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**Soccer, Post-Colonial and Post-conflict Discourses in Algeria:
Algérie-France, 6 Octobre 2001,
“ce n'était pas un simple match de foot”**

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This paper reports an analysis of press articles of selected Algerian francophone newspapers, which were published before, during and after a ‘friendly’ soccer game between the French and Algerian national teams on 6 October 2001, in the Stade de France in Paris. The paper seeks to identify how the ‘identity’ and sense of belonging of French-Algerians, known also as Beurs, Maghrebins, les émigrés de France, or Français-plus was located, negotiated in the Algerian journalistic discourse. It considers the manner in which concepts such as ‘culture’, ‘locality’ ‘nationhood’ and ‘citizenship’ were mobilized to define or situate the identity of Algerian immigrants (or those of Algerian origin) in comparison with that of Algerian (local-national) identity. The ‘friendly’ soccer game between the two national teams become a symbolic space, another occasion, for remembering the French-Algerian colonial past. Moreover, it represented an opportunity to reposition Algeria in the international (sporting) arena, and more importantly, to reassert social ties between Algerians, as part of the post-conflict process for national reconciliation. This was the product of more than ten years of generalised violence, which has been termed the ‘second war’ (also la guerre sans images) of Algeria, after the first war for independence against French colonialism.

« ...il me semble que le fait même d'écrire sur mes origines algériennes me montrent à quel point je ne suis plus exactement Algérien comme ceux qui sont restés là-bas, mais que je ne suis pas exactement Français comme ceux d'ici ... » It seems for me that the fact, in itself, of writing about my Algerian origins shows how far I am not exactly Algerian as those who stayed there, but I am not exactly French like those of here. (Azouz Begag, 1998).

France greeted me with open arms ... and that's why I live here now. Here, I have the opportunity to perform 20 concerts a month with good musicians and good technicians. That doesn't mean I've forgotten my roots. I feel fine almost anywhere in the world, but the place I come from is always a part of me. In fact, it's nonsense to separate these things. Anyone with a modicum of intelligence can link the traditional with the modern world (Souad Massi, Algerian singer living in France, in Dombrowski, 2005).

The core of our discussion is directed toward deconstructing the sense of being of an Algerian community (or of Algerian origin) in France. I suggest that an analysis of (Algerian) media content around a 'friendly' international soccer game between France and Algeria can be used as lens through which to look to understand the process of making Beurs (word inverted from rebeus, which designates Arabs) and French-Algerian (called also Maghrébins, North Africans) identities. Hence, the paper seeks to shed light on the importance of studying sport, not only as a form of practice but as a symbolic space for remembrance which may involve the process of forgetting (not yet forgiveness), or at least appeasing memory, of past Franco-Algerian colonial history. Furthermore, the staging of the soccer match between the two national teams was an occasion to reposition Algeria in the international sporting map and to re-assert Algerian social ties, an important constituent in the course toward post-conflict 'reconciliation' after more than two decades (since 1988) of generalised violence. Before I begin the discussion about Algerian newspapers' coverage (of pre- and post- game events between France and Algeria in 2001) in regard to the identity of the Algerian community in France, including that of French-Algerians and French of Algerian origin, in order to comprehend the contemporary (conflicting) discourse(s) about Algerian national identity, I will first examine the impact of colonialism and decolonisation in that country.

The Impact of Colonialism and Decolonisation in the Reconstruction of Algerian Identity

Colonialism was one of the direct causes of (forced) immigration, the violent uprooting of thousands of Algerians who saw migrating to (then metropolitan) France as a means, sometimes the only one, of improving their economic and social conditions. According to Manceron (1996), nowhere was the colonial 'conquest' so violent, brutal and radical in its destruction of the pre-existing social structure than in Algeria. In the same vein, Khan (1991: 286) states that

[French colonialism] not only worked to expropriate the Algerian tribes and destroy the rural economy, but also to wipe out handicraft and guild-type organisation, pillage the cities, suffocate the few extant intellectual élites, steal or burn archival documents and entire libraries, wage ceaseless war on Arabic language and Islam, and try to drive them into permanent inferiority by setting up a native school system designed mainly to enhance a servile education necessary for the advancement of colonialism and a degree of acculturation apt to ensure the maintenance of foreign domination.

The damage caused by the violence of colonialism and decolonisation have affected the *raison d'être* of the Algerian sense of being. It subjected the society to a real *déculturation*;¹ the colonial past, after forty years of Algerian independence, is still at the roots of an unappeased conflict, described by Manceron (2002) as the latent tension between two (Algerian-French) memories. This has prevented, or at least contributed in slowing down, the normalisation process between the two nations, making the task of organising and staging a 'friendly' soccer game between the two national teams a complex endeavour.

After Algeria's independence in 1962, the flow of immigration continued for different political and socio-economic reasons. One can argue that the reconstruction of identity based on total rupture between the coloniser and the colonised, achieved through revolutionary action where 'the native would simply bury colonial society,' did not happen as Fanon and Sartre predicted it would.²

That said, as a result of the official interruption by the French government of working immigration rules in 1974, the phenomenon previously conceived by migrant workers in terms of forced uprooting (*déracinement*) and displacement, turned to that of a permanent project of settlement (*enracinement*) and definite "sédentarisation" (Césari, 1998: 49). Subsequently, a gap in the models of identification emerged, particularly for those of the second and third generations who are negotiating their identity today between the values of French universalism transmitted by the (republican) school and that of their parents' original culture. Both forms of identity-making are in crisis. The former because of the challenge of American (Anglo-Saxon) hegemony, characterised according to Naïr (2003: 84) by the spiritualisation and essentialism of the particular (ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious) sense of belonging, and the latter as a consequence of globalisation, synonymous for some of material civilisation and hyper-consumerism, which increased, according to Habermas, (in Borradori, 2003), the sense of fear of the violent uprooting of traditional ways of life. Furthermore, the previous economic approach of the 1960s and 1970s toward immigration has given place to more political and cultural approaches, transforming the debate, previously discussed in terms of costs and advantages, to that of control of flows, citizenship-nationality, national identity, integration, Islam, *communautarisme*, multiculturalism (Withol, 1995).

Soccer vector for 'peace' and 'reconciliation'?

As part of the Algerian struggle for independence, soccer 'l'héritage de l'occupant' was used to counter the colonial cultural hegemony on its own terms. Sports clubs, after being a space for cultural "co-existence" between different ethno-religious groups, had become a place for the nationalist struggle for independence and, thanks to the FLN-team, an effective tool for the internationalisation of the Algerian cause. During the Algerian revolution (1954-1962), the FLN soccer team became a symbol

of Algerian resistance and struggle for independence, and therefore sport was viewed as an effective tool for international recognition of this struggle. According to Fates, the FLN succeeded, through its national soccer team, in ensuring an honourable participation in international life by achieving high quality sporting performances and thus becoming a model for other revolutionary movements fighting for their independence around the world (e.g. the Palestinian national soccer team). In this way the phenomenon of sport became an effective diplomatic tool for the promotion of the Algerian cause in international society. After independence, Algerian and French national teams met only twice. The first “confrontation” was during the 1975 Mediterranean Games held in Algiers. Organising a mega event, such as the Mediterranean Games after only 13 years of independence (followed by the African Games in 1978) was an occasion for the Algerian government’s so-called ‘revolutionary regime’ under the leadership of Boumedienne to show to 2700 athletes and 15 participant nations (and thus to the world) the first results of its socialist programme for development. This is exemplified in the following El-Moudjahid newspaper reports:

The revolutionary regime in Algeria has always accorded major importance to the youth of this country. The proof is in the building of sports facilities in wilayates [departments]. This approach is symbolized by the Olympic complex of 19 June [the day of the military coup, called officially the readjustment of the Algerian revolution], where the Mediterranean Games of Algiers will take place. ... Those projects were promoted for a precise objective, the building of a large-scale infrastructure aimed at facilitating the promotion of sports participation for all young Algerians ... (El-Moudjahid, 23 August 1975; original text in French).

In Scagnetti’s (2003) terms, Algiers’ Mediterranean Games constituted an important sporting event in the history of the independent country. Algeria succeeded in winning 30 medals, including 5 won by citizens of immigrant origin (a gold medal in boxing, 3 silvers in track and field and boxing, and two bronzes in judo and boxing). The other important event during the Games was Algeria’s victory over France (the former enemy) in the soccer final.³ Algeria won the gold medal with a team coached by Rachid Mekhloufi.⁴

The last ‘confrontation’ between the two national teams, the focus of this paper, took place on 6 October 2001, thirty-nine years after independence, in a soccer game which ought to be a new page in the relations between the two nation states. But it finished in an unexpected manner, described by one Algerian newspaper as “a sad end for a historical match.”

Although it should be noted that the main objective of the paper is not to discuss the different use of soccer in the colonial and post-colonial eras, for nationalist, political and ideological purposes this part of the country’s sporting history has already been investigated by a number of Algerian and European scholars (Fates, 1994; Dine, 1994; Lanfranchi and Wahl, 1996; Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001; Amara and Henry, 2003). The paper is directed toward the study of an international soccer match which happened under different circumstances and of time, together with differing sporting and political contexts. On one side, you have France, an ex-coloniser of Algeria, which at the time was the World Cup holder and one of its best players, Zinedine Zidane, a French national of Algerian origin (voted on many

occasions as the personality of the year in France). On the other side, you have Algeria, an ex-colony of France, its team managed by *Rabah Madjer*, the country's first soccer superstar after independence (Dine, 2002) and supported by millions of Algerians in Algeria and elsewhere. Particularly in France, where the Algerian community (or those of Algerian origin) represents the biggest immigrant community, their hope (at least in the way portrayed by the Algerian media) was to beat the French soccer 'master' (the world champions), as they had done in 'the battlefield,' forty years earlier.

As previously discussed, the major focus of this paper is the Algerian community living in France (called also Beurs, Maghrébins and North Africans – at least for a segment of this population – since the notion of Beur/Maghrébins/North African community masks great internal diversity of gender, class, generation, religiosity etc.) – for whom the soccer game between the two national teams was highly symbolic. It was another occasion for the Algerian community in France to celebrate their own double sense of belonging to a 'hybrid' identity. That is an amalgam of some aspects of both Algerian culture and French citizenship, neither expressed in terms of fully belonging to 'French culture' or that of (Algerian) 'culture of origin.'

Toward an Increased 'Hybridisation' of Identity

The so-called Algerian immigrant population is today facing multiple dilemmas concerning the complexity of combining multiple identities: (a) ethnic nationalism characterised by social, political and cultural ties to the motherland (*pays d'origine*), mixed with a universal sense of belonging to Islamic Umma (community of Muslim believers); (b) civic/civil nationalism, to express⁵ (at least for the second and third generations) their belonging to the French republican (*laïque*) values of democracy; (c) identification, specially for younger generations, with a global (transnational) youth culture, i.e. MTV, hip hop, Nike, NBA.

Césari (1998: 42) explains this complex variety of belonging(s) as the contradiction between individual, collective, and national identities. The dialectic between these three (although not exhaustive) systems of identity making in the everyday life of populations of immigrant origin, and for younger generations in particular, can be illustrated with Kepel's (1994) example of the French (republican) schooling system:

... In France, the Republican school is the place par excellence where the common belonging of pupils to the common *laïque* nation undermines individual differences. It [the school as system and space] aims at training of equal citizens whose main reference is a sum of shared values – where there is no need for religious sphere to interfere because it is considered as part of private domain⁶ (Kepel, 1994: 165; translated from French).

Moreover, the debate on post-colonial discourse is also a debate of the antagonism between two different (essentialist) world views. The first could be described as 'universalist,' propagating universal values of democracy and enlightenment, but also ethnocentric in presenting itself as the sole guardian of rational thinking. It symbolizes the culture of the dominant (ex-coloniser) as the "only legitimate culture that could ensure the universal communication of knowledge" (Finkelkraut, 1987: 77). It is explained as well as being the most able to bring light (enlightenment and reason) to those dominated classes or ex-colonised nations – who were previously

deprived of ‘modern science.’ This universalist project, as asserted by Finkelkraut, who is usually criticised for privileging ethnico-religious arguments in his analysis of the French society, hides two missions: (a) “un déracinement” or *déculturation* (the gradual loss of cultural distinctiveness) which consists of snatching a social group (ethnic-religious-linguistic minorities) from their web of habits and attitudes comprising their collective (ancestral) identity; (b) *dréssage*, or taming, characterised by the inculcation to the dominated group of the values (the ideal culture) of the dominant.

Today the impossibility of transcending those contradictions makes integration – particularly in the sense of assimilation as conceptualised in the French political and intellectual spheres – an unthinkable project.

The second world view can be described as ‘particularist.’ It is a discourse which calls for the return of ex-colonised societies to the communitarian logic of identity, in contrast to that of the neo-colonial (individualist) logic. It separates the colonial and original cultures and refuses to accept any other “corrupted” form of culture, including that of a hybrid (Beurs) culture, which is considered as not identical and even an immoral deviation from the initial (motherland) local (Muslim) culture.

Building from the above discussion, we can argue that both universalism (in the name of enlightenment) and particularism (in the name of local identity) represent two faces of the same coin, i.e., nationalism.

Billig, in his discussion of the psychological, ideological and historical bases in the construction of nationalism (we and them), states that:

We imagine *ourselves* and *foreigners* to be equally ruled by the sociology of nationhood. This governing sociology produces countries in which *we* and *them* are reproduced as peoples bound both uniquely and universally to our places. Armed with this vision of nationhood, not only can *we* claim to speak for *ourselves* but also *we* can speak for *them*, or for *all of us* (Billig, 1995: 83; emphasis added).

In the same vein, it could be argued that the national identity of the French of North African origin have been constructed by the French media and political spheres on the foundation of French universalism (French republican values). The universality of ‘our’ French nationalism and ‘our’ secularism (*laïcité*) refuses or denies ‘their’ particularism, even in the name of ‘our’ pluralism and tolerance. As Billig claims:

... *our* tolerance is threatened by *their* presence; *they* are [les jeunes des banlieues] either intolerant or cause of intolerance; thus *we* seek to exclude *them* not because *we* are intolerant but, quite the reverse, because *we* are tolerant (Billig, 1991: 82; emphasis added).

The discourse of exclusion that particularly Maghrébins and the African community living in the French national space are facing, is often projected in a manner that ‘they’ are too ‘culturally different’⁷ to be absorbed into the French society. The analysis of Algerian newspaper reports shows that these notions of differentiation when talking about the Algerian community living in France exist also within Algeria’s national space. This time it is addressed in the name of ‘our’ (Algerian) ‘cultural identity’ and ‘authenticity,’ which views the success of ‘others’ (from Algerian origin) as a natural result of ‘our’ (Algerian) ‘specificity’ (the example of Zidane) and explains, on the other hand, ‘their’ social failure as a result of ‘their’

déculturation (Doukhan, 1998) which can be defined as the process of uprooting a social group – immigrant populations and minorities – from their web of habits and attitudes which comprise their collective (ancestral) identity. The ‘collective self’ of ‘us’ (in-group), representing Algerian national identity, and unity against any forms of violence, in comparison to ‘them’ (out-group - i.e. Beurs/ jeunes des banlieues) also exists (although with dissimilar meaning and intensity) in the discourse of Algerian journalists.

It could be stated that the tendency to include or exclude (consciously or unconsciously) individuals/groups into the Algerian national space, depends in today’s post-conflict process of rebuilding national unity in Algeria, on the attitudes (association/dissociation) of individuals/ groups with any forms of ‘violence,’ ‘incivility’ and ‘disorder.’ This is what makes today’s process of rebuilding national unity in Algeria, emphasizing ‘reconciliation,’ different from that of (past) post-independence strategies for nation-state building, which for some historians, have over-glorified the recourse to (legitimate) violence and armed struggle to attain independence. Moreover, the analysis also confirm that 50 years after Algeria’s independence, the historical memory (du passé franco-algérien) is still evident in Franco-Algerian (sporting and non-sporting) relations⁸.

Discourse and The Reformation of Identity

It is argued that the making of an identity is not something discovered but which has to be made. In the same line of reasoning, Said (2000: 315) claims that:

To see others not as ontologically given but as historically constituted would be to erode the exclusivist biases we so often ascribe to cultures, our own not least. Cultures may then be represented as zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection and forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing, all take place in the global history that is our element.

Arguably, it could be stated that identity is a socially constructed reality, built on the logic of the differentiation process of ‘we’ that includes ‘our’ national, cultural, political, ideological and local identities, in relation to ‘others’ history, geography, traditions and life styles. ‘Others’ become the antagonist (mirror-like) reflection of ‘our’ self-identity. For the purpose of this paper, data drawn from newspaper articles were used to analyse the perception of Algerian journalists about French-Algerians, also called Beurs, Maghrébins, Franco-Maghrébins, North Africans, les immigrés de France, les Arabo-Berber-Musulmans français, Français-plus (Hargreaves, 2001). They are also branded in the Algerian dialect as z’mmagra, usually used in a negative sense, to designate (particularly during the 1960-70s socialist period) Algerian ‘others’ who come there every summer to show their material wealth and to confirm their (consumerist) cultural differences. The aim of the analysis is to grasp these plural/conflicting realities surrounding the construction of immigrants’ (or from immigrant origins) identities in Algerian national newspapers. This involves the homogeneity/heterogeneity and dichotomy doubleness existing between the designation of Algerian journalists of the ‘we’ (in-group) and ‘others’ (out-group). The paper argues that the designation of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the Algerian context has been deeply affected by both past and present conflicts.

It should be emphasised that our focus is not a linguistic one, but is problem-oriented, concerned with the language used by Algerian journalists to define or situate

Algerian immigrants' identity in comparison to Algerian 'local identity.' For this rationale, articles from the Algerian francophone press, published before and after the game, were gathered. The French (rather than Arabic) language was selected for its similarity with the history of soccer in Algeria. Both cultures or modes of expression could be regarded as a product or the legacy of the French colonial society, absorbed and transformed (*créolised*) – at different stages of Algerian history – for diverse political and cultural ends. They were mobilised, at list during the colonial era, by the colonial administration to affirm its dominance on French Algeria⁹, and by Algerian nationalist movement in its struggle for an independent Algeria. The creolisation of French language by Algerian intellectuals and leaders of Algerian revolution was described by Brian (2002), in line with Franz Fanon, as the process for a deterritorialization of French, the creation of a minor (Algerianized) French, in order to speed the breakdown of the French imperial relationship to Algeria¹⁰. In the same manner, Muslim soccer clubs became the place for the training of leaders of the national movement and for a wider political mobilization (Amara and Henry, 2003)¹¹. Furthermore, the media landscape in Algeria is extremely diverse with about thirty daily newspapers and about 150 weekly or monthly newspapers, mostly state's owned and the rest, the leading ones, are privately owned by cooperative of journalists and businessmen (e.g. Issad Rebrab, the owner of Cevital, the leader of oil and sugar industries in Algeria, is the co-owner of *Liberté* newspaper) . However, apart from the daily arabophone newspaper, *El Khabar*, which has the highest circulation rate with 400 000 copies per day, francophone newspapers, have a greater readership, reaching broad segments of the literate-urban population (most of the Algerian urban population lives in the northern 10 percent part of the country)¹².

The other point that needs to be raised concerning the selection of newspapers is the issue of accessibility. Only those newspapers electronically available or with free access online archives at the time of collecting data (in 2002) were selected. More Algerian newspapers are electronically accessible today but not all offer access to online archives. Finally, even though the question of representativeness in the quantitative sense of the term is not a concern for this paper, because of the qualitative nature of the study, it could be argued that the selected national newspapers are still the main elements of the Francophone (or Francophile) press in Algeria.

The selected newspapers are usually classified (in ideal type) for their editorial line as liberal (*laïque*) such as private owned newspapers *El-Watan*, *Liberté* and *Le Matin*; centrist, for example *La Tribune*; nationalist-conservative, for instance the state owned newspaper *El-Moudjahid*. Having said this, it should be emphasized that the distinction between democrats-liberal versus conservative-nationalists in the Algerian politico-intellectual arena is not clear cut. Algerian journalists paid a high price (113 journalists were assassinated between 1992-1998) because of their positions, or the nature of their work, in what is now portrayed as the red decade, to describe more than ten years of civil war in Algeria (a term which is still unsaid for its sensitivity in a nation which declared itself to be unified in its struggle against colonialism). Secondly, all Algerian newspapers are still dependent in their day to day management (e.g. printing and publicity) on public funds, which makes them politically and financially vulnerable¹³. Thirdly, the meanings of nationalism and conservatism, on the one hand, and liberalism and democracy on the other (at least in its actual form of a controlled, top-down multiparty system), which were presented in the past socialist Algeria as contradictory concepts, are accepted today, in post-socialist and post-conflict (yet to be achieved) Algeria, as the norm by all political and social movements.

It needs to be noted here that the present political debate in Algeria is oriented toward re-negotiating the sense of both:

- (a) modernism; which accepts some notion of progress and controlled political pluralism (but not necessarily the secular values of western modernity). Incorporating also (modernist) Islamist parties which are present members of the government coalition;
- (b) radicalism, associated with those armed movements which reject the notion of the Algerian state, declared to be the (poisoned) legacy of colonialism, calling instead for the return to the Umma or nation of believers. That said, in the aftermath of the massive popular vote in 2005 for the president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, a project for national reconciliation may lead in the future to a general amnesty. The meaning of “radicalism” usually applied in the official political discourse refers to armed groups and is in itself in the process of continuous redefinition involving only those armed groups refusing to put an end to violence and to join the platform for national reconciliation.

Algérie-France, 6th October 2001

The organisation of the ‘friendly’ game was agreed upon by the two governments a year before in 2000, after the visit of Algerian president Bouteflika to France. We should highlight here the highly historical significance of the 6th October 1961 date in the Algerian collective memory. Particularly for those Algerian immigrants who lived and witnessed the struggle for independence from ‘metropolitan’ France (since Algeria was a province of France), it was the day when the chief of the Police, Maurice Papon, famously known for his repressive methods, decided as part of security measures against what were described as ‘criminal activities of FLN terrorists’ to establish a curfew for Algerians living in the suburbs of Paris from 8:30 pm to 5:30 am. Following this decision the FLN, which managed to impose itself as the sole representative of the revolution in Algeria and elsewhere, decided to organise a large and peaceful demonstration in the centre of Paris for the night of 17 October. The response of the national police was extremely violent. Hundreds were massacred, and their bodies were thrown in the river Seine, or imprisoned (including everyone who looked like a North African, i.e. southern Europeans who happened to be in the wrong place that day). A dark page in Algerian-French history which has still to be opened.

The international soccer game was also played while the world media, politicians, sociologists and historians were busy discussing the aftermath of the 11 September attack in New York and its consequences for world security as well as the manner in which the US was going to respond to stop the treat of ‘world terrorism.’ The latter is claimed to became after the end of the Cold War the new threat to world stability and western democracy. In this context of hypertension, a security plan named ‘Vigipirate’ to thwart the menace of another terrorist attack on French territory (after that of 1995 bombing) was reactivated. The objective was to face the threat of what the French media, particularly after 11 September, described as sleeping cells (les cellules terroristes dormantes). In addition, the match was played at a time when France was still under the shock of another tragedy, the explosion of a chemical factory in Toulouse. First, the French media attributed it to ‘Islamist’ groups, but after investigation it was established to be an accident brought about by a technical

failure and human neglect. For El-Moudjahid newspaper, this was another occasion for the enemy of Algeria and “some mistaken associations which cultivate hatred of Algeria ... to tarnish the image of Algeria and displace the match from its normal context, while placing pressure on the organiser to cancel it.” According to the same newspaper, the French media wanted at all costs to link the match between Algeria and France with ‘terrorism.’ This was described as “the fruit of fertile imaginations – des scénaristes de l’information – of news’ scriptwriters” (El-Moudjahid, 09/10/01).

However, for the majority of Algerian newspapers the match was a historical moment. According to Liberté,

“[the match] is highly symbolic for our country, which will face France for the first time after the independence. But this time in a soccer field ... it will be a battle between two countries which have lived through difficult times” (Liberté, 07/10/01).

The same newspaper chose to cover the pre-match atmosphere in the streets of Paris, particularly those known for their important concentration of the Maghrébins community:

“Algerian immigrants succeeded to create an outstanding atmosphere ... in Barbés. They were hundreds to go out to express their joy and pride ... they even stopped traffic for one hour, to transform the street to a panorama of a mega festivity” (Liberté, 07/10/01).

The act of stopping the traffic for an hour, even if not legally authorised, is justified as an expression of joy and festivity. This could only happen in the multicultural streets of Barbés, which reinforces, at least in the reporter’s account, the distinctiveness/uniqueness of Barbés as a space, inside (outside) French territory.

According to El-Moudjahid (09.10.2001), the soccer match was a meeting in the service of “an appropriate and sought after fraternity.” As for El-Watan, the match was a challenge and an occasion to de-sensitise (décomplexer) “passion, nostalgia, and suspicion ... in the relations between the two nations. As a consequence, soccer, this highly mediated activity, becomes for this occasion the most appropriate tool, “to go beyond certain direct and indirect [psychological and historical] blockages” (El-Watan, 07.10.2001).

One can argue that journalists’ language used to describe the pre-game atmosphere reinforced the attitude, the readiness, of Algerians toward forgetting (and even forgiveness) of the colonial past, with the hope that this feeling was shared among the French population and political leaders. To illustrate this position, we can read in Le Matin’s article that those types of events could serve as a bridge between two countries, linked most of the time by a passionate and conflicting history. Above all, “because of the international events [post 9/11] ... which have transformed more instinctive the rejection of others and normal the distrust of foreigners, the source of evil” (Le Matin, 07.10.2001).

Le Jour J

The following are the words chosen by a reporter from Liberté newspaper to describe the atmosphere before the kick off:

“19h29 French time, Stade de France, “les verts” get into the field ... everybody stood, shouting “One, Two, Three, viva l’Algérie.” We felt to be in the 5th July temple [referring to the Algerian Olympic stadium] ... the world champions [except for Zidane of course] were welcomed as if they were playing outside their base, by thousands of Algerian supporters coming from all over France.”

France has discovered other colours: green, white and red [the Algerian flag] ... It was simply magnificent, with all supporters standing for Tahia El Djazair [long life to Algeria] ... sublime images which only soccer knows how to produce. The participation of Dahleb and Zidan’s kick off, the two symbolic figures of plural Algeria,¹⁴ announces the starting of the game. (Liberté, 07/10/01)

All this happened in a stadium, according to Liberté newspaper, which had known the joy and triumph of the French “melting pot” (Black, Blanc, Beur) during the World Cup final, but which for this occasion has given an image of a “conquered territory.”

The same mixed feelings of pride, joy and hyper-nationalism were expressed by other daily newspapers. One of El-Watan’s reporters had even claimed that “... we had the impression to be in the 5th of July stadium” (the biggest stadium in Algeria, named after the day of independence).

“Supporters’ hearts present that night belonged only to the green of Algeria, and Kassaman [the Algerian national anthem] ... was sung in an enclosure which has borrowed its voice to be the echo for a strong presence of Algerian supporters.”

On the other hand, la Marseillaise was faced by protest¹⁵ by the so-called les jeunes des banlieues (the youth of suburban Paris) who waited for this occasion, according to the same newspaper, to

“take a psychological step upon the social difficulties that they are going through ... the Algerian flag raised by les jeunes des banlieues was largely dominant...”.

It was an occasion for Algerian supporters to express their identities:

“the Algerian flag had occupied the French land, at least for the time of one night” (El-Watan, 07/10/01).

It is worth highlighting here ways that the notion of space, being inside or outside Algerian/ French land, and thus of “our” and ‘their’ supporters present that day in Stade de France, was constructed. The same supporters of the Algerian national team were one time described as Algerian (like ‘us’) and another time as les jeunes des banlieues. The place itself, the famous Stade de France, became the 5th of July stadium in Algiers and therefore part of Algerian territory. Thus the displacement of space caused also a displacement of supporters’ identities. The voice of ‘other’ French (including those of North African origin) supporters, who may have represented the majority that day, became nearly silent and therefore absent.

After 76 Minutes of Official Time

The atmosphere described above of partying and joy and of a soccer match supposedly between two nations sharing hard moments of history, but willing to forget and even to forgive, was bungled by what Liberté (7/10/2001) described as ‘prétendent supporters’ or pseudo-supporters of the Algerian national team.

“the happiness was transformed to sadness, real supporters deserts, do not find the words to describe their desolation...”

After 76 minutes of official time, while the score was 4-1 for the World champions, the referee decided to stop the game¹⁶. The reason was ‘envahissement de terrain’, supporters spilling out into the pitch portrayed by the same newspaper as

“they were rascals who emerged from nowhere and they have nothing to do with Algerians... Shameful, despicable, the words are never strong to describe what really happened”.

According to El-Watan,

“it was a violent form of expression by a group of ‘jeunes Beurs’ marginalized, who waited for this occasion to protest against their social exclusion...By the fault of a well determined group ... a bunch of agitated supporters who came to spoil the party” (El-Watan, 07.10.2001).

Many reactions were offered to explain what happened. For some journalists, it was the expression of internal (French) socio-economic problems and the failure of those in charge of security in Stade de France. Other newspapers chose to minimise, or at least to de-dramatise, the importance of the incident.

For La Tribune (08/10/2001) the interruption to the game was another aspect of the continuous history of conflict between Algeria and France “which does not have an end.” In El-Moudjahid’s view, the incident was in fact a “banal” event and an “isolated” act of “two or three agitated supporters.”

“...There was absolutely not a will of violence by those who swept onto the pitch...they entered for the sole reason to express their enthusiasm and joy without violence or aggressiveness...” (El-Moudjahid , 09/10/2001).

In a similar vein, the journalist from El-Watan (09.10.01) claimed that the event was unpredictable and irresponsible, but non-violent.

“... There was a sympathetic sweep onto the pitch ... by number of supporters who wanted to live the party much closer”.

The same newspaper pointed out that in addition to Algerian supporters, who spilled onto the pitch, there were also others from Tunisia, Morocco, Portugal:

“a multitude of nationalities not animated by bad intentions but not safe though from manipulations ... despite the negative effect of such irresponsible

behaviour aggravated by minority of supporters, we are far from the hooliganism that European and French stadia are so familiar with”.

“In other places hooliganism is a fashion, causing enormous damage. In this perspective we cannot teach neither the French or the initiators of soccer [English] who have had at numerous occasions to witness much more serious scene” (El-Watan, 08/10/2001).

For El-Watan and El-Moudjahid, those in charge of Stade de France security were held responsible for what happened 15 minutes before the end of the game. The others responsible are, of course:

hidden groups whose sole obsession is to derail the train of friendship between Algeria and France (El-Moudjahid, 09/10/01).

The different positions of Algerian newspapers in discussing the significance, and the moral responsibility for what happened, divided between aggravation and de-dramatisation and using terms ranging from despicable to sympathetic to clarify what ‘really’ happened, can be explained as part of the ongoing reconstruction (renegotiation) process of what is acceptable, common, suspect and unjustifiable in the present Algerian post-conflict outlook.¹⁷ Some Algerian newspapers reasserted that aspects of public disorder and incivility (provoked by a minority) are not unique to Algerian supporters. Acts of hooliganism (more serious) take place week in and week out in the European stadia (e.g. in France and England) as a reminder of the global dimension of this phenomenon, and thus an argument against the ethno-cultural explanation of violence which tends to associate violence (thus terrorism) solely to Arabo-Muslim culture .

Conclusion

In conclusion, it could be stated that the construction of Beurs/French-Algerian identity, etc. – at least in the account of Algerian newspapers – varied considerably. This could be assumed to be linked to the following issues: (a) the influence that colonial history had, and still has, in the definition and positioning of Algerian immigrants’ identities in French society; (b) the projects for society, i.e. liberal versus conservative (although it is hard to distinguish between these two political positions in the Algerian context) which each of those Algerian newspapers adhere to; (c) the recent history of internal generalised violence and the process of post-war trauma Algerian society is going through. It imposes a certain revision, re-examination, and renegotiation of the meaning of what it is to be an Algerian,¹⁸ and the conditions which contribute to prevent the recurrence of collective violence (as a means for political change) in the Algerian society.

The general observation we could make from our analysis is that the Algerian press employed multiple uses of rhetoric to portray the identity (psychological types) of Algerian supporters, incorporating (consciously or not) dual and antagonist types of categorisation. The same Algerians (supporteurs des verts) previously depicted as members of the Arabo-Berber and Islamic community, and Maghrébins proud of their cultural distinctiveness and ‘their’ Algerian flag, had become in a space of 76 minutes, “rascals who emerged from nowhere and they have nothing to do with Algerians or Algeria.” They were also described as Jeunes Beurs, marginalised, who

waited for this occasion to protest against ‘their’ (thus nothing to do with Algeria) social exclusion, in France (‘their’ homeland).

Other newspapers such as *El-Watan* and *El-Moudjahid* preferred to talk about a minority of ‘sympathetic’ and ‘non-violent’ jeunes Beurs, who were not safe from manipulation by ‘hidden forces.’ In other words, the French media were depicted by Algerian newspapers also as ‘scriptwriters of fictional news’ in reference to their negative portrayal of Algeria between 1992-1998, during the hardest period of internal political violence. Their main aim, from the Algerian perspective, particularly *El-Moudjahid*’s (the official government newspaper), was to tarnish the image of Algeria and to destroy any chance of amity and partnership between France and Algeria.

A comparison of French and Algerian press discourses regarding the match event, particularly in connection with the reaction and behaviour of the so called Beurs and Maghrébins supporters, before, during and after the game, could deliver some aspects of the complex identity that this category of population is going through today.¹⁹ A comparison between Francophone and Arabophone newspapers in Algeria, knowing the sensitivity of the debate between Francophones and Arabophones around the building of post-independent Algeria,²⁰ can also shed light on interesting themes.

It could be stated that the problem of identity (not to forget the socio-economic problems) among the Beurs/Franco-Maghrébins population in France (not to use the term ‘minority,’ being highly sensitive in the French republican context) can be located in the complex and ambivalent sense of living in ‘between-ness’ and even ‘emptiness.’ This may be more pertinent for the third generation. This is a generation, according to Breviglieri, whose immigrant consciousness is not questioned. Therefore, the issue of integration their parents had to deal with should not be part of their daily life problems for the simple reason they consider themselves as French ‘like others.’ Their view about their (parents’ or grandparents’) sociétés d’origine (le bled) is not always nostalgic, but it is equivalent also with *étrangeté* (foreignness), political totalitarianism, corruption, imposed (selective) history,²¹ political violence and social inequality (Geisser & Kelfaoui: 2001).

Ici [in France], we are in the presence of a generation, that naturally ‘forget’ or they do not find indispensable to possess patrimonial culture²²” (Doukhan, 1998).

We should mention here the specificity of the Harki population in France and their descendents (second and third generations), which are absent (silenced) in the Algerian newspapers’ analysis of pre- and post-game issues between France and Algeria. Harkis are the Algerian Muslim²³ population who chose (or it was imposed upon them) to fight against their fellow Muslim Algerians to uphold French colonialism in Algeria. For this category of the population, the previously discussed notions of forgetting and the possibility of forgiveness in relation to the Franco-Algerian past are impossible or difficult to conceive. Because they chose to fight for the French flag against Algerian independence, and therefore against a Muslim Algeria, they thus (voluntarily) decided to be part of the French national space for ever. Consequently, to be accepted or not as Harki (for cultural or religious reasons) in the French national space and history, becomes an internal French problem. The same rhetoric of Harki or fils de Harki (the sons of Harki) “who are thirsty for vengeance against Algerian independence” was used by the media, and by the

Algerian government to depict the armed groups. By doing this the Algerian authorities contributed, according to Harbi, in bringing to the surface all these unresolved historical issues concerning the Algerian war for liberation (1954-1962). As he puts it,

“[regarding] questions such as terrorism against civilians, Harkis, Algerian cultural identity etc. We have to remind ourselves that some political groups in Algeria, particularly those who are against the Islamist project [to establish an Islamic state], sought in the last years to carry the internal Algerian conflict into France. The problem is not to be against the Islamists. They have enough convincing arguments why they are against the Islamist project. The problem is in the discourse that these groups utilise which is close to the discourse of French settlers [pied noirs] and most French political factions which are embittered by the Algerian cultural experience after independence” (Harbi 2006, from Aljazeera news web page, translated from Arabic).

The constructed stereotype, while referring to the specificity or particularism of Maghrébins, which is usually presented as one homogeneous group, is projected (consciously or not) with a logic of differentiation, if not exclusion. For instance, when talking about national belonging, cultural identity and religious faith, the image projected by the media (in Algeria and France) is that of struggle, identity crises, violence, chauvinism, fundamentalism and isolationism. It is characterised also by *le repli* (the-tactical-return) toward the community, family and religion (i.e. the process of ghettoisation), an image which Geisser and Khelfaoui (2001) reject and describe as dramatic, discriminatory, and even pathologic. The origin of that negative imagery has roots, according to Césari, in past colonial history, with consequences still persistent, particularly in the social imagination of the French. As Césari points out,

“Those young are victims of post-colonial syndrome, which makes [their] Arab and Muslim origins the object of a sum of negative imagery which is rooted in the colonial past” (Césari, 1997:39).

This is to say that what is needed today, more than a symbolic ‘friendly’ soccer game, is un travail de mémoire, in other words a de-colonisation (deconstruction) of the shared memory between France and Algeria. This memory has only been established in terms of invasion, conquest, battles, domination, defeats, victories; in other words, through war and violence. A product also of an ideologised history on the one hand, as well as a selective memory on the other hand. A tendency, according to Ravenel (1996), for amnesia (even negations²⁴) on the French side and that of hyper-commemoration on the Algerian side.

I finish the paper in the same way I started by quoting, this time from Tahar Ben Jelloun’s novel, *Les raisins de la galère*. This perfectly describes the pluralist (double, and even ambiguous) sense of belonging to the French among those of Algerian origin (represented in the novel by Naima):

“We were conceived in an improvised manner, for the provisory, we are the children of the cities of transit, we arrived without warning ... we found ourselves living here with human-like faces, expressing ourselves with civilised-like language, and with French-like manners and customs, we are

here, and what is left for us [to do] to deserve staying here [in France]?” (Ben Jelloun, 1996:117; translated from French by the author)

NOTES

1. Described by Bourdieu as a catastrophic experience of social surgery, “the war made a clean sweep of a civilisation which we only can speak about today as part of the past” (see Bourdieu, 1974: 123; translated from French).
2. On the intellectual debate about Algerian war of revolution see Le Sueur (2001).
3. This symbolic sporting victory intervened after the (first) official visit, from 10 to 12 April 1975, of the president of the French Republic, Valéry Giscard d’Estang, to independent Algeria.
4. In April 1958, Mekhloufi (named by Boudjedra 1981, as ‘le footbaleur de la révolution’ in a novel dedicated to the FLN team) abandoned the French national team, which was preparing for the World Cup finals in Sweden and instantly became an Algerian national symbol. A few months earlier he had been part of a French team that won the world military soccer competition in Buenos Aires on Bastille Day, 14 July 1957. (See Lanfranchi and Wahl, 1996; Amara and Henry, 2004)
5. Through institutionalised channels, such as the act of voting as well as participation in political and other associative (and non-political) activities.
6. The school system in Britain, which is not considered “laïque” in the French term, functions according to another logic, that reflects the disassociation between citizenship and nationality (see Kepel : 1994).
7. The core justifications of cultural differentiation is based particularly on presumed attitudinal differences toward separation of religion and state (see Lamont et al., 2002).
8. At the time of writing this article, the Algerian President Bouteflika has asked the French government to officially recognise its crimes against humanity in Algeria as a precondition for the signing of traité d’amitié between the two countries. “Bouteflika persiste et signe, La colonisation française a été brutale et génocidaire”, Liberté, Edition N° 4145 du Lundi 08 Mai 2006.
9. To increase the foreignness of the Arabo-Islamic cultures of pre-colonial Algeria, Arabic was declared as a foreign language , in French-Algeria.
10. French language has become, as the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine has said, one of the spoils of war.
11. The majority of the names of ‘indigenous’ clubs began with the words ‘club Musulman’, or ‘Union sportive Musulmane’. Islam was thus a fundamental element and symbol of differentiation, between Muslim and non-Muslim (European settlers) clubs.
12. The Arabic, Berber and French languages are all connected to the country’s history and culture. For Berger (1998: 61) “many Algerians, perhaps the majority, live in several languages, often switching from one to the other in the same sentence. To deny Algerians the possibility of being at the same time Arabophone and Berberophone, or Berberophone and Francophone, might amount to denying them the very possibility of being Algerian”.
13. For instance, Le Matin newspaper is no longer in the market and at the time of writing its director had been in jail since 14 June 2004 for “financial infraction”. He was released on 14th June 2006.
14. Zidane and Dahleb because of their creativity and soccer performance have become the symbols of “plural Algeria”, and not that of “plural France”.
15. La Marseillaise faced the same protest by the supporters of FC Bastia (from Corsica) in the French Cup final against L’Orient held on 12 May 2002. In this

- form of protest, supporters showed their objection to Chirac's policy regarding Corsica's nationalist (separatist) movement.
16. The first time that an official game was interrupted before its term since the creation of the French Soccer Federation in 1904 (Gastaut, Y. Les soccereurs algériens en France a l'épreuve des identités nationales, <http://www.wearesoccer.org>).
 17. For similar works on understanding peace after post-conflict see Pouliny (2004).
 18. This involves also the negotiation of the meaning (codes, beliefs, values) of nationality, collective 'self', social ties, religion, solidarity, the organization of collective work .
 19. "You could read in Liberation's front page "France–Algeria, after forty years of stoppage time", Marianne responded by naming those who were involved in the interruption of the game as "boys of divorce" (between France and Algeria) whereas Le Monde regarded the match of reconciliation between France and Algeria is still on" (Gastaut, Y. <http://www.wearesoccer.org>).
 20. For some the arabisation policy has been imposed and over-politicised by the regime to maintain its control of political life.
 21. See the work of Ricoeur (translated in 2004) on history and memory and the notion of (institutionalised) inertia, selective memory and even forgetfulness.
 22. They do not express either their full belonging for social and historical considerations to "French culture" nor to their culture of origin.
 23. It should be mentioned here that the war of resistance in Algeria was not exclusively a war between 'Muslims' and 'Christian' French, because there were many Christians who fought for Algerian independence and many Muslims fought against independence. Although reaffirming Islamic identity as a form of differentiation and resistance was important against the colonial order because of its ambiguous game of defining colonialism in Algeria as a secular (civilising mission) endeavour and at the same imposing on Algerians (the indigenous population) a denial of their Islamic identity as a condition to be accepted as full citizens (not indigenous) in the colonial society.
 24. It was only in 1998 that the French Parliament recognised that what happened between 1954 and 1962 in the "Algerian territory" was not an internal conflict but a war. This recognition was a setback with the recent French Parliament's voting on 23 February 2005 on article 4 of law n° 2005-158 which glorified the positive enterprise of French colonialism (the article was abrogated by presidential decision on February 16, 2006).

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