

Chapter 1

French Discourses of Empire

The particular shape and characteristics of French postcolonial discourse today cannot be understood without an exploration of the specific historical legacy of French imperialism and colonialism and the discourses or ideologies through which these processes were articulated and rationalised. This chapter will highlight a number of key issues and contradictions, some of which still have a bearing on present difficulties.

The French Empire did not develop in a steady linear progression, but passed through a number of distinct stages in its history, or rather we should say their histories, in which each stage was marked by a clear setback, a defeat or loss, which, temporarily at least, put a brake on the process of expansion. One can distinguish, broadly speaking, three distinct phases: (1) from the early sixteenth century to the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815; (2) from 1830 (the conquest of Algiers) to 1870 (the fall of the Second Empire); and (3) the period of imperialist expansion under the Third Republic from 1875 to the culmination of the decolonisation process with Algerian independence in 1962. Each of these phases had its own specific features, in terms of the nature of the economic, political and military forces at play and the relations within which they operated. The different historical stages were also characterised by very different rationalisations of the whole imperial undertaking. Thus each phase was characterised by a specific set of discourses or ideologies, which had developed in tune with the times and historical conditions and which were used in the different stages to rationalise, or indeed to oppose, the process of colonial expansion (Girardet 1972; Ruscio 2002).

However, just as there was also an underlying continuum in the historical processes involved in the development of imperialism, in spite of the discontinuities, so too was there a strong element of continuity at the level of the ideas and discourses, in which earlier forms retained their power to influence and shape the new forms of later periods.

The First Phase of Modern French Imperialism (Early Sixteenth Century to 1815)

The first stage coincided with similar attempts by other European powers at the beginning of the modern period to expand beyond their own borders into the so-called 'New World', Africa and the East, to bring back gold, silver, spices and other riches (Ferro 1996). The acquisition of natural resources, extracted minerals, agricultural produce and artefacts through various forms of trade and plunder, characterised by a greater or lesser use of force and deception, soon developed into new forms of agricultural production overseas in some of the territories, particularly in the Americas and the Caribbean. Colonial entrepreneurs of a new type thus took over from the older seafaring adventurers and privateers, with the intention of getting involved in the production process itself and developing it along new lines, through the establishment of vast plantations for the production of tropical or semi-tropical produce, often of new products that would become crucial for mass consumption back home, such as sugar, cotton and coffee. These new operations in the Americas and the Caribbean depended on the development of the slave trade into an operation of hitherto unheard-of scale and the transportation of slave labour to work the plantations. At the same time, colonial settlement by European settlers was taking place in what were sometimes known as 'virgin territories', and therefore seen as ripe opportunities for the enterprising settlers, willing to leave their homeland, often under the pressures of poverty and persecution, to start anew in a strange and foreign land. In this way, vast tracts of the North American continent were colonised by French settlers in what came to be known as 'New France'.

All of these endeavours were inspired by the sense of opportunities for making money or a better life, opportunities that were there for the taking or creating. There was no shortage of arguments for the validation of such enterprises. In the case of France, the conquests had been carried out in the name of the greater glory of the French king and the development of the earthly reign of Christendom. It was the French king François I who sent the Italian sailor Giovanni da Verrazano, to North America to attempt to find a route through to the Pacific in 1524/25. He also sent off the Breton sailor Jacques Cartier in 1534 to search for the north-west passage to Asia and explore the opportunities for riches in the Americas. Cartier is credited with 'discovering' much of Canada, claiming possession of the islands of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon in the name of the French Crown in 1535, for instance. However, attempts in 1555 to establish French settlements in Brazil, at Rio de Janeiro and elsewhere were strongly resisted by the Spanish and Portuguese, and it was not until 1605 with the founding of Port Royal in the territory of Acadia (present-day Nova Scotia), followed by the founding of Quebec in 1608 by Samuel de Champlain, with the support of the king, Henri IV, subsequently to become the capital of French Canada, or 'New France', that the French really developed a foothold. Further territory was claimed in what is now the southern United States. The former Jesuit, explorer Robert Cavelier de La Salle, famously named Louisiana after Louis XIV in 1682, and a colony was established there in 1699 by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville,

born in 'New France', but serving as an officer in the French navy. Settlement began on the South American coast, in what is now French Guiana, from 1624 and colonies were founded on the Caribbean islands of Saint Kitts (1627), Martinique and Guadeloupe (1635), Saint Lucia (1650) and Saint-Domingue (1664). In Africa, the French set up trading posts along the Senegalese coast from 1624.

Yet, from the outset, there were certain features that distinguished the form that French overseas expansion was to take from that of other European powers, especially its arch-rival, England. Not least of these was the role that the state, the Church and the armed forces were to play in the colonial enterprise. Where the driving force of British expansion overseas had been the mercantile activity of its entrepreneurs, in France's case the interests of state and the extension of its political and military battles with other European powers on the European continent and especially with its island neighbour were to prove at least an equally potent factor and possibly reflected in part the relative lack of political influence of the merchant class in pre-Revolutionary France. It was Louis XIV's minister, Colbert, who founded the French East India Company (*Compagnie des Indes Orientales*) in 1664, which was to set up colonies on the Indian Ocean islands of the *Ile de Bourbon* (*Réunion*) (1664), *Ile Royale* (*Ile de France*, now *Mauritius*) (1718) and the *Seychelles* (1756), as well as on the Indian mainland, beginning with *Chandernagore* in Bengal in 1673. Further colonies were established at *Pondicherry* in 1674, *Yanam* in 1723, *Mahe* in 1725 and *Karikal* in 1739. Missionaries, such as *Père Labat*, played an active part in the acquisition of territory in Canada, Louisiana and the Caribbean, and the Church worked closely with the organs of state.

The role of the Church in the formulation of the *Code Noir* by Colbert for Louis XIV in 1685 (later renewed in a second version under Louis XV in 1724) was especially significant.¹ The Code set out the regulatory framework for the institution of slavery and the slave trade, down to the finest detail (Sala-Molins 1987). It claimed in the Preamble, that it was motivated by the need to maintain the authority of the king and the 'discipline of the Catholic Church', as well as the welfare of the slaves. The *Code Noir* proclaimed that all slaves should be baptised and instructed in the Catholic religion (Article 2) and that no other religion would be tolerated (Article 3). Indeed, the very first article orders the expulsion of all Jews from the island colonies. At the same time, it institutionalised the status of the slaves as the property of their masters.

The role of soldier-adventurers in India was also especially significant. Thus, while both British and French attempts to expand were driven forward by the need to establish new trading posts and settlements, the political imperative to score points against their rivals and defeat them in military battles assumed perhaps an even greater significance in the case of the French. The military exploits of *La Bourdonnais*, a French naval officer and administrator from Saint Malo, who operated in India and the Indian Ocean islands, rivalled those of the man he came to perceive as his enemy, *Joseph François Dupleix*. As Governor of *Chandernagore* from 1731, then Governor-General of India from 1742 until his recall to France in 1754, *Dupleix* vied with the British for control of India, particularly through a

policy of local alliances, political manoeuvring and intrigue and scored significant military success in the south.

In spite of their efforts, however, the French did not come out of these various overseas wars well. Acadia was lost to the English and became Nova Scotia, as a result of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, resulting in the traumatic displacement of more than 10,000 French-Acadians, the ‘Cajuns’, to Louisiana in 1755, still a vivid part of the folk memory, although many subsequently returned (Maillet et al. 1984). The French finally lost the battle with the British for the control of India and Canada, as a result of the Seven Years War, which ended in 1763, also the year of the death of Duplex, who had ultimately been beaten at his own game by Robert Clive. This year also saw the cession of Louisiana to the Spanish, although it was briefly returned to France in 1800. In 1803, however, Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States.

The loss of territory in the ‘New France’ of North America, as well as the loss of India were both felt keenly, though in different ways. There were attempts to find new ways for French colonialism to proceed. Yves Bénot, for instance, has argued that the Abbé Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes* was probably written to order, commissioned by the Choiseul ministry to assemble a body of knowledge in support of this policy (Raynal (1770)/1981). It is interesting that a section of this work, attributed to Diderot, argued notably for the civilising power of trade:

It was there that, finally, seeing spread out before me these beautiful lands in which science and the arts now flourish, where the darkness of barbarism had for so long held sway, I asked myself: who dug these canals? Who drained these plains? Who founded these towns? Who brought together, clothed and civilised these peoples? Upon which all the enlightened men in their midst replied with one voice: it is trade, it is trade. (Raynal (1770)/1981: 15)

In the case of India, French nostalgia for a mostly mythical paradise lost was to become a long-standing feature of the relationship between France and India, down to the present day (see Chapter 8). Moreover, the subversive character of much of French activity in India, aimed at undermining British power, was to continue to mark a particular kind of French discourse, which presented France as the champion of the colonised underdog and still has its echoes today.

In the North American context, the linchpin was provided by the American Revolution, in which France naturally took the side of the American colonists against the British. Its own Revolution in 1789 was to have an even greater impact on what was left of France’s colonial empire. First, it provided the impetus for the successful revolt of the black slaves in the 1790s in France’s most profitable colony of the time, Saint-Domingue, which went on to become the independent state of Haiti. Secondly, it led directly to the takeover of power by the military leader Napoleon and the establishment of an empire in mainland France itself, which, apart from the Egyptian expeditions and other unfulfilled ambitions, was primarily preoccupied with extending its conquests to other European territories, unlike its British rival, which,

as an island power, necessarily focused on the domination of overseas territories, and, moreover, overseas territories that, with the exception of Ireland, were outside Europe. The importance of the Napoleonic system of government and the impact of the First Empire on the overseas colonies, in terms of historical events and processes, but also in terms of the colonial systems of governance and long-lasting ideological effects, have not received sufficient attention to date. We shall return to this question later, as well as to the ideological conflicts that arose during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods in respect of the colonies and, particularly, the institution of slavery – conflicts that were fought through in desperate struggles.

For the moment, suffice it to say that, by the end of the First Empire and Napoleonic period in 1815, the territory and trading posts that France had acquired all over the world had largely been lost, as a result of rivalry and wars, particularly with the British. Napoleon's defeat on the European continent led to a settlement, with the Treaties of Paris of 1814 and 1815, following on from the Congress of Vienna, in which a small number of its former colonies were restored to France, though this amounted to nothing more than the Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, Guiana, the Ile de Bourbon (Réunion) and trading posts in Senegal. Henceforth, these would be referred to as the 'old colonies'. All that remained of the French presence in India were the five trading posts, *les comptoirs de l'Inde*: Chandernagore in Bengal on the river Hooghly, about 30 km north of Calcutta, Pondicherry on the Coromandel coast, 160 km south of Chennai (Madras), Karikal, just south of Pondicherry, Yanam (Yanaoun), further north on the Andhra Pradesh coast, and Mahe, on the western Malabar coast (Sen 1971; Annasse 1975; Association Les Comptoirs de l'Inde/CHEAM 1994; Le Tréguilly and Morazé 1995; Vincent 1995; Weber 1996).

The Second Wave (1830–70)

The second wave began in 1830 with the key conquest of Algiers, leading to the takeover of much of the North African territory. The reasons for the invasion appear to have been fairly ad hoc, to provide something of a diversion for a monarchy in trouble, though a short-term pretext was provided when the Dey of Algiers struck the French consul with a fly-whisk and a longer-term one by the wish to curtail the activities of pirates operating out of Algiers.

Moreover, the brief interlude of the Second Republic (1848–1852) brought the political dimension of the debates once more to the fore, culminating in the second abolition of slavery in 1848, with Victor Schoelcher as Under-Secretary for Colonies, and the institution of universal manhood suffrage in the colonies. These measures, which included representation in the national assemblies of metropolitan France for the colonies, meant that the 'old colonies' had been brought into the logic of a process of assimilation, although representation of the colonies did not necessarily mean representation of the colonised for many years to come.² In any event, there were setbacks in the actual implementation of these measures, as a result of the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon and the establishment of the Second Empire.

This led to a resurgence of militaristic colonial ambitions, leading to some further territorial gains, with Cochin China added to the list of conquests. It also led to some notable failures, such as the ill-fated attempt to install a puppet regime in Mexico (1861–67). Under the Second Empire, there was also a reversal of policy on some issues relating to colonialism and modifications to the accompanying discourse. Some of the tensions between the two strands of colonial policy, which were later to develop into the opposition of ‘assimilation’ and ‘association’, have their roots in this period, although in reality it was never a case of either/or, but a recourse to different approaches depending on the particular circumstances.

The new colonial conquests, particularly those in North Africa, opened up the way for new approaches to the administration of these peoples and territories. If there were attempts at the beginning to use traditional structures in a more indirect form of control, these pragmatic arrangements were replaced by the system put into place in 1845, under the Governor, Marshal Bugeaud. The system set up a threefold division of the territory into civil, mixed and military authorities. A key element was the ‘Arab bureaux’, which, under the aegis of the army, devolved a whole slice of administration and tax collection to local functionaries of one type or another. These were abandoned in 1856, largely because of problems of corruption, and the civil authority took over (Girardet 1993). Military authority and influence remained a key element in the governance of Algeria, however. Louis-Napoleon himself harboured ambitions to rule Algeria as an Arab kingdom, in which the Arabs would have the right to their own autonomous territory, from which European settlers would be excluded. In this scenario, he would be Emperor of the Arabs, as well as of the French. These proposals were strongly opposed by the colonial settlers and very little came of the emperor’s attempts to cast himself in the role of ‘friend of the Arabs’ (Spillmann 1981). In any event, the measures that were taken were soon to be overturned by the Third Republic, which took up the policy of assimilation with enthusiastic vigour (Girardet 1993) and implemented measures to give the old colonies representation in France, as well as through local government, though not without retaining their status as colonies.

The Third Phase (1875–1962)

The real expansion took place much later in the nineteenth century, from the 1870s onward, when Britain and France practically carved up Africa between them in a division of spoils sanctioned by the Berlin Conference of 1885. France also increased its hold over Indochina, although it never recovered its earlier influence in India or other parts of the globe. This third stage, which lasted until the decolonisation of the post-war period and early 1960s, marks the real heyday of the French Empire (Andrew and Kanya-Forstner 1981). By 1914, there were sixty million people under French imperial control and over ten million square miles of territory. There were further gains at the end of the First World War, when the French gained League of Nations mandates over the former Turkish territories of Syria and Lebanon, and also acquired African territory, previously controlled by the Germans, in Togo and Cameroon.

The arguments and debates about the empire were not restricted to the realm of politics (Chafer and Sackur 2001). During the course of the nineteenth century, with the development of the modern nation-state and modern forms of French nationalism, the cultural realm became increasingly important, as the notion of the superiority of French culture and civilisation became more and more widespread. Economic arguments also had their part to play. In particular, following the loss of the first overseas territories, one of the main arguments against any further colonial adventures had been their ruinous cost (Spillmann 1981). Voltaire himself had earlier used this argument in *Candide*, bemoaning the expense of the war over possession of Acadia, ‘a few acres of snow’, which exceeded what all of Canada was worth, though this has often been misquoted (Voltaire (1759)/2003). Moreover, after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in 1870, the anticolonial camp found new force in the case for concentrating resources on building up the home front, against their powerful enemy across the Rhine. However, the economic arguments that were to prevail were those put forward, not against, but in support of the necessity of colonial expansion to provide a safety valve for the economy, as the Third Republic minister Jules Ferry was to put it, most notably in his speech to the Chambre des députés of 28 March 1884. Colonial policy was the daughter of industrial policy, he said. France needed colonies to provide new and expanding markets, as well as to act as a source of cheap raw materials and labour power.³ Paul Leroy-Beaulieu also made the economic case for colonial expansion, as in his book *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Leroy-Beaulieu 1874). He saw the colonies as an outlet for surplus population, products and capital. Léon Gambetta, amongst others, also argued that colonial expansion could be seen as compensation for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine (Ager 1996).

These were some of the arguments with which opponents and supporters of the expansion of empire carried out the debates. Once the empire had established itself with a firm foothold in North and Equatorial Africa and in Indochina, in addition to the outposts of the Caribbean and the islands of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the dominant discourse became more political. After all, the heyday of the French Empire coincided with the entrenchment of the Republic in mainland France, in the form of the Third Republic, which still remains the longest-lasting Republic that France has yet seen. If the earlier explorers, priests, merchant- and soldier-adventurers had carried out their conquests to the greater glory of God and King, the more modern radicals and Republicans of this period raised the French flag all over the globe to the greater glory of the Republic.

The common premise underlying all the discourses of empire was a fundamental redefinition of the relations between the countries involved, in which the realities of the precolonial past were obfuscated. Thus, all previous achievements of the colonised countries were overlooked, played down or distorted. Economic development, scientific discoveries, mastery of technology, cultural diversity, political and military might – all disappear from accounts of these countries’ histories to date. They were to appear henceforth as backward outposts, on the fringes of the new historical narrative of the planet’s development.

The colonising power was presented as marking a new stage in the development of the countries concerned. As such, it was the harbinger of technological, economic, political and cultural progress, the agent of change for the salvation of the peoples concerned, who had previously been wallowing in their backwardness and obscurantist ways. Hope lay only through the advent of modernism, and the imperial powers had a monopoly on modernity. Henceforth the only value would be that added through imports. The whole enterprise was of course couched in high-sounding rhetoric. If the British forte was to present itself at the forefront of economic and technological development, with the construction of railways as its major trump card, it did not hesitate also to promote its own particular brand of paternalistic moralism. The French, on the other hand, drew on their own characteristic source of political modernity, with the trumpeting of the values of the Revolution and the Republic, the universalism of which suited the enterprise very nicely.

French colonial discourse was not a monolithic entity, but was characterised by different strands and tendencies (Roberts 1963), such as the ‘associationism’ linked to Lyautey and strongest in the protectorates, like Tunisia (established in 1881) and Morocco (established in 1911), where the French used existing administrative structures to rule indirectly. This ‘associationism’ differentiated itself from the dominant tendency proclaiming the virtues of ‘assimilation’, while the latter enjoyed an almost hegemonic status in the full colonies, at least in theory. As Gambetta said in a speech at the Palais-Bourbon on 10 February 1878, ‘the principle which has primacy in all our work, which should rule our decisions and govern all our thinking, is the principle of assimilation’ (Gambetta 1883: 102).

It was in the name of the Republic that the French colonialists were bringing the universal values of the Enlightenment to the colonised peoples they ruled. The Rights of Man were trumpeted as universally applicable, as were the Republican principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. There is perhaps no better example of the fervour with which the doctrine of assimilation was promoted than the speech made by Gambetta at a banquet commemorating the abolition of slavery, held on 5 May 1881, in the presence of Victor Schoelcher, in which he claimed that ‘France will never be big enough nor its population sufficient’. Any increase in the number of its citizens was a way of increasing the grandeur of France. The abolition of slavery itself was seen in this light: ‘The fact that Frenchmen were created on this day, which we now commemorate, is sufficient cause for its memory to be a supreme cause for rejoicing and reparation.’ (Gambetta 1910: 166). He proposed a toast to the *Français d’outre-mer*:

without distinction of colour, class or caste; the Declaration of the Rights of Man – and this is our Gospel – did not distinguish between people according to the colour or the rank, where they have been placed by fate on the social ladder. This is what gave it its solemn, sovereign character, even as it extended the scope of our national regeneration: instead of saying ‘the rights of the Frenchman and the citizen’, it said ‘the rights of man and the citizen’, thereby signifying that whoever should claim membership of the human family, by

dint of his organic body and conformity as part of the closely linked series of beings, had, by right of birth and similarity, to be admitted to participation in human freedom and dignity. (Gambetta 1910: 166)

Indeed, he also saluted the ‘overseas French’ for their contribution to ensuring the victory of the Republic, adding to the number of Republican supporters in the National Assembly (Gambetta 1910: 167). He then ended by encouraging them to demand ever more ‘assimilation’:

ever closer assimilation to the mother country, assimilation which will not much longer be denied to you ... You are in possession of the same freedoms as France, you may perhaps think that they are not sufficiently complete, I believe that, for the moment, they are enough to be able to prepare the rest, and they will shortly receive their necessary complement.

The assimilation that you demanded, you have already obtained most of what you asked for; one more effort, one more vote, one more representation, and I am sure that between France overseas and mainland France there will no longer be any disparity: there will only be one France, the true, the only France, and there will only be one flag, the one to which I raise my glass, gentlemen, the national flag. (Gambetta 1910: 168)

We shall see that everyone in the Republican camp was not in fact in agreement that the Rights of Man covered the colonised; for some, there were limits to how far their universality could be stretched. Moreover, we shall see that the division of France into two Frances did not disappear with the triumph of the Third Republic, but would re-emerge through the following years. This did not mean, however, that there were no differences between the British and French brands of empire. In a speech to the *Chambre des députés* the following year, 18 July 1882, Gambetta made the case for cooperation with Britain with regard to Egypt, in spite of (or because of) the rivalry that existed between the two powers and, in particular, their different conceptions of the nation and the colonies:

remember that the English have the habit of differentiating between peoples. On the one hand, there are those peoples, which they consider to be nations of a race similar to their own and able to benefit from the institutions of free England; Australia and Canada are countries where there really is a people with successive generations and social strata, with its own traditions, its own language and its already constituted aptitudes. To these, the English give institutions, which gradually lead to the emancipation of these races and make of them, as it were, the younger sisters of England. But there are other races, it would appear, which, in the eyes of England, have always had the characteristic of being dominated, of living under the crack of the whip, and which are only capable of becoming a people, provided that they are not exposed to all types of demands and pressures coming from outside. (Gambetta 1910: 268)

For the French, on the other hand, there was only one nation; it was this nation that had the right to act in Egypt, to maintain European influence and keep it away from ‘Muslim fanaticism and the chimera of revolution’ (Gambetta 1910: 272).

As a further, concrete illustration of the difference between the approaches of the French and the British, the gateway still stands that used to separate the French colony of Chandernagore in Bengal from British India; it still bears the motto of the French Republic: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. It is worth comparing this with the inscription carved by Lutyens on the gateway of the Secretariats in New Delhi (quoted in Dalrymple 1993: 83):

Liberty will not descend to a people;
A people must raise themselves to liberty;
It is a blessing which must be earned
Before it can be enjoyed.

The contrast between the two discourses is neatly illustrated. However, did this then mean that the French colonies represented a Republican’s vision of paradise on earth for the colonised peoples?

The French Republican Discourse of Empire

The reality existed in what was more akin to a schizophrenic relationship to the dominant colonial discourse. For, if all could aspire to be equal citizens of the Republic, with full political rights, in practice most remained colonial subjects, with only duties and few, if any, rights (Suret-Canale 2001). Moreover, this was not just a contradiction between discourse and reality; the contradiction was also integral to the discourse itself, which maintained the same essential dualism, that had characterised earlier differentiations between Christians and heathen, freemen and chattel slaves, whites and blacks, Europeans and ‘natives’, civilisation and barbarity. Indeed, these forms of the binary divide did not go away; they were subsumed beneath new layers of discourse.

Thus, the distinction between citizen and subject did not go unacknowledged in the heyday of empire; in fact, it was clearly spelled out, as fundamental to the constitutional theory of the Third Republic. As Etienne Balibar has pointed out (Balibar 1992), a clear distinction was made between French citizens and those who were not members of the national collective, whether as foreigners residing on French soil or as ‘natives’ in the colonies and protectorates. Not only were the latter defined as subject to the power of the French state, but this power was defined as external to them, since they were not part of the collective body that constituted its sovereignty.⁴ Moreover, this distinction was paralleled by a clear divide between the law as such, *la Loi*, over which all citizens had the right to exercise control through their representative bodies, and legislative authority outside the law, *le pouvoir réglementaire*, which concerned the day-to-day management of the state’s function of maintaining public order, as well as the administration of the colonies. While these

categories were, and still are, also applicable to metropolitan France, the latter played a particularly important role in the administration of the colonies.⁵ Indeed, as Jean Suret-Canale has pointed out, the constitutional position of the colonies was, under the Third Republic and until 1946, largely what it had been under the Second Empire, since the ‘Senatus-Consulte’ of 3 May 1854, which decreed that the colonies should be governed by imperial decree until further legislation, never forthcoming, was passed (Suret-Canale 2001).

The reality of the situation of the colonial ‘subject’ was thus far removed from what appeared to be the premises of the discourse of assimilation. However, the discourse of assimilation should also not be confused with a belief in the fundamental equality of races and peoples. Indeed, it will become clear that even the most vociferous proponents of assimilation sometimes had strongly held convictions based on the premise of the inequality of races. We should note here that Jules Ferry and Léon Blum have both been cited by Jean-Marie Le Pen in support of his own view of the inequality of the races (Taguieff 1997).

There are, thus, a number of misapprehensions with regard to the doctrine of assimilation. Basically, it was, first and foremost, a policy option for administering the colonised peoples, not a philosophical or political theory of colonialism. This meant, on the one hand, that it could coexist as part of a world view based on diverse assumptions regarding the scope of universalism or the extent of the applicability of equality and human rights. Moreover, in spite of the fact that assimilationism formed an important strand of colonial doctrine, it was neither the only strand, nor did it, in fact, correspond that often to actual practice.

More representative of this reality was the ‘Code de l’indigénat’, developed in Algeria in 1881 and then extended elsewhere, which made the ‘natives’ subject to summary administrative justice for a whole range of offences, including failure to show respect to the representatives of French authority (Suret-Canale 2001). A clear illustration of the continuity of the forms governing colonial relations, this was a latter-day version of the Code Noir.

Very few of the colonised subjects could actually attain the rank of citizen, which was limited to a small elite who had successfully negotiated the successive hurdles of the French education system and passed the assimilation test. In Algeria, which was not even considered a colony but an integral part of France,⁶ the Arab or Berber population could only acquire full citizenship rights if they renounced the Muslim *statut personnel*, which in effect meant giving up their religion.⁷ Even when the limited right to vote was conceded after the Second World War in a dual college system, one European vote was made the equivalent of eight Algerian votes. As Benjamin Stora (1992: 19), among others, has pointed out, the Republican principle of equality, encapsulated in the notion of ‘one man, one vote’, was not respected.

Yet, even in the case of those who appeared to have sincerely held beliefs in an assimilationist universalism based on equality of rights, the discourse showed clear symptoms of schizophrenia. This comes out through two contradictions, which do not have merely historical interest, but are at the root of some of the most contentious ideological debates of our own time.

The first is the contradiction between the universalist discourse and its use by the particular nation-state of France, together with its embeddedness in a national political culture, with a specific national language. Indeed, Antoine de Rivarol, in his *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française* of 1784, had already made it clear that the universality of the French language was based on very particular, national characteristics, such as its political institutions, its climate, the particular characteristics of its people and, above all, its image in the world.⁸

This contradiction came out very clearly in debates around assimilation. Gambetta, one of the principal advocates of colonial assimilation, as we have seen, could insist, at the same time, when talking about assimilation, on the absolute 'Frenchness' of the task at hand (*'nous venons faire ici une œuvre absolument française'* (Gambetta 1883: 102).

The fortunes of the reputation of the seventeenth-century French philosopher, Descartes, his ratings and image over the last four hundred years, could serve as a concrete illustration of the ambiguity at the heart of the universalist world view. On the one hand, Descartes has come to symbolise the French nation itself; thus André Glucksmann could publish his book on the philosopher under the title, *Descartes, c'est la France* (1987). Yet, in 1765, the Academicians were already vying with each other to prove that Descartes did not belong to France alone, but was the gift of France to the universe. Little by little, a view of Descartes took shape from the end of the eighteenth century as the real founder of modern freedom, with his doctrine of radical doubt and fundamental reliance on the sole power of human reason. As such, he became the bogeyman of the anti-Republican and ultra-Catholic Right, one of the key symbols of the *franco-français* struggles and synonymous with France, whether as an idealised figure or as the target of abuse. While Victor Cousin could eulogise the profound Frenchness of Cartesianism as 'a fruit of the soil, a profoundly and exclusively French œuvre in both its form and content' (quoted in *Le Monde des livres*, 29 March 1996: VI), its repudiation by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, both by the radical Right for its subversive undermining of authority and by some parts of the revolutionary Left for a petty preoccupation with order and abstraction, did little to detract from its incarnation as the symbol of French universalism. In 1946, the year in which Sartre was to rehabilitate Descartes as the apostle of existential freedom in his anthology of his texts (Sartre 1946a), Maurice Thorez was to portray him, in the name of the French Communist Party, as one of the factors inextricably linked to Frenchness and, furthermore, a pioneer of socialism and Marxism!⁹

The second characteristic feature of the ambiguity of the Republican discourse was the fact that the subsequent national liberation struggles tended to be articulated in terms of the same modernist discourse as that used by the colonial oppressor. Imperialism couched in the discourse of modernity produced its own ideological, if not political, gravediggers. The first generation of leaders of the newly independent states were, indeed, to be found amongst the small elite who had been thoroughly schooled in the ideas of the French Enlightenment and steeped in the discourse of the French Republic. It is thus no surprise that the development of what has come

to be known as *La Francophonie* built on this legacy, though not in a straightforward, linear fashion.

The remainder of this chapter will develop further a general overview of the way in which French Republican discourse overlaid the realities of empire. In particular, some of the following questions will be addressed: how far this discourse corresponded to earlier discourses of the Revolutionary period; whether any of the contradictions already apparent at the time of the Revolution were resolved, or apparently resolved, by the time of Third Republic imperialist expansion; and what the new elements were that developed over time and specifically into the postcolonial period.

Revolution, Republic and Nation

The key notions underpinning the French Republic derive, of course, from the ideas that were developed in theoretical form during the prologue to the French Revolution and then concretised and given practical content during the course of that revolution.

At the heart of the Republican world view is the notion of national sovereignty, the nation as the sole source of the legitimacy of political power. Also known as sovereignty of the people, *souveraineté populaire*, this is a fundamental principle of the democratic world view, that political power is only legitimate when it derives from the people and is used for the people's benefit. It is a notion in which the people and the nation are one and the same. Yet how are they defined? How is it determined who constitutes the nation/people – who is to be included and who excluded? These issues had already been debated by the Enlightenment philosophers, reflecting on the principles and practices of antiquity. Rousseau discussed the Greek practices of exclusion and even the practice of killing any foreigner found in the political assemblies of the people, deemed necessary to ensure that the will of the people could be accurately expressed (Rousseau 1762).

The rise of nationalism and the nation-state began with the growth of capitalism at the beginning of the modern period and reached its apogee in the course of the nineteenth century, as far as Europe is concerned. There was no one model of the nation-state. The French Revolution instituted a new model of the nation, alongside an exclusivist, ethnically defined one, with its roots in the *Ancien Régime*. For all the similarities in basic ideology, the new American nation was profoundly different in character from the modernist conception that came to the fore in France. Britain had its own particular, synthetic model. Germany's again would be different, hovering between an attraction on the part of some progressive nationalists to the French Republic, but ultimately surrendering to the siren call of romantic ties to the blood of the race and an almost ethnic symbiosis with the soil, forests and rivers of the territory. In the definition of German nationality, the ties of blood were the sole criterion; only ethnic Germans, wherever their place of birth, were eligible for German nationality. This notion has only recently been challenged (*Le Monde*, 16 October 1998).

The striking new characteristic of the French conception of the nation and the people that developed at the time of the Revolution as the practical expression of the

Enlightenment vision of thinkers like Rousseau was its representation as a political union. In its pure Republican essence, the nation was conceived as the union of citizens. In other words, the nation was not the sum total of the individuals living on a particular territory and linked by historical, family, racial or other ethnic ties. Family ties, leading to birthrights, were seen as a particular source of inequality by Enlightenment thinkers.¹⁰ The nation was rather a political body, in which citizens with the same political rights and duties coexisted in absolute equality. This equality could only be conceived by the exclusion of real inequalities and differences from this public, political domain into a separate private domain. It was to the latter that the real differences between individuals were relegated, including differences based on family origins, economic disparities, geographical, cultural, religious and other factors. This implied a high level of abstraction, particularly with regard to the concept of the citizen, who existed only in his political capacity, in respect of his political rights and duties.

The French Republic does not allow for difference amongst its citizens. This abhorrence of difference is still a guiding principle of political debates in France today. One recent example was the controversy that arose in the spring of 1999 surrounding the revision of Article 3 of the Constitution to specify that there should be equality of men and women in the area of political representation (*la loi favorise l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et aux fonctions électives*) and the introduction into Article 4 of financial penalties for those parties that did not make efforts to achieve this. There was serious opposition to this, not so much by diehard defenders of male prerogatives, but by some stalwart Republicans, on the grounds that it introduced divisions into the sovereign people.¹¹

The question of gender difference and its relationship to Republicanism has been a problematic one from the beginning. Other manifestations of particularity and difference have been more straightforward. Thus, the irrelevance of kinship and territorial links to the Republican concept of the nation meant that, in theory, it was open to all. Indeed, in the early days of the French Revolution, it was possible for 'foreigners', such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, to become citizens of the French Republic. This open, assimilationist principle was to remain a dominant theme of the Republican discourse of nationhood to this day, although, as we shall see, exclusion is the inevitable counterpart of assimilation. The one cannot exist without the other.

In any event, the Republican view implied rather more than opening the doors of the French nation-state to all comers. Of even wider significance was the universalism upon which the whole Enlightenment discourse of the Republic and the nation had been founded. This meant essentially that the principles of the French Revolution were not applicable solely to the French. Liberty, equality and fraternity were proclaimed as the birthright of the whole human race and the Declaration of the Rights of Man was presented as a universal charter for all humankind. The differences that existed between real human individuals had no political significance.

Moreover, the notion of homogeneity was central to this concept of the nation, constituted by the union of citizens. The nation as unity of the people represented

not a consensus or majority view, resulting from the working out of the differences between individuals and interest groups, but was the expression of the will of the whole people, the 'general will' in Rousseau's terms (Rousseau 1762). At its most extreme, this view of the nation had, as its corollary, the position that the nation, as representative of the general will, could speak only with one voice, implying the need for unanimity as an outcome of all political debate by the representatives of the nation. Difference per se was excluded from the realm of a politics that was diametrically opposed to other theories of politics based on conflict and struggle between individuals, groups or classes. Quite how the single will of the nation was to emerge in unanimity was always problematic, and has, at various moments in the history of the French Republic, led to faith in what could almost be characterised as a form of mystical vision, such as that expressed by General de Gaulle in his famous speech at Bayeux in June 1946. Often this type of thinking has culminated in a single charismatic figure, such as de Gaulle himself, being endowed with the capacity to represent the whole nation.

Indeed, much of the current constitution is based on ideas such as these, which were at the root of the Gaullian vision. The role of the head of the French state was crucially defined by his role in representing the unity and will of the whole nation. Even the deputies of the National Assembly are each considered to be representatives of the whole nation, rather than of their particular constituencies; their mandate is a national one and involves no responsibility to their particular constituents.¹²

In practice, however, the unanimity required by this theory of the nation could rarely, if ever, be applied concretely and remained on the level of abstraction. The modern French Fifth Republic is itself a hybrid: de Gaulle's principles, which gave primacy to national unity, had to give way to accommodate the party-political conflicts inherent in the parliamentary aspects of the system. Moreover, the Republican conception of the nation, and particularly its inevitable embodiment in a strong, central state, was contested even in its origins by more liberal strains of Enlightenment thinking. These stressed the paramount importance of individual freedom over the national interest and saw the state as a necessary evil, whose power needed to be contained through a system of controls, as in Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers, set out in *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), where one power checks another power.¹³

In spite of these reservations, however, the basic elements of the Republican conception of the nation remain enshrined in the constitution. It still constitutes one essential element of the theoretical underpinning of the French Republic, even if it has always been contested by actual political practice.

Those looking for theoretical backing for a different view of the nation can, of course, refer to a much earlier political tradition, whose antecedents pre-date the Revolution. In *Ancien Régime* thinking, the nation was loosely defined in relation to the two terms of kinship and territory. This conception of the nation was built on local and regional identities, which do not stand in opposition to the national identity but are rather constitutive of it, providing the geographical and cultural heritage in which ancestral links to a particular piece of land are central. In other words, one's Frenchness is mediated through one's regional identity; one needs to be a Gascon or

a Breton and so on before one can be French. Thus, the French national community evolved over time along with the consolidation of a national, central power, which was prepared to go to war and fight to defend certain perceived 'national' interests. This French nation was defined as much by those it excluded, as by those who were included, unlike the Revolutionary concept, in which the nation was posited as inclusive and assimilationist, open to all potential political citizens of the Republic.

The importance of this earlier conception of the nation is not to be underestimated and, certainly, the theorists of the counter-revolution, such as Joseph de Maistre, with his *Considérations sur la France* (1797), *Du Pape* (1819) and *Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821), sought to develop the exclusivist concept of the nation in the post-Revolutionary period. The conflict between the modernist notion of the nation and the traditionalist one of ethnic and territorial ties, linked to the ideology of blood and soil, was to continue throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The importance of these two linked notions of blood and soil came increasingly to the fore, with the development of notions of racial purity and the importance of the bloodline and kinship ties on the one hand, as in Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853–55), and long-established, ancestral roots in a given territory on the other. This latter aspect was developed in the specific brand of nationalism promoted by Maurice Barrès, with its emphasis on the importance of *enracinement*, notably his *Les Déracinés* (1897). According to this version of nationhood, newcomers and itinerants were permanently excluded from the national community. The prime focus, however, was the exclusion of the Jews, as these ideas developed into a xenophobic anti-Semitism throughout the nineteenth century, culminating in the polarisation arising from the Dreyfus Affair. With the development of the empire, the same ideological tendencies developed into a chauvinistic racism, directed against the colonised peoples.

Some people have characterised the two types of nationalism, set out above, as either 'maternal' or 'paternal'. Paradoxically, Jean-Louis Lévy, in his essay on Dreyfus, attributes the maternal variety to Dreyfus himself, while claiming that most French Jews subscribed to the paternal variety, similar to that of the young Bonaparte, and one that looked to the future, to the abstract principles of the Revolution, rather than the visceral attachment to a nationalism with its roots in tradition and the past, characteristic of the maternal variety.¹⁴

The dichotomy between the two conceptions of nationhood was, of course, just one aspect of a broader conflict that counterpoised the Republican and the anti-Republican forces throughout the nineteenth century, with Vercingetorix and Clovis as the respective champions of the opposing camps.¹⁵ Yet, just as this conflict was not a simple bipolar opposition, but was punctuated by a series of compromises and attempts at creating hybrid forms of the political system, so also the question of nationhood should be viewed in all its complexity. There are internal issues and contradictions to be explored within the different conceptions, as well as changes and developments that were to take place under the impact of historical circumstances. Our concern here is with the problems associated with the modernist, political conception of the nation, associated with the Republican viewpoint.

The Fault-lines of the Revolutionary Principles

The universalism of the first Republican principles was always an ideological construct, with limited real practical application. For all the noble aspirations of inclusiveness and openness, the new French Republican model of the nation was flawed from the start. The pure, abstract notion of the nation as the union of the citizens was very soon tainted by such particularist and historically contingent considerations as the association with a specific language, a specific territory, specific national traditions and culture.¹⁶ Indeed, Balibar has gone further to suggest that these flaws are not unique to the French model, but that all historical forms of citizenship have been based on the principle of exclusion – of women, of slaves or, indeed, of partly ‘naturalised’ foreigners, since the political community is constituted as a state and also linked to a society (Balibar 1992: 113). Thus, the first-flush universalist idealism of the early Revolutionaries soon gave way to real restrictions. Indeed, some were already present from the outset in the flawed conception of the universal Rights of Man, which limited these political rights to the male half of the human species.

This should not be construed as a retrospective critique in the light of later feminist concerns. No sooner had the Declaration of the Rights of Man been published than the challenge to its pseudo-universalist scope was mounted with the publication in 1791 of Olympe de Gouges’s *Rights of Women*. The movement to extend political rights to women did not, of course, succeed; indeed, it was ruthlessly repressed (Godineau 1988). Olympe de Gouges was sent to the guillotine. Théroigne de Méricourt’s campaign for women to have their voice in the Revolution ended with her public humiliation and descent into madness.

The universality of political rights also came under challenge by the introduction of a property-based division of the citizen body into the two categories of active and passive citizens, the former enjoying full political rights as well as duties, the latter burdened only with duties.

In both these cases, the restrictions on the universalist principle were dictated not by logical flaws within the principle itself, which had served as a powerful slogan to mobilise the forces of the whole people as part of the Revolutionary struggle. It was rather the clash between the ideological principle and the reality of the historical balance of class forces and gender groups within the economy and society of the time. In both cases, alternative solutions that maintained the universalist principle were put forward by the movement for women’s rights, on the one hand, and the egalitarian wings of the Revolutionary movement, on the other, though not all members of these two movements necessarily supported the other’s case. Thus, the limitations referred to may be seen as failures to apply the principle in a given historical context, rather than as inherent flaws in the principle itself. In both cases, the challenges to the actual exclusions were doomed to repression and failure. This was not so with the most significant challenge to the French Revolutionary state, which took place not in mainland France itself, but in her richest colony of the time, Saint-Domingue (see Chapter 2).

The obfuscation in the name of universalist principles of the particular genesis of the Revolution and the Republic was convincing only if confined to the realm of the abstract ideal. In reality, the Revolution and the Republic came into being under the ideological

banner of universalism but in the specific local context of the French nation-state. This led inevitably to a sometimes dangerous conflation of the two, with the contingent circumstances of the birth of the modern universalist Republic in France seen as the justification for the imposition by France of this model on other peoples, from the Napoleonic conquests through to the expansion of empire under the flag of the Third Republic. Most seriously, the failure to recognise openly the actual particularism of their own French nation could lead to a refusal to acknowledge the particular claims of other peoples to national status. The Rights of Man did not extend to the Rights of Nations.

We shall have occasion to return to this key contradiction which is at the heart of one of the main French discourses of empire and which has left a continuing legacy of ideological ambivalence for the contemporary, 'postcolonial' world. Reality, however, always has a tendency to reassert its supremacy over ideology and discourse throughout the course of history. In the face of the abstract, universalist, all-inclusive political concept of the Republican nation, the concrete issue of the unity and defence of the particular national territory of France against attack by the enemies of the Revolution was soon one to be reckoned with. The imposition of the particular French language as the national language was similarly dictated by the practical need to unify a people speaking a number of different local and regional languages and dialects (Rickard 1989; Battye and Hintze 1992). Thus, the abstract political nation was never actually experienced in its pure, ideal form, but was linked from the outset with a really existing, concrete territorial and linguistic community.

Therefore, it was perhaps inevitable that the Republican model of nationhood would in reality be influenced by elements of the exclusionist model based on territory and kinship. This interaction and partial fusion were to become accentuated at the end of the nineteenth century with the establishment of the Third Republic, which took place formally in 1875.

The Evolution and Fusion of the Main Strands of Nineteenth-century Nationalism

The Third Republic adopted as its official ideology the political, inclusive model of the nation as the union of its citizens and reinforced the differentiation between the public domain of political life and public service, on the one hand, and the private domain of individual and family life, on the other. At the same time, it developed a more specifically French orientation, in which the self-definition of the French nation increasingly depended on the differences that were articulated in respect of other non-French nations. Thus it was that territorial, ethnic and cultural factors came to assume increasing importance in the nation's view of itself.

In no small measure, these developments were due to the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, culminating in the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and the continuing perception of the German neighbour as the most menacing threat to the French nation, as the significant Other in opposition to which French nationhood was defined.

Even so, the terms of the new self-identity retained a decidedly Republican form, in which the key positive concept of national unity was paramount. What was new

was the extension of this notion beyond the strictly political domain to encompass cultural elements in the formation of a new notion of national identity. This national identity assumed the existence of a homogeneous national culture, which the establishment of compulsory, free and secular public schooling by the National Education Minister Jules Ferry in 1881 was set to make a reality. The French language had been the official judicial and administrative language since the *Ordonnances de Villers-Cotteret* of 1539 and there had been significant efforts during the Revolution, most notably by Barrère and the Abbé Grégoire, to make French the truly national language of the Republic, culminating in the decrees of 1793 concerning the compulsory use of French in schools and then the decree of 20 July 1794 forbidding the use of other languages in all written documents. However, the reality had been somewhat different for the bulk of the population, who still spoke their own regional language or dialect at the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The public schooling system was to change this decisively, by enforcing the use of the standard French language in all its schools and ruthlessly punishing all miscreants who continued to speak in other tongues while on school premises.

Thus, there was a concerted attempt to eliminate all regional linguistic and cultural difference through the uniformity imposed by the education system. No longer was it enough to banish such difference to the private domain; language and culture were incorporated into the public domain and, as such, politicised. This was achieved by the full-scale integration into the public domain of an education system that had hitherto been largely left as the preserve of the family, the Church and its orders. Although parts of the system had been conceived as public institutions in the service of the state from their origins – such as the Napoleonic *lycées* created for the training of an elite civil and military service – the creation of a mass-level, public service was unprecedented.

Not only was the organisation of the system, including the curriculum, directly controlled by the central state, but the teachers were also made state employees, with the same status as other *fonctionnaires*, or civil servants. The function and purpose of schooling were defined explicitly, not in terms of individual fulfilment but as the preparation of the future citizens for useful public service to the Republic. The whole curriculum, and particularly the *instruction civique* classes, was geared to inculcating the values of citizenship based on equality of rights and duties, as well as to propagating the newly homogeneous national culture.

The abstract political equality of all citizens now became transformed into cultural uniformity, and thus the main vehicle for the assimilation of all future citizens into the homogeneous national body. At its most messianic, the system sought to propagate the ideals of a meritocracy, in which real social, economic and financial inequality could be left behind at the school gate, in which all pupils would be treated the same in their identical school overalls, in which they would all imbibe the same version of the nation's history, the same national cultural heritage of great authors and their works, the same set of intellectual, moral and political values.

The real limitations to this uniform utopia probably do not need to be dwelt on at length, at least as far as metropolitan France was concerned. Not least, the

continued existence of a parallel and almost wholly religious system of private schooling ensured that some French children continued to receive a very different account of the French national heritage, through the mainly Catholic private schools. Nor can it be said that the public school system was successful in achieving real social equality, since so many extra-curricular factors were involved. Its record on cultural assimilation was rather more impressive, particularly in respect of children of non-French origin, whose parents had come to settle in France from countries such as Italy and Poland, and who became transformed into fully fledged French citizens within the space of a generation.

It is within the context of the huge expansion of the French Empire that these developments take on their full significance, for the purpose of the argument that is being developed here. As Balibar has pointed out, the development of the empire constituted one of the key defining elements of the French nation:

What is France? ... I suggest an answer to this question, which without making any absurd claim to be comprehensive or definitive, aims to begin to face up to the most powerful taboo in our history. The question of what is France is inextricably bound up with French colonisation, which is the last in a long line of great social, political and cultural 'revolutions', which have made the French nation what it is. (Balibar 1992: 57)

The uneasy marriage of a homogeneous national identity and culture with Republican universalist idealism at home, mirrored the contradictions within the discourses of French imperialism. The latter rationalised its colonial enterprise in the name of its universal mission, at the same time as it excluded the vast majority of its colonial subjects from participation as citizens of the empire. Ironically, it was the export of the French public school system that came to the rescue. A system that had been the vehicle for promoting equality in the widest sense at home took on instead in the colonies a much more ambivalent role.

Specificity and Contradictions of the Republican Discourse of Empire

Although the realities of the imperialist relation precluded the possibility of an empire-wide citizenship, the school nonetheless held out the prospect of assimilation to all those who passed through the French education system, with full French citizenship as the ultimate prize. As the main vehicle for the inculcation of Republican ideology amongst the colonised peoples, it could create aspirations to equal treatment, which only a small minority could transform into reality if the empire were to survive. The reality, therefore, was that access to education itself was also restricted. Albert Sarraut, Governor-General of Indochina from 1911 to 1916, then several times Minister for Colonies and Prime Minister, as well as author of *Grandeur et servitude coloniales*, published in 1931, was one of those who defended the restriction of higher education to a tiny minority of colonial 'subjects', on the grounds of hereditary and intellectual factors.¹⁷ In French West Africa in 1945, only

5 per cent of the population attended school. In Algeria in 1939–40, out of a ‘Muslim’ population of seven million, there were only 114,000 children attending primary school, 1,500 in secondary schools and only 94 students at the University of Algiers (Suret-Canale 2001). For this elite group, the school could just possibly open the door to assimilation. At the same time, by peddling the same version of the homogeneous national culture throughout the schools of the empire, it ensured that the real relations of domination remained in place, so that even those who constituted the small elite and were allowed a measure of assimilation would continue to know their place. Any child forced to learn by heart and recite passages about ‘Our ancestors the Gauls ...’, ‘who were mighty and strong ...’, as recounted, for instance, in the semi-autobiographical novel by the Tunisian writer Hachemi Baccouche, *Ma foi demeure* (1958: 16), and by numerous other writers (Kessous 1994), would understand that they would always remain alienated at least in some measure and never able to participate fully in the French national community.

Thus, in most cases, the education system acted as an effective barrier to progression towards full assimilation, both in the cultural and, perhaps more importantly, in the political sense. One of the qualifications for the acquisition of French citizenship was a certain level of educational attainment, involving, sometimes explicitly, the repudiation of any other cultural inheritance. As we have seen, in Algeria, full French citizenship was dependent upon renunciation of the *statut personnel* – effectively a repudiation of the Muslim religion.

The dual college system introduced into Algeria after the Second World War, was, in fact, based on the differentiation of particular religious communities, notwithstanding the fact that this notion ran counter to the secular principles underpinning the Republic, in which religion, along with other particular, differentiating features, is assumed to have no role in the political domain and certainly not as a qualification for citizenship. Benjamin Stora has drawn out the implications of this contradiction in the case of colonial Algeria, where:

Citizenship was determined in accordance with the *community of origin* (as defined by religion). This was a denial of the principles of the Republic, in a territory which was nonetheless considered to be a mere extension of France. The principles of 1789 in fact dissociated the existence of people from their function, caste, ethnic origin, or religion for the granting of their civic rights. (Stora 1992: 22–23)

Moreover, the image of the colonial Other as ‘native’, *indigène*, which had been incorporated into colonial propaganda under the regime of Albert Sarraut at the Colonial Ministry in the 1920s and 1930s, was not only based on the stereotypes of race, colour and geographical origin, but also on the notion of religious difference. Indeed, this was a deep-rooted perception that took on new life during the Algerian conflict. As Jean-Luc Einaudi has pointed out, Michel Debré explicitly referred to the need to launch a crusade of Christianity against Islam in an article in the *Courrier de la Nation* of September 1958 (Einaudi 1991: 25).

From the point of view of the colonised peoples, then, the Republican discourse of empire clearly had its limitations, as well as its partial and, indeed, remarkable successes. Moreover, discourse and ideology were not the only means available for the governance of the empire. The actual or threatened use of the forces of repression was never absent and had provided the main bastion for the perpetuation of colonial rule from the outset.

In 1843, Lieutenant-Colonel de Montagnac suggested in one of his letters from Algeria that:

Any part of the population which does not accept our conditions must be wiped out. Everything must be taken and pillaged, with no consideration for age or sex: grass must not be allowed to grow, wherever the French army treads. Whoever wants the end result must also be prepared to accept the means, whatever our philosophers may say. All the good soldiers whom I have the honour of commanding have been warned by me that if they should happen to bring me an Arab alive, they will get a thrashing with the blade of my sabre ... this is the way to wage war against the Arabs; kill all the men over fifteen years of age, take all the women and children and ship them out to the Marquesas or somewhere else. In other words, annihilate anything which refuses to crawl at our feet like a dog. (Montagnac 1885)

In the event, Montagnac himself was killed by the forces of the Emir Abdelkader two years later, in 1845. However, similar views were still being expressed throughout the period of French rule. None other than Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *De la démocratie en Amérique*, justified a policy of total warfare and laying waste to the countryside throughout the 1840s in a series of writings and reports as a result of several visits to Algeria (Le Cour Grandmaison 2005). This was a vision of the opportunities presented by France's trans-Mediterranean frontier, inspired by those of the American frontier and the conquest of the West, with all that implied for the extermination of the native American peoples. In 1882, one could read in *Le Courrier d'Oran* (24 May) that 'we know of no better policy than the one adopted by Moses in respect of the Midianites. He exterminated all the males, only sparing females who were virgins, who were given to the soldiers. This practice may seem cruel to the short-sighted, but in fact it was the only intelligent thing to do.'

French army archives, recently opened to the public, have shown that the French authorities were aware of the practice of torture by the security forces in Algeria from at least 1949, even before the war of independence had begun. In 1999, it was noted in *Le Monde* that two of Algeria's governors-general had condemned the practice of torture, which was later to become systematic in the war itself (*Le Monde*, 5 February 1999). When necessary, violence would also be deployed in mainland France itself, as with the savage repression and killings of demonstrating Algerians in Paris on 17 October 1961 (Einaudi 1991).

The discourse deployed to rationalise imperial rule was undoubtedly much more convincing when it acted as a means to justify the imperial undertaking to the home-

grown public in metropolitan France. One of the key elements of this rationalisation was the notion of the *mission civilisatrice*, the ‘civilising mission’, of the colonial power. Jules Ferry famously claimed in his speech to the Chambre des députés of 28 July 1885 that the civilisation by the ‘superior races’ of the ‘inferior races’ was not just a ‘right’ but also a ‘duty’; indeed, it was a right because it was a duty. There was no question, in his mind, that the Rights of Man did not apply to Africans in their present state of non-civilisation. This was the rationalisation of colonial conquest, not for pleasure or to exploit the weak but to raise them to the level of civilisation. The Freemasons also concurred, affirming that ‘the work of colonisation of the Third Republic is fundamentally one of civilisation’ (quoted in Ager 1996: 12 – his translation). This view did not, however, go unchallenged. Clemenceau, in particular, drew attention to the dangers of such an approach in the country of the Rights of Man (Chambre des députés, 30 July 1885), and the unacceptability of such a rationalisation of conquest.

The notion of the ‘civilising mission’ was not an invention of Third Republic imperialism; it had come into currency before. Victor Hugo, for example, in a conversation with Bugeaud, described in rapturous terms the conquest of Algeria as the march of civilisation against barbarism, with the French fulfilling their mission to bring light to a benighted people, taking over from the Greeks this mission to enlighten the planet.¹⁸ Edouard Alletz, writing in 1837, also described the civilising mission that had fallen to France, making it clear that civilisation would be imposed by force of arms if necessary: ‘There is one aim that in its essence befits our country: this aim is the civilisation of the globe. France is unable to keep things to herself. She runs, she flies to communicate light and life to all peoples: she will even compel them, by force of arms, to bear the full burden of the gifts that she bestows’ (quoted in Kessous 1994: 78).

Although this can be seen, to some extent, as the French version of the notion of the ‘white man’s burden’, which was common currency in the British Empire, its ideological underpinning and political outcomes were rather different. However, like the ‘white man’s burden’, the *mission civilisatrice* was conceived as the duty of a people supposed superior in terms of physical, intellectual and moral attributes to the inferior races that they had conquered. Indeed, it was this very superiority that had rendered the imperial conquests possible, and even necessary or inevitable. It was also this superiority that had enabled the white man to progress to a higher level of civilisation, defined in terms of educational attainment and knowledge, economic and technological development and high moral qualities. It was often linked with the suppression of barbaric practices, supposedly only indulged in by the non-civilised. This was notably the case with the ideology which, by masquerading as a crusade against Arab and African slave traders operating in the Congo, managed to draw a cloak over the brutal realities actually perpetrated in the Belgian King Leopold’s personal colonial fiefdom (Hochschild 1999).

At the time of the 1885 Berlin Conference, Bismarck formulated the notion thus: ‘associate the African native with civilisation by opening up the interior of the Continent to commerce; provide the inhabitants with the means of instruction and education by

encouraging Missions and enterprises which will encourage useful knowledge; and ensure the suppression of slavery' (quoted in Ager 1996: 13 – his translation).

Whatever the grounds for the belief in racial superiority, either within a God-given hierarchy of inherent essentialist ranking of racial categories, or stamped with the credentials of scientific theory as a contingent product of the historico-evolutionary process, the burden of duty was articulated essentially as a moral one. This could assume disinterested forms in the shape of the ideology of selfless commitment to public service, characteristic of the more idealistic colonial administrator, or the missionary's calling to raise the moral and spiritual level of the 'heathen' and convert them to the Christian faith. However, in all cases, it assumed the notion of racial superiority, aligned with greater power. Sarraut notably defined the *mission civilisatrice* as 'le droit du plus fort d'aider le plus faible' ('the right of the strongest to help the weakest'), in which the notion of 'duty' was eclipsed by the notion of 'right' associated with might. Ernest Renan, a favourite of the Third Republic for his anticlericalism, made no bones about his belief in the inequality of races. In his *Dialogues philosophiques* (1876), he justified colonisation through the argument of the rightful subordination of the lower to the higher races.¹⁹

There is no doubt that a significant body of French colonial opinion shared much the same kind of ideas as these. Léon Blum made this explicit, in an intervention to the Chambre des députés on 9 July 1925, when he said, 'We love our country too much to dissociate ourselves from the expansion of French thought and civilisation. We recognise that there is a right, and even a duty, for superior races to draw to them those races that have not attained the same level of culture and to summon them to progress.'

In the French case, however, the *mission civilisatrice*, as taken up by the Republican champions of empire, was not just defined in terms of race; the universal values of the Enlightenment also formed an essential reference point. At any rate, they had to be taken into account. Thus, while the applicability of the universal Rights of Man to the colonised and 'native' peoples remained something of a grey area for most, and seen explicitly in black and white terms by some, the archetypal colonist in the French Enlightenment mould took upon himself the mission to bring the light of reason and science to the dark regions of the planet, where primitiveness, obscurantism and barbarism held sway. It was when, and only when, the 'natives' had been sufficiently educated that they could aspire to the full enjoyment of the political rights associated with the Rights of Man. This could be postponed indefinitely, mainly by restricting access to educational advancement to a small elite, and indeed the justification of the continuing presence of the French colonial power relied on this indefinite postponement.

At the root of the difficulties was the contradiction between the universalism associated with the Rights of Man and the dualism of conceptions of the peoples of the earth, in which they were variously divided between Christians and heathens, men and savages, humans and non-humans, civilised and barbarians, superior and inferior races. Some of these categories implied an absolute, qualitative opposition; others were framed in more relative or quantitative terms, such as the distinction between the *plus évolués*

and the *moins évolués*. In the early phases of imperialism, the dualism took the form of a religious divide, between the Christians and the heathens. Indeed, this divide provided the justification for the domination by Christians of the non-Christian peoples. The notion of Christendom had developed as a system of order in Europe, in which spiritual and temporal authorities derived their legitimacy from God through a well-defined, stratified hierarchy, in which rights and duties were clearly defined, and where the common faith implied the observance of certain common values. This order did not extend to the non-Christians, who were outside the frame of the moral and legal rights and duties set out under this system. Thus, the Lateran Council of 1139 had decreed that Christians should not use the crossbow against other Christians, although its use against 'heathens' and 'heretics' was permitted (Mazrui 1990: 11). However, in spite of the supposed community existing between those who professed the same faith, fighting between Christians was not unknown, along with the use of the crossbow.

One of the problems with later, secular notions rationalising imperialism was that they had not entirely broken with this dualism characteristic of the earlier ideology. In fact, the supposed universality of the human race had been and remained a matter of some debate, and the division between Christians and heathens was often articulated in terms of the division between men and savages, humans and non-humans. Even when the old dualism based on religion was considered inappropriate, and the humanity of all peoples was accepted, the division was often simply replaced by new forms, in which relative, quantitative terms became more familiar – civilised and barbarians, superior and inferior, *plus évolués* and *moins évolués*. If the humanity of all peoples was accepted, then it became possible to envisage a new type of conversion, in which the conquered were not simply converted more or less against their will, to facilitate their control by the conquerors, but one that envisaged the uplifting of people in the inferior category to a higher stage. The process might take time, but was not ruled out as impossible.

No imperial power could survive long without offering its colonial subjects a vision of a free future. This was the case with both the British and French Empires. The differences between them lay not in any different conception regarding the superiority of the coloniser over the colonised, but in the different strategic goals they held out to the colonised.

The British tended to hold out the ultimate goal of self-government and thus disengagement when the colonised peoples had progressed and become sufficiently civilised and capable. In theory, this implied a staged process of development and preparation for ever greater involvement in their own representation, administration and government. This was not to mean representation in the metropolitan institutions. In spite of Queen Victoria's proclamation in 1858, in which she defended the principle of equality of all those in the empire, following the imposition of the direct rule of the British Crown over India after the Mutiny of 1857, this was not translated into representation in the British Parliament. This is hardly surprising, as the promise of equality remained essentially without effect. Moreover, at this time, only a minority of the British population was represented in Parliament. Unlike the (male) populations of the 'old' French colonies, British colonial subjects were not to

be offered representation in the British Parliament. Indeed, when the first non-white MP, Dadabhai Naoroji, entered the House of Commons in 1892, it was as the Member of Parliament for the London constituency of Finsbury Central.

The French, on the other hand, offered the prospect of eventual assimilation of all the colonised peoples as full citizens of the French Republic. In spite of its overt secularism, what was proposed by the most fervent advocates of assimilationism was in many respects a process, very similar to a religious conversion. As such, it was also based on a dualistic conception, like that which had operated in conversions to Christianity, or indeed to Islam. Thus, not only was the 'pure', assimilationist model influenced by the accretions of centuries of ideological history, but it was also inevitably marked by the realities of imperial power.

In reality, the political status of the different colonised peoples differed widely according to their historical and geographical circumstances. This was true not only for their administrative status, whether under the tutelage of the Ministry for Colonies, the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Foreign Ministry, depending on how they were viewed in relation to the metropole. It was also true of the eventual prospects for their future evolution, particularly as far as those in the protectorates were concerned, for whom the different ideology of 'associationism' had been preferred.

Racism, Empire and Further Contradictions within Republican Ideology

It is clear that the Republican discourse of empire was not the only perspective on offer. From its origins, the imperial expansion of all the European powers involved was accompanied by the development of an ideology of racism, sometimes justified in the name of religion, which established a racial hierarchy of exclusion from the true faith. At the time of the first conquests of the New World in the sixteenth century, there were debates as to whether the native Americans were human beings at all, with the celebrated defence of their humanity by Bartolomeo de Las Casas (see Chapter 3). The growth of slavery as an economic system and the consequent dehumanisation of the slave through his or her reduction to the status of a chattel led to the entrenchment of racism for the rationalisation it provided for such a system.

Indeed, racism appears not just as an ideological option but as an integral part of the ideology that accompanied the development of capitalism. As Samir Amin has pointed out, it became a necessary part of the 'European' ideology, which took shape through a number of different phases:

This European ideology is constructed in stages from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment up until the nineteenth century by the invention of the eternal truths required for this legitimisation. The 'Christianophile' myth, the myth of Greek ancestry, and the artificial, antithetical construct of Orientalism define the new European and Eurocentric culturalism, thereby condemning it irremediably to consort with its damned soul: ineradicable racism. (Amin 1989: 77)

Far from promoting universalism in fact, the European imperialist conquest of much of the world did not bring about the homogenisation of societies, but accentuated polarisation, crystallising the centre/periphery relation: ‘On the contrary, this conquest progressively created a growing polarization at the heart of the system, crystallizing the capitalist world into fully developed centres and peripheries incapable of closing the ever widening gap, making this contradiction within ‘actually existing’ capitalism – a contradiction insurmountable within the framework of our capitalist system – the major and most explosive contradiction of our time’ (Amin 1989: 75).

France had also had its share of racist ideologues, promoting notions of racial superiority both at home and abroad. Indeed, the new form of pseudoscientific ideas of race and politics that were to flourish in the course of the nineteenth century had in fact taken root in France in the aftermath of the Revolution and as part of the reaction against it, with Gobineau and others of his ilk pioneering an ideological strain that was to end in the extermination camps of Auschwitz. The sociologist, Gustave Le Bon, renowned for his work on the psychology of the crowd (*De la psychologie des foules* (1895)), proposed a model more along the lines of the British model, separate development, no mixing of races, etc., in opposition to the French (and Portuguese) assimilationist model. He warned against educating or assimilating the natives, as this would not change their nature, but only give them the means to rise up against the Europeans. His views also extended to the intrinsic inferiority of women and the reckless foolishness of those who would educate them.

However, the major rationalisation of the notion of French superiority related to the domain of civilisation and culture, where a belief in cultural superiority was linked with the notion of a duty to convey this culture to the world. As Ager says: ‘A strong influence on those who supported colonial expansion in the nineteenth century was the belief in the indefinably superior nature of French civilisation and culture, and particularly the belief that France had a special role to play in bringing her culture to the world’ (Ager 1996: 60–61). That the superiority was ‘indefinable’ indicates strongly the ideological nature of the belief. In this vision of France’s mission, it is most frequently compared to the sun, with the natural quality of beaming its brilliance to the rest of the globe, expressed most evocatively in the French expression ‘*rayonnement de la culture*’.

It is hardly surprising that there were contradictions in the discourse of those appointed to govern and educate the colonised peoples. One of the key contradictions was at the heart of the notion of the *mission civilisatrice* itself. The public education system was one of the major vehicles for bringing the uncivilised into civilisation, and one of the key values that it was supposed to inculcate was the ideal of the secular Republic. However, public education and schooling as applied in the colonies were not so completely dissociated from the religious evangelising of the Catholic orders and lay missionaries. It appears that the colonies did not experience the same, clear dichotomy between public/secular and private/Catholic schooling that continued to exist in mainland France, at least until the Fifth Republic, when the two began to be brought into a closer working relationship, in particular through

the 1959 Debré law, which encouraged cooperation between private education and the state and permitted a measure of state funding for the Catholic schools.

Indeed, given that, in the colonies, state public education was reserved only for the elite and the obligation of compulsory schooling did not exist for the whole population, it was usually left to the religious foundations, both Christian, such as the Missionnaires d'Afrique (the Order of White Fathers – *Pères Blancs* – and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa – *Soeurs Blanches*), and Muslim, to provide basic education for the rest.

Abroad, in the colonies, the distinctions were fudged and the old conflict between secularism and clericalism was muted in the name of a common sense of nationhood on behalf of the colonial power. Colonial administrators working for the Third Republic, public school teachers, priests, missionaries and Catholic educators were united by a common sense of their colonial mission. In the same way as Clemenceau characterised the French Revolution as a *bloc*, the French abroad formed a *bloc* in the service of the empire, in which their ideological differences counted for less than they would have done at home. A simple but striking illustration of this is the physical proximity of the headquarters of the French Republic's administrative headquarters in the Indian colony of Chandernagore and the Catholic church, schools and convent.

We shall be looking further at some of these contradictions in the Republican discourse of empire, together with the basic contradiction, which we have already touched on and which contained the seed of the empire's own downfall. For, if the colonised peoples learned their lessons well, they also learned that the Revolutionary discourse of modern democracy gave them the ideas and concepts that they needed to turn the tables against the colonial oppressors and achieve their liberation, although this notion of a lineage with Western ideology has not gone without challenge, as we shall see.

There is one further contradiction in French Republican ideology that needs to be tabled at this stage. This concerns the contradiction within the notion of history itself, which has assumed such importance in the legitimisation of the French state. History, usually written with a capital H in French, provides the material for the foundation of the French Republic. As such, it relies heavily on the notion of tradition; *la tradition républicaine* ('the Republican tradition') is one of the stock-in-trade phrases of French political discourse. Yet, at the heart of this 'tradition', indeed as its founding principle, one finds a basic discontinuity, a rupture with the past, dramatised in the French Revolution. On the one hand, this is the modernist notion of history as progress, looking to the future; on the other, the historical legitimacy of the French state relies on its roots in the past. The ambivalence implicit in the notion of history has been further accentuated in recent years by an increased importance given to the notions of memory and heritage, particularly in connection with issues of national identity. The future project contained in the Revolutionary view of history has largely disappeared from mainstream political discourse.

It is thus hardly surprising that this ideological framework is now increasingly perceived as inadequate in the postcolonial age. However, the 'end of modernity' remains problematic as far as post-colonial relations are concerned.

Notes

1. The text of the Code Noir may be consulted at <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/amsudant/guyanefr1685.htm> (retrieved 26 December 2004) or http://www.afcam.org/Doc_illustration/CodeNoir/LECODENOIR.htm (retrieved 16 February 2005).
2. Blaise Diagne (1872–1934), from Senegal, was the first black *député* in the Chambre des députés, from 1914 to 1934, and Junior Minister for the Colonies in 1931. He was followed by others, including the Guianese Gaston Monnerville (1897–1991), first elected in 1932 and President of the Senate from 1958 to 1968. However, it was only after the Second World War, that there was any significant measure of representation, including Lamine Gueye (1891–1968), elected in 1945, Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1905–93), member of the Assemblée nationale from 1945, then Minister in various governments from 1956, until he became President of the Ivory Coast in 1960 until his death, amongst many others.
3. See Thomson (1968: 308–10), for Ferry's speech on the economic necessity of imperialism.
4. In particular, Balibar (1992: 61–62) quotes the following passage from R. Carré de Malberg, *Contribution à la théorie générale de l'Etat* (1920)/1962, Vol. 1, pp. 243 ff.:

il suffit de comparer le cas du citoyen avec celui de l'étranger se trouvant sur le sol français: en ce qui concerne l'individu qui n'est pas membre de la collectivité française, la notion de puissance se dégage pleinement; cet étranger est vraiment soumis à une puissance extérieure de domination. Voir dans le même sens ce que dit M. Duguit ... des indigènes des colonies ou des habitants des pays de protectorat, qui sont sujets de la puissance française sans être français ou en tout cas sans être citoyens français. Les nationaux, au contraire, dans la mesure où ils ont été 'représentés' (*Décl. de 1789*, art. 6) à la confection des lois par les organes de la collectivité, n'apparaissent pas, dans leur subordination à ces lois, comme les sujets d'une puissance supérieure, mais on peut dire qu'en se conformant à la loi ils observent leur propre volonté ... les citoyens, en tant que membres constitutifs de la collectivité souveraine, ne peuvent être considérés comme étrangers aux actes de souveraineté qu'accomplit la collectivité par l'intermédiaire de ses organes; ils y participent en ce sens et pour ce motif que la nation ... n'est pas autre chose que l'universalité des citoyens.

This passage also clearly shows the limitations of the concept of 'universality'.
5. Cette distinction est inextricablement liée à l'articulation des pouvoirs de l'Etat en pouvoir *de la loi* et pouvoir *réglementaire*: le premier impliquant en dernière instance un contrôle de ceux qui incarnent la souveraineté nationale et constituent (par leur vote) les organes de l'Etat (ou du moins sont censés en être à leur origine); le second ayant pour champ d'exercice la gestion quotidienne des problèmes d'ordre public non maîtrisables par la loi, mais aussi et surtout la gestion des territoires et des populations coloniales. (Balibar 1992: 60)
6. See Gambetta in a speech in 1878: 'L'Algérie doit être conduite comme le reste de la France, parce qu'elle est une terre française par excellence' (Gambetta 1883: 101). Jules Favre, on the same occasion, made this unwittingly ironic statement: 'nous n'avons qu'une pensée: faire de l'Algérie une terre vraiment française; par le cœur, elle l'est; par le droit, c'est la conquête qui nous reste à faire, et nous y travaillerons de toute notre énergie' (Gambetta 1883: 103).
7. This was stipulated in a Sénatus Consulte of 14 July 1865.
8. 'Cette universalité de la langue française ... tient à des causes si délicates et si puissantes à la fois que, pour les démêler, il s'agit de montrer jusqu'à quel point tant de causes diverses

- ont pu se combiner et s'unir pour faire à cette langue une fortune si prodigieuse' (Rivarol, quoted at <http://www.france.diplomatie.fr/francophonie/citations.html>).
9. In his speech of 2 May 1946 at the Sorbonne, on the occasion of Descartes's 350th anniversary, Thorez claimed that: 'Le monde aime la France parce que, dans la France, il reconnaît Descartes et ceux qui l'ont continué ... A travers les tempêtes qui se sont abattues sur les hommes, c'est Descartes qui, de son pas allègre, nous conduit vers les lendemains qui chantent' (quoted in *Le Monde des livres*, 29 March 1996, p. VI).
 10. Family ties or filiation was also a problematic preoccupation at the level of personal identity; see Simon During, 'Rousseau's Patrimony: Primitivism, Romance and Becoming Other', in Barker, Hulme and Iversen 1994: 47–71.
 11. See Raphaëlle Bacqué, 'La droite sénatoriale accepte la parité approuvée par Jacques Chirac', *Le Monde*, 5 March 1999.
 12. The status of the members of the Assemblée nationale is defined as follows: 'Les députés sont investis d'un mandat national. Bien que chacun d'eux soit l'élu d'une seule circonscription, il représente la nation tout entière. Ils se déterminent librement dans l'exercice de leur mandat, n'étant juridiquement liés par aucun engagement. Tout mandat impératif est en effet nul.' For further information, consult <http://www.assemblee-nat.fr/connaissance/election-depute.asp>.
 13. This theory was ironically used to support the weakening of legislative power in the Gaullist constitution of the Fifth Republic.
 14. Quel paradoxe, plus apparent que réel! C'est un juif français et assimilé, pétri d'un patriotisme *maternel* ('Juste ou injuste, c'est ma patrie') qui donne le coup d'envoi au sionisme ... Alors que le patriotisme de la plupart des juifs nationaux est de type 'paternel', qu'il s'apparente plutôt – du moins à la première génération – à celui du jeune Bonaparte: 'Brusquement la Révolution le convertit au patriotisme français le plus ardent. Mais prenons garde. Conversion avant tout cérébrale en même temps que passionnelle. Ce n'est pas à la tradition de France, ce n'est pas à l'immense passé français qu'il se rallie, c'est à l'avenir français tel qu'il peut le comprendre, c'est aux principes abstraits que la Révolution vient de se donner ou plutôt de donner au monde comme décalogue universel.' (René Grousset, *Figures de Proue*, Plon, 1949)
Or le patriotisme de Dreyfus est plus viscéral que cérébral, plus proche de Barrès ou Mauriac que de Valéry. Il n'est pas de *conversion* ... Sa voix ne fait-elle pas, par instants, écho à celle de Du Bellay: 'Je fixe l'horizon les yeux tournés vers la France, dans l'espoir que ce sera enfin le jour où ma patrie me rappellera à elle.' (Lévy 1982: 256)
 15. This whole conflict came to the fore once again at the time of the celebrations of the 1,500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis in 1996 (*Le Monde*, 26 July 1996).
 16. 'Le terme de *nation* change de sens: ce n'est plus l'ensemble des citoyens, c'est l'idée d'une *appartenance* historique, centrée sur l'Etat. A l'extrême, à travers la mythification de la langue, de la culture et des traditions nationales, ce sera la variante française du nationalisme, l'idée d'une communauté morale et culturelle fondée sur les traditions institutionnelles' (Balibar 1992: 142).
 17. 'l'enseignement supérieur suppose, avec une hérédité préparatoire, un équilibre des facultés réceptives, un jugement, dont seule une faible minorité de nos sujets et protégés est encore capable' (Sarraut 1931: 152).
 18. Voilà ce qu'est devenu ce que l'on appelait le grenier des Romains! Mais, en serait-il ce que vous dites, je crois que notre nouvelle conquête est chose heureuse et grande. C'est la civilisation qui marche sur la barbarie. C'est un peuple éclairé qui va trouver

- un peuple dans la nuit. Nous sommes les Grecs du monde: c'est à nous d'illuminer le monde. Notre mission s'accomplit, je ne chante qu'hosanna. (Hugo 1841: 52)
19. 'Les hommes ne sont pas égaux, les races ne sont pas égales. Le nègre, par exemple, est fait pour servir aux grandes choses voulues et conçues par le Blanc' (quoted by Taguieff 1997: 95).