Settler Identity and Colonial Violence in French Algeria 1945-1962:

An Exploration of the Relationship between Settler Identity Formation and the Justification of Violence in Settler Colonies

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Introduction

The foundational works of Fanon[1] and Memmi[2] published in the late-1950s and early-1960s laid the groundwork for a postcolonial analysis of colonial violence in Algeria. Through a psychological examination of both coloniser and colonised, these theorists emphasised the inherent violence of the colonial structure, defining colonial society in terms of a constant Manichean conflict between the settler and the 'native' where settler profit is the direct consequence of the loss suffered by the indigenous population.

Attempts to expand on their theories proved difficult until the opening of relevant archives in the early-1990s. Since this new material became available, a new generation of work dealing with colonial violence in Algeria between the end of World War Two and the early 1960s has being growing steadily. However, as Joshua Cole indicates[3], this work has been less concerned with the question of colonial violence itself, instead being preoccupied largely with specific violent events or how particular institutions such as the police, army, magistrates and courts were involved in these events. Raphaëlle Branche's 2001 investigation[4] into the army's use of torture during the Algerian war, for example, was one of the first studies to make use of the newly opened archives. Significant attention has also been paid to the massacres at Sétif and Guelma in 1945; Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer and Jean-Louis Planche both publishing books on the subject in 2002 and 2006 respectively.[5] Moreover, police violence in Paris has been examined by Jim House and Neil Macmaster (2006)[6] and Jean-Paul Brunet (1999/2003).[7]

With academic attention focused predominantly on specific violent events, the question of colonial violence itself has been understudied in recent years. Martin Thomas' edited volume, *The French Colonial Mind, Volume 2: Violence, Military Encounters, and Colonialism* (2012)[8] and Marnia Lazreg's (2008/2016 new edition) investigation[9] into the relationship between torture and colonial domination during the Algerian War as well as James Mcdougall's 2005 examination[10] of the social production and cultural encoding of violence in colonial Algeria are rare and much welcome exceptions.

Amalgamating a Fanonesque psychological approach to the broader question of colonial violence in Algeria with a modern examination of colonial and metropolitan responses to specific violent events, this paper investigates the role of settler identity formation in the legitimisation and unleashing of colonial violence in Algeria between 1945 and 1962. Settler identity formation and its relationship with colonial violence in Algeria is a subject that has been overlooked in the historiography in general. While Martin Thomas[11] and James McDougall[12] have both discussed the subject, an in-depth investigation is still

lacking.

While it is impossible to speak of an undifferentiated and collective settler identity, foundational colonial theories which promoted understandings of native barbarism and irrationality were, as McDougall argues, 'a powerful presence in widespread socialisation processes and in the consensus of the colony's internal politics.'[13] The assumption of singular identity is a reductionism common in the social sciences in general. It is clearly the case that rather than belonging to a singular affiliation, humans share a plurality of identities of various kinds: nationality, religion, sexuality, race, belief, personal interest etc. However, as Amartya Sen explains, the assumption of singularity is not limited to theories of identity and has also been utilised by sectarian activists who aim to secure loyalty from a targeted group by requiring them to cut ties to all other identities. He argues that 'the incitement to ignore all affiliation and loyalties other than those emanating from one restrictive identity can be deeply delusive and also contribute to social tension and violence.'[14]

This process is clearly observable in the settler colony that required its members- 'settlers'- to define themselves as one collectivity by the same logic that justified conquest, and to distance themselves from their other loyalties: French, farmer, Christian etc; in the process transforming colonial Algeria into a society where colonial violence could be quickly justified and unleashed against the colonial population. The present paper aims to apply Sen's theory to colonial society without falling into the reductionist trap of accepting the colonial logic that the settlers formed a singular affiliation. This paper acknowledges that the settlers had plural identities, however it argues that these other loyalties were restricted by the colonisation process thus facilitating the use of colonial violence.

Though there must be a thorough examination of the distinct dynamics of settler colonies as well as the particularities of the violent events which occurred within them, settler colonies are arenas that demonstrate the complex interplay between identity formation and the justification of violence. Conclusions drawn from such examinations may not, therefore, be applied universally. This paper argues that they nevertheless offer a valuable insight into understanding how, in certain contexts, 'othering' ideologies have shaped identities and lead to violence.

During the era of globalisation in which the formation of identities (national, religious, civilisational or otherwise) has become increasingly connected[15] to violence, the present paper argues that it is imperative to examine the complex relationship between identity construction and violence in particular historical contexts.

With the use of sources from the British Foreign Office, the British Embassy in Algiers, as well as British and French newspapers, the present paper will make the case that European understandings of native barbarism and irrationality in colonial Algeria not only served to define the colonised but also strongly shaped the identities of the colonisers who encoded this epistemology into colonial society, thus leading to a rapid escalation of violence as decolonisation movements gained momentum.

This will be demonstrated via an original comparative analysis of British perspectives on French colonial violence. This approach allows for a close inspection of the complex relationship between racism, identity and violence within the arena of the settler colony by revealing an hypocrisy in the British response to French violence; namely that while British violence towards Mau Mau was accepted as a justifiable

response, French violence towards the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) was deplored and widely condemned.

Chapter One will engage with the classic and emergent theories of colonial violence in Algeria. Chapter Two will then examine the connection between settler identity formation and the justification of colonial violence in Algeria through an exploration of the British response to the use of torture in the Battle of Algiers (1956-1957).

Chapter Three will expand upon what the findings of the above reveal about the interplay between identity, racism and violence in settler colonies and will then relate the discussion to the broader question of colonial violence.

Given the limited scope of the paper however, the analysis will be confined to a specific focus. The resulting limitations must be identified at the outset. Firstly, given its immediate concern with how settler identity relates to colonial violence, indigenous violence will not be analysed. Furthermore, as the essay concerns itself with colonial violence in Algeria and will not expand to experiences in other areas, its conclusions may not be applied generally. A general theory, however is not the objective of the essay nor is it to claim that settler identity formation is the only factor at play in the legitimisation of colonial violence.

Chapter One: Theories of Colonial Violence in Algeria

The revolutionary theories of Fanon and Memmi exposed the foundational epistemological principles of the colony which professed the superiority of European culture, intellect, religion and race over the majority indigenous population. The European settlers, they argued, upheld these principles in order to legitimise their presence in the colony and the mass expropriation of its land and resources. Violence is thus structurally embedded within the colony as opposition, polarisation and marginalisation define all relationships and identities which are formed within it. Fanon and Memmi thus concluded that colonialist society can only be overcome with greater violence.

Patricia Lorcin adds nuance to these theories in her investigation[16] into the establishment of ethnic categories in colonial Algeria. She argues that prior to the French invasion of Algeria in July 1830 and first contact with its inhabitants, French understandings of the territory and its people were confined to two main underlying intellectual assumptions. Firstly, the perception of Islam as a belligerent religion and secondly, the notion that it was France's duty as Rome's rightful heir to bring 'civilisation' to the barbaric peoples of North Africa; legacies of the Christian crusades against Islam and of the Roman colonisation of North Africa respectively. These assumptions were largely based on Roman ethnographic classics such as Sallust's *Jugurthine War* that documented Roman warfare with the indigenous inhabitants of ancient Numidia, the Berbers. Such ideologies were developed and disseminated by journalists and ethnographers,[17] which enabled the military to legitimise the conquest of Algeria. Commanding officers such as Thomas Bugeaud, Governor-general of Algeria from 1841-1847 and General Marie-Théodore de Rumigny shared the opinion that Arabs presented a constant threat to the French as Islam produced a barrier to civilisation.[18] For them, this barrier could only be overcome by the conquest and colonisation of the Arabs; prerequisites to the French *mission civilisatrice*.

James McDougall expands upon Lorcin's theory by reassessing the specific socio-cultural factors which lead to colonial violence in Algeria.[19] Distancing himself from theories that fail to acknowledge the particularities of individual violent events, he argues that 'different occurrences of both state and non-state violence must be understood as particular, distinct moments in both the recomposition and breakdown of inherently conflictual social relations.'[20] Rather than being the result of 'nature' or a unique culture and history, McDougall claims that after the colonial occupation of Algeria, the social production and cultural encoding of violence entered Algerian social relations resulting in their deterioration.

'A fundamental psychological and ideological mechanism of colonial rule', McDougall argues 'has been the externalisation of imperialism's own violence onto its victim.'[21] In line with Lorcin, McDougall highlights the importance of European intellectual assumption in the foundation of colonial Algerian society. Prior to the 1830 French invasion of Algeria, he explains, racist depictions of Algerians had been steadily developing in Europe. McDougall indicates that century-old negative imagery of Arabs resulted from Western perceptions of the European right to trade in the Mediterranean throughout the sixteenth century. Arabs were viewed as cutthroats who posed a constant threat to civilisation by disrupting 'legitimate commerce' through naval raids and capturing European subjects. Perhaps more importantly, understandings of Islam as an atavistic, violent religion and the Arabs as Islam's irrational and treacherous adherents, were widespread among the new colonisers.[22] McDougall claims this body of stereotypes ossified the 'alterity of violence' in colonial thought and was embedded into colonial society by the colonisers who had initiated the violent campaign to conquer the territory to 'civilise' its inhabitants.

With the indigenous population dehumanised in widespread colonial thought, the administration and the wider settler community could justify acts of colonial violence which would not be acceptable within the confines of their 'normal' morality in Europe. McDougall argues that the native population were viewed by settler society as 'intolerably threatening'. It is this 'hysterically internalised fear of the 'native'', he claims, that 'served as the unspoken, since self-evident, ground of justification for the spectacular exercise of physical violence against Algerians.'[23]

Both Lorcin and McDougall's analyses are valuable as they clearly demonstrate the foundational role racist ideology played in the establishment of colonial society in Algeria. McDougall's analysis of the intimate relationship between racist ideology and colonial violence is especially significant. Nevertheless, his preoccupation with European fear of the 'native' limits his argument. Fear of the 'native' was unquestionably a constant presence in colonial society, yet it is unlikely that fear alone lead to colonial violence. The present paper takes the position that the negative imagery and ideologies that were encoded into colonial society not only served to dehumanise the colonised population and instil a fear of the colonised in the minds of the European population, their assertion of a binary understanding of native savagery versus European civilisation also shaped the identities of the colonisers by reducing the plurality of their identities to a singular affiliation: settlers. From this perspective, colonial violence may be understood not simply in terms of a fearful reaction but also as an entrenched response employed in the pursuit of self-preservation.

Martin Thomas strengthens McDougall and Lorcin's work on ideology with his in-depth analysis of the relationship between police intelligence gathering and colonial violence in Algeria.[24]

After the rejection of Ferhat Abbas' *Manifeste* in 1943, Algerian attempts at achieving equal status with the colonisers began to take a militant-nationalist turn. Consequently, settler fears escalated, especially in areas with a large Muslim population and limited settler presence such as in the Guelma arrondissement. Many settler communities now increasingly perceived their lives to be under attack. As settler radicalisation intensified, settler militias began to form in the Constantine region. For many settlers, concessions to the indigenous population were viewed as a threat to their continued presence as it refuted the entrenched principle that European presence was justified by superiority over the indigenous people.[25]

Fears of an indigenous uprising were now widespread in the police, gendarmerie and military and when Algerian nationalist protestors marched in Sétif on 8th May 1945, V.E. day, the police intervened. Shots were fired, and the riots became violent and spread throughout Sétif and into the close-by town of Bougie, leading to the deaths of ninety French settlers.[26] The French response was organised by the army and to a lesser extent by civilian militias. Muslims were indiscriminately murdered in highly disproportionate numbers by the enraged colonial forces and settler death squads. Rey-Goldzeiguer estimates the death toll to be in the many thousands.[27]

The Algerian turn to militant nationalism served in a cyclical manner to confirm further in the minds of the colonisers the need for harsher measures and more repression. Thomas indicates that the Sétif massacre turned colonial Algeria into a more repressive police state where intelligence gathering on the indigenous population became the top priority because of the intense threat the settlers felt to their continued survival in colonial Algeria.[28] The Centre d'information et d'études (CIE), the body responsible for intelligence gathering about the indigenous population, Thomas explains, played a significant part in the reinforcement of racist understandings, prior to and after Sétif, by exacerbating widespread colonial fears by portraying popular anti-colonialism as a return to a menacing Arab fanaticism.

Thomas' investigation reveals that in the five months before the massacre, the CIE obtained a constant flow of intelligence from four main sources; the Constantine prefect, Andre Lestrade, Secret police officers, the Africa section of the 19th Army's corps headquarters in Algiers and the colony's gendarmerie command, all of which were directly involved in gathering and analysing information about internal opposition and changes in public opinion before and after the Sétif massacre.[29] The CIE reports convinced many, including French Magistrates working in Algerian courts and gendarmerie commanders such as General Taillardat, 'that Algeria was suffering a social 'malaise' of which popular resentment of settler privilege and diminishing respect for colonial authority were primary symptoms.'[30] The accounts of indigenous violence outlined in the reports thus worked in combination with pre-existing racist intellectual assumptions to produce justifications for the unleashing of brutal state violence to 'pacify' the militants.

Thomas emphasises that such institutionalized discrimination 'cannot be reduced to a simplistic binary characterization of hegemonic colonial violence versus determined anticolonial popular resistance'.[31] This portrayal, forwarded by classic theorists such as Memmi, he argues, obfuscates the process which lead to colonial violence in Algeria because the European colonisers typically justified the violence of conquest not in terms of enforced subjugation, but as 'transient pacification'; the bringing of civilisation and order to a land perceived as uncivilised. However, more importantly, because of the routine nature of colonial violence. For Thomas, 'an accretion of rules, regulations, and customary practices' entrenched in colonial

society normalised the use of security force violence by rendering it 'the logical outcome of past precedent' to those who practiced it.

Thomas' compelling theory of the routine nature of colonial violence is also demonstrable via an analysis of settler identity formation. Building on Thomas' work on the normalisation of security force violence, chapter two will analyse British perspectives on colonial violence in Algeria, focusing on the relationship between settler identity and the legitimisation of colonial violence.

Chapter Two: British Perspectives on Colonial Violence in Algeria

The counter-insurgency violence which had become rational, necessary and therefore 'normal' in colonial Algeria was viewed very differently in Britain. In March 1958, the *Guardian* published an article giving an account of one man's experience of being tortured at the hands of the French authorities in Algeria.[32] The article goes into graphic detail about how the man was tortured violently with electricity and water, and how his torturers compared themselves to the Gestapo to force their victim to provide them with important intelligence.[33] Criticism of French violence in Algeria was not however limited to the anti-imperialist press. The *Daily Telegraph* and *News Chronicle* published similar articles portraying French violence as answering, 'terrorism by terrorism'[34] involving 'ruthless torture' and 'illegal arrests'.[35]

The articles published in the British press caused widespread disgust and Downing Street received a barrage of letters from both individuals and organisations such as the Birmingham Peace Council and the Women's International Democratic Peace Federation, requesting the British Government express disgust at French practices which were compared to Soviet methods in Hungary.[36] On the 6th March 1958, a Mr C.J Cullingford addressed a letter to Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd requesting the British Government 'voice [its] disgust at the satanic practices illustrated in the Guardian extract.'[37] The Government received a similar letter from Sgt G. Davidson, on the same day, which requested immediate protest to the French Government as 'we fought a world war to stamp out such disgusting practices which made the name of Germany stink in civilised nostrils.'[38] It is clear from the strength of the language present in these examples and the many other letters that were sent to the British Government[39] that many members of the British public felt outraged by the idea that a 'civilised' nation such as France could carry out such despicable acts. For these people, French violence in Algeria was clearly not justified and more importantly it was not even justifiable as it was not viewed as a necessary means to an end as was perceived to be the case in colonial Algeria. For these people, it was a violation of international human rights agreements and a morally abhorrent abuse of power.

Despite the extraordinarily high number of complaints requesting protests to the French Government over atrocities in Algeria, Whitehall consistently refused to take any action. For example, when Mr Usborne M.P received a letter from a constituent requesting him to raise questions in the house about the imprisonment and torture of volunteer workers in Algeria,[40] he was informed by the Foreign Office that the Consul-General in Algiers had been contacted concerning the allegations and that as the names of the five volunteers were absent from Mr Usborne's initial correspondence 'it is impossible for him to find out anything about them.'[41]

The dismissive answer Mr Usborne received from the Foreign Office was typical of the responses sent out to constituents and organisations who raised concerns about the violence occurring in Algeria. On several occasions messages were sent back to MPs explaining that they should inform their constituents that a British protest was impossible for a number of reasons, either as the French Government was taking French military proceedings in Algeria very seriously, that there was insufficient evidence to warrant a British protest or that Britain had no right to interfere in French colonial affairs.[42] Nevertheless, in the vast majority of cases, the evidence provided to support these claims was that 'the strength of French public opinion on the subject has led to the setting up of an organisation to investigate alleged cases of this nature' and that said organisation had submitted a report detailing the events in Algeria and its recommendations to the French Government.[43] The two main organisations raised in Government correspondence were the International Commission Against Concentration Camps (La Commission Internationale Contre le Régime Concentrationnaire, CICRC) and the Commission for the Protection of Individual Rights and Liberties (La Commission de Sauvegarde des Droits et Libertés Individuels, CSDLI), which both published their reports in *Le Monde* on 27th July and 14th December 1957 respectively.[44]

However, the CICRC report was only partially critical of the events reported in the press. Of the seven sections present in the report only the last three sections confirmed that 'particularly during two periods of time which corresponded to increases in terrorism, prisoners arrested by the Army, Gendarmerie or police were often kept for weeks without being charged and during this period were, in numerous cases, ill-treated or even tortured'.[45] The main points of the previous sections, however, consisted of thanking the French authorities who 'scrupulously kept their promise to allow the committee to go wherever and see whoever it wished' and that 'there were no secret camps additional to the "centres d'hébergement" which the committee visited'.[46] The report thus allowed the British Government to provide evidence to its citizens that the French Government was taking appropriate steps to deal with the violence in Algeria without being too critical of its colonial ally.

The CSDLI report however received broader publicity as it had been set up in April 1957 by President Guy Mollet after significant pressure from the French left-wing who had become outraged by the allegations of torture and malpractice in Algeria during the Battle of Algiers, which began in late 1956.[47] The report it produced made clear, like that of the CICRC, that torture of prisoners was indeed being used as a means of extracting intelligence, however, as Raphaëlle Branche indicates, the report was only released to *Le Monde* three months after its initial inception by the government.[48] The French government thus deliberately maintained the secrecy of the report for three months, by which time the FLN had been defeated. Any conclusions that would have been vital for the prevention of excessively violent counter-insurgency campaigns were therefore now almost pointless. Despite this knowledge, the British government still decided to refer its constituents to the report in order to illustrate how seriously the French government was taking the unfolding crisis.

The reality behind British reluctance to protest French counter-insurgency violence was, however, quite different. British protest to the French Government was in fact undesirable in Government circles for two main reasons. Firstly, for fears that a protest would lead to being accused by Western powers of harbouring communist sympathies.[49] For the conservative British Government of the late 1950s, being perceived as a

Communist sympathiser was a sincere concern as widespread International Cold War fears of Communism and relentless McCarthyism consistently portrayed the non-aligned and decolonisation movements as subversive communist insurgencies that threatened Western civilisation.

However, the more significant reason was that rather than opposing the use of violent counter insurgency techniques in Algeria, the Foreign Office and British Army were in fact having secret discussions with the French army about the most effective techniques to combat 'terrorism'.[50] During the worst of the violence in Algeria in the mid-1950s, both the Foreign Office and the French Government were strongly aware of the fact that Britain was engaged in an equally violent counter-insurgency campaign against Mau Mau in British Kenya. Techniques such as villigisation, whereby the indigenous population would be concentrated into small, separated communes to prevent the spread of insurgencies, indiscriminate incarcerations, brutal torture involving electric shocks, the castration of male suspects often with plyers[51] and of females by the forceful insertion of glass bottles into the uterus[52] as well as the mass hanging of suspects,[53] were commonplace. Protesting the French Government was therefore undesirable as the British Government would have been immediately accused of hypocrisy by the French and future efforts to share intelligence on guerrilla warfare techniques would have been compromised.

In January 1957 on the eve of the Battle of Algiers, British Lieutenant Colonel A. J. Wilson of the Rifle Brigade was invited by the French army to visit French military outposts in Algeria to share British knowledge and experience on the crushing of 'terrorist' insurgencies such as in Kenya. Wilson outlines in the report that there are 'two sources of urban terrorism' in Algiers: 'Arab murder gangs based on the Kasbah and white Communist inspired terrorists'. French operations to crush such terrorists, he explains were 'too haphazard and insufficiently sustained' and would be better off being 'based on the lines of Operation Anvil- the clearing of Nairobi in 1954.'[54] Elite members of the Foreign Office such as Gladwyn Jebb, British ambassador to Paris, were strongly in favour of Anglo-French intelligence sharing on guerrilla warfare techniques and Wilson's report was immediately sent to the British consulate in Algiers from which it was forwarded to the embassy in Paris and the Foreign office as well as to the Ministry of Defence and the War Office, all of which took great interest in the findings.[55] There were even discussions to send more officers on similar observation missions. However, after pressure from the Foreign Office, the plans were abandoned.[56]

The Foreign Office's decision to abandon future observation missions is highly significant to the present study as it reveals clearly that the British government was unable to justify its involvement in Algeria to the British public. Fabian Klose also correctly indicates that the Foreign Office refused to send further missions as 'it was feared that any conceivable link between the British army and the French war in Algeria could seriously harm the standing of Great Britain in the Arab world and especially in Libya, where the British maintained important military bases.'[57] However it is manifest from Government correspondence as well as from articles published by both the left and right wing British press that while the violent suppression of Mau Mau in Kenya could be openly discussed and justified in the British press and Government, violence in Algeria was not and, more importantly, *could not* be justified in Britain. British involvement in counter insurgency campaigns in Algeria could not be authorised as it was evident to the Government that violence in Algeria was considered a highly inappropriate response by much of the British population.

This paper argues that this paradoxical divergence was caused in large part by the epistemological assumptions that were entrenched in colonial society at conquest, upon which the identities and livelihoods of the colonisers were built, thus tying them inextricably to the Manichean colonial situation. While similar racist understandings of the Algerian indigenous population circulated as freely in British Government circles as in France, illustrated clearly by A.J Taylor's report on the Algerian situation, a British settler colony was never established there. As a result, Britain was free to moralise about violence in Algeria as none of its citizens' identities were tied to the colonial state. The French Government, on the other hand, needed to constantly reassure itself that its continued presence was justified and utilised the racist intellectual assumptions that legitimised conquest to justify and employ violent techniques as rising indigenous militant nationalism was increasingly perceived by Algeria's radicalised settlers as a threat to their survival.

Racist depictions of Mau Mau were also highly prevalent in Kenya and the British press. Mau Mau was regularly portrayed as a fanatical cult of anti-European, anti-white savages. The *Hartlepool Mail*, for example, published an article on 27th September 1952 describing Mau Mau as 'anti-white terrorists',[58] while the *Dundee Courier* ran a similar story in December 1954 that portrayed white settlers as brave and innocent victims of irrational fanaticism; one settler is quoted exclaiming that her 'children will grow up [in British Kenya], Mau Mau or no Mau Mau.'[59] Mau Mau was clearly perceived by the British public as an affront to British values and a threat to the survival of British settlers in Kenya. Mau Mau could therefore be justifiably destroyed by any means possible.

Violence thus became 'normal' and necessary for those with a vested interest. In order to maintain the legitimacy of the colony, the racist assumptions upon which both colonial Algeria and Kenya were established had reduced the plurality of European identities to a single restrictive colonial identity. This process prevented the colonisers and metropolitan Governments from engaging their 'normal' morality by warping their perceptions about what consisted of an appropriate response to indigenous nationalism. It is evident from investigating British perspectives on French colonial violence that morality that would be considered 'normal' in the metropole could be disengaged in the periphery, in this case by the underlying racist assumptions to which any coloniser must adhere if she is to remain a coloniser. What may seem paradoxical to an outsider is therefore completely 'normal' to an insider in the colonial context. On the 'normality of violence', Hannah Arendt makes the astute point that

'…this new type of criminal, who is in actual fact *hostis generis humani*, commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong.'[60]

Chapter Three: Settler Identity and the Question of Colonial Violence

This chapter will discuss what the above findings demonstrate about the relationship between identity, racism and violence in settler colonies. It will then connect the discussion to the broader question of colonial violence.

The hypocrisies inherent in the highly divergent British responses to Mau Mau and the FLN reveal the intimate connection between settler identity formation and colonial violence. It is clear from such responses that violence became justifiable if a settler community had been established in the colony. The widespread justifications for colonial violence in Algeria as well as British justifications for violence against Mau Mau are as indicative of this reality as the inability of the British government to intervene in Algeria. Clearly, the singular settler identity required by the colonial administration for the preservation of its ideological foundations had a highly restrictive impact on the settlers' choice of response to indigenous challenges.

Concessions to independence movements meant eroding the principles which justified settler identity and thus existence. The escalation of settler radicalisation in colonial Algeria demonstrates clearly that for many colonisers, the notion of indigenous equality was a very real threat to their survival as settlers. Colonial violence was therefore perceived as the only possible response to rising indigenous nationalism.

It is therefore inconsistent to accept that highly discriminatory ideologies permeated throughout the settler colony, dictating all relations and identities within it while simultaneously arguing that the violent colonial response was deliberated by individuals who were unbound by circumstance. Though his work has been invaluable in understanding how institutionalised racist assumptions create and reinforce the cyclical nature of oppressive settler colonial societies, Albert Memmi, is guilty of this contradiction. Memmi argues that 'it is impossible for [a settler] not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy of his status. It is moreover, in a way, a double illegitimacy.'[61]

This argument oversimplifies the complex nature of the colonial situation and the relationships formed within it between state, settler and the indigenous population. The outcome of colonialism Memmi describes is accurate and was clearly the case in French Algeria, however his analysis of settler understandings undercuts his argument. In assuming that settlers were aware of their constant illegitimacy he inadvertently depicts the colonial administration as a sympathetic body which was able to comprehend the grievances of its conquered peoples. In response to Memmi, Nadine Gordimer indicates that Memmi's analysis misses 'that the colonizer justified his/her situation by asserting that the colonizers brought enlightenment, technical as well as religious, to the indigenous people living in the heart of darkness.' 'On the colonizer's scale', she continues, 'there was a trade-off balance, a straight deal that could ignore morality.'[62] Gordimer rightly questions Memmi's assumption that the colonisers were fully aware of the highly unjust nature of the colonial situation. For most colonisers the question of morality was irrelevant; for them it was simply an established fact that Europeans were infinitely superior to all other races as it was this assumption upon which their identities as settlers were shaped and legitimised.

Memmi's argument also obfuscates the question of responsibility by framing settler colonialism in simplistic terms of 'good' versus 'evil'. Rather than attempting to explain settler behaviour through an analysis of their justifications for expansion and understandings of the indigenous population, Memmi's assumption of settler awareness of illegitimacy simply reverses the colonial ideology by framing the colonial situation in nationalist terms as a battle between hegemonic colonial violence and an anticolonial resistance, a portrayal which both Martin Thomas and James McDougall have argued convincingly against.[63]

Adding nuance to Memmi's portrayal, Thomas makes the case for the uniqueness of 'colonial' violence,

indicating that its duality; its simultaneous and contradictory ability to both sustain, and destruct colonial power makes it different from non-colonial violence. Colonial violence, for example, was typically used in Algeria to restore order or in vengeful killings by settler militias but this short-term response undercut the long-term goal of preserving the colonial presence.

Building on Thomas' theory, this paper suggests that one of the major factors behind the unique duality of colonial violence he describes was settler identity. While, objectively, the use of colonial violence contradicted the long-term goal of securing the survival of the colony, for the settlers, violence was viewed as the only means to ensure their survival as their sense of self depended on the same foundational ideologies that justified the continued presence of the colony itself. This process thus normalised the use of colonial violence.

Albert Bandura's theory of moral disengagement is highly applicable to this contradictory process. Bandura argues that violence becomes increasingly acceptable once the morality of a particular action is perceived as justified. It is within this process of moral justification, he argues, that 'detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it as serving socially worthy or moral purposes. People then can act on a moral imperative and preserve their view of themselves as a moral agent while inflicting harm on others.'[64]

Underlying this moral justification was Amartya Sen's notion of 'singular affiliation': the reduction of the plurality of European identities to one restrictive colonial identity as settlers. Through this process, the settlers became true products of the colonial enterprise in that their identities as well as their livelihoods and futures depended on the maintenance of colonial mythology. This meant that propensity for violence towards the indigenous population was drastically heightened in settler colonies as, despite the long-term consequences of the reaction, the settlers could not afford to let the administration collapse which justified brutal violence simply as a necessary means to an end.

The post-Sétif escalation of colonial violence demonstrates this process. With the ever-increasing radicalisation of the settler community, the military and the colonial administration itself, justifications for the by-passing of legality and the unleashing of violent methods began to circulate. From the colonisers' perspective, order had to come before equality as the fight was no longer a case of pacification but was now a fight for the survival of civilisation; a fight between good and evil.

Conventional methods were deemed inefficient and in response to settler demands for tougher crackdowns, harsher methods were incorporated into the army's strategy. After the declaration of a state of emergency in April 1955, 'special powers' were devolved to the army and orders were issued for the immediate crushing of the rebellion. For General Paul Aussaresses, the declaration allowed 'tighter cooperation between the police and military intelligence.' He argued 'it was a way of institutionalizing what I was already putting into practice unofficially in the field.'[65] Indiscriminate incarcerations of Muslims became increasingly common, checkpoints were installed across the main cities to keep the indigenous population under constant surveillance and Generals Aussaresses and Massu now openly condoned the use of torture to gather intelligence. They justified its use by claiming that insurgent warfare is completely different from its conventional form and that torture speeds up intelligence gathering.

The paradoxical employment of increasingly violent counter-insurgency measures to secure the future of

the colony demonstrates that the army, like most European settlers in Algeria had been blinded by the racist intellectual assumptions to which the colonial enterprise required them to adhere in order to legitimise continued colonial presence. Their abilities to engage moral reasoning, as would have taken place in Europe, had thus been disabled and the colonial project, which assumed the ultimate superiority of Europeans over the indigenous population, had left colonial violence as the only perceivable solution to the conflict.

The temptation to use the labels 'good' and 'evil' is almost irresistible in the study of a subject as emotionally sensitive as colonial violence, but as demonstrated in Chapter Two, the reality of colonial violence in Algeria was far more complex. Contrary to Memmi's portrayal, morality is a malleable force that can be engaged or restricted depending on the circumstances. As the above analysis has demonstrated, widespread moral disengagement existed in settler colonial society as the racist ideologies embedded within the social structure restricted 'normal' moral engagement by reducing plural European identities to a singular affiliation, that of 'settlers'. The settlers therefore became convinced of their decisions to use violence as they were heavily invested in the situation and were consequently unable to perceive any other response. Settler identities were part of the colonial enterprise and concessions meant their destruction. Colonial violence was therefore deemed 'normal' under the circumstances.

Albert Bandura explains that

'through moral justification of violent means, people see themselves as fighting ruthless oppressors, protecting their cherished values, preserving world peace, saving humanity from subjugation or honoring their country's commitments. Just war tenets were devised to specify when the use of violent force is morally justified. However, given people's dexterous facility for justifying violent means all kinds of inhumanities get clothed in moral wrappings.'[66]

The current literature on colonial violence has largely ignored the broader question of colonial violence, instead focusing on specific violent events. Investigations into the role of settler identity in the justification and unleashing of colonial violence are scarcer still. This paper has attempted to blend the foundational analyses of Memmi and Fanon with the nuanced investigations of modern theorists such as Martin Thomas, Patricia Lorcin and James McDougall via an analysis of settler identity to reinvigorate a discussion about the broader question of colonial violence in Algeria. This is an area which has faded from view in the historiography and as a result needs serious attention.

Attempts to understand settler behaviour, however should not be confounded with condoning violent acts. An analysis of colonial motivations and the underlying driving forces which facilitated the justification and unleashing of violent methods does not take away from the responsibility shared by the colonisers. Decisions *were* made to initiate such tactics, as were taken by Generals Massu and Aussaresses. Settlers *did* make the decision to become inhabitants of the colonial state and were therefore in support of the subjugation of the indigenous population by a colonial power. Assumptions were not questioned, and European values were considered superior to those of all other races.

Nevertheless, in order to understand how such violent campaigns were ever justified by colonial

authorities and settler communities as well as by widespread groups in the metropole, one must probe deeper than the specific acts alone and there must be an analysis of the intellectual assumptions which permeated thought and identity during the period. Through investigating the motivating factors behind colonial violence in tandem with a detailed analysis of particular violent occurrences, we can observe how human perception can become easily biased by assumption and prejudice. From this perspective, colonial violence becomes explicable, though still morally deplorable; a perspective which is becoming ever-more necessary in the age of globalisation where identity and politics are becoming increasingly entwined.

Conclusion

This essay has argued that settler colonial society was a world divided to its very core between a minority of exploitative, privileged Europeans and a marginalised and oppressed indigenous majority. It has argued that the Manichean reality of the colonial situation was built on racist epistemological assumptions that permeated European thought at the time of conquest which, after first contact with the indigenous population, were embedded into the colonial social fabric. These assumptions professed the superiority of European race, religion, politics and economics and rationalised the colonisers' 'mission civilisatrice'.

Belief in the superiority of Europeans was thus fundamental to legitimising colonial expansion and subsequent European presence in the colony. This meant that any future settlers were required to adhere to the founding principles if they were to legitimise their presence. Through the colonisation process, diverse European identities became restricted to one singular affiliation: settler identity. Settlers thus became connected at a fundamental level to the colonial enterprise and indigenous challenges to colonial authority were therefore perceived as a direct challenge to their existence. Rising indigenous nationalism from the end World War Two thus created a widespread radicalisation of settler attitudes towards the indigenous population. The declaration of a state of emergency made official the widespread justifications for violent counter-insurgency campaigns to combat the 'uprisings' which confirmed for the settlers, the military and the colonial and metropolitan governments their worst fears about the indigenous population: that civilisation had been rejected by the indigenous population.

Using British government correspondence and reports from the time of the Algerian War as well as articles from British and French newspapers reporting during the Battle of Algiers, this essay has demonstrated how the implantation of racist intellectual assumptions into the foundations of colonial society limited, to a large degree, the settlers' ability to engage their 'normal' morality. By examining British disgust at French justifications for colonial violence in Algeria alongside British justifications for similarly violent methods against Mau Mau in Kenya, this essay has revealed how racist epistemological assumptions sculpted settler identity and paved the way for the rationalisation of colonial violence by warping perceptions of reality and framing the colonial situation as a just project which sought to bring civilisation to the uncivilised.

It has shown that the British government was unable to justify intervention in Algeria to the British public and has argued that this was largely because British identities had not been connected to the colonial situation in Algeria as they had been in Kenya. This allowed British moralising about violence towards the

Algerian indigenous population who were viewed simply as victims of French colonial violence. Mau Mau, on the other hand were portrayed as a dark cult which sought the destruction of civilisation as they presented a threat to the survival of British citizens. The hypocrisy of the British response is thus highly suggestive that institutionalised racism is connected at a fundamental level, via settler identity formation, to the justification and unleashing of violence in a colonial context.

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