

ECHOES OF EMPIRE:

IMPACTS OF FRENCH COLONIAL LEGACY

ON IDENTITY, IMMIGRATION, AND

INTEGRATION POLICIES

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This paper investigates how France's history of colonialism has shaped France's immigration and integration policies to understand how colonial ideologies can guide policies that shape national identity and social groups. By understanding the historical context and development of France's colonialism, from the French Revolution to postcolonial migration data, it can be found that France's self-image as a place for liberty contradicts its poor treatment of immigrants from colonies. Therefore, this research underscores that marginalized immigrants are affected by assimilationist and multiculturalist policies, institutional memory, and racism. The paper also briefly interrogates how the European Union's commitment to national sovereignty and unexamined colonial legacy prevents it from influencing France's approach. Ultimately, the paper offers a solution: only by confronting the myths of universalism and actively addressing the colonial roots embedded within its immigration policies can France achieve true reconciliation and equity.

I. Introduction

As Marianne stood firmly with the infamous tri-color French flag in *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix,¹ she reminded us of the universal struggles many have faced across time and space to earn freedom and recognition. The French Revolution (1789-1799) marked the beginning of France's path towards a more just and democratic society, one that distributed power to the hands of the common people and gave them the ability to participate in governance. Marianne personified the revolution and "liberty, equality, and fraternity" have since become central themes of French politics and national identity.² Her appearance has changed many times throughout different periods of the French Republic, but her signature red Phrygian cap and cockaded headpiece have never been altered.³ Its original meaning can be traced to emancipated slaves in ancient Rome as their symbol of freedom.⁴ The revolutionaries saw her cap as a rejection of monarchical oppression and the embodiment of self-determination. As France continued to conquer and colonize, Marianne traveled across new oceans and lands for roughly three centuries.⁵ Under the false promise of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," France brutally suppressed their colonies and exploited them. Many immigrants from these colonized regions regarded France as a beacon of hope, despite the oppression. Today, current French immigration policies still make it hard for them to enter and integrate into French society. Why is it that France—a country that understands the struggles for freedom and the privileges that it

¹ Writer, Guest. "Marianne of France, Symbol of the French Republic." The Good Life France, June 19, 2021. <https://thegoodlifeFrance.com/marianne-of-france-symbol-of-the-french-republic/#:~:text=Since%20there%20was%20no%20longer%20a%20republic%2C%20Marianne%20was%20no.>

² Ibid.

³ Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. "Marianne." France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Accessed December 7, 2023. [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/symbols-of-the-republic/article/marianne.](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/symbols-of-the-republic/article/marianne)

⁴ Wills, Matthew. "The Rise and Fall of the Liberty Cap - JSTOR DAILY." JSTOR Daily, October 19, 2021. [https://daily.jstor.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-liberty-cap/.](https://daily.jstor.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-liberty-cap/)

⁵ "French Empire." New World Encyclopedia. Accessed December 7, 2023. https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/French_Empire#:~:text=France%20had%20colonial%20possessions%2C%20in,largest%20behind%20the%20British%20Empire.

grants—shuts out so many immigrants from its former colonies, to whom it once promised liberty and opportunity? Analyzing France’s colonial past reveals that this history plays a significant role in shaping its current national identity and immigration policies. Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) can only do so much to mitigate colonial sentiments in France’s immigration policies while respecting their national sovereignty.

II. The French Identity and Its Interaction with Colonialism

To understand the issues with France’s immigration policies, it is crucial to understand the complexities of the French identity and its intertwined history with colonialism. Identity is an amalgamation of everything that makes an individual or social group unique. This can be the characteristics, experiences, values, interests, relationships, and so on that come from the process of defining who they are and what they want.⁶ Everyone goes through this process on their own terms, but the results may bring groups of people together with similar identities. In the case of national identity, which can be best exemplified in France, the people and the state are closely tied together with strings of shared cultural, historical, and political memory. Besides the shared institutional language, religion, and culture, the Jacobin tradition further elaborates that commitment to common political values and the state also contributes to the French identity.⁷ Ernest Renan, who was a famous 19th-century French historian, defined the nation as “a soul [and] a spiritual principle” that it is worth “the desire to continue assert[ing] the heritage that [they] have received undivided.”⁸ Renan does something interesting here: he personifies the state

⁶ Risse, Thomas. *A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Cornell University Press, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7v8r0>.

⁷ Safran, William. Review of *The French and Their National Identity: The Quest for an Elusive Substance?*, by Espaces 89, Club de l’Horloge, Revue Pluriel-Débat, Abdel Aïssou, Paul Oriol, Georges Abou-Sada, Hélène Milet, Harlem Désir, Jean-Pierre Colin, and Commission de la Nationalité. *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990): 56–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42844146>.

⁸ Ibid.

as a powerful, intangible being while giving it the justification it needs to be deified and shared with the world. The strong relationship between the French people and their nation throughout history built a foundation for patriotism and, at its most extreme level, nationalism.

During and after the French Revolution, nationalist movements directly perpetuated the idea of elitism and superiority, which later translated into colonialism. Though France's colonial expeditions started during the 17th century in North America,⁹ their colonialism did not become what it is known as today until the late 19th century. After being defeated in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), they were humiliated into losing their continental European hegemonic status. The tensions heightened as France processed what their defeat meant. As Prussia began expanding and pressing against France's eastern borders, there was only one way for France to retain her great power. They must expand outside, particularly in Africa, starting with the southern shores of the Mediterranean.¹⁰ This event became the motivation for the Third Republic, which would become France's premier colonial and imperial empire.

But those two reasons were not legal or honorable enough to authorize such a controversial venture. The "civilizing mission" was the core argument that gave European nations legitimacy for political, social, and economic extraction and indoctrination of other groups of people and their nations.¹¹ It highlighted racial, cultural, and societal differences primarily among non-white states, magnifying the presence of "underdeveloped" and "backward" states that supposedly needed intervention and assistance. In the name of Marianne, the Revolution's universalizing principles, and national pride, France built one of the world's

⁹ Parsons, Christopher M. "Discovering a Not-So-New World." In *A Not-So-New World: Empire and Environment in French Colonial North America*, 15–41. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv16t6h6t.4>.

¹⁰ Andrew, C. M. "The French Colonialist Movement during the Third Republic: The Unofficial Mind of Imperialism." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (1976): 143–66. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3679076>.

¹¹ Watt, Carey A. "Introduction: THE RELEVANCE AND COMPLEXITY OF CIVILIZING MISSIONS c. 1800–2010." In *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development*, edited by Carey A. Watt and Michael Mann, 1–34. Anthem Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1gxp9mc.3>.

largest empires in modern history under the guise of advancing colonies through Westernization.¹²

III. Post-Colonial French Immigration Policies

Amidst the conquest for resources, land, and glory, economic growth boomed like never before. To sustain the growing labor market during the mid-19th century, Indigenous people were commodified and relocated throughout the French Empire for work. The movement of people between France and her colonies resulted in colonial subjects being brought into the country for the first time.¹³ Even though this was her first experience with colonial interaction within mainland France, it was not until after World War II that immigration laws specifically for these populations were officially codified into law. Interestingly, France had no intention of any formal codification or regulation until Moroccan migrants demanded recognition and official documentation of their work. They were mainly sent to work at coal mines in northern France during the 1950s, and many would lie about their age to be more desirable for hire and a chance to escape their country. Consequently, many years later, they would never receive pensions or benefits because of the lack of systems and processes in place to prove their real background information.¹⁴ They were stripped of their identities in every aspect and were just as real as an unclaimed thought, seeking connection and recognition in a world that does not acknowledge their true worth.

¹² Schwartz, Vanessa R. "French and the Civilizing Mission." Essay. In *Modern France a Very Short Introduction*, 36. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

¹³ Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." [migrationpolicy.org](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/challenge-french-diversity), September 6, 2018. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/challenge-french-diversity>.

¹⁴ Spire, Alexis. "The Weight of France's Colonial Past on Immigration Policy." *Accueil - Archive ouverte HAL*, June 13, 2020.

After World War II, the age of European empires ended, resulting in a mass influx of immigrants from post-colonial states and abroad.¹⁵ Immigration brought a new wave of ethnic diversity to France, and its effects have rippled throughout French society. The era from the 1950s to the 1960s can be described as the decolonization period, where colonies achieved independence and were given control of their statehood. It was a crucial starting point for witnessing the transformation of French immigration policy because it had to address newly independent subjects and their ability to immigrate to France.¹⁶ The dominant post-colonial countries were Vietnam, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and the region of sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁷

To understand French immigration policies after the decolonization period, it is important to understand their original purpose. France's immigration policy was built with the intent of protecting its national citizens. For that to happen, the French government was adamant about making a clear distinction between the colonized, the foreigner, and the natural citizen because the construction of the state heavily depended on knowing who were real natives and who was not.¹⁸ The colonial subjects, though newly independent, faced many legal obstacles because they had no fair diplomatic representation abroad since their country was not fully stable yet and was still predominantly influenced by the French administration.¹⁹ Even if they were to be able to go into the country, they had to do more work to get paperwork and become citizens. They had to erase their cultural background, fully adopt the French culture and language, and sign the Civil

¹⁵ Chafer, Tony. "Decolonization in French West Africa." Oxford Research Encyclopedias, October 26, 2017. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Bantu-Expansion-Bostoen/57198055c5dd29e473508a377dcd911e0312391>.

¹⁶ Cole, Joshua. "How to Be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789." The University of Chicago Press Journals, September 2010. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/653170?journalCode=jmh>.

¹⁷ Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." migrationpolicy.org, September 6, 2018.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Zalc, Claire. "Alexis Spire Étrangers à La Carte." Cairn.Info I Matières À Réflexion, February 2007. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-critique-internationale-2007-2-page-201.htm>.

Code, which allowed the possibility, not the guarantee, of naturalization.²⁰ On the other hand, non-colonial subjects, who were considered to be foreigners, had the protection and representation of their home state, which made the process much more seamless.²¹ All they had to do was prove their political loyalty to France, which was both open-ended and less strenuous than their counterparts' requirements.

Twenty years later, after these policies had settled and seeped into neighborhoods and workplaces, anti-immigration sentiments grew because of the rise of far-right parties and politicians. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Jean-Marie Le Pen led the far-right National Front party, which gained significant popularity among the public. The far-right agenda proved destructive to immigration policies and further perpetuated the notion of French superiority over ethnic populations—many of whom were former colonial subjects. Under his party's rhetoric and grasp over society, they slowly diminished the immigrant population. There were 102,400 foreigners, including post-colonial and non-colonial people, who settled in France in 1990.²² The following year, the anti-immigrant sentiments escalated after Jacques Chirac, then Mayor of Paris, delivered his infamous “Le Bruit et L’Odeur” speech. In it, he complained about the “noises and smells” caused by immigrants—primarily Muslim Arabs and Blacks—and how they were disrupting the lives of native French people.²³ His remarks were met with open arms and launched a period where hostile comments about immigration became more common.

²⁰ Davidson, Denise Z. "How to be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789." *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (12, 2010): 765-769.

<https://ezproxy.bu.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fhow-be-french-nationality-making-since-1789%2Fdocview%2F840254458%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9676>.

²¹ Zolberg, A. (1999) “Matters of State: Theorizing Immigration Policy”, in Hirschman, C., Kasinitz, P. and DeWind, J. (Eds.). *The Handbook of International Migration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 71–93.

²² Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. “The Challenge of French Diversity.” migrationpolicy.org, September 6, 2018.

²³ Bourgneuf, Cécile. “Quand Jacques Chirac Évoquait ‘Le Bruit et l’odeur’...” *Libération*, September 26, 2019. https://www.liberation.fr/france/2019/09/26/quand-jacques-chirac-evoquait-le-bruit-et-l-odeur_1505291/.

In agreement with anti-immigration sentiments, Charles Pasqua, who was France's conservative interior minister, set the goal of having zero illegal immigration in 1993. He imposed the Pasqua Laws, which restricted immigration by tackling a wide range of demographics, such as international students and foreign spouses, and also gave more deportation power to the police and asylum officers. By 1995, the number of immigrants entering was 56,700, half of what it was five years prior.²⁴ That same year, the French presidential elections were held and won by Jacques Chirac, who rapidly rose to the highest seat of power, riding the wave since his speech and advancing the far-right agenda.

Yet, the Pasqua laws and Chirac's presidency were not unchallenged. Two groups of protesters, both of African and Chinese descent, were angry with the current strict immigration policies. It caused them to not be able to obtain resident permits, despite having lived and worked in France for several years, so they held a demonstration in a Parisian church. This would be called the Sans Papiers movement, or the people without legal documents movement.²⁵ With the support of over 10,000 people, they decided to mobilize in Paris. During the summer of 1996, they marched in solidarity, and though the police intervened, there would be similar events throughout the next two years.

After garnering national attention and support from many citizens throughout France, the Socialist Party was able to win the National Assembly during the 1997 legislative election year. During their time, they would ratify new rules to loosen immigration laws, such as giving special immigrant status to graduate students and highly skilled employees (RESEDA Law, 1998).²⁶

²⁴ Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." migrationpolicy.org, September 6, 2018.

²⁵ Behrman, Simon. "On the Creation and Accommodation of the Misery of the World: The Case of the sans-Papiers." Royal Holloway Research Portal, October 28, 2020. <https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/en/publications/on-the-creation-and-accommodation-of-the-misery-of-the-world-the->

²⁶ Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." migrationpolicy.org, September 6, 2018.

This increased international students and cleared up 87,000 unauthorized immigrants who were not accounted for in the previous policies. The fight for fair immigration policies that are just and address colonial biases is not over. Transitioning into the 21st century, the emphasis became more on the integration of immigrants.

IV. Integrating the “Other” into French Society

In a government study collected in 2022, it was reported that 7 million immigrants lived in France, making up 10.3% of the total population.²⁷ With such a high immigrant population, integration has become more pressing than ever before. For the French, it began with the passage of the 1972 Pleven Laws, which criminalized racial discrimination and racist speech.²⁸ This was an important codification that brought about a more progressive society where the protection of ethnic minorities and immigrants is non-negotiable.

However, the protection of these groups became more extreme as they advanced integration, but through ethnic and cultural erasure. In February of 2005, France passed its most detrimental law on political memory and its history with colonization by forcing educational curricula to recognize France’s important role in its colonial project.²⁹ By way of explanation, to heroize France’s involvement in its colonies and protect her white savior identity, but it did not stop there. This moment revealed the corruption and revisionist history that was occurring at the institutional level and trickled down to the local level. In hopes of collective amnesia over their history with colonialism, the French government tried to clear their name.³⁰

²⁷ “L’essentiel Sur... Les Immigrés et Les Étrangers.” Insee, October 7, 2023.

<https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/3633212#graphique-infographie>. (see bibliography for population graphic)

²⁸ Bird, Karen L. “Racist Speech or Free Speech? A Comparison of the Law in France and the United States.” *Comparative Politics* 32, no. 4 (2000): 399–418. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422386>.

²⁹ Spire, Alexis. “The Weight of France’s Colonial Past on Immigration Policy.” *Accueil - Archive ouverte HAL*, June 13, 2020. <https://hal.science/hal-02867003>.

³⁰ Ticktin, Miriam, Ruth Marshall, and Paolo Bacchetta. “A Transnational Conversation on French Colonialism, Immigration, Violence and Sovereignty.” *CUNY Academic Works*, 2008. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_pubs/847/.

Just two years later, the Constitutional Council banned all studies and data collections regarding ethnic and racial diversity and origins of people in France to adopt a more “color-blind” and “race-neutral” approach to French identity and citizenship.³¹ It had the opposite effect: it made conversations about race taboo at the institutional level but brought more public attention to it than ever. How were they to help their immigration population if they did not have adequate data on them? The truth is, they could not back then, and even today. Similar to the effects of the civilizing mission, they magnified the presence of immigrants and their racial, cultural, and societal differences and placed a bigger target on their backs in an attempt to help them. The French government, while aggressively assimilating immigrants into society, created a dangerous new image for them as a by-product, the image of the “other.”

In literature, the “other” represents an individual who is viewed as different by a group, causing them to be villainized or shunned. For example, Victor Hugo’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* perfectly captured this through Quasimodo, a man who was feared for being deformed and monstrous in appearance. Parisian society did not accept him, and he was subsequently hidden in a cathedral. Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve’s *Beauty and the Beast* also has the “other” in the form of the Beast, who was a prince cursed for being selfish and unloving. Literature often reflects reality, so the Quasimodos and Beasts of the world do not only exist in their respective stories. In the context of French immigration and identity, the “others” perform three primary functions. They need to differentiate themselves from a main group, be self-identifying, and create boundaries for themselves.³² Oftentimes in work industries and society, post-colonial immigrants carry the exclusionary label “francophone” and immigrant, which separates them

³¹ “Ethnic-Based Statistics.” Insee, September 16, 2019. <https://www.insee.fr/en/information/2388586>.

³² Lucarelli, Sonja, “Mirrors of us: European political identity and the Others’ image of the EU” in *Debating Political Identity and Legitimacy*, pp. 148-167

from the general body of natural citizens, creating an out-group from the in-group.³³

Furthermore, there are often heavily segregated neighborhoods that distinguish the different socio-economic classes, where immigrants are most likely to reside in the poorer areas.

Integration methods, such as assimilation and multiculturalism, have been used in Europe to accommodate the increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees. The most popular method in France is assimilation. This form is very aggressive and extreme, as it aims to create uniformity by destroying all self-identities. “Le citoyen,” or the citizen, is the preferred national identity, and any immigrants who come in must dissolve their previous connections with their old culture and replace it with French values and community.³⁴ Having everyone chase after the national French identity builds the notion of fear and anxiety towards the “others.” It is inherently blind to cultural diversity and provides equality for all at the expense of equity. Many minority communities are put at a disadvantage because they are underrepresented and underserved in all aspects of politics, economics, and social life. One can argue that the assimilating policies are a continuity of their civilizing mission practices because of how they subject postcolonial immigrants to the dominant French culture and tradition. It perpetuates the notion that they are culturally inferior and unworthy of taking up space in France, so they have to blend in to get by.

Marine Le Pen, daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen and politician from the Front National Party, said at a 2014 Football World Cup that the immigration policies were a total failure because bi-national citizens still had their non-French citizenship and were refusing to fully

³³ Alison Marmont, " French or Francophone: Postcolonial Immigrant Identities and Literature in Contemporary France," *Xanthos: A Journal of Foreign Literatures and Languages* 1 (2019): 1-16,

³⁴ Wilson, Robin. "Chapter 2: The old order: how Europe used to manage cultural diversity". In *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018) accessed Dec 8, 2023, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.4337/9781786438171.00006>

assimilate.³⁵ Algeria qualified for the second round against the French, and she said that they had to pick a side because they could not be both. She ends her remarks by saying that “there is not another country in the world that would accept what we go through on our territory”³⁶ showing how political memory and history run deep in their sense of self. Ironically, the French football team has historically been made mostly of immigrants or children of immigrants. Trevor Noah points out, “When they are unemployed, when they may commit a crime, or when they are considered unsavory, it’s the African immigrant. When their children go on to provide a World Cup victory for France, we should only refer to them as France.”³⁷ French media gets to pick and choose when an immigrant can be French or not, depending on how well they represent France.

The assimilationist model fails to connect the idealized notion of French citizenship to the lived experiences of those living in the suburbs.³⁸ Immigrants often feel more disconnected and unacknowledged under the assimilationist model because they do not see the benefits of conforming to a culture that was never made for them. In 2008, at a football match against Tunisia, many immigrants booed the French national anthem because those living in the suburbs were experiencing discrimination and an ethnic hierarchy that was not what they imagined when they became French. Moreover, *laïcité* laws, which were secularist policies and ideas, banned religious values and garments in public schools in 2004, which targeted religious minorities and immigrants.³⁹ It started as a way to remain religiously impartial, but how it was enforced was too

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ FRANCE 24. “France’s Le Pen Calls for End of Dual Nationality in Algeria World Cup Row.” France 24, June 30, 2014. <https://www.france24.com/en/20140630-france-le-pen-algeria-world-cup-police>.

³⁷ The Daily Show. “Trevor Responds to Criticism from the French Ambassador - between the Scenes | The Daily Show.” YouTube, July 19, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COD9hcTpGWQ>.

³⁸ Wilson, Robin. “Chapter 4: What went wrong?”. In *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018) accessed Dec 8, 2023, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.4337/9781786438171.00008>

³⁹ González, Francisco Colom, and Gianni D’Amato. “Chapter 7: Unveiling Contemporary French Secularism.” Essay. In *Multireligious Society: Dealing with Religious Diversity in Theory and Practice*, 117. London: Routledge, 2017.

aggressive and counterproductive, making it seem more like cultural erasure than intercultural dialogue.

Current assimilationist policies in France have caused backlash through many protests and riots. Most notably, the 2005 Youth Riots⁴⁰ and the 2015 Paris attacks⁴¹ have sparked the conversation about civil unrest and homegrown terrorism. Both events had a common theme in which attackers were of minority and/or immigrant backgrounds who wanted recognition and community but were feeling shut out from their country. The attackers hoped to bring attention to the intense discrimination and marginalization that they were facing, but instead, they brought negative stereotyping that furthered the “other” identity narrative.⁴²

V. The European Union’s Influence on French Policies

As a member of the European Union (EU), France has few restrictions on its immigration and integration policies, allowing it to continue its practices without repercussions. The purpose of the EU is to create a thin layer of supranational governance that connects all 27 member states under common goals that promote peace and cooperation without hindering national sovereignty. Common institutions that serve this purpose include the passport, the Euro, and consistent branding across government institutions.⁴³ As outlined on the official EU fact sheet, they can only offer basic visa rules for workers and students staying longer than 90 days.⁴⁴ Immigrants outside of those base criteria must refer to the member state they are moving to, and it is up to

⁴⁰ Mestries, Francis. “The French Autumn Riots of 2006 and the Crisis of Republican Integration.” PHP Web Hosting. Accessed December 8, 2023.

⁴¹ Vasilopoulos, Pavlos. “Terrorist Events, Emotional Reactions, and Political Participation: The ...” Taylor and Francis Online, July 20, 2017. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402382.2017.1346901>.

⁴² Wilson, Robin. “Chapter 3: ‘Morbid symptoms’: the failure of prior social models”. In *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018) accessed Dec 8, 2023, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.4337/9781786438171.00007>

⁴³ McNamara, Kathleen. (2015) *The Politics of Everyday Europe* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁴ “Immigration Policy: Fact Sheets on the European Union: European Parliament.” Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament. Accessed December 9, 2023. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/152/immigration-policy>.

them to make the final decision on the applications.⁴⁵ In addition, integration policies are strictly up to the individual member states as well. There may be incentives for member states to promote integration, but the EU does not have an overarching policy that regulates it.⁴⁶

If anything, the EU would most likely perpetuate France's immigration biases. One argument that can be made is that the EU itself has not addressed its colonial past. The argument follows that the EU's foundation was not built upon peace but rather economic recovery from the decolonization period, created after World War II when many colonial and imperial states knew that the decolonization period was forthcoming. Therefore, these states needed to band together (European Economic Community) to economically recover and continue their "grand and global civilizing mission" in Africa.⁴⁷ Europe must address its colonial and imperial history before it can comment on or help its member states.

VI. Final Thoughts and Future Research

It is clear that France's colonial history has deeply influenced its current national identity, as well as its immigration and integration policies. Historical events and institutional memory are so deeply intertwined—with colonialism as the common thread—that it becomes difficult to separate the truth of the past from the narratives that the nation tells itself. The questions that now need to be asked are: How do they make things right? How will they confront institutional memory with the truth, and is it possible to reconcile with the communities that were most affected by it? There are no shortcuts to address this. As a starting point, France can ask themselves the same question that they posed at the beginning of their conquest. "Who was the monster, and who was the man?" For so long, they viewed Indigenous people as monsters who

⁴⁵ "Immigration – Your Rights." European Union. Accessed December 9, 2023. https://european-union.europa.eu/live-work-study/immigration-eu_en#:~:text=If%20you%27re%20a%20non,decision%20on%20individual%20migrant%20applications.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Kundnani, Hans. "Chapter 3: From Colonial Project to Community of Memory." Essay. In *Eurowhiteness: Culture, Empire and Race in the European Project*, 69–77. London: Hurst & Company, 2023.

needed help and westernization. Until they recognized that the people they were exploiting were never monsters but rather ordinary people who were progressing and living at their own pace, France could start to unravel the mistakes and find ways to repair their damages, if possible.

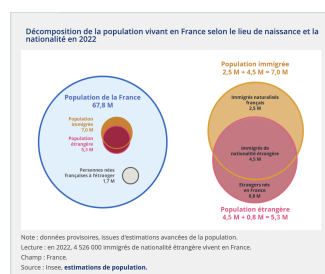
VII. Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was not to arraign and convict France of her crimes. Rather, it was to share another perspective on the history of immigration and how it has been shaped by colonialism. Understanding the dark side of France’s universal values from the Republic can close the gaps between principles and justice and how its application proved it to not be as universal as they thought. In a world that is more interconnected and diverse than ever before, France is standing at a pivotal moment where she has the opportunity to show the world that she can make amends for her wrongdoings to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Through active reflection and community-driven action, it is possible to heal the scars of colonialism.

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