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On Colonial Mimicry: France, Security and the Governance of Postcolonial Suspect Communities

The 2005 banlieues riots that spread from the suburbs of Paris throughout all of France, reaching into neighbouring European cities (Brussels and Berlin), testify of a continuing legacy of colonial relations between the metropole and subjects originating from the colonies and/or of its descent. This paper does not seek to answer why the urban rioting in France occurs. It does however question why those committing themselves to this politically communicative destruction are consistently composed of the same group. It seeks to examine those means of governing these individuals in a contemporary period marked by its reassessment of the French colonial project.

How have/do current policies of social control of postcolonial migrant groups mimic their colonial predecessors? I argue that the contemporary period is marked by a nuanced mimicry expressing itself in a security confluence. Specifically, we can identify in the North African colonies and in contemporary metropolitan France the same kind of spatial/urban inscriptions informed by cultural and racial alienation. These same attitudes and practices which facilitated targeted surveillance and security policy in the colonies are currently used by the French security apparatus in monitoring and controlling groups of postcolonial origin.

The paper first critiques the work of the Paris School of security, and its outstanding political sociology approach to the construction of emerging threats as

advanced by Didier Bigo and others. While outlining an impressive and convincing means of understanding how groups are deemed suspicious and threatening, the Paris School has neglected to examine the historical antecedents of security management and policing that are *mimicked* in the world of migration, namely the role of the imperial project on security, and the effects of the political ideology of racial and cultural superiority on these security practices. I then describe how the discursive justifications buttressing the French colonial experience (of native otherness and racial inferiority) fostered particular logics of rule expressed in specific urban and security policies. This is followed by an analysis of the temporal continuity of French attitudes of racial and cultural hierarchies, expressed contemporaneously in the discourse of migrant integration, and how from this, the base discourse of distrust for the native inherent to the colonial moment is transferred to inform current justifications of surveillance and political repression echoing French colonial forays, current security assessments being based on racial hierarchies of threat.

My research aims to demonstrate that contemporary France is one of many contemporary spaces that epitomizes the postcolonial moment. Those groups targeted by French society as its pariahs experience a nuanced mimicry that transcends genealogical and spatial differences and distances. It equally aims to present a postcolonial understanding of contemporary security practices, and to demonstrate how race is enveloped in the construction of the suspect group, thereby informing the subtleties of rule that are incorporated in the pursuit of security in the postcolony.

The Paris School and the Social Construction of Threat

Security practices in France have adapted to the economic and political transformations undertaken at both the regional and global levels. The end of bipolarity, the development of a common European market, and the advancement of political synchronicity among members of the European Union (especially in legal matters), has undermined neat concepts attached to former sovereign territorial delineations. This is particularly the case with regards to distinctions made between external and internal security. Traditional security roles and concerns, the military and secret services with protecting the territorial integrity of the state from external threats while national police forces with maintaining the public order and social civility, once differentiated at the border, have and continue to merge in reaction to the increased mobility of goods, individuals and their associated ideas and beliefs, characteristic of globalization. In this context of transversality and the inability to bar foreign elements from the national space, security agents conduct their affairs on the assumption that security can only be achieved when acted upon at the level of the population. Stated otherwise, security is sought in connection to knowledge of population groups, their movement, their ideologies and their intentions in order to better induce mechanisms of social control. According to this logic, threatening individuals and groups can be located anywhere, thus requiring the targeted use of devices and means of surveillance, detection and information gathering. National police forces collaborate with multiple foreign partners, identifying geographical areas of concern (for example borderlands and areas of opacity) and groups and individuals 'of interest'. National and military intelligence

services conduct routine surveillance within national borders in an effort to detect and monitor the 'enemy within'. The argument is made that threats no longer enter the national space via tanks and other armoured fighting vehicles, but by trucks, barges and backpacks. Movement by individuals across national frontiers requires mechanisms of surveillance in order to identify which elements of society enter the national space, and for what purpose.

As a result of this refurbished understanding of internal/external security 'fused', security professionals have come to occupy a privileged position in articulating specific interpretations of which people are deemed threatening, under which circumstances. The environment of security secrecy/sensitivity that encompasses the work performed by security professionals and the intelligence they proffer confers upon them a considerable level of authority and political clout regardless of the veracity of their claims. Following from this legitimacy, security professionals are granted operational autonomy by state officials (Bonelli 2005b: 109-110). Their interpretations are developed within this institutional and discursive milieu, which in part determines the nature of each security emphasis- i.e. which groups provoke fear and should be considered enemies, and what security options are the most appropriate forms to counter them. In this way, individual security interpretations from distinct security organizations compete for rank (both in terms of prestige and budgetary allocation) within what Bigo calls, the security field, "where security agencies (police, gendarmeries, custom officers, army and information services, private security agencies and more marginally local security agencies, pro and anti-immigration agencies) participate *de facto* in the global

redefinition of their respective attributions” (Bigo 2000: 174). Thus, participation in this field by security professionals (both state agents as well as private security companies), for Bigo, constitutes the dominant force in the social construction of security threats (Bigo 2002).

While advancing our understanding of securitization as a competitive process played out by security professionals and its significant effects in the production of enemies, too strong a focus on that role risks obscuring two important dynamics of threat construction. First, a multiplicity of actors takes part in the process of securitization, notably the media and political officials, making it difficult to determine the salience of one competing actor over another. While impossible to measure the causal impact of the media in the construction of specific threats, it is ideally suited as a disseminator of information and exhibits the capacity to structure a group’s sense of collectivity through visual and auditory repetition, conferring objectivity “on the alarmist definitions of reality by transforming them into a usual cognitive fund”, particularly when the public has little or no access to other sources of information (Tsoukala 2005: 173; 180). The legitimacy enjoyed by political officials lends credence to their security articulations. Political officials are privy to not only the information provided by one security agency, but of those in their governmental entirety; are given the power to allocate resources (human, monetary, etc.), implement policies of rule, and pass extraordinary legislation to “break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by” in response to those

threats believed to be imminent and existential (Buzan et al. 1998: 25)¹. Having been charged with the function of government, politicians hold considerable sway in the elaboration of threat construction.

Second, and most importantly to this argument, the socio-historical context of postcoloniality that envelopes the social environment and relationships that are intrinsic to both migrants and the former empires to which they gather, is ignored in Bigo's formulation. Security practitioners and political officials alike process information through cognitive 'mental maps', which are contextualized by historical events and framed by politico-cultural values and beliefs (Thomas 2008: 20).

French society writ large displays an attitudinal continuity reaching back to the colonial era with its concomitant effects on the historical development of security practices, and of the opinions/cognitive frameworks of security professionals. The persistent belief in the incommensurability of French values and those of migrant populations from the postcolony structures the discursive field of security interaction and therefore the construction of threats that is its outcome. The logical extension of this process of threat construction, so heavily influenced by the French postcolonial situation, is that security tactics employed by the French state will

¹ The situation of social unrest and revolt in the banlieues of the majority of French cities in November 2005 is instructive in this regard, when the Chirac government implemented exceptional legal measures (not used since its colonial forays in Algeria in 1955 and New Caledonia in 1985) to suppress urban rioting. Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior at that time, having promised to clamp down on criminal behaviour, insisted on the organized character of the urban rioting. An official assessment made by the French Intelligence Service, the Renseignements Généraux (RG), made shortly following the start of the urban violence, contradicted Sarkozy's appraisal of the situation, instead contending that nature of the rioting was organic and non-coordinated. The Director of the RG was sacked shortly thereafter (Dikeç 2007: 119).

likewise draw on colonial precedent in the maintenance of social control in the French metropole.²

French Colonialism, Race and *La Mission Civilisatrice*

France's imperial project was founded on a belief system of socio-political supremacy, which provided a rationalization for its actions in regard to non-European peoples. France, as the champion of republican freedom, liberty and rational thought *par excellence*, was aptly placed in the world as a power capable of disseminating superior socio-political values tied so intimately to its revolutionary past (Cohen 2003a: 176-180; Kessous 1994). The military conquests of these lands, while potentially lamentable, were a necessitous aspect in ushering the non-European subject into modernity, for them to ultimately refuse social and political practices associated with tyrannical rule and fanatical religious beliefs (Conklin 1997; Burke 2002).

La Mission Civilisatrice, while associated with the superiority of Republican political values, was also based on a spurious belief in the hierarchy of racial dichotomies purportedly proven by scientific fact, but in actuality socially constructed in a discursive regime of otherness requiring constant reproduction and reiteration (Stoler and Cooper 1997: 6-11). The racial construction of otherness which valorised the French population at the expense of an 'inferior' native other sustained its foundational imperial aporia. In expounding civilization, French

² While maintaining that Bigo's emphasis on the governmentality of security professionals requires further elaboration on the postcolonial and historical dimensions of threat construction, his empirical evidence, along with that of others associated with the Paris School of Security, is outstanding, and will be used in the current discussion.

attitudes reproduced the alterity of the native population expressed in terms of incivility, fanaticism, barbarism and savagery- qualities which were incommensurable with 'superior' French values- a tense manifestation of the discontinuities between logics of Republican improvement of the native through French imperial tutelage and notions of European social/political/ethical preferentiality and military supremacy (Thomas 2005b: 55-56; Scott 1995: 197). This was especially the case for North African Muslim and Sub-Saharan African populations who were kept subjects but not citizens (unlike Jewish North Africans who were granted citizenship in 1870), having been bestowed with duties related to the development of the colony, but few political rights, and who were consistently reminded of their laziness, sensuality, and incapability of self-rule (see Shepard 2006; Adas 1989; Lorcin 1995; Conklin 1998). As a result of this oppositional dialectic, French colonial rule constantly sought to maintain an equilibrium between its civilizing and 'uncivilizable' logics, what one colonial official aptly described as rule by 'enlightened tyranny' (Quoted in Le Cour Grandmaison 2006: 37). This incommensurability informed colonial administrators of certain requirements for the maintenance of colonial rule, its practical application manifested in colonial urban and security policies.

Demonstrative of French attitudes towards the native populations' apparent 'racial inferiority', urban planning in the colonies sought to maximize the appearance of colonial hegemony and the socio-economic status of French *colons* over the native population. Colonial administrators implemented procedures to separate communal groups, justified by calls for the maintenance of public hygiene

and security/policing. The spatial dimensions of urban areas in the colonies physically demonstrated the social relegation and distancing of the native 'other' to areas apart from the European; places easily contained and monitored by French colonial security agents.

The divergent experiences of French colonial urban planning in Algeria and Morocco demonstrate the racial hierarchizing of its urban space in both colonies. Prochaska illustrates how over the period of colonial occupation of Algeria, of all disparate social groups located therein, native Algerians were the most spatially segregated residential group from the settler population, a situation which worsened appreciably over that period. The case of Morocco encapsulates the idea conceded by a participant of a 1927 urban planning conference in Paris that, "Colonial urbanism is eugenics applied to towns" (Quoted in Thomas 2005b: 142). There, colonial administrators made arrangements to maintain the structural integrity of large urban centres in the new Protectorate, preventing any alteration of the medinas under the guise of preserving the social fabric of the native Arab and Berber populations while new parallel cities in Rabat and Casablanca were constructed for the incoming European population (Abu-Lughod 1980: 175). These newly constructed areas were separated from Arab living quarters by the creation of a *cordon sanitaire*, a greenbelt area surrounding, and encapsulating older Arab neighbourhoods. These spatial divisions allowed for military access to the separated native quarters and facilitated the surveillance of political subversives, and the quelling of political dissent in the case of protest/rioting since less caution was required in the absence of French citizens. The preponderance of French

military means, visually buttressed by the grandiose construction projects for European residential and recreational spaces were aimed at both deterring the native Moroccan population from revolt while simultaneously selling the modern ideals adopted by the Republic (Wright 1991; Njoh 2008).

Health safety could equally be monitored; European areas could be built in accordance with European (read 'higher') standards of sanitation, containing unseemly native elements away from the white population. Colonial urban planners often revealed the racial assumptions which underpinned French colonial urbanism, where through fashioning separated towns Europeans "avoided direct contact... with indigenous elements of the lower class, whose physiological misery and filthiness would be important factors in the spread of epidemics" (Quoted in Abu-Lughod 1980: 144). In no uncertain terms, the native population was (like a disease) meant to be contained; its movement policed. Urban planning in the colonies mirrored in physical/spatial terms the social denigration of subject populations meant to be cured through European exposure that in urban practice rarely 'took place'. The containment of the native population also facilitated targeted security surveillance.

Colonies under French control were administered by policymakers adhering to the insatiable rationale of intelligence extraction and consumption occurring in concert with the systematic spread of surveillance in the metropole (Dandeker

1990)³. However, surveillance outside of France was conducted by a foreign elite concerned with the aggrandizement of their nation and individual social positions in an environment of political uncertainty. More importantly, the colonial surveillance rationale evinced a fundamental distrust of an inferior and potentially dangerous native population. French colonial officials worked under the objective assumption that their regime was not welcome, and conducted their affairs according to a self/other dynamic. Intelligence of the native threat was often largely exaggerated as a result of the racially embedded attitudes of colonial security analysts (Bayly 1996: 6, 161-174). Thus, distrust of native populations and its related surveillance requirement was also a function of the discursive regime of racial categories advanced by French colonial rule.

As a consequence of the transnational concerns raised by travelling imperial subjects, French colonial governments attempted to control the movement of disparate social groups through surveillance and information gathering. The French military intelligence (the *Service de Renseignements*), working in concert with the French colonial special police forces (the *Sûreté Générale*), shared the task of monitoring movement of the rural Berber and Bedouin populations between rural and urban areas, and along traditional migratory routes to ensure peaceful relations between the latter and both the more sedentary tribes, and European settlers (ibid.: 61-62, 184-187). *La Sûreté* routinely surveiled the activities of North African temporary migrant workers moving between the colony and the metropole,

³ This section relies heavily on the work of colonial historian Martin Thomas who has importantly analyzed the security aspects of surveillance to the greatest degree that I have as yet found in the literature on French imperial rule.

Maghrebi students enrolled in universities in France, their family members, and those living again in North African urban areas that had recently done so (Pervillé 1974: 240). The transnational dimensions of the Islamic religion, the foreign contacts of the Muslim ulama (a result of their travels to Islamic holy places and religious universities) and the growing appeal of Islamic conservatism and reform in response to the increasing intrusion of the French colonial state preserved an atmosphere of intense scrutiny among colonial security officials of the clerical elite (Burke 1972: 111-117; Thomas 2008: 82-88). French security services quickly distinguished those imams to be trusted and easily manipulated from those that fomented Islamic resistance, between 'good' and 'bad' Islamic observance, and between a malleable Islam culturally-specific to Arabo-Berber culture from religious practices stemming from Wahhabite-style interpretations (Thomas 2005a: 1049-1050; Haddad and Balz 2008: 217). When French administrators received information concerning potential resistance to colonial rule (whether verified or exaggerated, *ibid.*: p. 56), the response was typically the quelling of dissent through repressive coercion, and often the use of disproportionate violence.

The amplitude of that repression was modulated according to the punitive opinions and threat perceptions of colonial military and judicial officials. Repression ranged from the proscribing of general political activity at its most benevolent, to short-term imprisonment, to torture and state terror at its most violent.⁴ The discursive regime of racial hierarchy employed by the French colonial

⁴ The general spectrum outlined here says nothing of the structural violence enacted upon native colonial populations, particularly in the forms of the perpetuation of

apparatus legitimated the belief that inferior races should be placed under juridical systems of rule long abandoned by and antithetical to those laws espoused by post-revolutionary Republican France. Application of the law in the colonies, it was argued, required the means whereby 'criminal' acts could be swiftly repressed, if need by summary order (Le Cour Grandmaison 2006: 49-50). The separation of administrative and judicial powers, operating in Metropolitan France were rejoined in the colonies, colonial officials ruling by decree. This situation was codified in the Constitution of the Second Republic, which stated in no uncertain terms that Algeria and the colonies should be governed by "laws particular to them until such time as a Special Act should bring them under the regime of the present Constitution" (ibid.: 38). It is therefore plausible to argue that the system of colonial law was in essence a discriminatory system of repression constituted on dichotomous racial premises for the purpose of the maintenance of French colonial rule.

Perhaps the most well known repressive discriminatory legal provision targeting native groups was the *Code de l'indigénat*; established in colonial Algeria in the 1870s, but officially codified in 1881. The Code was passed as exceptional and temporary, to be used in a situation of wartime emergency and meant to disappear in concurrence with the military 'pacification' of native populations (Merle 2002: 80). It listed thirty-three infractions not illegal under French common law, but

new forms of native poverty and of the exploitative colonial policy of forced corvée labour, is not lost on the author, but is not dealt with due to issues of space. For an important analysis of the contested boundaries of acceptability of free labour under French and British imperial rule, see Cooper 2000.

constituting punishable criminal acts when committed by Muslims in Algeria.⁵ The code formed a system of soft disciplinary policing, which included offenses such as speaking out of turn to a French official, defaming the Republic, or failing to respond to the questions of colonial officials. Offenses also included refusing to fight forest fires and locusts, firing weapons into the air at celebrations, forgetting to register a family birth or death, and, as mentioned previously, failing to acquire a permit in travel (Shepard 2006: 31; Ruedy 2005: 89). Civil administrators, often with minimal legal training, empowered by the Government General to dispense summary punishment on defendants, adjudicated these offences. Sentences included placing offenders on house arrest, or under penal detainment for a maximum of five days, and the administering of fines.

French officials argued that the combination of the isolation of French officials and the 'barbarity' of the native populations made essential the use of draconian penalties, including torture (Thomas 2005b: 76-77). Torture was used habitually in conjunction with other forms intelligence gathering, colonial historians arguing that the practice was employed across the empire, not only in times of war (Branche 2001: 25-34; Cohen 2003b). General Paul Aussaresses, a member of the French military Special Services during the Algerian War of Independence, expressed the common-held belief in torture's necessity when admitting in his 2001 memoir of his duties in the conflict: "Torture was used systematically... Summary executions were an integral part of the task of maintaining order" (quoted in Cohen 2003b: 232).

⁵ The Code was also applicable elsewhere in the empire such as New Caledonia and French Indochina, but was not applied in either Morocco or Tunisia.

Violent repression in the colonies demonstrated the expendability of the lives of native groups that would be civilized, be it by schools or by slaughter. The racialized belief of French superiority underpinning *la Mission Civilisatrice* constituted French subjectivities in relation to the native other, enshrined in (extra)legal practice. This resulted in a logical corollary, namely the attitude widely believed by colonial officials (and French society as a whole) that violence was the only thing natives understood, therein legitimating the most violent of responses (Branche 2001: 27).

***Le plus ça change...* Integration and the New Racism**

The racialized dynamics embedded in colonial security policy should be understood as temporal continuities of security practice- current operating mindsets in regards to policing and security techniques used in Paris and London were fine-tuned in Algiers and Calcutta. The belief in the superiority of French cultural values continues today, finding its contemporary expression in the discourse on migrant integration. The visible differences inscribed on the bodies of migrants and the visibility of their cultural practices, form the basis on which French society defines its superiority, constantly insisting on their cultural incompatibility from those groups of postcolonial origin. This attitude of incommensurability manifests itself in particular effects that bear more than a resemblance to the colonial period. Social relegation of postcolonial migrant groups due to their visible otherness is mirrored in its spatial relegation to the economically marginalized suburban banlieues, in the surveillance of these areas and its residents of postcolonial origin/descent, and of heavy-handed violent repression of these suspect groups.

For each set of French integration debates and responses, one similarity remains: postcolonial groups are people who retain cultural differences that are incompatible with French secular Republican values. The French government is unwilling to recognize any form of ethnic or cultural difference in French society. Doing so, it is argued, threatens the state's Republican equality and universality enshrined in French revolutionary history, and would lead to the creation of threatening, ethnically-enclaved spaces similar to other Western states that do recognize ethnic and religious particularities (like the United States) (Jennings 2000: 586). This logic extends to the gathering and/or processing of personal information; it is against the law to include information indicating racial, religious, ethnic or any other categorization of the population within public statistics. However, classification is legally permitted by French officials based on the differentiation between citizens and foreigners (Cesari 2004: 220 note 2). This republican-inspired legislative standard delineates the norm of Frenchness; immigrants from the postcolony differentiated from the 'norm' subjectivity of French citizen, the subjectivity of the former defined as lacking those qualities that characterise the French citizen, and requiring cultural integration. In the Metropole, like in the former colony, the French subject is "deemed to be the holder of some superior knowledge, power, insight or representational capacity", while the native, now migrant, keeps the inferiority attributed to him/her, continuing until that day that they should adorn themselves with the qualities of the French ideal-type (Mujamdar 2007: 217). In this way the French requirement of integration retains its colonial hue of native cultural and racial inferiority, as the citizen/foreigner

binary results in the common belief, that postcolonial migrant groups must abandon any aspect of their subjectivity that is contrary to these superior values, especially since those groups now reside in the Metropole (Jugé and Perez 2006).

Balibar argues that the discourse of cultural incompatibility of postcolonial migrant subjectivity reconfigures discrimination into a framework of 'racism without races', where culture performs the function once attributed to biology and locks "individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1992: 21-22). Nevertheless, the practice of the new racism is defined by its continued *visuality*, where the visibility of difference to the French norm (white, middle class) constitutes the incommensurability of those visually/culturally connected to the postcolony. Thus, we see the fundamental aporia of the colonial civilizing mission continued contemporaneously, i.e. the impossibility of the native becoming truly French even should he/she want to or require it (Silverman 1992). The routine discrimination of the banlieues youth is indicative of this phenomenon. While born in France (and are therefore citizens), youth of Maghrebi or Sub-Saharan African descent are routinely targeted by the French police for identity checks, the latter being empowered by the French government to do so in efforts to curb illegal immigration. People who are visually different in physical appearance or behaviour from the typical French white citizen find themselves classified by State institutions as a 'foreigner', and are therein subjected to discriminatory treatment and social exclusion.

Furthermore, the legal expression of these cultural and police practices has been regularly demonstrated by both colonial and postcolonial administrative/parliamentary tampering with the Nationality Code, experienced in 1870 with the Crémieux Decree, in 1993 with the Pasqua Laws forcing children of postcolonial migrant families to apply for French citizenship (now repealed), the overwhelming support of banning of the Islamic burqa set to pass the French Senate in September 2010, and with President Sarkozy's introduction of legislation to parliament this Fall that would repeal citizenship of those individuals of postcolonial origin who would threaten/harm the lives of French police officers. These legal measures target a specific cultural group associated with values inimical to French socio-political identity, therein privileging white normality.

The discursive construction of the foreigner in contemporary France spatially mimics the racial exclusion of erstwhile native colonial groups. The settler cities of the colonial period were characterized by an overrepresentation of French and Europeans in newer, refurbished neighbourhoods, separated from the natives forced to reside in the dilapidated older neighbourhoods, or in the cities' impoverished peripheries. The space of the French banlieues, has been associated with the stigma of the foreign-ness reserved for postcolonial migrant groups; the social relegation/ marginalization of the latter is inscribed in a spatial variant similar to the colonial experience. The French government has largely neglected the physical upkeep of the banlieues to the detriment of its residents. Most residents cannot afford the capital to maintain functioning businesses, or procure the loans which would require it. Buildings have not been refurbished since their

construction in the late 1950s, mimicking the dilapidated edifices of Rabat, Casablanca and Bône, with an estimated 80 percent of the buildings suffering from serious and dangerous structural inadequacies as of the early 1990s (Silverstein and Tetrault 2006). When buildings are condemned by municipal authorities, the majority of them are either never demolished, leading to them being occupied by squatters unable to afford HLM housing, and when they are, nothing is built in their stead (Dikeç 2007: 96-97). Silverstein and Tetrault claim that over 300,000 more apartments will be phased out of the banlieues due to disrepair than built since 1989 (Silverstein and Tetrault 2006). This situation logically leads to overcrowding, placing more stress on the structures themselves in terms of wear and tear, and constitutes a significant hazard should an emergency occur (Flicking 2005; RFI English 2009).

The banlieues population's social marginalization is also mirrored in its experience of isolation from French city-centres and from other banlieues. The French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Research (INSEE) has indicated that some 60% of suburban municipalities lacked its own train station, a rate changing only slightly to the present day (Silverstein 2004: 109-111). The commuter rail lines connect the banlieues directly to the capital, but rarely if ever connect banlieues to another. Unless banlieues residents own a car, this translates to a commute lasting over an hour and a half (only a ten to fifteen minute driving distance). Commuter trains have been highly securitized following the early 1990s when the national train service complained of losing control of its suburban network. As a result, those Metro lines connecting the banlieues to Paris have been

heavily policed by the French Gendarmerie, private security firms, and Metro police who regularly check banlieues youth for their proof of payment and identity papers.

Of course, the banlieues do serve a beneficial function to groups of postcolonial origin. As opined by Albert Memmi,

“What can the immigrant do in the face of this wall of scorn and suspicion? He reacts like any organism in a hostile environment... withdraws into himself, and turns to his friends... This ghetto is both a rejection and a reaction to rejection, real or imagined, by the others... It is the shell secreted by a minority group that feels, rightly or wrongly, that its very existence is threatened. To escape this threat the immigrant turns to his own, encloses himself within their embrace, in which he believes he is safe” (Memmi 2005: 82-84).

Nevertheless, this reaction to insulate one’s self from the discrimination of French society leads to an increased denunciation of postcolonial migrant lifestyles and subjectivities. That banlieues space that provides comfort is stigmatized; both space and subjectivity are resultantly posited, as in colonial times before, to be areas of concern to the security apparatus of the French State, areas requiring intense surveillance as an alienated space.

French Surveillance and the Postcolonial ‘Islamic’ *Banlieues*

The postcolonial context of transversality informs which populations are judged necessary to place under surveillance. The connection of the metropolitan space to the colonies produced and reproduced, in both locales, sites of subjectivity-formation; a space wherein multiple social trajectories are reconfigured in lieu of the convergence of previously autonomous spaces. This is a socio-political space wherein the circumstances of local situations are of political significance in multiple locations, as if there were no differentiation of occurrence between the two geographies; what happens in Algeria matters in France and vice-versa. This

connection continued to congeal following the process of decolonization, when former imperial states enacted labour policies that favoured the immigration of former colonial subjects to the national space, in order to supply French industry with in low-skilled, temporary labourers (Hargreaves 1995: 43, 50-57). The process of connecting disparate spaces is further intensified with the nurturing of global capital, as migrant labour is drawn to different parts of the globe, oftentimes transcending the formal political institutions of the state, while remaining connected to prior national contexts and cultures. Those holding ideological affinities (*and those that are believed to be*) that compete with the political values of the French national-republican political model are immediately considered suspect. For example, Volpi convincingly demonstrates how, like nationalism before it, “the discourse about the ‘Ummah’...(the Muslim community of believers)... produces the kind of imagined community that groups and individuals can refer to in order to change their relation to politics and violence in any part of the world”, resulting in the employment of contemporary security practices and state discourses that attempt to eradicate or lessen its effect, and to deligitimize the source of its potency (Volpi 2007: 467-468). It also becomes incumbent on the security institutions of the state, which already ostensibly hold a monopoly over the legitimate entry to the national territory, to establish means of identifying and gathering information about those who may be subversive elements of a postcolonial society (Ceyhan 2005: 210-211). It is for this reason, in the colonial context, the Sûreté Générale monitored Maghrebi students and labour migrants in France, those imams and the Muslim elite with foreign connections/affiliations, and their families, fearing the latter’s

potentialities for subversion. This logic is sustained in the contemporary period with current French surveillance policies.

Contemporary French surveillance differentiates further still between those that 'plausibly' maintain subversive opinions from those no longer of concern to the Metropole; the French Intelligence Services and National Police monitor the actions of some social groups more than others, their surveillance practices conforming to the system of hierarchically racialized categories of the colonial experience. As previously discussed, the French surveillance antecedent of groups originating from the (post)colony is derived (at least) from its colonial experience in North Africa, shortly following the Algerian conquest of 1830. The colonial distrust of the native population is supplanted to the postcolonial era, blurring into a threatening amalgam when "the equation Poor= Suburb= Immigration= Arabs comes into being" (Cesari 2004: 35). That migrant groups from North and Sub-Saharan Africa form separate cultural communities within France (or *communautarisme*), adhere to a religion (Islam) that is at odds with French secularism, and hold values that are, as a result of these, it is suspected, possibly dangerous, is commonplace understanding and justification given by the French police and intelligence community.

Considering postcolonial migrants and their children as potential 'security risk groups', those in the practice of security surveillance, informed by these beliefs and migrant stereotypes, target diasporas in France. This is especially so for those groups that are assumed to practice Islam. The result is the sedimentation of common assumptions of contemporary internal security threats (radical Islamic terrorism, human/drug trafficking, urban unrest, etc.).

Nicolas Sarkozy, while Minister of the Interior, demonstrated this logic when, in an interview for the French daily *Libération*, he rejected “the current conditions that force Islam to develop out of cellars and garages... We should all fear a secrecy (which) leads to radicalization” (quoted in Cesari 2004: 72). Sarkozy’s fear, and desire that all of French society embrace it, illustrates the continuity of colonial distrust articulated as a current security justification; migrants following the tenets of Islam behind closed cellar/garage doors and other spaces of opacity are potential terrorists, a situation that we should all fear. It is this and similar security justifications that causes Bigo to observe an evident shift “from systematic, generally slow, intermittent checks to virtually permanent surveillance focusing *on a few target groups* and reacting with maximum speed. Systematic control of the territory still exists but has diminished in comparison to the surveillance of certain populations” (Bigo 2001: 136 emphasis added). It is evident that the privacy of postcolonial migrant populations, and the inability of the French government to surveil them, is a security concern which is embedded in a discourse of racial and/or cultural discrimination akin to its colonial predecessor.

Those departments of government charged with the security of the French state sustain a robust anti-subversive mindset, and target those groups and networks that are suspected of engendering dissidence. Dissident behaviour, however, is conflated with the racial differences inscribed on the bodies of surveillance targets. Postcolonial migrants are visibly different from the ideal-type French, white, middle-class citizenry. The tone of one’s skin, the thickness and colour of hair, as well as the type of clothing worn mark out those social groups

generally surveilled by the French security apparatus. For example, portrayed in the popular media as jihadi preachers, elderly men of tanned-complexion, adorned with long white robes, white-knitted skullcaps and light-coloured sandals are routinely targeted by the police and subjected to round-ups and identity checks.

Conversely, the 'Beur look' of baseball caps, baggy jeans, football jerseys and sneakers, that is commonly identified as the preferred style of dress of young men of Maghrebi and African descent, is equally used as a means of classifying dissident racial identities (Silverstein 2004: 149). These young men are targeted by police for identity checks due to the *presumption* that their petty criminality will be transformed into something all the more sinister- that they form the groundswell of potential Islamic radicalism. Pierre de Bousquet de Florian, former Director of la Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST) explained in September 2002 that while France does not seem to be an al-Qaeda target there is nevertheless a belief in the strong potential that young French Muslims holding empathetic affinities for other Islamic groups (particularly the Palestinians) pose a threat to the safety of the Republic: "The danger, is that today there is a real coming together of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) based in Algeria and agents of Al-Qaeda... This coming together constitutes an imminent threat: the amalgam combined from an on-going negative attitude about French colonialism, the poor opinion that are shared by a number of French youth of Maghrebi origin of the situation in the Middle East, the eventual war in Iraq is potentially explosive' (quoted in Bonelli 2005b: 105, translation mine). It should be noted, however, that the feeling of disaffiliation among youth of postcolonial origin and their sensitivity to foreign

Muslim suffering, has long been considered a threat, systematized predominantly by the French Intelligence Service as the above comment shows. As early as 1990, these young people were the cause for the establishment of a special division of the RG dedicated to the surveillance of 'Urban Violence' (Bonelli 2001: 95).

Answering directly to the Minister of the Interior, the Cities and Banlieues Section of the RG was established following the early 1990 October riots in the Urban Priority Zone (ZUP) of Vaulx-en-Velin, outside of Lyon.⁶ The purpose of the Section is to provide assessments to the Minister of the Interior on the situation of the banlieues, to anticipate riots, and to be informed of social facts and opinions that aid in the anticipation and prevention of terrorist violence through the gathering of open source information and more focused infiltration. In lieu of this mandate, by the end of the 1990s, up to 1200 'sensitive neighbourhoods' were under RG surveillance (Dikeç 2007: 80-83).⁷

The main challenge facing analysts in the Cities and Banlieues Section is the act of forecasting possible occurrences of urban unrest and terrorism. Bombings in Paris and Lyon in 1995 attested to the futility of this exercise,⁸ but it also provided confirmation to the thesis advocated by the RG; Khaled Kelkal, a French national of Algerian origin (from Vaulx-en-Velin) was involved in the bombing, and was connected to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the group to which the bombings were

⁶ The specific circumstances leading to this and other riots will be discussed later.

⁷ A map provided by the former Cities and Banlieues Section Chief suggests that the overlap between surveilled neighbourhoods and those areas targeted by French urban policy planning are virtually synonymous (Dikeç 2007: 84).

⁸ For an analysis of the post 9/11 governance of security risk, see the *Security Dialogue* Volume 39 Special Edition on Security, Technologies of Risk, and the Political.

attributed. The RG subsequently intensified their monitoring of Muslim communities, especially locations of religious service and Islamic charitable organizations, using undercover methods of espionage akin to those methods of used in the colonies (communication interception- albeit through wire tapping-, use of informants, shadowing, etc.) (Bonelli 2005a: 198-199).

The bombings also led the RG, and the Cities and Banlieues Section specifically, to configure particular risk profiles based on statistical probability matrices of trajectory correlation in order “to identify who among the Muslim communities is likely to be enlisted to the ranks of radical groups” (ibid.). While these statistical patterns are informed by the former trajectories of behaviour of individuals known to be involved in clandestine action, they are nonetheless developed within a postcolonial frame of reference, and are therefore value-laden. As mentioned earlier, in the creation and technological development of these models and methods, the assumptions of those that assign value to them, as well as those security professionals that employ them, are imbued with beliefs associated with racial and cultural hierarchies. Thus, the first question asked to determine one’s terrorist threat potential is that of country of origin, followed closely by religion and location of worship. Travel abroad, especially to predominantly Muslim countries, or those cities with significant Muslim diasporas of their own (London, Detroit, Berlin) is also scrutinized. More importantly, when combined with these, a banlieue address is attributed particular salience. The banlieues are overrepresented by foreigners, particularly from North Africa and are therefore quintessential transversal (and therefore assigned as dangerous) spaces. The

creation of the Cities and Banlieues Section and their surveillance activities reaffirmed those opinions sensationalized by the French media images of masses being called to Mosque or united in kneeling prayer- “lurking behind this portrayal was an implied threat, namely, that these collective, uniform, repeated bodily practices of prayer could develop into a mass uprising, a fear underlined by the presence of riot police in many of the images” (Silverstein 2004: 134); the banlieues, it was feared, were becoming Islamicized. That most fanatical and resistant of all postcolonial subjectivities, Islam, and its potentially corrupting effects on banlieues areas already assumed dangerous, it is argued, demands security surveillance.

Surveillance practices in France follow colonial suit. Those living in the French banlieues of postcolonial origin maintain the subjectivities assigned to their relatives in the colonial setting: untrustworthy, fanatical, criminal, terrorist. As a result of their visible racial and spatial stigmas, these postcolonial suspect communities are surveiled by the French Intelligence Service and the National Police, the latter directly responsible to the Minister of the Interior. On the front lines of banlieues law and order, the National Police are especially susceptible to the corrupting influence of the postcolonial discourse of racial/cultural hierarchies. In practice, it is they who exhibit the violent repression that is associated with the institutions’ colonial forebearers.

The Police and Postcolonial Repression

The actions of the Police should be understood as physical expressions of the dominant attitudes and beliefs of the societies to which they are attached and are embedded. The police operate on two spheres of interpretation. First, they are

meant to uphold the legal principles and provisions established by political/judicial authority. This sphere articulates the specificities of deviance of a particular social order, which the police, as an institution of the State, are meant to constrain and if possible, prevent. The police are granted the authority of the legitimate use of violence proportionate to the level of deviance they are meant to curb, up to and including lethal force in most democratic societies. They serve as a coercive attachment of a society, to be used in the maintenance of order and social control. However, as individuals, police officers in France are subject to the positioning effects of the postcolonial regimes of otherness described above. The police solidify those societal orientations in their function as agents of social control as they abide by a system of categorical boundaries created by state membership that are by definition discriminatory; this facilitates a general suspicion of those subjectivities not granted access, or who may indeed be members but do not fill its visual ideal-type. As observed by Charles Tilly, the categorical boundaries of inequality enforced by the state security apparatus (of which the police are a major component) are not objectively defined verifiable criteria. Instead, "social control agencies often use grossly inaccurate indicators to stigmatize a suspect segment of the population" (Tilly 1998: 66).

Nowhere is this more evident than in France, where policing according to racial categories is endemic. Police studies conducted in the early 1980s in the banlieues analyzed the criteria behind police decision-making, demonstrating undeniably the salience of ethnicity in targeting suspects "irrespective of the offense and of the social integration of the individuals involved... with the greatest risk of

prosecution for people from the Maghreb” (Zauberman and Levy 2003: 1077). The racial targeting of (post)colonial migrants within the Metropole by the police has continued since the colonial era, often exhibiting the distinctive violence experienced in the colonies. As early as 1925, the French government created a special section of the Parisian Metropolitan Police meant to maintain order among the colonial migrant population. The newly formed North African Brigade primarily targeted migrants from Algeria, staking out North African neighbourhoods, and predominantly arresting those who failed to comply with immigration regulations, such as providing identity verification and residence information to French immigration authorities. North Africans were four times more likely to be arrested than other European migrants, many of them either voluntarily returning to their homes, or at least moving away from Paris to be free of police harassment. While the majority of indictable offenses for which North African migrants were arrested would be considered petty crime, the Brigade quickly developed a reputation for the disproportionate use of force in its response, police action more indicative of violent crime prevention (Rosenberg 2006: 158-163). While disbanded due to its collaborationist role against the French Resistance in the Vichy period, immediately following political demonstrations where the Paris Police force fired directly into the crowd killing six Algerians and a trade unionist, the Brigade was reconstituted under the name the *Brigade des Agressions et Violences* (BAV) (Rajsfus 2003: 41). The Brigade recruited many French nationals recently repatriated from Algeria (commonly referred to as the Pieds Noirs), and focused their police efforts on violent nighttime raids on cafés in the banlieues (common meeting places for the

North African migrant community) (House and MacMaster 2006: 40). The Prefect of the Paris Police, Maurice Papon, serving as the General Secretary of the Prefecture at the creation of the BAV, played a leading role in the violent repression of the North African community, culminating in the violent suppression of the 17 October 1961 Paris demonstrations when some 200 Algerian protesters were killed (ibid.).

Although France has not since experienced so spectacular an event, the policing of the banlieues maintains its racial characteristics and repressive qualities. Shortly following 11 September 2001, the French government enacted the *Loi Relative à la Sécurité Quotidienne*, a measure that extends the ability of the French Police to check one's identity, as well as the possibility to intervene in the common spaces of buildings. This law essentially targets banlieues youth on subsidized housing estates who congregate in foyers of their own apartment buildings. With the 2002 election of the centre-right Raffarin government, and the placement of Nicolas Sarkozy as the Minister of the Interior, the Police was given again an increase in legal authority to perform identity checks and stop and searches, justified solely by a 'reasonable grounds for suspicion'. Additionally, this *Loi pour la Sécurité Intérieure*, or 'Sarkozy Law', made congregating in public spaces a criminal offence (Schneider 2008: 147). The Sarkozy Law was accompanied by legislation put forward by Ministry of Justice, whereby police custody was extended to ninety-six hours without the suspect being charged of a crime, and generalized the definition of an 'organized gang', thus "making it possible to treat infractions of this kind by using measures hitherto limited to terrorism" (Dikeç 2007: 118-119).

These types of security legislation have intensified the process of the securitization of the banlieues, resulting in exceptional responses to everyday practices (like social assembly in basements and entrances of public housing buildings), among them the detention of suspected terrorists, the deportation of undocumented immigrants, and the regular harassment of young *cit * residents (Silverstein and Tetrault 2006). These repressive legal measures bear a colonial tinge as they are strikingly similar to the *Code de l'Indig nat*, where natives could be detained for up to five days for offenses such as traveling without identity papers, and congregating in small groups. The enactment of these laws target those groups who are visually suspicious and are spatially associated with areas of France overrepresented by postcolonial ethnic groups. They also feed the tensions which mount between banlieues residents and the French Police; young people feeling "persecuted by constant, discriminatory police checks, whereas the police, fearing that residents will react violently, are prompt to use more forceful and more virile methods, thus reinforcing the youth's sense of injustice" (Zauberman and Levy 2003: 1073). The atmosphere of mutual distrust between these groups, and its resultant exhibition of violence, echoes the colonial period.

Lastly, police violence against postcolonial migrant groups, directed in particular at banlieues youth, has resulted in fatalities. Racial attacks and police brutality have been on the rise concordant to the increased visibility of postcolonial migrants in France (a process begun by family reunification in the late 1970s to early 1980s). Uprisings in the banlieues generally follow from these incidents. These include the riots of October Vaulx-en-Velin after the death of a banlieues

youth being chased by the police; the riots of May the following year in Val- Fourré as a result of the asphyxiation of Aïssa Ilich who was denied his asthma medicine while in the custody of the police (evidence showing that he was also severely beaten); in June 1995 after the police killing of a local youth in a motorcycle chase; in 1996 when a taxi-cab driver of Antillean origin was shot in the head by police at Charles de Gaulle Airport; in 1998, when a 22 year old Algerian man was shot in the head in his home by a police officer, “who had traced his car after an alleged traffic offense”, and lastly, in November 2005 in Clichy-Sous-Bois, when two French citizens of Tunisian and Malian descent were chased by police Anti-Crime Brigade following an impromptu football match into an electrical transformer and killed (see Jackson 1995: 350; Schneider 2008: 145-148; Silverstein and Tetrault 2006; Silverstein 2004: 159-161; Dikeç 2007: 152, 160-164). In short, between 1977 and 2002, some 175 young people, the vast majority of postcolonial origin, were killed in incidents involving the French police (either definitively or through some related circumstance), by 1999, France being the only European Union member state to be warned by the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Cruel and Inhumane Treatment (CPT) to improve its record concerning police use of torture while in custody (Schneider 2008: 146)

In short, the French security apparatus employs practices that express a profound confluence with its colonial security predecessors both in terms of surveillance and repression. The French Intelligence Service and the National Police currently target ‘Risk groups’ based on those nigh-identical corresponding subjectivities once requiring security action, established long ago in French-

controlled Algiers, Rabat, Tunis, Senegal, etc. The policing of the French banlieues exhibits a disproportionate armed violence which “is inscribed within a more general process of intimidation, profiling, and harassment of legal and illegal immigrants” (Balibar 2007: 50). Not unwilling, but certainly unable to disassociate specific aspects of their identities from who/where/what they desire to be in French society (their race, parts of their religions and cultures), it is this environment of general suspicion and cultural/racial stigma, carried over from the colonial period, in which resentful groups of postcolonial origin translate their experiences into a veritable hatred for that society that has been so reluctant to accommodate their difference. The fiery expressions of this longing-turned-hatred is then interpreted by the French State as verification of its societal *menace*, only to repeat the same (post)colonial cycle of increased surveillance and more vehement state repression, as attested by the nearly annual banlieues smell of fire mixed with teargas.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the confluence in attitudes and practices which produce and reproduce groups of (post)colonial origin as France’s incommensurable Other. This regularly results in affective outbursts of subjectivity-formation and violence not against the system of alienation indicative of (post)colonial techniques of rule itself, but against its local instantiations (what Bourdieu calls ‘affective quasi-systematization’), as attested to the physical destruction of cars and public places in the postcolonial banlieues in November 2005 (Bourdieu 1979: 60-61). The system of racial hierarchies created by the

colonial project is sustained in contemporary discourses of migrant criminality, traditionalism, sectarianism, violence, and general incivility. The logical extension of this discursive continuity is that the practices of social control used in the colonial era will be drawn on in current struggles against a dangerous postcolonial enemy within. Thus, the security practices of the French State are a contemporary expression of nuanced mimicry.

This, of course, is a very political statement. The French State has not killed subject groups to anywhere near a degree experienced from 1830 to 1962. Those migrants, once given citizenship, enjoy all of the political rights enjoyed by any French member of parliament, citizen, etc. These evidences are presented in defiance of the charge of racism and cultural discrimination. However, while the putative potential of citizenship is present, the denial of fundamental aspects of one's identity to experience the political rights taken for granted by the white French majority, even if possible, would not be able to negate the expressions of discrimination inscribed in French law, in the discourse of the French media and public, and in the actions of those wielding the legitimate use of violence as they are based in the conflation of visual difference and cultural incompatibility. If the attitudes, which justified colonial violence and distrust, endure and are deified in all aspects of French life, how are current security practices not informed by them? It is an impossibility to believe that they are not.

It should be acknowledged that the political expression of the rioting postcolonial youth provides meaning to their subjugation; the burning of the buildings and cars represent their internal explosions. In this way, the violent reflex

of the banlieues youth is a form of resistance aimed at illuminating to the audience of Europe, if not the entire globe, those imperial structures that remain due to what Ann Stoler refers to as the French “culture of concealment” which attempts to sever present discrimination from the imperial ruins (Stoler 2008: 209). Government officials and social scientists alike would all do well to remember that the stigmatization of those subjectivities that are considered suspicious and threatening will only be sedimented in the concrete rejections of those dominant social orientations which form the basis of the former’s exclusion. Running from the police, throwing stones at their cars or burning them if possible, learning Arabic and wearing the headscarf- have all become contemporary political rites of passage for those French banlieues youth who bear the stigma given to their great grandparents by Lyautey, Didier, Bigeaud and those under their stewardship.

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