

## THE POSTCOLONIAL QUESTION

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India has been independent for nearly sixty years, as has Pakistan, and more than fifty years have gone by since the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Over forty years ago, after seven years or more of war, Algeria won her independence, followed six years later by Morocco and Tunisia. The Portuguese colonies gained their independence thirty years ago, much later than the other colonies of tropical Africa. While some people may have concluded years ago that a page of history had been turned, since the early years of this 21<sup>st</sup> century it would seem that a major debate around colonization has now been re-opened, not so much among the nations who, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were still subjected to European domination, as in the very colonial powers themselves, most notably in France.

In the countries which were colonized, above all those where national independence was acquired fairly recently, and where demonstrations of national sentiment are a major factor of political life, reference to the shared struggle against colonialism is virtually a ritual, albeit a conventional one. In Western Europe, however, where the idea of the nation is hardly ever referred to by the majority, the media frequently projects a favorable spotlight on the numerous speeches and works denouncing—as the expression goes—the crimes committed during centuries of colonization, right up to the final years. Colonialism is often assimilated with slavery and even, with increasing frequency, with more or less deliberate acts of genocide.

And yet this renewed condemnation, far from advocating a penitent attitude toward the peoples who were the victims of colonialism, has become an intrinsic factor in internal politics, particularly in France. Thus the right and the far right are both denounced retrospectively, blamed for the colonial wars, and even the traditional left is reproached for the colonizing policies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic and its decisive involvement in the war in Algeria.

At that time, anti-colonialists, few in number, pleaded with their fellow citizens to demand that France's leaders put an end to a conflict which, given the general wave of decolonization, seemed to be heading nowhere and which cast France in a very negative light. In spite of the slogan "Algeria is

France,” which was an utter delusion, it ultimately became imperative to acknowledge the independence of a new nation. The systematic use of torture was denounced, but no one would have dreamt of speaking of another genocide.

Presently, a new anti-colonialist movement (neo-anti-colonialism) is lending its support, admittedly on an international level, to independence movements such as that of the Chechens or the Palestinians (occasionally denouncing the imminence or even the perpetration of genocide); but what is essentially at stake, in my opinion, is more a matter of internal politics. To gauge the true dimensions of this movement, one must take into consideration the fact that the relations between Western Europe and Asia or Africa have changed dramatically, not only on a political level, but also demographically. One can no longer speak of colonization, but of postcolonial.

Not only is there the fact of independence itself (and the various types of neocolonialism must in no way diminish the importance of that fact), and that the population of the former colonies has tripled—given the changes in sanitation measures worldwide—but, above all, the migratory relations between Western Europe and Africa or the Indian sub-continent have been reversed. During the colonial era, with the exception of special cases like Algeria or South Africa, the African and Asian nations were dominated by a tiny minority of Europeans; most of them had come from Europe, and would return to Europe once their career was over (British India, with a population of 300 million, was ruled by a mere 30,000 British colonists, although they were assisted by a substantial number of “native” notables, auxiliaries and civil servants). Since independence, and above all over the last few decades, population movements have been reversed, and their dimension is of a totally different nature, affecting a great number of Asian, African and North African countries as emigrants head for Western Europe, most often toward the home of their former colonial rulers. Another difference is that this migration, which one could refer to as postcolonial, tends to lead to settlement in Western Europe.

The influx of numerous Indians, Pakistanis, West Indians, and Africans from Commonwealth countries in the 1960s brought on a severe racist backlash, which led in turn to anti-racism movements (see the article by

Delphine Papin). Roughly the same thing happened in France, but principally from the 1980s on (the first election results for the National Front date from 1983), whereas the initial rise in immigration from Algeria and then North Africa, twenty years earlier, immediately after the war in Algeria, did not give rise to any particular problems, since unemployment prior to 1975 was not very high.

As it is above all the Algerians and North Africans residing in France who are targeted by the extreme right, the new anti-colonialist movement has been able, when speaking against the right and the extreme right, to adopt and re-adapt the tone of the slogans against colonialism and the war in Algeria (at the time, Le Pen had championed the cause of French Algeria). As more than half of the five million people of Muslim background living in France were born there and are, therefore, French, the new anti-colonialist movement has been able to conduct their campaign on an internal level, arguing that the discrimination felt by the children of immigrants is indeed proof that French society has been split by a “colonial fracture” [Blanchard et al., 2005], like any other post-colonial society. So much so that an “Appeal for a Conference on Post-colonial Anti-colonialism” was launched on January 19, 2005 on the Internet site <http://toutesegaux.free.fr/> (with a link, significantly, to the site [www.oumma.com](http://www.oumma.com), favored by certain Islamists, with the blessing of active members of the anti-colonialist movement) upon the initiative of immigrant researchers and militants, who have declared themselves to be “natives of the Republic”—with one exception being that these North African and African immigrants and their children represent roughly 10 to 12% of the population in France, whereas in the colonies, the true “natives” were the overwhelming majority.

### **Different types of colonial and post-colonial situations**

What is patently necessary is to study the post-colonial question not, as some would have it, to “wipe clean the slate of the past,” but to gain a clearer picture of it. For twenty years or more postcolonial studies have become part of the curriculum at universities in Britain and the United States with the participation, in particular, of scholars from the Indian sub-continent. Their research is focused primarily on the question of literature in English or other

imperial languages (see the article by Emilienne Baneth-Nouailhetas). The postcolonial question also falls within the province of a geopolitical approach.

By “question” I mean to imply, per the dictionary, not an interrogation, but a problem which implies difficulties of a theoretical or practical nature needing to be resolved—in short, a body of incomplete and uncertain knowledge leading to debate. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, diplomats spoke of the “Oriental question” when referring to the Ottoman Empire. When in 1913 Stalin wrote about the national question (*Marxism and the National Question*), he sought above all to delineate only those theoretical aspects which did not contradict the class struggle—which Lenin held to be essential. Rather than using these pages to set out a highly abstract and generalized theory of colonization—what is at stake here is above all a geopolitical phenomenon (the power struggle for territory and for the populations who live there)—I find it will be more useful to give a rough overview of the great diversity of former colonial situations and the even greater diversity of postcolonial situations, because the former colonial powers themselves are also implicated. Some of the present debate on colonialism might give the impression that colonialism was the same everywhere, but in actual fact the nature of colonization varied widely from country to country and from one era to the other.

What we call colonization is an extraordinary geopolitical phenomenon, for it affected nearly every continent, with the exception of Antarctica: all of Africa and the Americas, and a very large part of Asia. Those states which were not colonized are also implicated in the postcolonial question, since the majority of them did make colonial conquests, including both Western European states and Russia (which at present still dominates the peoples of the Caucasus and Siberia). The Balkan nations were dominated until the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Ottoman Empire. But at this point it might be useful to wonder whether colonization, at least as we have known it since the discovery of the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, does not refer exclusively to the domination of non-Europeans *by* Europeans. English colonial expansion virtually began with Ireland—the total stranglehold with which they governed the island brought on a dreadful famine from 1845 to 1847, and they maintained their grip over their neighbor until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japan was never colonized but, in the European sense of the term, the Japanese did

colonize Formosa, Korea and Manchuria. It was only due to the rivalry among a handful of pillaging imperialist states that China was able to avoid the status of colony or protectorate, but China continues to dominate Tibet, Sin Kiang and a large part of Mongolia, where a fierce geopolitical policy of settlement at the expense of the indigenous peoples is being implemented.

*Colonies of settlement (by Europeans) and of exploitation (of natives)*

There has always been a classical distinction between the so-called colonies of settlement (by Europeans) and those where the native population was “administered” or “exploited.” The former category includes the American and Australian continents, where a relatively small indigenous population was drastically reduced by the “viral shock,” in other words by the involuntary spread of Old World diseases among a population who had no immunity. In addition, these “colonies of settlement”, which are generally spoken of in a favorable light, are the same ones which fell victim to various forms of genocide: in Peru, through the deliberate implementation of a lethal system of traditional agricultural tasks in order to exploit the silver and gold mines (lacking any form of ventilation); in the United States and Canada, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where Indian tribes were massacred, the buffalo which were their staple diet were systematically exterminated, and smallpox was spread through the distribution of infected blankets—whereas all the Europeans were vaccinated. Aboriginal populations were systematically exterminated in Patagonia and throughout vast regions of Australia. There is no doubt that in many parts of the world actual intentional genocide was a tool for expanding the colonies of settlement, so that these colonies could absorb the surplus of the rapid population growth in Western Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Europeans, because of massive emigration, soon made up the core population of this first group of colonies. Subsistence agriculture was practiced, and the ability to distribute vast tracts of land made “virgin” by the disappearance of the indigenous population contributed substantially to the creation of societies which were more or less egalitarian and democratic. A major exception being the fact that African slaves were brought to the West

Indies, Brazil and the United States—a “particular” and hardly democratic example of a colony of settlement.

Colonies of exploitation, which were far more numerous, were those where Europeans employed various means to have labor performed by natives or, as was the case in America, by slaves brought from Africa, in order to produce fairly costly agricultural goods which were not food-producing and which were destined for sale in Europe, where they could not be produced. Thus the majority of the colonies of exploitation were located in the tropics. However, this rather clear-cut distinction between colonies of settlement and colonies of exploitation is oversimplified, for both types of colonies co-existed in the United States and in Latin America—the Latin-American colonies of exploitation in the early years of colonization gradually became colonies of settlement, by virtue of European immigration and the mixing of cultures among the Amerindians or descendants of African origin, the majority of whom, nowadays, speak Spanish or Portuguese.

#### *The Alliance between small groups of Europeans and indigenous notables*

For the majority of formerly colonized countries, the present-day economic and cultural landscape is largely a consequence of the type of domination practiced by the various colonial powers and the geopolitical choices of the colonizers. For a start we must try to understand how the colonization of densely-populated, powerful states was even possible, particularly as conquest, in the majority of cases, was carried out by very small groups of Europeans (and in the case of British colonization, by the agents of private trading companies). Although prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century these Europeans did not dispose of particularly efficient weapons, they rapidly gained control over powerful empires (the Aztecs and Incas in America, the Great Moghul in India), either by relying on the enslaved minorities who rebelled against their local sovereigns, or by creating alliances (as in India) with local notables who used the judicial system introduced by the Europeans as a way to appropriate land which tradition and their sovereign had always entrusted (for a tax) to the management of village communities. In sub-Saharan Africa the European colonizers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century received support from populations who had been victims of the African slave traders.

Colonization would have been impossible without the help of local groups and notables. It was primarily their descendants, however, who in the 20<sup>th</sup> century spearheaded the independence movements, in order to throw off the tutelage of the colonial authorities.

A full understanding of the functioning of neocolonialism in postcolonial situations cannot ignore the role of these local notables, who were the accomplices and beneficiaries of colonization before they would go on to become its competitors.

### *The Diversity of Postcolonial Situations*

#### *Ancient and very particular postcolonial societies*

In America, however, it was not the natives who won the struggle for independence, but the Europeans born in the colony (in Latin America, they were called Creoles) who sought to reinforce their power vis-à-vis the civil servants sent from Europe, and to rid themselves of the home country's trade monopoly. The colonies in the Americas garnered the bulk of their wealth through the exploitation of local labor and, for some of them, through the labor of slaves brought from Africa. Once development took on considerable proportions, however, and once the slave trade was prohibited, in 1815 and thereafter, increasing use had to be made of free laborers who came from Europe and who, in most cases, eventually obtained land grants. Thus the colonies became colonies of European settlement. Most of the major cities in Latin America were created along the coasts by Europeans, and they brought with them crops from Asia—cotton, sugar cane, coffee—which they produced for export to Europe. The United States is the only instance where the significant transformation from former colony to major industrial power occurred.

When analyzing postcolonial relations, one must take into account not only the era when independence was obtained, in other words the separation of political power between the parent state and the colony, but also the social and cultural characteristics of each state with regard to the mass of the population and to the ruling classes. A critical factor here is the differences and similarities in language.

To get a better idea of the way postcolonial relations can evolve, we should return to the very first of the wars of independence, that of the United States of America (1775-1783). Although the immigrant population originated in Great Britain and spoke English, they rebelled against the colonial domination of the United Kingdom (and in particular its commercial monopoly). The “Americans” wrested their independence from the British at the cost of a bitter struggle, and founded the first modern republic to oppose the British Crown. Relations with the old country were initially extremely tense, and this would have indirect consequences on a large part of the globe: shortly after American independence (from 1807 on, and at the Vienna congress in 1815) the British enforced a worldwide ban on the slave trade in order to keep the American planters from renewing their stock of slave labor. Still, the capture and trade of slaves continued to be practiced in Africa by African slave runners<sup>1</sup>—thanks to which the French trade, despite the prohibition, continued at a fairly regular pace until 1830 (France, we should point out, did not abolish slavery until 1848).

Gradually, postcolonial relations between the United States and the United Kingdom shifted with the rise of British immigration and the export of capital from British banks to the enormous North American market. In 1898 the intervention of the American army into the war the Spaniards were waging in Cuba against the island’s independence movement resulted in the United States inheriting a colonial possession, the Philippines, and two semi-colonies, Puerto Rico and Cuba. By the end of the First World War the United States had become Britain’s prime creditor, whereas before 1914 they had been their prime debtor. To speak of a reversal of postcolonial relations is, obviously, an historical paradox. All of Europe would maintain cultural relations with the United States, in particular because of the emigration of Ashkenazy Jews from Central and Eastern Europe; their descendants occupy an important position in American intellectual circles.

The postcolonial period of the Hispanic colonies in the Americas is very different, although, as in the United States, it was not the indigenous inhabitants, the “Indians,” who rebelled against the colonial Spanish regime in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the “Creoles,” that is, the mixed blood

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<sup>1</sup> See Pétré-Grenouilleau, 2004; I have published an extensive report on his work in *Hérodote*, no. 117 (“Elisée Reclus”).

descendants, landowners and traders, of the original Spanish conquerors. The Creole oligarchy took advantage of the occupation of Spain by Napoleon's troops in order to throw off the commercial monopoly imposed by the Spanish administration and to divide the Crown's land among themselves, to the detriment of the Indians. They were a privileged European minority who spoke Castilian and, once they had gained their independence (with the interested support of Great Britain), cultural relations among these new republics in America and their former parent state could have remained strong, as was the case between the United States and Great Britain. But Spain, in the wake of the Napoleonic invasion, suffered for over forty years under an ultra-reactionary royalist restoration which imposed an obscurantist regime particularly hostile to intellectuals from the former colonies which, moreover, had become new republics. These republics turned therefore to other European countries, whereas many Spaniards continued to emigrate to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. Cuba on the other hand, whose independence came much later (1898), maintained and developed her relations with Spain, despite memories of a hard-fought war of independence; for with the "generation of '98," the Spanish intellectual circles experienced a significant renewal, after the shock of war with the United States and the loss of the last colonies of the Spanish Empire.

With the great Mexican revolution which began in 1910—the revolution of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa—the Indians of Mexico sought in vain to take power. Their example endures to this day, inspiring the Indian movements of Central America and the Andes (in December, 2005, the Indian Evo Morales was elected president of Bolivia). On the other hand, Simon Bolivar's (1783-1830) dream of reunifying the former Spanish empire—the current Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez is inspired by "Bolivarism"—was Creole in inspiration, like that of the Cuban revolutionaries, José Martí (1853-1895) among others. Finally, Fidel Castro was the son of a Galician who, like many other Spaniards, went to Cuba immediately after independence in order to take advantage of the severe shortage of labor caused by the exodus of former black slaves to the cities. Fidel Castro is, in a way, the product of a very particular postcolonial situation.

### *Typical postcolonial situations*

The problem of postcolonial relations is very different in countries where the majority of the population does not speak, or hardly speaks, the language of their former colonizers, even when that language remains the official language. This has been the case of several former colonies in Asia (India in particular), but above all in sub-Saharan Africa where, because of the extreme diversity of native languages, the language of the former colonial ruler—French, English, or Portuguese—has remained that of the new state. While it may be taught in the schools, that language is spoken only by a minority of the population, by civil servants, and by those working in the tourism industry who actually speak their native tongue at home.

At first glance the relations between these former colonies and their parent state might seem to be limited to intellectuals and political leaders or activists, but they are also characterized by a sizeable emigration *toward* Europe, despite the considerable draw of the United States. With the exception of Latin America, a vast majority of former colonies (including the West Indies) have witnessed a relatively important migratory flow toward the former parent state. Not only do these immigrants already speak the language, but among them there are also a considerable number who may have fairly long-term relations with the home country, going back to the “old days” when their native country was still a colony. These immigrants from former colonial empires are nevertheless often subject in Europe or the United States to displays of xenophobia or racism but, at least where the first generation is concerned, they often feel that such tribulations are not as trying as was the everyday behavior of the police or employers in the country they have left behind.

Humanitarian organizations often maintain the erroneous impression that it is the poorest among the population who leave Third World countries behind; on the contrary, the poor scarcely have the means to purchase the air fare or, in a place like Europe, to cover their initial moving expenses. Often these immigrants are middle-class or even well off, and they emigrate not merely for financial reasons but also to find clients or to be able to exercise the profession for which they were trained (in England, for example, there are a great many doctors from India); add to these emigrants numerous

intellectuals, journalists, and academics who have left to escape a regime or local authorities who prevent them from expressing themselves or persecute them for their political ideas.

Truly democratic regimes remain rare in countries which were once colonized (and even in countries like Russia which have always been independent), whereas in the former colonial powers, as in other Western European states, basic human freedoms and the rule of law are more or less respected nowadays, even where immigrants are concerned. The mere fact of having avoided colonization is not enough to explain why the population of a given country enjoys relatively democratic conditions. Russia, and subsequently the Soviet Union, may have ruled over an empire, but the Russians, alas, went from tsarist authoritarianism to something far worse, the tyranny of the Soviet regime, now followed by the reign of a mafia clique and their apparatchiks, who have succeeded in confiscating “liberalism” to their advantage in a vastly impoverished country.

*For the former colonies, a complex and tangled heritage*

To map a geography of freedom or, *a contrario*, one of human rights abuses, means taking into account the political structures which have followed in succession throughout history. When considering the countries of the Third World, one convenient method is to distinguish three separate periods whose legacies overlap to the present day: the pre-colonial period, where social organization varied greatly from one country to another (from tribes to major empires) and may have endured, or been transformed by colonization; the colonial era, varying in length, during which vastly dissimilar forms of power were implemented to the advantage of the Europeans and also the local notables; and finally the postcolonial period, where political regimes have also varied enormously, depending on the role played by the privileged minorities which emerged from colonization, by the representatives of the middle classes, the military, or the leaders of revolutionary groups responsible for a socialist regime or the dictatorship of a so-called “proletariat”; such regimes were often, in actual fact, run by the heads of the army or of a militarized party.

From one Third World country to another, political independence might be relatively old: two centuries for Latin America, a mere forty to fifty years for many countries in Africa and Asia, twenty-five years for Africa's Portuguese colonies, less than a dozen years for South Africa or the former Soviet republics—if one allows that the end of apartheid or of communism can be equated to a process of independence. The time span and the depth of the transformation in relations with the home country has varied widely from one country to the next, with each new founding of an independent state.

To reach any sort of useful conclusion regarding the postcolonial question, it is not enough to take the time lapse since independence into account. Although independence may not have radically altered existing problems and forms of economic dependence may persist, political independence remains a transformation of extreme importance to much of the population, if only by virtue of the new ideas and aspirations born of independence. When we refer to the postcolonial question in relation to this or that nation or this or that State, we do not mean to imply that their political independence remains limited in some way, particularly with regard to the former parent state. On the contrary, one might go so far as to say that, at present, even in those republics of Latin America which have been independent for over two centuries, national sentiment and the value attached to the idea of independence are stronger in countries which have been colonized than in many western European countries.

To ask the postcolonial question is to examine the primarily cultural interaction existing in the present day between two countries which were once connected by a geopolitical relation of a colonial nature—in other words, that of an outside political authority exerted over a nation by virtue of conquest (and with the complicity of local notables), where the indigenous population is subject to an administration conceived and implemented by officials who have come from a distant and culturally different country. This colonial geopolitical relation became fairly exceptional and it was in the struggle for independence that a large number of nations in Africa, Asia and the Americas (including the United States) were formed. This does not mean that they severed contacts with their former colonial masters. In a certain number of cases, as we have seen, such contacts were considerably strengthened.

While geopolitical relations of the colonial type were, in a way, culturally one-directional, postcolonial relations have to a certain degree become much more reciprocal. A relatively large part of the colonized population would have heard the colonizers' language all around them, and learned it, and may also have gone on to imitate certain aspects of the colonists' behavior, whereas in the colonial parent state (with the exception of the "colonial circles") very little was known about the culture of the dominions "overseas." In France today, for example, given not only the rise in the number of inhabitants of Muslim background but also the evolution of ideas, the number of people who listen to rai, eat couscous or have "Arab" friends is incontestably greater than in the days of "French Algeria." Witness the importance of postcolonial relations.

Such relations are far less significant where the Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas are concerned, comprising as they do a total population nine times greater than that of present-day Spain. Postcolonial relations are limited in each case to the evocation of ancient family origins and to a shared community of language and literature, something which Franco (after Primo de Rivera) called *hispanidad*. Juan Carlos has spoken of an "Ibero-American community of nations," which is in a way a zone of diplomatic prestige. But the bulk of Latino migration is not, on the whole, to the Iberian peninsula but rather to the United States, and this applies to economic exchanges as well.

The situation pertaining to French-speaking nations is very different. To begin with, in the majority of "Francophone" nations only a portion of the population uses French, more or less in competition with the local indigenous languages. And yet because of the flow of migrants to France from overseas Francophone nations, the relations of those nations to French society are much stronger than those of the Spanish speakers of America with Spain.

### **The Development of Postcolonial Relations around the Western Mediterranean**

Many countries in the world are affected by the postcolonial question, and nowhere more than in the countries of North Africa and southern

Europe, where postcolonial relations are closest (and have a very concrete significance for a great many families) and also the most contradictory, for in this part of the world, independence came relatively late, and as a result there are many individuals who still recall the dramatic events which characterized the struggle for independence.

*The impact of the relations between France and North Africa*

In the Western Mediterranean, postcolonial relations are above all the province of France and the three countries of North Africa. In the first place, because French colonial domination was first established in 1830, over heavily populated and very vast regions (to include the Algerian Sahara) and in a manner which differed greatly from one era to the next. Spain, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception of the old *presidios* still in her possession today, (Ceuta, across from Gibraltar, and Melilla), exercised her protectorate north of Morocco only in the fairly small mountainous region of the Rif, and south of the Sahara in vast deserted coastal regions across from the Spanish archipelago of the Canary Islands. In 1911 Italy, after a war with the Turks, annexed vast regions south of Sicily in Libya, but they were sparsely populated.

One reason France continues to play such a large part in her postcolonial relations with the countries of North Africa is because of her very particular demographic evolution. The very early drop in birth rates in 19<sup>th</sup> century France brought with it a more or less chronic lack of labor, which led to a systematic call for immigration, initially from various European countries, then Algeria, particularly after the Second World War. The opposite occurred in Italy, Spain and Portugal, where high population growth until the inter-war period and insufficient economic growth led until fairly recently to chronic unemployment and mass emigration. These factors also, obviously, prevented any foreign immigration. Only fairly recently have North Africans begun to emigrate to Spain and Italy, and most often those migrants are clandestine, on their way to other countries of the European Union—although the memory of Arab Andalusia, *Al Andalus*, attracts a certain number of Moroccan and Middle Eastern students to southern Spain and Granada.

In Europe, it is France that is most affected by the problems of North Africa and the development of postcolonial relations. Since Algeria's independence in 1962, the number of persons of Algerian origin residing in France (whether they immigrated or were born there) has increased six-fold, and half of them are now French nationals. This population increase brings with it a whole new set of questions for, logically, after seven years of a cruel war, relations between the Algerians and the French should have remained atrocious for a very long time. So in order to explain the paradox of this immigration, the motives of each of the parties must be understood.

On the French side, immediately following Algeria's independence, public opinion on the whole was simply grateful—thanks to General de Gaulle—to see the country out of a very grave political crisis which, in France itself, had lasted roughly four years. Many French citizens felt that the war was clearly the result of a grave error—that of having failed, for over a century (without even mentioning the phase of conquest), to apply the great principles of the Revolution—liberty, equality, fraternity—in the French *départements* of Algeria (created in 1848; Muslims were not allowed to vote). In addition, the "*pieds-noirs*" who were refugees in France were unable to form a "refugee party" which might have denounced the massive immigration of Algerians. Finally, employers were only too happy to welcome the immigrants, because in the 1960s there was still a shortage of labor.

From the Algerian side, emigration to France seems even more paradoxical. Not only did tens of thousands of *harkis* (Algerian auxiliaries serving in the French army) take the decision to escape and leave for France (the majority of them had been abandoned by the French to a cruel fate) but also, and above all, there were many Algerian immigrants who had actually just fought for Algeria's independence.

This paradox was a result of the geopolitical crisis in the Algerian nationalist movement, which had not only arisen in the Algerian maquis (primarily the mountainous regions, Kabylia in particular) but also in Tunisia and Morocco, on the other side of the electrified barricades which had been built along the borders by the French army. The army had lifted the barricades just before independence, and the forces of the ALN (National Liberation Army), led by Colonel Boumediene, which had formed in Morocco

and Tunisia were finally able to enter Algeria. A severe conflict broke out in the outskirts of Algiers in June-July 1962 when they encountered the maquis, particularly the one from Kabylia, which had taken control of the city. It was the “army of the borders,” better equipped in heavy weaponry, which seized power.

The following year, in 1963, the insurrection in the Berber mountains of Kabylia signaled the break between the leaders of the army of the exterior and the leaders of the maquis, some of whom had to flee Algeria and went to find refuge...in France, where they took advantage of the general amnesty de Gaulle had declared: legally, they were still French citizens. This goes some way toward explaining the long-lasting dispute between the army of Algerian democrats and the FFS (Socialist Forces Front) party, made up primarily of Kabyls, as well as the recently constituted competitor of the FFS, founded in 1989, the RCD (Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie—the culture and democracy party).

In order to explain the importance of Algerian emigration to France, one must also take into account the impact of rising unemployment in Algeria, as well as the political monopoly held for over twenty five years by the single party, the FLN. Rivalries within the party drove many party members to leave for France as well, to join family members who were already there—something which, for the regime at the time, was a sort of safety valve useful for dealing with disgruntled intellectuals.

In addition to these specifically Algerian political reasons for emigration to France, there have also been more general reasons behind the emigration of a rising number of Moroccans and Tunisians: unemployment, a desire for social advancement, hopes for professional success, as well as the need, for intellectuals, to flee undemocratic regimes. In 1975 the sudden increase in unemployment in France compelled the government to halt immigration, but Valéry Giscard d’Estaing did decide to allow those foreigners who had already been settled in France for a number of years to send for their family members. The application of the principle of “family reunification” explains why legal immigration from North Africa was never actually halted—and clandestine immigration followed close behind. Within the context of chronic mass unemployment, the presence of over five million people of Muslim background has aroused feelings of xenophobia among the

French population—above all among the working class, where North Africans (particularly Moroccans from the Rif, where hashish is grown) have been accused, rightly or wrongly, of playing a significant role in drug trafficking and contributing overall to an increase in social unrest.

All such elements are part of postcolonial relations, and these relations assume a dimension the negative effects of which it is scarcely possible to limit, at least in the short term; the most serious obstacle to the positive integration of French-speaking North African immigrants and their descendants (often French citizens) is clearly unemployment. Postcolonial relations, however, are not only negative in impact where France and North Africa are concerned, Algeria in particular. There is, for example, a true French-speaking Berber intelligentsia, Kabyl to be precise, which is gaining ground in France, acting as a foil to the maneuvers of the Islamist networks (see the article by Camille Lacoste-Dujardin).

*The Algerian Civil War is also postcolonial*

Finally, the tragic events in Algeria since 1992 can also be examined in the light of the postcolonial question. To summarize, one might say—and it is a fact—that the civil war in Algeria is the result of the opposition between the Islamist groups on the one hand and the military regime in power claiming to uphold the Republic on the other. But the fact that the Islamists' argumentation has not been limited to religion must also be taken into account. They have declared that they are waging “a new war of independence” in Algeria, accusing the officers of the Algerian military in power of being supported by France or even of being the “lackeys” of France.

Such an accusation may seem paradoxical at first glance, given the fact that the present leaders of the Algerian military are the official representatives of those who fought the French army from 1954 to 1962. While a number of Algerians, unfortunately, have been swayed by this oversimplified Islamist argument, it is because it does indisputably contain some truth, with regard to the corruption infesting the country and fed largely by the networks of complicity which have developed above all since the 1980s between the generals at the center of real power in Algeria and certain French political and business circles (see Aggoun and Rivoire, 2004). But there is also, along with

a number of other factors, a much deeper cultural reason: the top officers in the military speak French and use it regularly, as do a significant number of engineers, journalists, intellectuals, doctors, and administrators, all of whom also have close relations with family members residing in France. Thus, even today, the print runs of Algerian papers published in French remain high, even if they face increasing competition from the Arabic press.

Among the working class, however, it is primarily Arabic that is spoken, and since the 1990s, an increasing segment—and now the majority—of the new generation of middle management and intellectuals are now primarily Arabic-speaking. Both feel excluded and view the “Francophones” as privileged members of society who run—and exploit—Algeria. The French-speaking circles are by no means homogeneous, for they also include many intellectuals and democrats who contest the power of the military and of the FLN bosses, the former single party; but all of them oppose the most radical Islamists (the moderates have joined the ruling party and have been integrated into the government since the late 1990s), who in turn accuse them of being false Muslims and traitors because of their close ties with France, the French, and French culture.

One must not forget that among those Algerians who fought for their country’s independence there were many, the Kabyls in particular, who had gone to work in France prior to that time, and for them there was a difference between the “French from France,” and the *pieds-noirs* in Algeria. Equally important is the fact that the considerable efforts made to improve education by the Algerian government in the years which followed independence involved the use of the French language. Many young Frenchmen were sent as public service volunteers to Algeria, and thousands of Algerians went to France for their higher education before returning home as civil servants and administrators. Thus, most professionals and management personnel of that generation speak French, and not only for their professional activities.

And yet this widespread use of French, in a country whose successive leaders have vowed to promote Arab identity, has remained problematic and, in the early 1970s President Boumediene decided that Arabic would progressively be phased in on all levels of education. Undergraduate university courses were taught in Arabic from 1980 on. Still, in well-to-do families where French is spoken on a regular basis, the younger generation

has continued to learn the language more or less spontaneously. In working class milieus, unemployed young people who have learned only Arabic feel they are all the more disadvantaged; Islamist propaganda accuses the Francophones of being privileged, of being bad Muslims, and of taking up all the “good spots” at the expense of the true Algerians.

The civil war which tore the country apart during the 1990s is obviously not only the result of cultural inequality. Witness the fact that in Morocco and Tunisia French is also widely used in the upper classes and in a large part of the middle classes, yet this has not, at least for the time being, incited the Islamist movements (particularly strong in Morocco) to raise the anti-French banner against the privileged members of society, something which in Algeria contributed to their following. This is probably due to the fact that Morocco and Tunisia had a far less traumatic experience of the end of the protectorate, and the Islamists cannot exploit the nationalist theme of a renewed war of independence against France.

Thus we have another example of the potentially grave consequences of postcolonial relations. Algeria is exhausted by the conflict, the radical Islamists have been unable to seize power, and the military leaders have been unable to defeat them altogether, so it would seem that a sort of compromise has been reached, the evolution of which, as of 2005, will also depend on the situation in the Middle East after the Americans leave Iraq, which may occur in the relatively near future.

### **The wave of new anticolonialism in France and relations with Algeria**

*What are the issues for the current debate on “colonialism”?*

At no time since Algerian independence has there been so much debate in the press and the media in France about colonialism and the consequences of colonization. According to some, French society is still split by the “colonial fracture” (Blanchard et al., 2002). In January, 2005, an appeal was launched by the “indigenous inhabitants of the Republic,” a paradoxical expression which immediately drew varying responses of concern, particularly on the left. And while there may be no direct relation of cause

and effect, the huge wave of riots in the Paris suburbs which started on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of October, 2005 and continued for twelve consecutive nights obviously gave rise to a flurry of commentary, often centered on the question of colonization, since most of the riots were sparked by young people “from the immigrant milieus” of North African and African origin (see the article by Béatrice Giblin).

Much of the debate was in fact consistent, insofar as everyone agreed on the seriousness of the problem of unemployment, considered to be the major economic and social cause of the “suburban unrest.” Although there was some fear that clandestine Islamist networks might join into the riots, this was not the case. Semi-official Islamic organizations did however plea for calm. Not enough has been said about the role of *provocateurs* in the unrest, something which scandalized public opinion and from which certain politicians hope to profit at the ballot box. It was above all the foreign media, from New York to Beijing, who rambled on about the “failure of the French system of integration,” in other words, the failure to integrate people from countries which once belonged to the former French colonial empire.

The first major public debate on the opportunities afforded by colonization took place in France in July, 1885, when Jules Ferry and Georges Clemenceau clashed violently in the National Assembly: Ferry, who would go on to win the day, argued for France’s “civilizing mission”; Clemenceau was every bit as republican but denounced the potential for “a wave of crime, oppression, rivers of blood, the poor oppressed and tyrannized by the victor.” In the same way, the debate regarding decolonization during the war of Indochina (1947-1954), and above all Algeria (1954-1962) had clear political objectives: the French anti-colonialists at the time, although they were few, demanded an end to these conflicts which were leading nowhere and which, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were a disgrace to France.

In comparison with earlier debate, present-day discussion in France of “colonialism,” while very popular with the media, seems to be much less clear with regard to the political issues at stake. Almost all the French colonies have become independent in the last forty years or more. Yet neocolonialism does subsist, but primarily as an issue for the leaders of the newly independent states. Present-day debate on the legacy of colonization aims to procure greater social justice for those whose parents or grandparents

came from the former colonies. But for some of the intellectuals who are leading the debate, what is at stake, retrospectively, is the historical and above all ideological representation of what constituted colonization.

This renewed interest also has a lot to do with the profound cultural changes French society has undergone over the last few decades, and the effects of those changes upon the intelligentsia: the shrinking of the working class and the response among its members to the overtures of the National Front; and the virtual disappearance of Marxism as an explanation for the evolution of the world. Equally significant among intellectual circles and the media is the weight of the term genocide, through the more or less justified references to the Shoah. The traffic in African slaves, because it lasted for centuries, seems to me to be the most long-lasting of crimes against humanity, but it did not stem from a logic of systematic extermination, as some have posited, quite simply for the very cynical reason that a slave who was traded possessed a distinct market value.

The renewed debate on colonization and its consequences, however, has on occasion been associated with the denunciation of slavery as a prime and major form of genocide. *Le Livre noir du colonialisme (The Black Book of Colonialism)*, a best-selling collection of essays edited by Marc Ferro (2003), is subtitled *XVIe-XXIe siècle, de l'extermination à la repentance (16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century: From Extermination to Repentance)*: extermination, which becomes a central issue in the book from the start, refers to that of the native Indians of America—which led in turn, because of the necessity for labor, to the development of the African slave trade. The theme of genocide as associated with the denunciation of “colonialism,” without even touching on the issue of slavery, has given a title to the book by Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Coloniser, exterminer (Colonize, Exterminate)* (2005), whose subtitle is *Sur la guerre et l'État colonial (On War and the Colonial State)*. Under this general heading, what is actually dealt with is the first phase of the conquest of Algeria, that of the war against Abd El-Kader in Oranie where, it is true, a large part of the population was exterminated, because of the type of war.

The beginning of the new discussion of colonialism and its various consequences could be said to date from 1998, the year of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the French colonies of the era—French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Réunion. Justly

celebrated in the present-day overseas territories, the anniversary was an opportunity to denounce the lasting after-effects of the slavery era and also to evoke the persistence of a more or less colonial type of situation regarding the faraway parent state. To be sure, since 1950 France has been making considerable “social transfers” to her overseas territories, with the end result that the per capita gross domestic product is at least triple that of those neighboring islands which are independent. The idea of independence has an incredible power to mobilize but, in light of the potential impact of a loss of subsidies from the parent state, the “duty of memory” has shifted its focus to denouncing slavery. Until recently, the majority of blacks (to use Aimé Césaire’s term) who lived in France were from the French Antilles or Réunion, and had emigrated with the help of programs organized in the 1960s by the Bumidom (Bureau des migrations des départements d’outre-mer—Bureau of Migrations from Overseas Territories), and which some now denounce, somewhat unfairly, as having been a new form of deportation. Over the last few years increasing numbers of immigrants have entered more or less illegally from Francophone black Africa. And in the debate on colonization where the focus is the war of Algeria, the West Indians and Africans—despite their differences—want to make their voices heard together. On November 26, 2005 some of them formed a Representative Council of Associations of Blacks, CRAN, which assembles over sixty associations.

In contrast, there is very little talk about immigrants whose parents or grandparents came from Indochina, where colonial domination was clearly even more brutal and humiliating than elsewhere: the war waged by the French expeditionary corps was every bit as long and cruel as that fought by the two million French soldiers in Algeria from 1954 to 1962. Most of the Vietnamese and Chinese who arrived in Paris in 1975 (after the fall of Saigon and the American debacle) settled in neighborhoods which became their own, and many of them have done exceedingly well in business, thanks to global financial networks. Very discreet with regard to the number of clandestine Chinese workers they employ, these immigrants prefer to keep a low profile, and some have become “integrated” solely for business reasons.

*Draft of a friendship treaty between Algeria and France?*

In the present debate about colonization, the central place given both by the left and the right to the Algerian war was revealed in the press by the general outcry among historians—and taken up later in the street in Martinique—as a result of article 4 of the law of February 23, 2005, passed discreetly by a very small number of deputies present that day in the National Assembly. According to this article, school programs must stress the “positive role” of the French presence overseas, particularly in North Africa.<sup>2</sup> This affair led—lately—the Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to threaten to rescind the “friendship agreement” between Algeria and France which was about to be signed.

On November 29, 2005, the socialist deputies asked for the repeal of article 4 of the law. But in the National Assembly the majority UMP, in order not to grant any concessions to the opposition, refused to make any changes, although the government has been seriously annoyed by the possible unraveling of the friendship agreement.

This draft agreement—denounced by a number of Islamists in Algeria—should not be taken lightly. It has a singularly important geopolitical significance, reaching far beyond the usual diplomatic declarations of friendship between states. It may have taken them more than seven years of a bitter war to claim their independence, and however fiercely attached to that independence they may be, the Algerians nevertheless very quickly established ties with France which were actually greater in number and far more positive than during the time of colonization. The war is by no means forgotten, but many Algerians speak French on a daily basis, many of their relatives live in France, and many of the newspapers they read, in Algeria, are published in French. And to be sure since 1962 no political currents in France have ever evoked the Ubuesque hypothesis of a re-

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<sup>2</sup> This law, “showing the recognition of the nation and the national contribution in favor of repatriated French citizens,” advocates in article 4 that “school programs should give special recognition to the positive role of the French presence overseas, in North Africa in particular, and attribute to History and to the sacrifices of the combatants of the French army who came from that region the eminent place to which they are entitled.” The end of this sentence alludes to the North African combatants of the Second World War, and to the *harkis*, the auxiliary soldiers of the French Army before 1962—or at least those who managed to find refuge in France. They were confined to camps, no doubt in order to prevent them from banding together as the henchmen of a potential party of repatriated North Africans hostile to the policies of General de Gaulle.

conquest of Algeria—or of any other former colony or protectorate for that matter.

As of 1963 therefore, Algerians began arriving from Algiers to work in France,<sup>3</sup> and they did this without provoking any displays of hostility among the French or even among the *pieds-noirs* who had just been forced to leave Algeria. Since 1962 successive French governments, on the right and on the left, have supported the Algerian government in periods of difficulty, particularly from 1992 on and for roughly ten years thereafter while the Algerian military were fighting by every means available the offensive of the Islamic extremist movements. The extremist networks continue to alarm French public opinion, not only because of the attacks in New York, Madrid and London, but also because of the risk that they might spread to France where, as everyone knows, roughly five million people of Muslim background now live, over half of them of Algerian origin (ten times more numerous than immediately following the Algerian war).

The risk that the radical fundamentalist Islamic movements could increase their influence must not be overlooked. But nor should one forget that for over twenty years there has been, in the Muslim world and its periphery, a more or less underground but far-reaching conflict, between the postcolonial governments on the one hand and the Islamist groups on the other hand who are seeking to impose “Koranic law” on all Muslims, to forbid them from participating in any sort of modern (i.e. Western) life which is not part of *sharia*—cinema, pop music, education of women, liberty of expression, etc. And while these governments may be democratic in theory only, the Islamic fundamentalists who denounce the oppression of which they claim to be the victims are hardly any more democratic themselves.

In Iran, the Shiite Muslims assumed power in 1979 almost by surprise, taking advantage of rumors about the imminent death of the Shah and, for the occasion, joining with the left-wing secular parties which they would subsequently eliminate. In the Arab countries, the state apparatus has been able to contain Islamist subversion, but nevertheless between 1990 and 1991 the fundamentalists in Algeria very nearly did win the day, following the first

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<sup>3</sup> They went to join those who were already settled there; let it not be forgotten that on October 17, 1961, the Algerians who were demonstrating in Paris against the “curfew” imposed on them were the victims of a terrible racist attack on the part of the Paris police, where over two hundred people were killed.

multi-party elections after twenty-five years of single-party rule, by attempting to seize power through major demonstrations fashioned after those in Iran, and by making use of the sentiment aroused by the Gulf War, after the invasion of Kuwait.

In the Muslim world, it was in Algeria, from 1992 to 2002, that a real war against the Islamic extremists was being fought, one which turned into an actual civil war. But despite the excessive nature of political repression (or even because of the excessive nature, some might say), the military government did enjoy the passive support of the population. No more supportive of the extremists were France's own Muslims, who were not subjected to that type of pressure; any inroads attempted by extremist networks have thus far been thwarted thanks to the efficiency of the French police and the discreet collaboration of a fair number of North Africans. Who knows what the repercussions might be, however, in terms of geopolitical changes in the Middle East once the Americans withdraw from Iraq?

The major geopolitical problem facing Algeria since 1990 has been the risk of renewed Islamic extremism, combining the contradictions of the Muslim world as a whole with the multiple consequences of colonization, the war of independence, twenty-five years of "socialism" and ten years of civil war. And in France the major geopolitical issue is also the risk of Islamist subversion, a distant repercussion of colonization with a time lapse of forty years and the contradictions of the Muslim world in the era of globalization. In the case of France and Algeria, postcolonial relations are exceptionally complex, and correspond to a shared geopolitical interest. They are not limited to an interest in oil or gas—particularly as, in this domain, Russia can progressively replace Algeria.

The postcolonial question in France cannot of course be reduced to this geopolitical convergence with Algeria. A growing number of young "second generation immigrants" who are actually French citizens, since they were born in France, reject the idea of integration, denouncing it as an illusion, in light of the unemployment and discrimination of which they are the victims. Some of them are seeking to define themselves as a minority according to religion, color, or race (Arab?), and some of them are pushing for specific rights and affirmative action. As a result there has been the recent development, with the support of intellectuals from the far left, of movements

such as the “Natives of the Republic” or “Sons of Slaves” or “Union of Blacks in France,” some of whom denounce French society as a colonial society. In France, the postcolonial question is really one of the evolution of the Nation and the idea one might have of it, depending on one’s political tendencies.

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