religion. Additionally, evident from the series of the 2015 terrorist attacks, French citizens of immigrant origins are attempting to exert control and to gain recognition and visibility with a region that has perpetually been a source of rejection,

disenfranchisement, and prejudice. Unable to penetrate French society, French youths are left competing against the contemporary psychological empire.

Chapter 2

French overseas departments, regions, and collectivities

Introduction

Known as the DOM-TOM, or the DROM-COM, or the DOM-TOM-COM, the French Republic includes a group of overseas departments, territories, and collectivities that are considered sovereign French territory. With varied levels of legal status and levels of autonomy, the DOM-TOM represent a diverse French population, as well as a unique perspective on the legacies of French empire. Benedict Anderson states that, though the concept of nations and nationality are “notoriously difficult to define,” one proposed definition would be an “imagined political community,” as “members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, Anderson argues that the concepts of nationality and *nation-ness* are “cultural artefacts” that are “capable of being transplanted... to a great variety

⁷⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 3, 6.

of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations.”⁷⁵ Although the French overseas departments and territories began as colonial conquests, these regions are now inherently a part of the French national consciousness, participating and sharing in the image of their communion. However, while the departments and territories continually vote to remain within the French Union – as seen in 2009 with Mayotte and 2010 with Martinique – traces of imperial France continue to linger and manifest in political movements and social unrest that challenge traditional perceptions of French identity and community.

In this chapter, I argue that the DOM-TOMs embody the fluidity and complexity of French identity, while at the same time challenging the notion of nation and community. Although many DOM-TOMs often vocalize the desire for greater autonomy and control within the region, these departments and territories consistently vote to remain unified with the French Union and community. In this chapter, I will begin with a brief history on the origins of the French overseas departments and territories and their

⁷⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 4.

relation to the French empire. Beginning as French colonies, the overseas departments and territories have evolved to become extensions of the French Republic. I will offer examples of departments and territories, examining the differences in pursuits for autonomy or French unification within the regions. I will then discuss the implications of the *Négritude* and *Créolité* movements as cultural manifestations of political desires to separate from colonial France, while still remaining connected to the French community and nation.

Historical overview

Officially becoming the *Départements et Régions d’Outre-Mer* – *Collectivités d’Outre Mer* in 2003 (DROM-COM), the most often expression associated with these countries as the *Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer* (DOM-TOM). In addition, there are also *Pays d’Outre-Mer* (POM). Consisting of 11 different major DOM-TOMs, the list includes:⁷⁶

⁷⁶ “Découvrir les Outre-Mer,” *Ministère des Outre-Mer*, last accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.outre-mer.gouv.fr/?-decouvrir-l-outre-mer-.html>.

French Guiana	DOM
Guadeloupe	DOM/ROM
Martinique	DOM/ROM
Reunion Island	DOM
Mayotte	DOM/COM
Wallis-and-Futuna	COM
Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon	COM
Saint-Martin Island	COM
Saint-Barthelemy Island	COM
New Caledonia	COM
French Polynesia	COM/POM

Consisting of varied cultures and identities, the French DOM-TOMs ultimately represent diversity under the French Republic. For example, the French Constitution offers these regions “equal rights with and the same legislative identity as any other department in metropolitan France, plus a certain amount of freedom which takes

account of their specific circumstances.”⁷⁷ Allowing departments, territories, and collectivities to choose “constitutional legislation a la carte,” France offers the DOM-TOMs the ability to “choose their own individual roads of development,”⁷⁸ yet many still argue for greater control and regional power.

Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Mayotte

After being placed under the sovereign rule of France in 1658, Martinique officially became French domain in 1674 and was ruled according to the *Pacte Colonial*, declaring that “the mother country founds and maintains the colonies; the colonies enrich the mother country.”⁷⁹ Once under official *Pacte Colonial* rule, France began shipping supplies and slaves to the French Antilles to support the French empire. Similarly to Martinique, Guadeloupe was placed under French rule in 1674, becoming a dependency of Martinique

⁷⁷ “Overseas France,” France in the U.S.: Embassy of France in Washington D.C., accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article573>.

⁷⁸ “Overseas France,” France in the U.S.: Embassy of France in Washington D.C., accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article573>.

⁷⁹ Robert Cornevin, “Martinique: Overseas department, France,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Martinique>.

until 1775.⁸⁰ After a series of attacks and losses, Martinique fell to Britain in 1762 and 1809, with the French reclaiming definitive rule in 1814.⁸¹ While also falling to British forces, France eventually regained controls of Guadeloupe in 1816.⁸² Furthermore, during World War II, both Martinique and Guadeloupe followed the collaborative Vichy government, only joining the Free French Forces in 1943.⁸³ Both Martinique and Guadeloupe became an official French *department* in 1946 and later gained status as a *region* of France in 1974.⁸⁴ Considered both a department and a region (DOM-ROM), Martinique has four *arrondissements* that are run by an elected council. Though Guadeloupe is also considered a department and a region (DOM-ROM) of France, Guadeloupe is only divided into two *arrondissements*. In terms of political representation, Martinique and Guadeloupe send representatives to

⁸⁰ Robert Cornevin, "Guadeloupe: Overseas department, France," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Guadeloupe>.

⁸¹ Robert Cornevin, "Martinique: Overseas department, France," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Martinique>.

⁸² Robert Cornevin, "Guadeloupe: Overseas department, France," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Guadeloupe>.

⁸³ Robert Cornevin, "Martinique: Overseas department, France," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Martinique>.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

the French National Assembly, the French Senate, and the European Parliament,⁸⁵ whereas Martinique also sends a representative to the French Economic and Social Council.⁸⁶ In terms justice systems, the French system of justice fully applies both within Martinique and Guadeloupe.

Following the Second World War and the contributions of Martinique and Guadeloupe to Charles de Gaulle's Free French Forces, movements for independence emerged within Martinique and Guadeloupe. However, from 1956 to 1964, struggles for an independent Guadeloupe were eventually suppressed by de Gaulle's appeals to remain united under the French union.⁸⁷ In the 1980s, increased acts of violence in the name of independence, as well as low levels of economic improvement within Guadeloupe, once again initiated talks of separation from the French government, but Guadeloupe retained its status as a department. As a concession, the French Parliament approved institutional reforms in 2000,

⁸⁵ Robert Cornevin, "Guadeloupe: Overseas department, France," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Guadeloupe>.

⁸⁶ Robert Cornevin, "Martinique: Overseas department, France," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Martinique>.

⁸⁷ Robert Cornevin, "Guadeloupe: Overseas department, France," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Guadeloupe>.

providing more responsibility and autonomy to the local assemblies within the department.⁸⁸ However, in 2003, the two *arrondissements* of Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthelemy voted to secede and to become French overseas collectivities (COMS).⁸⁹

In contrast, Martinique experienced a greater fight for independence. With Aimé Césaire, one of the founders of the *Négritude* movement, elected as a deputy to the French National Assembly in 1946, the voice of independence was more greatly heard.⁹⁰ In addition, as the economy in Martinique continued to depress, more autonomy and control was given to local councils over economy, police, and taxation.⁹¹ However, some dissent over independence does continue to exist within Martinique. For example, in 1992, “a plurality of the island’s voters” voted to ratify the Treaty on European Union, contributing to France’s success in joining the EU.⁹² Furthermore, in 2010, Martinique voted against a proposal that would grant greater autonomy to the region. Thus, what are the

⁸⁸ Robert Cornevin, “Guadeloupe: Overseas department, France,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Guadeloupe>.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁰ Robert Cornevin, “Martinique: Overseas department, France,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 28th, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Martinique>.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹² *Ibidem*.

perceived benefits of remaining a French overseas department, and how do these departments and territories perceive the French national community?

As an overseas department, all inhabitants of Martinique are legally citizens of the French Republic. As such, all Martinicans can move freely to the metropole for employment, and can also apply for *Le revenu de Solidarité active* – France’s monthly welfare payment of €466.⁹³ However, this welfare payment is not equivalent to the high cost of local food available in Martinique, and is deemed insufficient, leading to growing levels of anger and resentment. In addition, the perceived continuation of a colonial rule and high employment rates also contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction.

For example, though slavery was abolished within Martinique in 1848, “societal stratification along race and class lines remain deeply entrenched,” despite the fact that the population is estimated to be only 5% whites and 95% Creoles.⁹⁴ As colonial plantation owners controlled most businesses during before the abolition of slavery, the white descendants (comprising an estimated 1% of the

⁹³ Alfred Wong and Roxanne Gomes, “The intractable social-economic problems of Martinique,” *Etudes Caribéennes* 21(2012), accessed April 28, 2016, <https://etudescaribeennes.revues.org/5795>.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

Martinique population) continue to control the land, businesses, and assets.⁹⁵ Furthermore, acts of *départementalisation* and *francisation* contribute to the racial and social problems within Martinique. In this instance, *départementalisation* translates into the “political annexation into France,” meaning that most decisions regarding quotidian life in Martinique are made within Paris.⁹⁶ Thus, although decentralization laws were ratified and movements toward greater autonomy were granted to Martinique in 2009, the majority of political and legislative power remains with the Prefect assigned from the President within the metropole, as well as “key administrative posts.”⁹⁷ Additionally, the move toward autonomy over local elections has resulted in little change within Martinique, resulting in a complete loss of power and representation for the Martinican population. The policy of *francisation* still exists within Martinique and marks the inability for Creole and indigenous Martiniquais populations to exert cultural or political dominance. *Francisation* began as a “national cultural assimilation policy” that imposed the

⁹⁵ Alfred Wong and Roxanne Gomes, “The intractable social-economic problems of Martinique,” *Etudes Caribéennes* 21(2012), accessed April 28, 2016, <https://etudescaribeennes.revues.org/5795>.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

“dominance of French language and culture for the development of French identity during the course of territorial consolidation.”⁹⁸ Thus, as Creole voices and identities fight to emerge and remain present within Martinique (and Guadeloupe), the long-lasting effects of *francisation* continue to represent the present-day empire and desire to diminish cultures that differ from the traditional Gallic, metropolitan France.

Moreover, though Martinique (as well as Guadeloupe, Reunion, and French Guiana) is an official department of France, the employment rates are three times higher than unemployment rates within the metropole.⁹⁹ The high level of unemployment, in conjunction with high levels of social unrest, results in high levels of emigration out of Martinique and thus greater demands to ratify the socio-economic issues lingering from the colonial effects of race and class separation. Although though Martinique and Guadeloupe both receive benefits of French citizenship, these regions also experience negative economic and cultural effects that are a direct result from the French Empire. Despite pushing for greater autonomy and

⁹⁸ Alfred Wong and Roxanne Gomes, “The intractable social-economic problems of Martinique,” *Etudes Caribéennes* 21(2012), accessed April 28, 2016, <https://etudescaribeennes.revues.org/5795>.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

political power, the lingering effects of colonial institutions and power continue to exist within the region, creating a sentiment of disconnect with the metropole. While these departments remain part of the French national identity, Martinique and Guadeloupe continue to experience the effects of the postcolonial empire.

In contrast to Martinique and Guadeloupe, Mayotte is an example of an overseas department that has consistently fought to remain unified with and uphold the values of the French Republic. 1843, France colonized Mayotte and the remaining Comoros Islands, but began to administer Mayotte separately after the three northernmost islands of Comoros declared independence in 1975.¹⁰⁰ As a result, in 1976, Mayotte became a special *collectivité territoriale* of France. However, in 1979, the United Nations “passed a resolution affirming the sovereignty of Comoros over Mayotte,” further supported by the African Union.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, a referendum was held in Mayotte in 2009, with 95% of Mayotte’s citizens voting to gain status as a French overseas department, legally taking effect in 2011.

¹⁰⁰ “Mayotte: Overseas department, France,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Mayotte>.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

Now officially France's 101st department, Mayotte is an interesting study in the relationship between Islam and the French Republic. For example, with a population of 200,000 in 2011, 90% of citizens identified as Muslim.¹⁰² As tensions seem to increase daily within the metropole related to the "incompatibility" of Islam and the Republic, in Mayotte, the citizens have continually "sought to reconcile Islam and the laws of the French Republic."¹⁰³ For example, Adinani Zoubert, an inhabitant of Mayotte, states, "it goes without saying that this is a secular state, but the point of a secular state is that it guarantees religious freedom. We don't have to live in an Islamic republic to practice our religion."¹⁰⁴ In order to gain departmental status, the inhabitants of Mayotte agreed to "accept certain compromises between the Koran and the French civil code," such as setting the legal age of marriage to 18 years, as well as abolishing all polygamous marriages.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, in 2010, the citizens of Mayotte ruled to abandon the *qadi* justice system – "the

¹⁰² Richard Bouhet, "Where Islam and the Republic get on," *Vox Europe*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.voxeurop.eu/en/content/article/981731-where-islam-and-republic-get>.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

practice of appealing to the authority of *qadis* or Islamic judges”¹⁰⁶ – in favor of the judges appointed by the French Republic. In addition, the French ban on wearing the *burqa* (the full body covering) within public spaces was also well received, with citizens largely against signs of religious fundamentalism.¹⁰⁷ Abdoulatifou Aly, the Mayotte representative for the French National Assembly, states, “In some French suburbs, there are people who want to use Islam as a weapon against the West, but that doesn’t mean that our religion is by nature opposed to the Republic.”¹⁰⁸ Instead, Aly believes that Mayotte is a perfect example of the harmony that could be achieved within metropolitan France, as Mayotte demonstrates the “capacity to integrate difference” and to “assume a fully universal dimension.”¹⁰⁹

Négritude, créolité, and identity: Re-imagining the imagined community

Though politically unified with the French nation, literary movements within the overseas departments and territories

¹⁰⁶ Richard Bouhet, “Where Islam and the Republic get on,” *Vox Europe*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.voxeurop.eu/en/content/article/981731-where-islam-and-republic-get>.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*.

represent contempt and cultural rejection of white, imperial France. Beginning in the 1930s, intellectuals and authors from Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana “sought for the first time to define their cultural identity in terms of their historical and racial affiliations with Africa, rather than their political and educational ties with France.”¹¹⁰ Before the official creation of French overseas departments and territories, French colonial rule effectively rejected the Creole language and culture, perpetuating dominance of *francisation*. Thus, Aimé Césaire, joined by Léon Damas, Léopold Senghor, and Birago Diop, forged the *Négritude* literary movement that was “a reaction to the cultural oppression of the French colonial system, which aims to reject the French project of cultural assimilation and the devaluation of Africa and her culture... Négritude is more cultural than political.”¹¹¹ In this movement, the authors reject the historically colonial French presence, acting instead to create a kinship with the African diaspora, utilizing terms such as “Negro” and “savage” as a means of defying “the prejudices

¹¹⁰ Beverly Ormerod, “The Martinican concept of “creoleness:” A multiracial redefinition of culture,” *Mots Pluriels* 7 (1998), accessed April 28, 2016, <http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP798bo.html>.

¹¹¹ “Aimé Césaire,” *île en île*, translated by Monica Goodwin, accessed March 29, 2016, http://ile-en-ile.org/cesaire_aime/.

of their likely public.”¹¹² By creating a literary and cultural kinship with the African diaspora, writers from regions such as Martinique and Guadeloupe are able to reject the European and French stereotypes of “race, color, mental and physical attributes,” and to create a “spiritual homeland” that unifies all “victims of prejudice, abuse, famine, [and] torture.”¹¹³ Furthermore, in creating a movement that defies the historical French presence, the followers of the *Négritude* movement also participate in consciously re-imagining the imagined community of France. While continuing to remain politically French, the movement creates another imagined community – this time within the realm of the African diaspora. As a result, Césaire relies heavily on geographic depictions of Martinique as a means to “destroy the caricature of those territories in European minds,”¹¹⁴ and to physically separate Martinique from the imagined community of France.

However, some Caribbean authors rejected the *Négritude* movement, as Césaire had wrongly made the assumption that *all*

¹¹² Beverly Ormerod, “The Martinican concept of “creoleness:” A multiracial redefinition of culture,” *Mots Pluriels* 7 (1998), accessed April 28, 2016, <http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP798bo.html>.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁴ Vincent Clement, “Latitude and longitude of the past: Puce, negritude, and French Caribbean identity in Aime Césaire’s poetry,” *Caribbean Studies* 39 (2011), 177.

“Caribbean non-white individual[s] will opt to be assimilated into the African cultural sphere.”¹¹⁵ This was often not the case, considering that French Creole as a language or culture had little to no role in the larger picture of *Négritude*. Thus, in the 1980s, three authors from Martinique – Patrick Chamoiseau, Jean Bernabé, Raphaël Confiant – published the *Eloge de la créolité* (In praise of creoleness), which stated, “Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves to be Creole. This will be for us an internal attitude, better: a vigilance, or better yet, a type of mental envelope in the middle of which we will build our world in full consciousness of the outer world.”¹¹⁶ Through the creation of the *Créolité* movement, writers such as Chamoiseau argued that the *Négritude* movement wrongly encouraged the Creole people to identify with a foreign land and culture, similar to the assimilation and civilizing mission of French colonialists. Thus, with the *Créolité* movement, the authors became more concerned with creating and providing an outlet for Creole culture and language, using these tools as a “unifying force” that

¹¹⁵ Beverly Ormerod, “The Martinican concept of “creoleness:” A multiracial redefinition of culture,” *Mots Pluriels* 7 (1998), accessed April 28, 2016, <http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP798bo.html>.

¹¹⁶ Patrick Chamoiseau, *Eloge de la créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), translated by Monica Goodwin, 69.

stemmed from “racial diversity and resisted centuries of imposed education” and assimilation to French culture and language.¹¹⁷ However, one issue surrounding *Créolité* is the fact that the language has a strong oral tradition, thus only a small minority can effectively read or understand works primarily written in Creole. Due to this fact, most *Créolité* works are written in French, yet reflect a “creolized” style of identity and voice.¹¹⁸

As many Creole authors continue to write in French despite attempts to create new communities and new identities that are distinct from the white French imperialists, these literary movements are cultural manifestations that indicate the political inability of the overseas departments and territories to separate from the French nation or community. According to Anderson, “nothing connects us affectively...more than language... There is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests.”¹¹⁹ Although these movements express a desire to find cultural autonomy and distance from the Empire, the overseas departments

¹¹⁷ Beverly Ormerod, “The Martinican concept of “creoleness:” A multiracial redefinition of culture,” *Mots Pluriels* 7 (1998), accessed April 28, 2016, <http://motspluriels.arts.uwa.edu.au/MP798bo.html>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 145.

and territories remain unified and connected to the French metropole through “imagined sound,”¹²⁰ maintaining a national connection based on the foundation of a common language.

Conclusion

Indicated from the divergent paths of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Mayotte, the French DOM-TOMs represent fluidity of identity and differing concepts of nation and community in relation to the French metropole. In the case of Martinique and Guadeloupe, cries for greater autonomy and improved economic and social status are consistently defeated by votes to stay within the French Union and to remain a part of the French community. Though legally a department of France, the inhabitants of Martinique and Guadeloupe continue to experience racial discrimination that is a continuation of former colonial French practices within the region. Continued social stratification and lack of political autonomy have thus resulted in feelings of dissatisfaction and disconnect from the metropole, hindering the communion of the French communities. Furthermore, literary movements such as *Négritude* and *Créolité* conceptualized

¹²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 145.

within these regions demonstrate the voice of the people attempting to find autonomy and identity away from the French colonizer, yet the use of the French language within these literary movements act as a continual anchor to French community and nation. In contrast, the political situation of Mayotte represents a cohesive union, with the inhabitants gladly voting to remain joined with France. With over 90% of the population identifying as Muslim, Mayotte is able to more closely identify with the metropole and with contemporary issues surrounding the French community. Ultimately, the French DOM-TOMs remain an essential part of the French nation, yet are marked by struggles to overcome the postcolonial empire, as well as social and political stratification with the region.

Chapter 3

The legacy of the *pied-noir* and the rise of contemporary French extremism

Introduction

On December 6, 2015, the *Front National* placed first in the first round of French regional elections, receiving 28% of votes nationwide and was projected to lead “races to govern six of France’s thirteen regions.”¹²¹ Marking the “highest ever performance”¹²² for the *Front National*, the rise of this far-right political party signifies the re-popularization of anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiment spreading throughout France. Though the *Front National* did not succeed in gaining control of any French regions in the second (and final) round of regional voting, the party still received 6.6 million votes which indicates the strength of the party and the growing sentiment of dissatisfaction within France. Following the

¹²¹ Alissa Rubin, “National Front Gets a Boost in French Regional Elections,” *The New York Times*, accessed April 17, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/08/world/europe/marine-le-pen-and-national-front-get-a-boost-in-french-regional-elections.html?_r=0.

¹²² Angelique Chrisafis, “Front National wins opening round in France’s regional elections,” *The Guardian*, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/06/front-national-wins-opening-round-in-frances-regional-elections>.

series of terrorist attacks within Paris, as well as mounting economic concerns and unemployment, the *Front National* “speaks to voters who feel economically strained, distant from leaders they perceive as elitist and out of touch, and angry or frightened by waves of immigration that they feel threaten their national identity and personal security,”¹²³ One such group targeted by the *Front National* is the contemporary *pied-noir* population, a group of repatriated European settlers who fought for the continued colonization of Algeria by France during the French-Algerian War.

Founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen, the *Front National* exists as Europe’s “oldest far-right party,” promoting “discriminatory and assimilationist immigration politics,” as well as campaigning for the expulsion of “unwanted” immigrants that are associated with “Islamization of French society.”¹²⁴ Shortly after the January 2015 terrorist attacks, Jean-Marie Le Pen stated that “It was to be expected... It’s an episode in the war that is being waged against us

¹²³ Alissa Rubin, “National Front Gets a Boost in French Regional Elections,” *The New York Times*, accessed April 17, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/08/world/europe/marine-le-pen-and-national-front-get-a-boost-in-french-regional-elections.html?_r=0.

¹²⁴ Gilles Ivaldi, “The Front National at 40: The evolution of Europe’s radical right,” *Policy Network*, accessed April 17, 2016, http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4265&title=The-Front-National-at-40-The-evolution-of-Europes-radical-right.

by Islamism.”¹²⁵ Though Marine Le Pen – Jean-Marie’s daughter and current *Front National* president – has recently severed political ties with her father in an attempt to “de-demonize”¹²⁶ the party, the *Front National* remains ideologically connected to the party that has consistently attracted “colonial enthusiasts” and “reactionaries longing for some idealized version of France’s proud past.”¹²⁷ Acting as the protector of “traditional” French values, the *Front National* continues to stratify social and political divisions by scapegoating the *Other* within French society and by perpetuating colonial-era ideas of cultural incompatibility and intolerance.

In this chapter, I argue that the resurgence of *Front National* popularity and its connection to groups such as the *pieds-noirs* and colonial sympathizers demonstrates the existence of a widespread psychological French empire that is currently impacting the social, cultural, and political arena. Intrinsicly connected to colonial beliefs

¹²⁵ Philip Gourevitch, “Le Pen’s Moment,” *The New Yorker*, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/le-pens-moment>.

¹²⁶ Gilles Ivaldi, “The Front National at 40: The evolution of Europe’s radical right,” *Policy Network*, accessed April 17, 2016, http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4265&title=The-Front-National-at-40-The-evolution-of-Europes-radical-right.

¹²⁷ Susan Dominus, “The National Front’s Post-Charlie Hebdo Moment,” *The New York Times*, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/magazine/the-national-fronts-post-charlie-hebdo-moment.html>.

about French cultural superiority, the *Front National* continues to successfully target inhabitants who fear the presence of the *Other* in French society and to consistently link France with legacies of colonialism and empire. Receiving support from both historically anti-colonial populations such as the *pieds-noirs*, as well as the general French population, the rise of the *Front National* signifies a rise of nationalistic and culturally exclusionary sentiments that indicate the presence of a psychological empire, fueled by remnants of an imperial mindset.

I will begin by first defining and identifying what is a *pied-noir*, both in the context of the French-Algerian War and in contemporary French society. I will then discuss the presence and representation of *pieds-noirs* within Algeria in the pre-decolonization period, examining their cultural and political standing. Next, I will discuss the current political and social situation of *pieds-noirs* in the contemporary French metropole in terms of political party alignment, specifically in relation to the *Front National*. Lastly, I will examine the rise of the *Front National* and the party's relation to groups such as the *pieds-noirs* within France.

Pieds – noirs in colonial Algeria

In 1926, Robert Randau wrote in his work *Les Colons*, “I am an African. I am the law. I am neither a lazy Arab nor a Maltese dog. I am a *colon*.”¹²⁸ A part of the *Algérianiste* literary movement, Randau and other authors often depicted these European settlers within Algeria (*pieds-noirs*) as the racially superior civilization, rising above the “inferior *indigènes*” and “lazy criminals who practiced primitive customs” that were “inferior” to French civilization.¹²⁹ Images of cultural superiority associated with *pieds-noirs* were present in much of the European literature concerning the Maghreb, demonstrating an “idealized vision of Algeria shared by many *pieds-noirs*, particularly those identified with the political center and right wing.”¹³⁰

In 1830, under a “loose suzerainty of Turkish military rule,” Algeria was experiencing severe political instability and internal turbulence, due to the fact that the region had been subject to a series of “successive conquerors” that had rendered the

¹²⁸ Samuel Kalman, “Fascism and Algérianité: The croix de Feu and the Indigenous Question in 1930s Algeria” in *The French Colonial Mind Volume*, ed. Martin Thomas (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 112.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*.

establishment of national cohesion and national identity impossible.¹³¹ Aiming to distract from domestic problems, France became entangled in Algerian affairs that lead to the initial Algerian conquest of 1830. The fight for total control and victory over Algeria lasted until 1847, when the Second French Republic officially declared Algeria an “integral part of France” by transforming Algerian territory into three French departments.¹³² By 1841, the number of *pieds-noirs* living in Algeria had reached a total of 37, 374 inhabitants, many of whom made claims to “fresh water and fertile land... without concerning oneself to whom these lands belong.”¹³³ Furthermore, in *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962*, Alistair Horne discusses the treatment of the indigenous Algerian population by the *pieds-noirs*:

Too often he [the Algerian native] was regarded with disdain, and from a vantage of superiority; which manifested itself in many different ways, and more insidiously among the poorer levels of whites where the frictional contact was closest. *Bicot, melon, figuier, sale raton* -- there was a plethora of derogatory slang for an inferior race that sprang all too readily to the lips... he was incorrigibly idle and incompetent; he only

¹³¹ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962* (NY: New York Review of Books, 2006), 28 – 29.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³³ *Ibidem*.

understood force; he was an innate criminal, and an instinctive rapist... 'They can see our women, we can't see theirs.'¹³⁴

During the period of Algerian colonization, the *pied-noir* population was comprised of a mixed spectrum of diverse origins, economic background, and political point of views. Although the *pieds-noirs* viewed themselves as culturally diverse and superior, by the 1950s, the indigenous Muslim-Algerian population was repopulating at ten times the rate of the European settlers, who only represented 11% of the total population.¹³⁵ As a result, the *pieds-noirs* became overwhelmed with the fear of becoming demographically outnumbered and aligned themselves in staunch political opposition to French assimilationist and integrationist policy proposals in Algeria. Furthermore, in 1947, the proposal of a *loi-cadre* (the law intended to provide autonomy and self-governance to indigenous Algerian populations), marked the beginning of a series of strikes and political opposition movements led by the *pieds-noirs ultras* – staunch integrationist oppositionists – that would last until Algerian independence. Ultimately, the *pieds-noirs* believed

¹³⁴ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962* (NY: New York Review of Books, 2006), 54.

¹³⁵ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962* (NY: New York Review of Books, 2006), 64.

themselves to be civilized in superior to indigenous populations, resisting all political movements to offer Algeria autonomy or independence.

Following years of violent warfare and the Algerian struggle to emancipate itself politically from France, the signing of the Evian Accords in 1962 resulted in Algerian independence and the mass-migration and exodus of *colons* and *pieds - noirs* to metropolitan France. With only two suitcases per person, over 1, 380, 000 *pieds-noirs* “queued day and night for passages out of the country they had been born in.”¹³⁶ However, this exodus symbolized a return to land that was never considered home; born in Algeria, these *pied-noir* communities were French without ever experiencing France. Similar to the treatment of indigenous Algerians by *pieds-noirs*, the native Frenchmen often referred to the presence of the pied-noir community as an “alien race,” as “threatening competition,” and as “dirty *pieds noirs*” who were subjected to extreme poverty due to the minimal state assistance given by France.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962* (NY: New York Review of Books, 2006), 532.

¹³⁷ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962* (NY: New York Review of Books, 2006), 550.

In the September 2012 issue of *l'algérianiste* (a contemporary *pied-noir* publication) commemorating the 50th anniversary of the exodus from Algeria, Georges Dillinger shares personal recollections of the “return” to France, writing:

As for us, we remember the exodus and we do not need the 50th anniversary to awaken the memory. But it gives us the opportunity to speak of it and to express our pain... the exodus was, in the vast majority of cases, leaving with only two suitcases and a shoulder bag or small suitcase, with one hand guiding the children who did not understand, questioning their parents and crying. The exodus, it was for close to a million of us, the abandonment of our homeland.¹³⁸

Furthermore, Dillinger writes, “many have known suffering... and demoralization, the rage in the heart in the presence of this environment of French people, indifferent when they weren't hostile.”¹³⁹ Embittered by the loss of French colonial control over Algeria, the *pied-noir* population experienced misery within metropolitan France and hostility from the native French population who viewed the *pieds-noirs* as exploiters.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Georges Dillinger, “Il y a 50 ans, l'exode,” translated by Monica Goodwin, *l'algérianiste* 139 (2012): 35 – 36.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁴⁰ Josette Giacobbi, “Les Expatriés de juin 1962,” *l'algérianiste* 139 (2012): 33.

Pieds-noirs and the rise of the Front National in contemporary

France

Attempting to settle into metropolitan French life after the exodus, one *pied-noir* wrote of her experience, “At this time, everything revolted me. I was always making comparisons between Algeria and France... I hated everything.”¹⁴¹ Further contributing to the struggle to adapt to life within the metropole is the perpetuation of a “nostalgia,” which is the constructed “heroic history” of the *pied-noir* population within Algeria during the time of colonization and asserts their “victimization” upon Algerian independence.¹⁴² Despite the struggle to adapt to life within the metropole, according to the 2014 electoral lists, 1.8% - or 80,000 potential voters - of the French population continued to identify as *pied-noir*.¹⁴³ Furthermore, 7% of the French population declared belonging to the *pied-noir* community, meaning that at least one parent or grandparent self-

¹⁴¹ Philippe Bouba, “Arrivée et adaptation des pieds-noirs en Roussillon,” translated by Monica Goodwin, *l’algérianiste* 105 (2004): 18.

¹⁴² Eric Savarese, “After the Algerian war: reconstructing identity among the Pieds-noirs,” *UNESCO*, 2007, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2007.00644.x/epdf>.

¹⁴³ “Le vote pied noir: mythe ou realite,” *Atlantico*, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.atlantico.fr/decryptage/vote-pied-noir-mythe-ou-realite-1015100.html>.

identified as *pied-noir*, which translates to a potential of 3.1 million voters in elections.¹⁴⁴

Thus, what is the significance of the *pied-noir* vote within contemporary French politics and society, and how does it contribute to the perpetuation of an imperial mindset? According to an analysis of the past presidential elections, the *pied-noir* vote consistently orients to the political right or far-right.¹⁴⁵ In an open-letter written in 2014, Marine Le Pen acknowledges the “tragic history” of the *pieds-noirs*, writing:

Letter to my *pied-noir* friends... I will not go to the tomb of General de Gaulle out of respect for the criminal abandonment of the *pieds-noirs* and the *harkis* who have suffered so much from his Algerian policies... we seek to join together... I forget nothing, I have a much respect for your tragic history... I embrace you and count on your support.¹⁴⁶

Manipulating the “nostalgerie” of the pied-noir community, Marine Le Pen and the Front National continue to appeal to the colonial mindset of French cultural superiority and tragedy surrounding

¹⁴⁴ “Le vote pied noir: mythe ou realite,” *Atlantico*, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.atlantico.fr/decryptage/vote-pied-noir-mythe-ou-realite-1015100.html>.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁶ “Front national: Marine Le Pen contredit Florian Philippot sur les racines gaullistes du parti,” *Atlantico*, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.atlantico.fr/pepites/front-national-marine-pen-contredit-florian-philippot-racines-gaullistes-parti-951717.html>.

Algerian independence. As minority groups within France have begun to question the success of French assimilation and integration, the present-day *pied-noir* community continues to demonstrate a perpetuation of colonial fantasies within France, as many “look back with nostalgia on the colonial days before the war... they want to be seen as guardians, keeper of a bygone French nationalism.”¹⁴⁷

Although today’s *pieds-noirs* have a clear connection to the xenophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric espoused by the *Front National*, it is clear that the colonial and nationalistic rhetoric utilized by the political far-right also resounds with a part of the population that has no immediate connection to the Algerian War or to the fight against decolonization. Presenting itself as the “protector of France,” French inhabitants that resist contemporary visions of a multicultural and integrationist France are now flocking to support the *Front National*, indicating deep-rooted colonial fears embedded within French society. As the *pieds-noirs* criticized Islamic practices (“They

¹⁴⁷ Michael Kimmelman, “Footprints of *pieds-noirs* reach deep into France,” *The New York Times*, accessed April 19th, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/05/world/europe/05iht-kimmel.4.20622745.html?_r=0.

can see our women. We can't see theirs."¹⁴⁸), so does the *Front National* critique the visibility of Islam within the metropole.

For example, following the terrorist attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* headquarters, Marine Maréchal Le Pen (Jean-Marie's granddaughter) stated that "today, we can see that immigration has become favorable terrain for the development of Islamism,"¹⁴⁹ implying synonymy between Islam and terrorism. Capitalizing on the recent terrorist attacks, as well as the stagnant economy and high levels of unemployment, the *Front National* presents itself as a party "for the people," easily able to scapegoat France's history of immigration as the main source of France's domestic problems. As the *pieds-noirs* believed indigenous Algerians to be lazy criminals, incompatible with French civilization, four out ten French citizens surveyed believe that "Muslims are a threat to our [French] identity,"

¹⁴⁸ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962* (NY: New York Review of Books, 2006), 54.

¹⁴⁹ Adam Nossiter, "Marine Le Pen's Anti-Islam Message Gains Influence in France," *The New York Times*, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/18/world/europe/marine-le-pens-anti-islam-message-gains-influence-in-france.html>.

which ultimately proves that the power of the *Front National* and Marine Le Pen are no longer a “political joke.”¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

Historically on the side of the colonizer and believing in the superiority of French culture and civilization over native Algerian and Maghrebi populations, French *pieds-noirs* represent a remnant of France’s imperial past that is once again finding popularity in contemporary French politics. Receiving its highest ever performance in the 2015 regional elections, *the Front National* is making political gains by appealing to colonial enthusiasts (such as the *pieds-noirs*) and by capitalizing on the fear associated with the rise of violent events, such the 2015 terrorist attacks within France. Proposing a vision of France that is anti-immigration, anti-Islam, and anti-*Other*, the rise of the *Front National* indicates a shift in French perceptions of identity, reverting to colonial-era perceptions of race and culture. Once perceived as a political joke, the Front National is

¹⁵⁰ Susan Dominus, “The National Front’s Post-Charlie Hebdo Moment,” *The New York Times*, last accessed April 19th, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/magazine/the-national-fronts-post-charlie-hebdo-moment.html?_r=0.

growing in popularity and is manifesting as the leader of a psychological empire within France.

Conclusion

Liberté, égalité, fraternité?

Continuously haunted by its imperial legacy, contemporary France is suffering from the existence of a psychological empire that is proliferating social stratification and increasingly radicalized views of religion, politics, society, and identity. Both metropolitan France and the overseas departments and territories are grappling with issues of identity and nation, which have manifested in increasingly violent and extremist displays of anger and fear. From the politicization of religion to the declaration of two states of emergency following instances of social upheaval and terror, the French nation must confront its colonial past and acknowledge the existence of a psychological empire that continues to prejudice and marginalize large segments of French society. Although France is no longer exerting official imperial control, French society continues to, and will continue to, suffer from the anxieties and fears of a contemporary, postcolonial empire.

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