

Introduction: Settler colonialism and French Algeria

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Abstract:

The unusual trajectory of settler colonialism in French Algeria, which culminated in the exodus of European settlers amidst a bloody struggle for Algerian independence, has often limited the interest of scholars who seek to understand settler colonialism as an enduring structure of oppression. For their part, scholars of French Algeria have yet to fully engage with the intellectual propositions of settler colonial studies, as a field of study which has focused primarily on Anglophone and Israeli-Palestinian contexts. The Introduction to this special issue seeks to open a research conversation between these groups of scholars, arguing that our understanding of all settler colonial contexts can be enriched through this dialogue. In revealing the multiple power dynamics of Empire, and providing a framework for addressing central questions of sovereignty and identification, settler colonial studies offer productive lines of enquiry for scholars of French Algeria, whose research has long been influenced by the opposing historical narratives of French and Algerian republicanism. In bringing to the fore questions of cultural and linguistic diversity within both settler and indigenous populations, and underscoring the emotional dynamics of Empire, research on French Algeria can, in return, help shed light on understudied aspects of other settler colonial contexts. Beyond this mutually beneficial exchange of perspectives, however, the dialogue between these groups of researchers can help to construct comparative and globally connected histories of settler colonialism, which bring multiple imperial spaces into the same frame of analysis. The Introduction opens this dialogue by mobilising the propositions of settler colonial theory to outline the dynamics of the operation of power in settler colonial Algeria, before describing the evolution of these dynamics over five historical phases.

Keywords: Algeria; comparative scholarship; connected history; emotion; historiography.

Inspired by Patrick Wolfe's differentiation of the structures of colonialism and settler colonialism, scholars have proposed various theoretical models for understanding the dynamics of power within the settler colonial situation.¹ Lorenzo Veracini has identified the core dynamics of this situation in his description of the triangular relationships between settlers, 'exogenous Others' and 'indigenous Others'.² These relationships, suggest Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson, multiplied in the twentieth century, particularly in colonies in which settlers 'had to contend with increasingly opinion-sensitive metropolises and indigenous majorities that could neither be decisively defeated nor be made to go away'.³ In these conditions, argue Elkins and Pederson, a four-way relationship developed between the imperial metropole, the local administration, the indigenous population and the settler community.⁴ Such multipolar relationships undoubtedly shaped the practices and

mechanisms of colonial rule in French Algeria, where, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries European settlers constituted a demographic minority in a territory ruled over by a highly centralised French state. Settler colonialism in Algeria consequently shared a number of the features identified by scholars in other contexts, including attempts to ‘transfer’ the indigenous population, the elaboration of an enduring ‘pioneer myth’, the insistence on the distinct cultural – or racial - character of the settler community, and a drive towards a form of pluralistic settler sovereignty.⁵

Although a number of scholars of settler colonialism include Algeria as a point of reference, its difference and exceptionalism as a settler colony are frequently noted.⁶ In Algeria, James Belich states, ‘the settler transition was always partial’.⁷ The historical specificities of the French Algerian context – including the heterogenous origins of the European population, the complex apparatus of the colonial government, and the exodus of settlers at the point of Algerian independence – have limited specialists of settler colonialism in their engagement with the colonial territory. The bloody denouement of French Algeria, where structures of settler colonial domination were ultimately disrupted by the uprising of Algerian nationalists and the departure of the European population, may not, moreover, offer a salutary example to politically-engaged scholars who seek to resolve the tensions of present-day settler colonial situations.

For their part, scholars of French Algeria have long been constrained by a French republican historiographical tradition which has tended to reduce the examination of settler colonialism to a politically-charged interrogation of settlers’ allegiance to the French nation. During the Algerian War, the historical questioning of settlers’ claims to ‘Frenchness’ served to displace responsibility for acts of colonial violence.⁸ In the decades following the end of the conflict and the ‘repatriation’ of settlers to the metropole, counter-arguments emerged

insisting on the complete and unambiguous *francisation* of the European population of Algeria during the Third Republic.⁹ Shaped by their respective conditions of production, these opposing historical narratives converged in their defense of French republicanism, and their ultimate affirmation of the binary opposition of ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised’.¹⁰ Although such interpretations have been challenged in recent decades, as scholars question the very notion of ‘Frenchness’, and examine its construction in French Algeria,¹¹ there have as yet been few attempts to engage explicitly with the propositions of settler colonial studies, as it has emerged as a field of research in the twenty-first century.¹²

Yet, as this special issue argues, a much greater appreciation of the unstable status of Algeria as a settler colony is essential to both scholars of settler colonialism and Franco-Algerian relations alike. Thus, in exploring the similarities and differences of the Algerian case, the articles in this collection make a specific contribution that connects the specificity of French Algeria to the generic of settler colonialism. They show that by standing back and placing French Algeria within a much broader debate about settler colonialism our understanding of French Algeria is significantly deepened and vice-versa. Viewed through the analytical framework of settler colonialism, questions of sovereignty, identification and demographic composition emerge as central to the historical understanding of not only the politics, but also the mentalities, behaviours and emotions of the various communities in Algeria and the French metropole. In using these questions to understand the dynamics of power in French Algeria, these articles also seek to open fresh lines of enquiry in other settler colonial settings. Questions of cultural exchange and multilingual expression amongst settlers of diverse European origin, for example, cannot be easily overlooked in the Algerian context, but rarely feature in histories of ‘the British World’ or ‘the Anglo World’, despite the disparate provenance of the European population.¹³ In providing such points of comparison

this special issue outlines the model for a globally connected and comparative history of settler colonialism which examines the exchanges and contacts between multiple colonial empires.¹⁴

Settler society in French Algeria was never a static object. It was an unfolding entity that was first made possible by the French invasion of 1830. In the ensuing years it would go through a number of phases before coming to a dramatic end point with Algerian independence in 1962. Nor was settler society a bloc. It was shot through with differences of class, gender, national origin and regional background. This internal diversity created complex hierarchies of power and ambivalent forms of settler identification. There was no single overarching settler narrative but rather a series of intersecting, often paradoxical, narratives that shifted according to the socio-historical moment. In trying to map the fluctuating relations that existed in different historical phases of settler colonialism in Algeria it is useful to think in terms of the dynamics which played out between six interconnected forces, the first of which was the French state. The state itself was not a single component, but rather a multiplicity of institutions, each of which had different views about the governance of French Algeria. Initially, the French Army provided the driving force for the invasion and annexation of the territory. Thereafter the interests of the French state were always crucial, ultimately becoming the decisive factor when de Gaulle adhered to a process of decolonisation in April 1961.

The structures of local rule provided a second force in the dynamics of settler colonialism in Algeria. Despite significant overlap, local authorities were never simply an extension of the metropolitan administration. The dissonance of metropolitan and local authority created significant tension within the operation of colonial power. Settler leaders frequently sought to bend Paris-appointed officials to their will and, if unsuccessful,

maneuvered to remove them. Such interactions reflected a deeply held suspicion of the government in Paris, particularly evident in the settler protests of the 1890s. These protests lead to the creation, in 1901, of the *Délégations financières*, a local assembly which enjoyed some measure of budgetary independence under the auspices of a French state. As David Prochaska remarks, 'the unintended consequence of the French Third Republic applying liberal democratic institutions to Algeria was the opportunity it gave the settlers to create their own independent power base.'¹⁵ Settler representatives defended their limited autonomy, expecting the state to protect the colony, without interfering in its affairs. Highly conservative, these representatives acted alongside the deputies elected from the colony to the French National Assembly to sabotage proposals for political change in the twentieth century.

The dynamics of power were further influenced by the wider settler community. This community was internally fractured by intersecting hierarchies of class and national origin. A tiny minority of settlers grew rich upon the profits of export agriculture, whilst the vast majority were poorer than their contemporaries in mainland France. Although settlement was frequently represented as a process of making a barren land bloom, particularly in the marshy Mitidja area just south of Algiers, most settlers lived in the coastal towns and cities. Those who had fled from Alsace-Lorraine following German annexation in 1871 found themselves at the apex of a system of social privilege, above other Frenchmen, Italians and Spaniards, and settlers from Malta, who were perceived to occupy a liminal cultural and racial space which separated Europeans from Berbers and Arabs. Political and social inequality was the cornerstone of settler society. Following legislation in 1889, most Europeans in Algeria – regardless of origin – had the rights of French citizens, whilst the Arabo-Berber majority was governed according to a separate legal code. Limited interaction

between settlers and the so-called '*indigènes*' contributed to a deeply ingrained settler racism that was particularly hostile to any sign of Arabo-Berber social and political advancement.

Arab, Berber and Algerian Jewish populations constituted a fourth force shaping the dynamics of settler colonialism. In the decades following the French invasion, settler leaders and commentators anticipated the disappearance of these populations, through demographic decline or communal segregation. The demographic resurgence of these populations from the end of the nineteenth century, however, meant that by 1936 the Arabo-Berber population stood at 6 million, in comparison to the settler minority of 1 million. As forms of Arabo-Berber political organisation diversified from the turn of the twentieth century, settler leaders directed their energies towards ensuring the political and social privilege of the European minority. Fear of Arabo-Berber incursions on settler privilege also contributed to a strong strain of anti-Semitism in settler society. The enfranchisement of the Algerian Jews by the republican government in 1870 met continued and violent opposition from settlers, who feared that this concession would ultimately lead to citizenship for the Arabo-Berber majority, and the end of French Algeria.

The struggle over the rights and status of the Arabo-Berber majority involved a fifth voice, that of metropolitan public opinion. Settlers were sensitive to metropolitan perception of colonial society from the mid nineteenth century onwards, though this perception itself was based on a limited knowledge of the colonial territory, largely derived from primary school lessons, the 1930 centenary celebrations or the 1931 Colonial Exhibition. While settlers sought to distinguish themselves from the French of the metropole, they also lamented the lack of knowledge which they felt underpinned metropolitan '*Arabophilia*', and exhorted observers on the other side of the Mediterranean

to celebrate the settler community as defenders of the French empire. The Algerian War, and the concern it generated for the fate of French conscripts, transformed public understanding of colonial conditions, providing a determining factor in the mobilisation of the metropolitan public in favour of de Gaulle's decolonisation narrative from 1961.

The dynamics of settler colonialism in Algeria were crucially influenced by a sixth factor: the changing international context. This dimension of the settler colonial situation is yet to receive sustained attention from scholars, though work on the international perspectives of the Algerian War demonstrates its importance.¹⁶ Conscious of imperial rivalry in North Africa in the nineteenth century, and the development of international revolutionary movements in the twentieth century, French colonial authorities attempted to insulate Algerian society from outside influences. Settler journalists too, sought to regulate links between the local settler community and their various countries of origin, all the while denouncing external agitators, from Ottoman spies in the years preceding the First World War, to communists and pan-Arabists in the decades following the conflict. It was, however, impossible to isolate Algerian society from these international developments. The global conflicts of the twentieth century, the Russian Revolution, the 1941 Atlantic Charter and the formation of the United Nations all conditioned social interactions between the multiple groups within the colonial territory, and had far-reaching consequences on Algerian politics.

As the articles in this special issue reveal, these six intersecting dynamics created the unstable realities of French Algeria; they also shaped a profound settler ambivalence to the political authority and cultural influence of the French state. This ambivalence in many ways surpassed that seen in other colonial territories where settlers necessarily oscillated between the need, on one hand, to maintain the privilege of the coloniser, and the appeal, on the other, of a process of indigenisation. Settler ambivalence was evident in the

resurgent, simultaneous claims to French protection and colonial autonomy, which reached their violent apogee during the Algerian War. Throughout the colonial era, settlers weighed their desire for autonomy against their feelings of insecurity. Their calculations, which took place within the dynamics outlined above, were suffused with emotion: fear of the majority Muslim population, fear of Algerian Jews and their perceived political influence, anxieties over imperial rivalries in the neighbouring territories of Tunisia and Morocco, concerns over diplomatic tensions within Europe and their potential consequences for social relations amongst the European national groups in the colony, hopes and aspirations for colonial progress – the last of which often gave way to disappointment, anger and a sense of betrayal in the wake of decisions made in Paris. Caught between a desire to be recognised by the French of the metropole, and a desire to be recognised as different from the French of the metropole, the settler community at once loved and rejected its imperial guardian. The development of settler ambivalence can be traced over five historical phases:

1830-1870: Invasion, Annexation and the Military Regime

The conditions of settler ambivalence to French authority were established in the early phase of settlement, between the French invasion of Algiers – a semi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire – in 1830, and the fall of the French Second Empire, under Napoleon III, in 1870. These decades were marked by political instability and regime change in France, leading to an uncertain and inconsistent approach to the development of the conquered territory and the governance of its heterogeneous population. Faced with widespread Muslim opposition to the French presence, and a protracted and bloody struggle against the forces of Abd el-Kader, the governments of the Bourbon and Orléanist monarchies regularly expressed doubts as to the desirability of securing possession of Algeria. If these doubts had

waned by 1848, following the defeat of Abd el-Kader, the proclamation of the Second French Republic, and the integration of the conquered territory into the administrative structures of the French nation, the question of governance provoked further anxieties. Although, as Jennifer Sessions notes, most French officials had come to see settlement as an extension of the relation of colonial domination established by military victory, there was little agreement as to the status of the growing numbers of non-French Europeans settling in the colony.¹⁷ These settlers, who were primarily of Spanish, Italian and Maltese origin and low socioeconomic status, outnumbered settlers of French origin in many areas of the colonial territory until the late nineteenth century.¹⁸ Alternately viewed as valuable sources of labour and disruptive agents of international competition, successive French governments hesitated to attribute French citizenship to foreign European nationals.¹⁹

The ethnic and social origins of the settler population contributed to the characterisation of the settler colony by the French of the metropole as a place of questionable morality, a reputation which was further cemented by the exile to Algeria of over 6000 political criminals in the wake of the 1848 revolution and the 1851 Napoleonic coup d'état.²⁰ Settlers reacted against what they perceived to be the dismissive attitudes of the metropolitan public, using early publications and professional associations to present themselves as local experts whose knowledge could be usefully mobilised by the French state – if coherent structures of colonial government could be established. Coherent structures, however, were not forthcoming. Although the colonial territory had been integrated into the administrative apparatus of the French state in 1848, these structures existed alongside those of the colonial General Government, established in 1834, and areas of military jurisdiction. Settler dissatisfaction with the governance of the territory was exacerbated over the course of the Second Empire as the French Army gained greater

authority. Although the violence of military rule contributed to the massive demographic decline of the Arabo-Berber population during these years,²¹ settlers perceived military institutions such as the *Bureaux Arabes* – which mediated between the tribes and the state, and provided limited medical care to Arabo-Berber communities – as Arabophile. Settler hostility to the French Second Empire and its military regime intensified when, in 1863, Napoleon III outlined his vision of Algeria not as a colony, but as an ‘Arab kingdom’, and when, in 1865, the Emperor cleared the way for the accession to French citizenship of individual Algerian Muslims and Jews. Despite the fact that this legislation – which required Muslims and Jews to abandon their right to be governed by Koranic or Mosaic law in civil affairs – attracted few candidates for naturalisation, it nevertheless, as Todd Shepard explains, ‘gave institutional form to the promise of assimilation in Algeria’.²²

1870-1908: The Consolidation of Settler Authority

The collapse of the Second Empire in 1870 was widely celebrated by settlers, who saw the transition to the French Third Republic and the subsequent establishment of civil rule in Algeria as an opportunity to renegotiate their relationship with the French state and reaffirm their authority over Algerian Muslims and Jews. The years between 1870 and 1908 were marked by the consolidation of settlers’ ambivalent attitudes to French authority. This ambivalence was evident from the very beginning of the period as a revolutionary Commune emerged in Algiers, dedicated not only to the defense of the Third Republic from Prussian invaders and French monarchists, but also to the elaboration of projects by which settlers aimed ‘to take the destiny of Algeria into their own hands’.²³ Settlers maintained their pressure on the French government throughout these decades through a strong colonial lobby in the French parliament, and gained further autonomy over their affairs through the

temporary administrative changes of 1881-1896, and the creation of a permanent body – the *Délégations financières* – to allocate the colonial budget, in 1901.²⁴ This increased autonomy facilitated the widespread appropriation of land, with devastating consequences for Algerians, particularly the nomadic pastoralist tribes.²⁵

Settler claims to autonomy in this era were increasingly supported by reference to a distinctive local cultural community. In their newspapers, their correspondence with the authorities, their professional associations and their early works of literature, settlers presented themselves as ‘Algerians’ and sought to define their particular traits and qualities. Traits frequently evoked by settlers included a rejection of the overly-civilised, ‘effeminate’ manners of Europeans on the other side of the Mediterranean, a plain-spokenness, a visceral bond with the Algerian soil, and a capacity to endure physical suffering. By the turn of the twentieth century settler demographers and doctors were referring to the ‘Algerian’ people as ‘neo-Latin’ or as a ‘new white race’, composed of an increasingly intermixed population of Frenchmen, Italians and Spaniards.²⁶ References to an ‘Algerian’ settler community or race did not, of course, negate the very real differentiation of social status amongst settlers of divergent national origins. Settlers of French origin, particularly those from Alsace-Lorraine, held a privileged position in colonial society, while those of Maltese origin were denigrated and ostracised.²⁷ The imagination of an ‘Algerian’ community nevertheless proved useful to settlers in the wake of the 1889 law which effected the automatic collective naturalisation of Europeans born in Algeria, as many settlers struggled to balance their new political identity with their mixed cultural heritage. Invocations of an idealised ‘Algerian’ settler community likewise proved useful in the context of Franco-Italian rivalry in Tunisia, and Franco-Spanish competition in Morocco.

Despite their drive for increased administrative and cultural autonomy, settlers were anxious to retain both the protection and the recognition of the French state. The 1871 revolt of 150,000 Muslims in Kabylia, led by El-Mokhrani, ensured that security remained a constant preoccupation of settlers in these decades.²⁸ Beyond protection, however, settlers wanted the French of the metropole to understand and acknowledge the risks and sacrifices of settlement. Their hopes in this regard were frequently disappointed as metropolitan politicians and journalists – concerned about ‘foreign’ influence on settler mentalities, and prompted by the first generations of Muslim reformers – attempted to displace responsibility for colonial violence onto the settler community. The sense of betrayal felt by settlers faced with the criticism and misunderstanding of the French government and the French public was heightened by the failure of the government to resolve other perceived problems. These included the ongoing complexities of the dual administrative system, and the influence of Algerian Jews in colonial society following their collective enfranchisement by the republican government of 1870. These issues converged to fuel a small but militant separatist movement in the late 1890s. Even settler separatism, however, was characterised by ambivalence: in the wake of the violent demonstrations of the turn of the century, former separatists admitted that their fleeting rejection of the French state had been founded on a desire to be better loved by the French nation.

1908-1945: The Rise of Algerian Nationalism in an Era of Global Rights

The limited autonomy gained by settlers in the wake of the violence of the 1890s and the establishment of the *Délégations financières* in 1901, was soon challenged by the French state, which proposed in 1908, to extend conscription to Algerian Muslims. Acutely

conscious of the demographic imbalance between France and Germany, especially in terms of men of fighting age, the state sought to marshal resources in French Algeria and across the Empire. Settler leaders were horrified by this proposal, opposing the arming of Algerians on the basis that the new recruits could turn this military knowledge against settler rule. Furthermore, settlers feared that conscription could lead to Algerian demands for citizenship rights. Rejecting the proposal, numerous town halls refused to carry out the necessary census of the Muslim population, while Gaston Thomas, the deputy for Constantine in the National Assembly, resigned as Minister for the Navy. The settler press also mounted a vociferous campaign which intensified still further when, following the formal introduction of Muslim conscription in 1911, middle-class Muslims calling themselves 'Young Algerians' drew up a Manifesto demanding enlarged suffrage for Algerians and representation in the French National Assembly. In June 1912 a delegation presented these demands in person to the Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré, immediately provoking further ire from settler journalists, who denounced the 'Young Algerians' as Ottoman spies.

The crisis of 1908-1911 crystallised tensions which continued to define the contours of French Algeria until 1946. The event affirmed the primacy of the interests of the French state, which had been willing to countenance reform – albeit always within a context of French sovereignty – in return for military resources. Indeed, the state proposed to give a small minority of Algerians greater rights as a reward for Muslim participation in the war effort. This reformist logic was also evident in later proposals to extend Muslim enfranchisement, albeit in a very limited way. Reforms proposed by the Popular Front in 1936 were actually implemented by de Gaulle in March 1944. These reforms, however, were greeted with hostility by settler leaders who saw their role as one of defending the status quo established in 1901. These leaders continually displayed an entrenched attitude, either

sabotaging such reforms in the National Assembly through the colonial lobby or, if legislation was passed, dragging their feet and preventing the practical application of reforms on the ground. This pronounced conservatism also explains why the authoritarian Vichy regime received such widespread support amongst the settler population.

The settlers' fear of political change was driven in part by the demographic realities of the period. Between 1908 and 1946 the settler population remained constant, flat-lining at one million, while the Arabo-Berber population shot up to over seven million. Many settlers felt outnumbered and consequently fearful about the future of French Algeria. Their fears were exacerbated by the fact that this population explosion was accompanied by another new factor: the politicisation of Muslim society. Politicisation was initially limited to a tiny minority of middle-class Muslims who wanted to ensure equality with French citizens. However, by 1946, Muslim mass politics had become a reality, with political parties demanding not just greater rights, but full independence. This mass politics was defined by the language of political and human rights, with the wording of the 1912 Manifesto inspired by French republicanism derived from the 1789 French Revolution. Subsequently, their demands would be shaped by the international language of human rights, notably the 1941 Atlantic Charter, signed by Roosevelt and Churchill and enshrining the national right to self-determination, and the formation of the United Nations. This move to a new mass politics was also influenced by developments in the Arab and Muslim world, specifically the Islamic Renaissance Movement and pan-Arab nationalism, which both opposed colonial rule in the Middle East and North Africa. The impact of the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Revolution and the two World Wars also contributed to this transformation. In this sense French Algeria could not be separated from global political developments, nor could it be

separated from global economics. Indeed the impact of the 1930s global economic depression was crucial in radicalising Algerian politics.

1945 to 1962: International Pressure and the Algerian War

In May 1945 French Algeria witnessed mass political demonstrations by Algerian nationalists in all the major towns and cities. Anticipating the formation of the United Nations in San Francisco, these protestors wanted to show that the Algerian nation existed and was ready to take its place amongst the nation states of the world. On 8 May one demonstration in Sétif in eastern Algeria led to widespread anti-settler violence that resulted in the death of twenty-one settlers. The event precipitated massive counter-violence from the French state as the Army re-established French rule across the Sétif region. Three years later the nationalist press would talk of 20,000 dead, while post-independence Algerian estimates have never been less than 45,000.

In many ways this violent moment contained all the hallmarks of the previous phase. Once again, the interests of the French state were paramount, as the government sought to reassert national sovereignty after the Nazi occupation. Settler fears of social and political change were also in evidence, faced with a self-confident Algerian nationalist movement which believed that Algerian independence was imminent. However, this moment was different in three crucial respects. Part of the nationalist movement was now committed to the violent overthrow of French Algeria. The newly-established United Nations, moreover, enshrined a clear decolonisation narrative – one where the demand for national self-determination would lead to a nation-state and a seat at the UN Assembly. In addition to

this, the geopolitical shift produced by the global conflict had produced two new super-powers – the USA and the USSR – both of which were resolutely anti-colonial.

These new factors defined the final phase of French Algeria which led to Algerian independence in July 1962. Thus, in November 1954 the National Liberation Front (FLN) launched a national war of liberation that was based upon a strategy of violence. Over the next two years the FLN came to predominate over all nationalist rivals. Settler leaders and the settler community as a whole recoiled in horror at the FLN tactics and demanded protection from the French state. Settler intransigence grew as they monitored political developments in Paris, considering any possibility of negotiation between the French government and the FLN to be unthinkable. The position of the French state did, however, change. In 1956 the Republican Front government deployed massive resources – both military and economic – in an effort to reform French Algeria. The government sought to create greater equality in colonial society by enacting the political changes encapsulated in the 1947 statute, and thereby protecting French sovereignty at the expense of settler privilege. This strategy was based on the premise that a reformed French Algeria would become the lynchpin of a Eurafrikan bloc, which – combined with the imminent creation of the European Economic Community – would situate France as a geopolitical force to counter the USA and USSR. The French government also hoped to protect the gas and oil resources that had been discovered in the Sahara, as the basis of the country's future economic strength.

Yet, by April 1961 de Gaulle had come to the clear conclusion that French Algeria was no longer in the interests of the French state. Not only was the maintenance of colonial rule a strain on the French budget, but it was doing grave damage to France's international image. Within the metropole, pressure to end the conflict mounted as the tide of public

opinion – concerned about the fate of French conscripts – turned against further military involvement. Outside of France, calls to end the conflict were accompanied by pressure to initiate a process of decolonisation. The USA had repeatedly underlined that, in the context of the Cold War, French Algeria and its negative global perception posed a threat to the strength and credibility of NATO. By 1961, France was hopelessly isolated at the UN as all the newly-independent former colonies lined up to support the Algerian cause. For settlers, however, the effect of the new policy of decolonisation was cataclysmic. As the French state sought to withdraw from Algeria, some settlers resorted to terrorism in the hope that they could prevent the definitive abandonment of their community. Their actions fed into the bloody and chaotic denouement of French Algeria, which resulted in the mass exodus of the settlers.

Post-1962: Memory Wars

For many historians, 1962 marks the end of France's ambitions towards empire, and a definitive turn away from its identity as a colonial power and towards a new future in Europe.²⁹ Kristin Ross has persuasively argued that the move to post-war modernisation, facilitated by immigration from North Africa, quickly made colonialism seem 'like a dusty archaism' such that, like a classic case of Freudian repression, the war and the consequent loss of Algeria were soon forgotten by the general population.³⁰ In tracing the afterlives of the war and the amnesia which has surrounded it, critics have adapted and applied Henry Rousso's seminal psychoanalytic analysis of Vichy France, pointing to the ways in which the unhealed wounds of the war have demonstrated a propensity to re-emerge onto the public

scene in the wake of events such as the Papon trial (1997-98), and the controversy surrounding the French army's use of torture (2000).³¹

In contrast to the amnesia and apathy among the general population, the post-war experience of the 800,000 or so settlers 'repatriated' to France in the summer of 1962 was very different. Received as colonisers and oppressors by the left wing, and resented generally for the cost, human and financial, of the war, they were traumatised by the loss of their homeland and struggled initially with the practical difficulties of finding accommodation and employment amidst public services overwhelmed by the number of arrivals. The consequences of the war were so far-reaching that, for many former settlers (now termed 'pieds-noirs'), it would prove impossible to move on. Their attachment to the now defunct colonial worldview, their sense of betrayal at de Gaulle's putative abandonment, and their rejection by the Communist movement to which many settlers had once belonged, combined to draw together the once disparate political views of the settler collective in generalized support for the far right, *pro-Algérie française* politics of Tixier-Vignancour and, later, the National Front. Political mobilization followed: the cultural association, ANFANOMA, created in 1956 by French settlers returning from Morocco and Tunisia, began the political campaign for the repatriates, initially focusing on indemnification for their material losses, and subsequently lobbying for symbolic public acknowledgement of the settlers' suffering.³² ANFANOMA was soon joined by a proliferation of cultural associations, which were frequently structured around the repatriates' area of residence in Algeria and which sought to recreate the memories and culture of the colonial community. As the repatriate community has aged, the associations represent an ever-reducing fraction of settlers and their descendants; conversely, in order to amplify their demands for official state recognition the associations have been obliged to adopt a simplified narrative which

elides the nuances of the historical experience. From these recreations of the Algerian settler community emerged the discourses of nostalgia ('nostalgérie') for their lost paradise ('paradis perdu'), and representations of the settlers as innocent victims of Gaullist duplicity.

This emerging narrative foregrounded the experiences of the European repatriates; it is notable that Algeria's Jewish population, most of which was forced to leave in 1962 as part of the settler community, did not generally form part of the *pied-noir* community once back in France but instead integrated into France's existing Jewish community or, in many cases, chose to leave for Israel. The narrative also excludes the thousands of settlers (the so-called 'pieds-verts') who defied the ultimatum of 'the suitcase or the coffin', and who chose to stay in an independent Algeria, embracing the ideals of the new state. Many stayed only a few years, leaving for France in the course of the 1960s but not reintegrating into the repatriated settler community.

The narrative established by the *pied-noir* associations, which highlighted in particular the violence (widespread kidnappings, and massacres in Algiers and Oran involving the French army) suffered by the community in the months leading up to independence, aimed to counter the widespread perception of the repatriates as colonists and racists. These two versions of history played into wider debates taking place in France in the early twenty-first century concerning how those living in France should remember controversial periods of the country's past, with certain constituencies, including writers such as Daniel Lefeuvre, Pascal Bruckner and Jean-Pierre Rioux, castigating the move to reassess the colonial past as part of a deplorable Western tendency towards intellectual self-flagellation.³³ The debate took a juridical turn with the Taubira Law (2001) on the slave trade, which was followed by the Law of 23 February 2005, article four of which established the responsibility of teachers to present 'the positive role of the French presence in its

overseas territories, particularly in North Africa'.³⁴ Immediately controversial and later abrogated, this clause nonetheless testified to the success of the *pied-noir* lobby in achieving state recognition of its view of colonial history in Algeria. Indeed, arguably it signalled the high-water mark for the *pieds-noirs* in terms of succeeding in having their memories accepted within the official historiography: by 2012 and the commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of Algerian independence, the media in particular was concerned to reflect the spectrum of perspectives of those involved in the war, such that the *pied-noir* experience was relativised as merely one of many in a mosaic of memories.³⁵

In Algeria, independence was followed by the creation of an official historiography of the war which emphasized the heroic anti-colonial resistance of the Algerian people, and transformed the one million war dead into so many martyrs of the nation. The preservation of a single unified narrative of nationalist revolution with the FLN at its head elided the brutal internecine conflicts between rival nationalist groups that had led to thousands of Algerian deaths. Instead, France was presented as the sole enemy, and its settlers the embodiment of colonial evil, all traces of which had to be purged in order to ensure the survival of the Algerian nation. Yet from the 1980s onwards cracks began to appear in the narrative as it was challenged from a number of directions. The economic difficulties experienced by other newly independent states such as Zimbabwe led many to question the feasibility of the better future promised by the regime, which also came under attack from the growing Islamist and Berberist movements; these appropriated the regime's own strategy to accuse the military of having betrayed the ideals of the anti-colonial struggle and having become in their turn, *hizb fransa* ('the party of France').³⁶ The violence of the conflict which followed, and which saw government forces as well as certain Islamist groups implicated in atrocities of unspeakable horror, has left a legacy of cynicism amongst a

population denied any moves towards truth and justice. Bouteflika's regime has continued to insist upon the narrative of liberation as the founding event of the new state, but increasingly this has been called into question by the efforts of academics, such as Benjamin Stora and Mohammed Harbi, whose work represents the experiences of both Algeria and France but who have strived to construct a common history of the Algerian war.³⁷

In this way the memory wars over French Algeria have to be understood as a trans-national phenomenon where contemporary events in both countries shape and reshape remembering. Thus, the unfolding bloodshed in Algeria from 1992 onwards was a crucial backdrop to public attempts within France to rehabilitate French Algeria, culminating with the 2005 Law. Now *pied-noir* groups could point to the seeming implosion of post-independence Algeria in order to argue for the positive legacy of settler colonialism in French Algeria. Equally, this perspective produced a vociferous reaction in Algeria. Explicitly citing the 2005 Law President Bouteflika used the sixtieth anniversary of the Sétif massacre, in May 2005, to denounce France as a country in denial about colonial atrocities, even describing French actions as genocidal. Similarly these specific memory wars have been moulded by the more general international narratives of remembering; one where the optimism of post-independence decolonisation in the 1960s and 1970s had given way by the 1980s to a much more pessimistic picture of corruption and failed promises.

The tensions surrounding the incorporation of the settler experience within the French national historiography speak to the ambivalence which has characterized the place occupied by the settlers within the French nation throughout the period of the colonization of Algeria. Homi Bhabha's reference to the 'ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space' reminds us that French Algeria intersected only intermittently and awkwardly with the historical time of the French state.³⁸ As critics such as Charles Forsdick have pointed out, the

emphasis on the historiography of France as essentially Hexagonal has had the effect of creating 'a certain idea of France', one where the settlers found themselves accommodated only with difficulty.³⁹ Located on the periphery of the nation, the settlers were effectively semi-detached from the narrative vision of the state, producing the uncertainties and tensions which characterized relations with the metropole, and which feature in the articles in this issue. Settler anxieties emanated from the disconnect between the settlers' sense of their own identity and future, and their perception of the powerful, civilized but moribund metropole, anxieties which resulted from the implicit racial and cultural hierarchies that stalked the insecure settler population, conscious of its mixed origins and demographic vulnerability. Vaunting its youth and vibrancy but always aware of the threat to French purity posed by uncultured elements from a variety of non-indigenous others, settler identity oscillated between demands for autonomy and the need for reassurance. The history of French Algeria is to a large extent the process of negotiating these demands, a process which came to an abrupt end in 1962 when the settlers' liminal position at the margins of the state was dissolved. From then, the temporal disconnect became manifest, with the settlers cut off from the teleological progress of the modern post-colonial nation, arguing their case for the past as it slips into what Bhabha calls 'the "timeless" discourse of irrationality'.⁴⁰

To understand the history of Algeria's settler colonialism requires an awareness of the complex dynamics which operated between the six competing centres of interest outlined above. The articles which follow are organized according to the chronology described above and engage with different facets of the settler colonial situation, tracing the dynamics as they evolve from the late nineteenth century through the crisis of independence to the present day. The issue opens with an analysis of the early conquest of

Algeria by William Gallois, who uses the work of indigenous writers to argue that the coming of the French led to the replacement of an Islamic state of being with the being of the state in the 1830s and the '40s. Charlotte Chopin's analysis moves forward in time to focus on the development of settler colonial culture, examined via the settler colonial press at the turn of the twentieth century, and the processes of cultural and political identification that led to construction of the notion of a 'Latin' identity. Rather than being defined solely by the colonial relationship with France, Chopin demonstrates that Algeria's settler identity was created by an inter-imperial network of connections between diverse settler societies, which fed into debates about settler sovereignty, and the creation of a transnational model of 'Latin' community, whilst also reinforcing the exclusion of the Muslim and Jewish communities. David Cummings' article on settler colonial literature continues the analysis of settler identity, examining how author Paul Achard (1887-1962) worked to 'indigenise' the settler community. As in Chopin's article, Cummings' work emphasizes the significance of the 'Latin' identity, but also its instability and ambivalence as it both gestures towards and pulls away from French cultural hegemony, and the non-French European settlers who constituted an important element of the colony.

The logic of elimination, and its contribution to the ambivalence of Algeria's settlers is the subject of Donal Hassett's article, which examines how this ideology, frequently regarded as integral to settler colonialism, was manifested amidst the demographic and political realities of French Algeria. Through analysis of the extreme-right in interwar Algeria, he argues that the settler collective was continually forced into creative compromise in order to maintain its predominance in the face of the political power of metropolitan France, and the demographic power of the Muslim majority. The response of settlers caught between metropolitan dominance and Muslim ascendance is explored further in the article

by Martin Evans, which looks at the complex emotional relationship between the settlers and Charles de Gaulle, as the settlers' position evolved from one of faith in May 1958 to the fear and anger of January 1960. Evans analyses how de Gaulle used television to project an image of political masculinity which foregrounded French rationality in order to justify his decolonisation strategy, and which consequently presented the settlers as irrational and unrealistic in their political aims. His analysis of the emotional dynamics of settler colonialism is taken up by Fiona Barclay, whose article looks at the emotional experiences of the settlers who were repatriated to France following Algeria's independence. Drawing on literary analysis, she argues that the success of de Gaulle's strategy in presenting the settlers as 'other' led to the re-creation within metropolitan France of the conditions of colonial oppression, and that consequently the former settlers should be conceptualised not as guilty colonisers or injured victims, but as individuals whose positionality was subject to continual renegotiation in a site of postcolonial conflict. The final article, by Emmanuelle Comtat, continues the postcolonial analysis of the former settlers, using analysis of quantitative data to analyse the settler colonial present, and determine the extent to which the attitudes of the settlers and their descendants reveal a specificity and a continuity linked to the colonial experience of the European settler community.

If the multi-dimensional model applied here serves to explore the particularities of Algeria's exceptionalism, the expectation is that it will also provide a theoretical framework to analyse other settler colonial contexts and so contribute to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the functioning of settler societies, past and present. By opening up a research conversation between the histories of settler colonialism in the Anglophone and Francophone empires, the intention of this special issue is to move beyond the Anglophone examples that have framed the debate so far and open up the way to a

globally connected and comparative history of settler colonialism that must also integrate a detailed consideration of the Lusophone and Hispanic worlds.

¹ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999).

² Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³ Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 3-4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For studies of these diverse aspects in the Algerian context see, respectively, William Gallois, *The Administration of Sickness: Medicine and Ethics in Nineteenth-Century Algeria* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Charlotte Ann Chopin, 'Embodying 'the new white race': Colonial Doctors and Settler Society in Algeria, 1878-1911', *Social History of Medicine* 29, 1 (2016), 1-20; Jacques Bouveresse, *Un parlement colonial ? Les délégations financières algériennes 1898-1945* (Publications des Universités du Rouen et du Havre, 2008 and 2010); David Prochaska, 'The political culture of settler colonialism in Algeria : politics in Bone (1870-1920)', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 48-49 (1988), 293-311.

⁶ Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*; Elkins and Pederson, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century*; James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 503.

⁸ Pierre Nora, *Les Français d'Algérie* (Paris: R. Julliard, 1961).

⁹ Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine (1830-1964)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964); Gérard Crespo and Jean-Jacques Jordi, *Les espagnols dans l'Algérie 1830-1914 : histoire d'une immigration* (Versailles: Editions de l'Atlantique, 1991); Mohamed Benrabah, *Langue et pouvoir en Algérie : histoire d'un traumatisme linguistique* (Paris: Séguier, 1999)

¹⁰ Charles-Robert Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine (1830-1964)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964); Gérard Crespo and Jean-Jacques Jordi, *Les espagnols dans l'Algérie 1830-1914 : histoire d'une immigration* (Versailles: Editions de l'Atlantique, 1991); Mohamed Benrabah, *Langue et pouvoir en Algérie : histoire d'un traumatisme linguistique* (Paris: Séguier, 1999)

¹¹ David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Patricia M. E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Race in Colonial Algeria* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002).

¹² Interdisciplinary workshops have recently been held to this end. Workshop on Settler Colonialism in Algeria, University of Stirling, UK, 1-2 July 2015; , L'Algérie française en perspective, Institut d'Etudes Avancées, Paris, France, 9-10 June, 2016.

¹³ Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003); Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

¹⁴ The need for a history of inter-imperial exchange has been underlined in Antoinette Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). Foundations of a connected history can be found in the comparative approach of Elkins and Pederson, *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century*; Ian Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ David Prochaska, 'The political culture of settler colonialism in Algeria', 295.

¹⁶ Irwin M. Wall, *France, the United States and the Algerian War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

- ¹⁷ Jennifer E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2011).
- ¹⁸ Kamel Kateb, *Européens, 'indigènes' et juifs en Algérie (1830-1962) : représentations et réalités des populations* (Paris: Editions de l'Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques, 2001).
- ¹⁹ Jennifer E. Sessions, 'L'Algérie devenue française: The Naturalization of Non-French Colonists in French Algeria, 1830-1849', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 30 (2002), 165-177.
- ²⁰ Louis-José Barbançon, 'Les transportés de 1848 (statistiques, analyse, commentaires)', *Criminocorpus January (2008)*, <http://criminocorpus.revues.org/148> ; DOI : 10.4000/criminocorpus.148 (accessed June 30, 2016); Louis-José Barbançon, *L'Archipel des forçats : Histoire du bagne de Nouvelle-Calédonie (1863-1931)* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2003), 63-64.
- ²¹ From around 3 million to 2.1 million between 1830 and 1870. See John Reudy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Indiana University Press, 1992)
- ²² Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*, 26. The law also allowed Europeans who had lived in Algeria for three years or more to apply for French citizenship.
- ²³ Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present*, trans. Michael Brett (1964; repr., London: C. Hurst & Co., 1991), 49.
- ²⁴ Bouveresse, *Un parlement colonial ?*.
- ²⁵ Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome. Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).
- ²⁶ Chopin, 'Embodying "the new white race"'.
²⁷ Andrea L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
- ²⁸ Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 16.
- ²⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), 22.
- ³⁰ Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 9.
- ³¹ Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994 [1987]). For readings of the Algerian situation, see Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'oubli* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991); Anne Donadey, "'Une certaine idée de la France": The Algeria Syndrome and struggles over "French" identity' in *Identity Papers: Contested Nationhood in Twentieth Century France*, ed. Steven Ungar and Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 215-32; and Charles Forsdick, 'Colonial History, Postcolonial Memory: Contemporary Perspectives', *Francophone Postcolonial Studies* 5, 2 (2007): 101-118.
- ³² ANFANOMA is the acronym for the Association Nationale des Français d'Afrique du Nord, d'Outre-Mer et de leurs Amis, led by Colonel Pierre Battesti from 1958-1973.
- ³³ For a discussion for the memory wars, see Fiona Barclay, ed., *France's Colonial Legacies: Memory, Identity and Narrative* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), and Pascale Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, eds, *Les Guerres de mémoires: La France et son histoire* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).
- ³⁴ The full text of the 'Loi 2005-158 du février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés' is available at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr>
- ³⁵ Fiona Barclay, 'Reporting on 1962: the evolution of *pied-noir* identity across 50 years of print media', *Modern and Contemporary France* 23, 2 (2015): 197-211.
- ³⁶ Martin Evans and John Philips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (Newhaven: Yale, 2012); Natalya Vince, *Our Fighting Sisters: Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954-2012* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- ³⁷ Benjamin Stora and Mohammed Harbi, *La Guerre d'Algérie 1954-2004 : la fin de l'amnésie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2004).
- ³⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 203.
- ³⁹ Charles Forsdick, 'Colonialism, postcolonialism and the cultures of commemoration', in *Postcolonial Thought in the French-speaking World*, ed. Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 271-284.
- ⁴⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 142.