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Author(s):

Badrane Benlahcene

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# Muslim-European Civilizational Encounters; French Colonization of Algeria; Its Framework and Impacts on Algerian Society and Culture

**Badrane Benlahcene\***

Comparative Religion and Civilization Studies,  
College of Islamic Studies,  
Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Doha, Qatar

## Abstract

The paper discusses the French colonization of Algeria, within the context of Muslim European civilizational encounters. It focuses more on the European colonization process in the world in general, and the so-called “*mission civilisatrice*” of French colonization of Algeria in particular. It takes the period from 1830 until 1962 as its interval of analysis, by analyzing the various changes that the colonizers brought to the Algerian society and people during their 132 years of colonization. The paper found that the French Colonization of Algeria is one of the most violent, radical and hegemonic civilizational encounters between the Muslim world and Europe. Moreover, Algeria has experienced one of the severe processes of colonization, which affected all aspects of the Algerian natives’ lives, and the colonizers changed the structure of society and the social institutions as well as their cultural traditions, which experienced severe damage.

**Keywords:** colonization, Algeria, French, civilizational encounter, European, culture, society

## Introduction

As early as the nineteenth century, Europe witnessed zeal of expansion over the world. Through discoveries of the Americas and the ancient world of Asia and Africa, Europe promoted a new policy of colonization and expansion, and marked a new phase of civilizational encounters with other civilizations i.e. Islamic, Chinese, Indian and other civilizations. Among those colonization expansions of Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French colonization of Algeria was a remarkable step towards expansion put under the motto of civilizational mission (*la mission civilisatrice*). However, the latter has been the point of debate among Algerian and French political, diplomatic, and legal quarters as well as journalists, scientific and historical researchers.

This paper aims to raise a discussion on this issue and put it under analysis. It aims also to bring into analysis the ways and means that the so-called “*mission civilisatrice*” was undertaken and the various destructions and deteriorations as well as the achievement that

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\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Badrane Benlahcene, Associate Professor of Comparative Religion and Civilization Studies, College of Islamic Studies, at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Doha, Qatar. [bbenlahcene@hbku.edu.qa](mailto:bbenlahcene@hbku.edu.qa)

the colonizers brought to the Algerian society and people during their 132 years of colonization.

The analysis of the situation is examined within the context of the civilizational encounter between Europe and the Muslim world and within the colonization process in the world in general.

As will be seen, Algeria has experienced one of the severe processes of colonization. The colonization affected all aspects of the Algerian natives' lives, and the colonizers changed the structure of society and the social institutions as well as their cultural traditions, which experienced severe damage.

## 2. The Colonization Process

It is widely recognized that colonization as a process and colonialism as a phenomenon in their European version are unprecedented in human history. They shifted from mere events in human history to a planned agenda by modern Western civilization to "civilize" the "primitive" and the "barbaric." However, their origins may be traced back to the traditions of the Greeks and Romans, especially, the Romans where "colonization was an integral part of the Roman policy."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, from the historical perspective, colonialism is deterioration in human history. That is, if we look at it, we find that its roots trace back to Rome when the Roman civilization first imposed its colonial seal on the records of history.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, a Western civilization with its modern outlook, which had been elaborated within the framework of the Greco-Roman traditions<sup>3</sup> took the colonizing character of that framework and developed it into a well-systematized agenda to spread over the world.

Historically speaking, colonialism as a civilizational phenomenon begun as early as the sixteenth century by early European political and economic expansion. At the beginning of that century, the various European nations discovered, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world. In other words, colonialism as a phenomenon and colonization as a process in modern times commenced with the emerging European nation-states.<sup>4</sup> It was an enterprise of expansion and domination spawned by the combined effects of rational bourgeois capitalism, demographic pressures, and power struggles among the

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<sup>1</sup>Barbara Ann Chernow, and George A. Vallasi, *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 601.

<sup>2</sup>Malek Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍa* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 148.

<sup>3</sup>Constant Southworth, *The French Colonial Venture* (London: P. S. King and Son, Ltd, 1931), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy, "Colonialism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed., Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2017 Edition), accessed May 6, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/colonialism>

European nation-states. Therefore, modern colonialism is essentially a European phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

To gain more understanding of the mentioned process, the present paper analyses colonialism and its colonization process on two levels. That is the general process of European expansion in the world and that process in Algeria.

### 3. The Zeal of European Expansion in the World

Since the sixteenth century, the West has, through direct or indirect domination, played an ever-larger role in fashioning the world and giving it many of its practices and values.<sup>6</sup> Four centuries later, the impact of the West is extensive and persistent. However, that process of expansion over the “Rest” has been shaped by the “unfinished project” of Western modernity.<sup>7</sup> It has been accompanied also by Orientalism and Christian missionaries as tools for proposing the Western worldview and subdue the other as well as achieving the “Western civilizational mission” or “civilizing mission” as the colonization process has been described and justified by the Westerners.<sup>8</sup> In the quite long passage, Gordon asserts that:

By 1800, Europe controlled about 35 percent of the land surface of the world, by 1878, 67 percent and by 1914, 84 percent. After World War I the percentage rose even higher when England and France established mandates over some of the successor states to the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. This was the height of Western global hegemony, the culmination of the expansion of the West traceable to the crusades in the eleventh century.”<sup>9</sup>

Many historians of colonialism support Gordon's note. Loomba, for example, agreed.<sup>10</sup> However, the groundwork for what were to become the great modern Western empires can more accurately be dated from the seventeenth century after which the energies of the West were exported rather than directed to internal discord. In this century the efforts were persistent to establish once and for all the primacy of secular over religious authority in Europe. In this century also “Europe” as a self-conscious civilization had emerged, from the matrix of “Christendom,” sensitive to its distinction from the other or the “rest” as

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<sup>5</sup>John P. Entelis, *Comparative Politics of North Africa* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1980), 16.

<sup>6</sup>Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 2.

<sup>7</sup>Jurgen Habermas, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project,” In *Habermas and The Unfinished Project of Modernity*, Edited by Maurizio Passerin D’entreves and Syela Benhabib, (Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1996), 38.

<sup>8</sup>Frederic Mauro, *L’expansion Européenne (1600-1870)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Paris: Presses Universitaires De France), 203; Helen Chapin Metz, ed, *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: Federal Research Division, 1994), 23.

<sup>9</sup>David C. Gordon, *Images of the West; Third World Perspectives* (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1989), 3.

<sup>10</sup>Loomba, *Colonialism*, 15.

Huntington termed the non-western civilizations.<sup>11</sup> The other, however, is always “exotic,” “negative” and “despotic,” whether that other is Asia, the Orient, or the East.<sup>12</sup>

The Western expansion, which, in William McNeill’s words led to “the irremediable collapse of the traditional order of each of the major Asian civilizations” and to the penetration of the West into “the issue of weaker societies,” became progressively more irresistible.<sup>13</sup> Finally, during the nineteenth century, the last resistance of the “traditional” forces of the other civilizations collapsed only later to give way to the resistance of new forces inspired by Western nationalism.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, the whole world after the sixteenth century became a vast frontier for the West to exploit and from which the West derived its fabulous wealth. Furthermore, the entire world until about 1914 was Europe’s oyster. In the meantime, the imposition of the Western rule was rationalized by benevolent doctrines such as the White Man’s burden or the *mission civilizatrice*. Cruelty, nevertheless, was employed, and Western domination caused serious psychological, social and cultural damage to host cultures.<sup>15</sup> In other words, “Europe did not dominate the colonies only, but it imposed its own rule on them” as if they were original parts of Europe or part of its ownership.<sup>16</sup>

Applying the newly emerged -so-called- sciences of anthropology, archaeology, and sociology, the West used to implement them in such a way that ensured the rationalization and scientificity of its claimed civilizational mission. A mission to civilize the indigenous, the barbaric, the primitive and the like terms used to denote the colonized peoples and civilizations. The Westerners also followed such habits of dichotomy to classify and distinguish themselves from others. For example, the dichotomies of we/them, civilized/primitive, civilization/barbarism, West/Rest, West/East, etc., were widely used in various Western circles. Also, the West presented itself as being the centre while other civilizations were the periphery. The proclamations of the West as the rational, the civilized, the industrialized, and the free world were always presented as antonyms of the East, the despotic, the aesthetic, the romantic and even the barbaric and the feudal.<sup>17</sup>

The deal with different parts of the “East” took various forms and varied from a romantic view to certain Eastern civilizations to the hostile view towards others. Consequently, the Europeans, while they invaded the Muslim world in the early nineteenth

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<sup>11</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, “The West Unique, Not Universal,” *Foreign Affairs* 75, No.6 (1996): 28-46.

<sup>12</sup>Gordon, *Images of The West*, 15.

<sup>13</sup>William McNeill, *The Expansion of The West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 726-30, 653-64.

<sup>14</sup>Gordon, *Images of The West*, 4.

Loomba, *Colonialism*, 8; Gordon, *Images of the West*,<sup>15</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Malek Bennabi, *Wijhat al- ‘Ālam al-Islāmī* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1989), 92.

<sup>17</sup>W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Trans., J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1956), 111-115.

century, presented only certain aspects of their Christian morality and soul. The pleasant soul was reserved for the Europeans whilst the Muslims saw only the oppressive and impermeable side of it. Furthermore, the European soul was, above all, that of the colonizer who leaves his/her civilizing character before embarking for the “Barbary” coast, the Indies or the Islands of Java.<sup>18</sup>

However, sociologically speaking, the solitary role of the Europeans in the history of the world over the last two centuries becomes apparent, although they detached themselves from the rest of the humanity, which they disdained and viewed as a sort of stepping-stone to their glory.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. The Ways of European Expansion in the World

As the treatment of natives by the Westerners varied, so did the depth of penetration and cultural transformation. In addition, there are many ways in which the West has imposed its rule upon the world, in general, and the East, in particular. Among them were the economic system, the social schisms, and the alien standards.

The first way was the implementation of the European economic system. As Europe expanded, there gradually came into existence, after the sixteenth century, a world economic system embracing virtually the whole globe and making all parts of the world economically interdependent. The dominant element in this system was the West who inaugurated it, became the first to take advantage of it and, in different degrees and ways, subordinated the economies of the rest of the world to its own. Over time, the economic life of the world was radically transformed to the advantage of the West, and the Western hegemony produced a new form of exploitation.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the Western powers saw their economic domination with cold business calculations which appraised it and valued it.<sup>21</sup>

The second method of European expansion was through the making of social schisms. A consequence of the Western impact, not unrelated to the phenomenon of economic dependence, was the making of a schism between an elite, increasingly drawn into the cultural orbit of the West and tied to it in many economic and political ways, and the mass of the people. The effect of this schism was often to separate leaders from their people in terms of language and manners as well as in terms of political interests and to divide society into the “Westernized” and the “traditional.”<sup>22</sup>

The third way of bringing about that expansion and dominance was through the imposed alien standards. That is to say, the Western impact has been felt in a third way

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<sup>18</sup>Malek Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, trans., Asma Rashid (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1988), 20.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>20</sup>Gordon, *Images of the West*, 9.

<sup>21</sup>Southworth, *The French Colonial Venture*, 7.

<sup>22</sup>Gordon, *Images of the West*, 10.

among those states challenged by the West but not, at least not immediately, subjugated, such as the Ottoman Empire and China.

Aware of the Western military superiority, the leaders of those states decided to borrow only one strand from the West. This strand was usually that of military technology, without taking into consideration the interrelatedness of all Western civilizational productions.

The borrowers were not aware of the integrity of all the strands of civilization. They were not aware either that having a civilization is not merely a question of stacking its products. Rather, it is a dynamic effort to synthesizing its fundamental elements to start the civilizing process.<sup>23</sup>

In this regard, the elites in those states tried to distinguish modernization from Westernization, the matter that was not easy for them, especially when they adopted some Western concepts such as nationalism. This was later to become a disturbing idea for the non-Western nations.

In the context of the East, with its complex mixtures of peoples and variegated religions, languages, and heritages, Western nationalism could only serve to fragment and to pit people against one another. That is because the adoption of nationalism cannot be separated from its allies, i.e., the ethnicity, racism and the idolization of territorial sovereignty.

As for the Muslim world, where the loyalty in principle is to the *Umma* of all Muslims irrespective of ethnic background, nationalism has been a particularly dangerous and sometimes "heretical" challenge. It divided the peoples of the Muslim world from one another as never before, and fragmented Muslim countries along ethnic and linguistic lines, thus endangering if not destroying the unity of the *Umma*.

Mentioning the confusion caused by the nationalism in the Muslim world, Gordon wrote:

Among the Arab succession states to the Ottoman Empire, confusion of identification and loyalty lasts to this day. To many Muslim Arabs, before World War I, for example, it was unclear whether they were primarily Ottomans, Muslims, or Arabs. And to this day there is often confusion between whether one's highest loyalty is to the Arab nation, to the regional state (Syria, Iraq, etc.), to the city, to the extended family or Islam.<sup>24</sup>

To conclude the discussion of the general process of European expansion in the world through the colonization mechanism it is important to bear in mind that the general framework within which a discussion of the same process will be discussed regarding the Algerian case.

<sup>23</sup>Sulaiman Khatīb, *Falsafat al-Ḥaḍāra 'Inda Malek Bennabi*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), 80.

<sup>24</sup>Gordon, *Images of The West*, 13.

## 5. The Colonization Process in Algeria

In the context of the colonization process, Algeria has experienced one of the severe processes of colonization.<sup>25</sup> In other words, it was “totalitarian colonialism” and an intense and far-reaching one, felt more badly in Algeria than in other places colonized by France.<sup>26</sup> Colonization affected all aspects of the Algerian natives’ lives. The colonizers changed the structure of society and the social institutions as well as their cultural traditions, which experienced severe damage. However, one cannot value the dramatic changes brought to Algerian society without a comprehensive knowledge of conditions in the pre-colonial era of the Algerians.

Therefore, it is important to outline the nature and significance of the political, economic and social changes and their effects on Algerian society and culture. It is important also to present a general picture of Algerian society before the invasion of French colonialism and its efforts of the annexation of Algerian society to the French nation and Western culture and civilization.

### 5.1. The Algerian Society before the Colonial Era

As part of the Muslim civilization, which experienced- in the last three centuries- a state of decline, Algerian society was, in the pre-colonial era, in the post civilized stage if we use Bennabi’s terms. However, sociologically speaking it was in a stable situation and had a level of development higher than at any time during the entire colonial era. Its culture was more original and belonged to Islamic traditions. There were some efforts to revive the society and enable it to reactivate its civilizing process, especially, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Although there was no high development, the people enjoyed a harmonious life and a kind of political stability, economic progress, cultural creativity and social harmony.<sup>27</sup>

Politically, Algeria was sovereign and enjoyed independence from the central caliphate in Istanbul. It was, nominally, part of the Ottoman caliphate, but practically it was fully independent internally and externally. Furthermore, in some cases, it was Algeria that assisted the caliphate regime politically, economically and militarily. The government administration was in the hands of the natives. This sovereignty could be seen in various forms, such as the treaties and conventions signed with the European nations whereby France was given special importance.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Jack Woddis, *An Introduction to Neo-Colonialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1980), 53,111, 129.

<sup>26</sup>Entelis, *Comparative Politics of North Africa*, 17.

<sup>27</sup>As‘ad Saḥmarānī, *Malek Bennabi Mufakkiran Iṣlāḥiyyan* (Beirut: Dār al- Nafā’is. 1986), 28.

<sup>28</sup>Bassām ‘Asli, *al-Jazā’ir wa al-Ḥamalāt al-Ṣalībiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā’is, 1980), 161.



“Algeria was indeed a nation prior to the French invasion, a highly developed, populous country with a high literacy rate.”<sup>29</sup> The Algerian society was in a position to provide the opportunity of education and almost all Algerians were literates. Many historians noted that Algeria experienced remarkable development in educational institutions, and “all Algerians know how to read and to write. There were two schools in each village.”<sup>30</sup> There were the official schools and the non-official ones where the natives used to send their children to learn basic religious knowledge. ‘Aslī mentioned that, “In every district, the natives were willingly managing to teach their children the Qur’ān, Prophetic tradition and Arabic language.” Besides, primary and secondary education enjoyed clear development before the advent of colonizers.<sup>31</sup>

The Western sources recorded that there was a significant development in the educational sphere in Algeria. They draw attention to the situation and the number of educational institutions in the pre-colonial era. There were in the capital Algiers 2920 institutions for education and 148 public fountains and schools for boys and girls. As for Constantine, in the East of Algeria, it was famous for both its material and intellectual activities, with 35 mosques, 7 *madrāsas*, and 90 Qur’ānic schools teaching some 1350 boys. Moreover, Tlemcen, in the West of Algeria, was another important place of education which had fifty Qur’ānic schools and two *madrāsas*.<sup>32</sup>

It was in those remaining institutions (*zāwiyya*, *kuttāb*, and *madrāsa*) where most educated Algerians received their early education, although they had faced the mass destruction of the colonizers from the very beginning of French colonization. Additionally, those schools not only educated children, but they also preserved the very essential features of Islamic culture, the traditions and the identity of Algerian society.<sup>33</sup>

However, it is agreed among the historians that Algeria did not have well-known universities or religious centres, as did its neighbouring countries. For example, Algeria

<sup>29</sup>David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>30</sup>Nevill Barbour, *A Survey of North West Africa: The Maghrib* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 239.

<sup>31</sup>‘Aslī, *al-Jazā’ir Wa al-Ḥamalāt al-Ṣalībiyya*, 165.

<sup>32</sup>John J. Morel, *Algeria: The Topography and History, Political, Social and Natural of French Algeria* (London: Milford House, 1845), 92; Elsa M. Harik, *The Civilizing Mission of France in Algeria*. In Elsa M. Harik and Donald G. Schilling, *The Politics of Education in Colonial Algeria and Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Center For International Studies, 1984), 27; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerian*, translated from French by Alan C.M Ross (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 60; Mahfoud Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 67.

<sup>33</sup>Abulqasim Sa’adallah, *T ārikh al-Jazā’ir al-Thaq āfi*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Bierut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1988), 274-316.

did not have schools like those of al *Zaytūna* in Tunis, al- *Qarawiyyīn* in Fez or al-*Azhar* in Cairo.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, the Algerian *‘Ulama* found in the mosques their means of spreading education and Islamic teachings and preserving the Algerian identity. Thus, the institution of the mosque played a pivotal role in educating the Algerians and in protecting their cultural values.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, the mosque in traditional Algerian society was the axis of all activities and the centre for people’s daily life.<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, the mentioned state of development and prosperity did not last for long in Algeria. That is, from the very beginning of French colonization the situation started deteriorating. Since the first settlers arrived in Algeria, many distractions and much damage took place in Algerian society and to its values, traditions, and institutions, which led to an unprecedented change in the structure of the society and the function of its various traditional institutions. However, to understand the in-depth process of change in the structure and the function of the society in Algeria during the colonial era, it is essential to draw a general picture of the changes made by the colonizers.

## 5.2. The Total Colonization of Algeria

The French colonization process, to achieve its objectives of bringing about the annexation and fusion of the Algerian identity and society, followed a four-pronged strategy; Christianization, the imposition of the French language, the illiteracy policy and the impoverishment policy.<sup>37</sup> It was a fourfold project to deconstruct the structure of Algerian society.<sup>38</sup>

Those four mechanisms, together, denote the systematic institutionalized plan to westernize Algerian society. Therefore, French settlement in Algeria was not a mere coincidence, as some scholars and historians claimed.<sup>39</sup>

On the contrary, the colonial movement was a systematic, institutionalized process that had been well-planned thirty years before the invasion took place. It was based on Napoleon's 1808 contingency plan which prepared for the invasion of Algeria. Therefore, when the French first landed in Algiers, they commenced their so-called “civilizing

<sup>34</sup>Muḥammad Mīlī, “al-Jazā’ir Wa al-Mas’ala al-Thaqāfiyya,” *al-Mustaqbal al-‘Arabī* 5, no. 45 (1982): 37.

<sup>35</sup>Harik, *The Civilizing Mission*, 29.

<sup>36</sup>Malek Bennabi, *Shurūt al-Nahḍa* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 21.

<sup>37</sup>Saḥmarānī, *Malek Bennabi*, 35; Frederic Mauro, *L’expansion Européenne (1600-1870)* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed), (Paris: Presses Universitaires De France, N.D.), 203.

<sup>38</sup>Rābaḥ Turkī, “Aḍwā’ ‘Alā T’arīb al-Tarbiyya Wa al-Idāra Wa al-Muḥīṭ Fī al-Jazā’ir,” *al-Mustaqbal al-‘Arabī* 11, no. 57 (1983): 86-90.

<sup>39</sup>John P. Entelis, *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized* (Boulder: Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), 23; Barbour, *A Survey of North West Africa*, 213.

mission” by undermining the Algerian institutions, humiliating the Algerian people and destroying the organized religious institutions. The French troops raped, looted, desecrated mosques, and destroyed cemeteries. It was an inauspicious beginning to France's self-described *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission), whose character, on the whole, was cynical, arrogant, and cruel.<sup>40</sup>

Applying the so-called *régime du sabre* (government by the sword), Algeria was annexed to France and put under General Governor, a high-ranking army officer invested with civil and military jurisdiction, who was responsible to the Minister of War. That policy led the French to take possession of the *beylik* (government-owned lands), and over time, as pressures increased to obtain more land for settlement by Europeans, the state seized more categories of land, particularly that used by tribes, religious foundations, and villages.<sup>41</sup>

To change the demographic structure of Algerian society, the colonial rule flooded Algeria with the so-called *pieds noirs*.<sup>42</sup> The so-called colonizers or, more popularly, *pieds noirs* (literally, black feet), the European settlers were large of peasant farmers or working-class origins from the poor southern areas of Italy, Spain, and France. Others were criminals and political deportees from France, transported under sentence in large numbers to Algeria. In the 1840s and 1850s, to encourage settlement in rural areas official policy was to offer grants of land for a fee and a promise that improvements would be made.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of the impact of colonialism on the land, settlers appropriated 27 percent of Algeria's arable lands (more than 7 million acres). Therefore, Algeria suffered the bulk of the European settler population. At its height (1955), that population constituted 13 percent of the total Algerian population.<sup>44</sup>

The settlers were increasingly aiming at changing the infrastructure of traditional society and systematically confiscating the lands of the natives. They were aiming also to make the natives more attached to the labor market provided by the colonizers and find themselves working as employees on their land which had been confiscated by the colonizers. Another aim was the shifting of the basic structures of society from the traditional forms of solidarity to more differentiated social structures.

In societal terms, colonialism caused increasing differentiation, tribal erosion, rural exodus, and emigration of thousands of people to other countries in the Arab World or Europe. In this regard, the researcher agrees with Entelis in his comparison between the French colonization of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria.

<sup>40</sup>Harik, *The Civilizing Mission*, 1.

<sup>41</sup>Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Algeria: A Country Study* (Washington: Federal Research Division, 1994), 25.

<sup>42</sup>Prochaska, *Making Algeria French*, 6.

<sup>43</sup>Ageron, *Tārīkh al-Jazā'ir*, 24-25.

<sup>44</sup>Entelis, *Comparative Politics*, 17.

While Morocco experienced segmented colonialism and Tunisia experienced instrumental colonialism, Algeria, however, experienced total colonialism which “constitutes unrestrained domination of the whole society at all levels, based upon the negation of the social, cultural, and economic order of the colonized country.”<sup>45</sup>

Historically speaking, I agree, to a certain extent, with Entelis’s and Ageron’s periodization of the stages of the colonization process along with the stages of decolonization in Algeria. They view that the colonial movement had passed through four important stages which had left their traces on the coming generations of the Algerian society.<sup>46</sup>

Firstly, the conquest and resistance stage (1830- 1848), which the French colonizers began with a policy of “limited occupation”, which abandoned the policy of annexation of the coastal cities to France by appointing a Governor-General in Algiers responsible to the Ministry of War in Paris.<sup>47</sup> Unlike the relative ease with which the Algerian coastal area was conquered and colonized, the French colonization of other parts of Algeria faced sustained native resistance that took nearly two decades to overcome. The resistance led by *al-Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir* (1807-1883) was a heroic one. Although it was persistent, the resistance fighters could not compare with the French troops who were well-armed and trained. With al-Amir's defeat in 1848, the “Algerians lost not only their freedom but also their land.”<sup>48</sup>

After defeating *al-Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir*, the French colonizers orientated their policy towards taking possession of the large territories of former Ottoman lands and religious endowments and distributing them among the settlers and military officers. Later, the policy of confiscation began by taking over private holdings and communal or tribal properties. Therefore, as mentioned by some historians, the European settlers even went so far as taking property by forcing the landowners to leave their lands and migrate. In other words, the European settlement required the displacement of Muslims from their land.<sup>49</sup> Thus, “such land policies (reached) the heart of society because they contributed to the dislocation of the whole series of relations and practices of production and property rights that were the basis of social life.”<sup>50</sup> This passage denotes that such a policy was carefully planned to isolate the Algerians from any means of resistance and to change their social, political, economic, cultural, and religious structures.

The French did not hesitate to apply any idea or means to achieve the objectives of their policy. They adopted various methods such as; the policy of assimilation, bloodshed

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Mauro, *L’expansion Européenne*, 246-247.

<sup>48</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, 27.

<sup>49</sup>Ageron, *Tārīkh al-Jazā’ir*, 26.

<sup>50</sup>Michael Gilson, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Arab World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 145.

massacre of the people, confiscation of lands, spreading of illnesses and ignorance, severe condition of life, malnutrition and lack of food and huge migration of people to outside the country. Therefore, using the words of Morell, hunger was the grimmest reality in Algeria through most of the colonization period.<sup>51</sup>

Along with the previous means, the colonizers officially encouraged settlement by “Europeans from France, Corsica, Spain, Italy, and Malta. Compared to a total of 5.000 European civilians living in Algeria at the end of 1832, there were nearly five times that number seven years later. By 1847, more than 100.000 had settled in the country.”<sup>52</sup> And the result for the Algerian natives was destitution, deprivation, and dependency status within their own country.

At this stage, one can recall the similar settler-Indian conflict in North and South America when the first Europeans settled in the New World. The process of expanding, the policy of confiscation, the change of the structure of society, Christianization, and impoverishment were the same. “There is the same story of treaties made and broken, the frontier pushed continually back; outposts built to protect the homesteaders; friendlies and hostiles, and sporadic surprise raids of frustration and vengeance by natives as they are gradually tracked down and cornered.”<sup>53</sup>

Thus, in less than twenty years, the settlers multiplied by a factor of twenty and the French colonization had made deep incursions into the country’s interior. The defeat of al-*Amīr ‘Abd al-Qādir*’s resistance and the destruction of his state made it easy for the French to further strengthen their presence in Algeria which would be declared as an integral part of France at the next stage.<sup>54</sup>

Secondly, came colonial intensification and the second resistance stage (1847-1871), which began in 1848 with the declaration by the Second French Republic government that Algeria was an integral part of France. During this stage, the colonizers’ number was intensified and the number of Algerian natives was reduced from three million in 1830 to two million forty years later.<sup>55</sup>

It is difficult to gauge in human terms the losses suffered by Algerians during the early years of the French occupation. Estimates of the number of those dead from disease and starvation and as a direct result of warfare during the early years of colonization vary considerably, but the most reliable ones indicate that the native population of Algeria fell

<sup>51</sup>John J. Morell, *Algeria, The Topography and History, Political, Social and Natural of French Algeria* (London: Milford House, 1945), 21.

<sup>52</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, 27; Ageron, *Tārīkh al-Jazā’ir*, 26.

<sup>53</sup>Charles F. Gallagher, *The United States and North Africa: Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 64; Entelis, *Algeria*, 28.

<sup>54</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, 28; Saḥmarānī, *Malek Bennabi*, 39.

<sup>55</sup>Salah El-Din El-Zein Tayeb, “The ‘Ulama and Islamic Renaissance in Algeria,” *The American Journal of Islamic social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1989): 34; Ageron, *Tārīkh al-Jazā’ir*, 26.

by nearly one-third in the years between the French invasion and the end of fighting in the mid-1870s.<sup>56</sup>

Algeria was divided into three departments and the population was divided into two categories; the privileged Europeans, on the one hand, and the suppressed Muslim natives, on the other. It was an apartheid policy similar to that seen in South Africa where there were differences in political and civil rights, social status and organization, and where economic opportunities were not the same and there had never been harmonized coexistence. The Europeans were the landlords and owners of everything, while the natives had to settle in ghetto settlements in the countryside or mountains.<sup>57</sup>

In this second stage, Algerian society witnessed the expansion of the colonizers over the entire country, and an increase in the number of decrees and edicts for assimilating and annexing Algeria to France and towards making *L'Algerie Francaise* (French Algeria). In 1863 and 1865, France put into effect decrees that had a great impact on the lives of the natives. Those two decrees made the sale of tribal lands and endowment lands easy and a freely circulating commodity and thereby facilitated their sale by individuals to settlers.<sup>58</sup>

The primary aim of this decree (law) was “the disintegration of the tribe. Its third article prescribed the following procedures: the delimitation of the territories of the tribes, the break-up of every tribe of the *Tell* (Algeria’s north fertile areas) and other agricultural areas, and the constitution of individual property and its distribution among the members of the *Duwwars* (branches of tribes).”<sup>59</sup>

Consequently, tribal life had been destroyed. That is, once the tribal lands were confiscated and sold, the entire system of cultivation and of rights and privileges that had guaranteed a livelihood for the poor peasants would be lost. Furthermore, the economic system would be destroyed which meant that the whole social system would experience severe changes and rearrangements.

The above-mentioned edict played a pivotal role in shaping colonized Algeria by abolishing the tribes which have been the principal obstacle to the pacification of Algeria, and thus, proved an effective tool in dismembering Algerian rural society and fostering the development of colonization. This stage had witnessed large scale massacres and intensive destruction, famine, and genocide, especially under the leadership of Marshall Bugeaud, Colonel Saint Arnaud, and General Cavaignac.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Abdel Kader Chanderli and Salah Zaimche, “Algeria,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2019), Access Date: May 09, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Algeria>

<sup>57</sup>Mauro, *L'expansion Européenne*, 249.

<sup>58</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, 29.

<sup>59</sup>Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria*, 44.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

Thirdly, came the total colonization and native acquiescence stage (1871-1919), which witnessed the fatalistic pacification of the Algerian Muslims and the expansion of the settler population. At this stage, as a result of the previous stages, “Algeria was pacified, but its population had been figuratively drawn and quartered. For the next half-century, the country was to be a land of silence for the Muslims; politically, economically and socially.”<sup>61</sup>

After crushing the last native revolt of the nineteenth century in 1871, the French intended to govern the natives with a special law termed the “*code de L'indigenat*” (Law for the Natives). It was a statutory mechanism that enabled them to control and contain the Muslims. That law covered the entire life of the natives in all aspects. As Entelis noted:

Its forty -one unconscionable provision includes: an Algerian Muslim was forbidden to speak against France and its government; Algerians were prohibited from keeping stray animals for more than twenty-four hours; natives were not allowed to become school teachers without proper authorization nor were they permitted to travel from one place to another within Algeria without a visaed permit, a kind of internal passport. Punishment for those crimes or others such as delay in paying taxes, giving shelter to strangers without permission, or holding gatherings of more than twenty people ranged from payment of fines to confiscation of property to indefinite administrative internment.”<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, the direct taxes imposed on the natives were a burden on their lives. To finance the development of the colonizers, the colonial rule resorted to a special system of taxation imposed upon the Algerians from the beginning of colonization and officiated in this stage under the name of *Les impots Arabes* (Taxes upon Arabs).<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the natives also paid indirect taxes. “There was also a series of compulsory labour obligations such as fire watches in forests, grasshopper drives, official transport, and public service taxes.”<sup>64</sup> However, severe punishments were always ready-made to punish any natives who dared to oppose such regulations.

Furthermore, the policy of *Le Regime du Sabre* (the Sword Regime) was applied along with the policy of Christianization. There was a systematic process of Christianizing the natives by spreading the catholic institutions and transforming famous mosques into churches as was done to the *Katshawa* Mosque in Algiers. Christianization was introduced also through educational institutions and medical missionaries, not forgetting the expanding number of European settlers in Algeria. However, the colonizers used Christianization in a complementary way.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>61</sup>Morel, *Algeria*, 31.

<sup>62</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, 32-33.

<sup>63</sup>Bennoune, *The Making of contemporary Algeria*, 50.

<sup>64</sup>Vincent Confer, *France and Algeria: The Problem of Civil and Political Reform, 1870-1920* (Syracuse: University Press, 1966), 22.

<sup>65</sup>Gustave Von. Grunebaum, *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity* (New York: Random House, 1964), 12-14.

The colonization process had reached its dominating stage (stage four) by the turn of the nineteenth century, whereas the Algerian consciousness began to recover from the damage caused by the French hegemony. It was due, first, to the call of reformism and revival under the umbrella of Pan-Islamism of al-Afghani and Abdu coming from the Eastern part of the Arab world.<sup>66</sup>

Second, it was due to the emergence of native intellectuals and politicians who sought to gain more equality between the natives and the settlers in Algeria. They insisted on introducing some reforms to the situation of Algerians by the colonial regime.

Third, is the contribution of Algerians in the World War I where about 200.000 Algerian Muslims served France loyally during that war which had given them a new experience and exposed them to new ideas, experience and expectations.<sup>67</sup>

Fourth, the interaction between some Algerian intellectuals and politicians and Arab nationalists in the Arab world or France like *Shakīb Arslān* and other Arab activists, as well as activists from other parts of the world.<sup>68</sup>

Fifth, “the powerful appeal of Islam, which throughout the centuries had provided individual Algerians with a sense of collective identity, was mobilized anew in the 1920s and 1930s as an instrument for cultural assertiveness and nationalist self-worth.”<sup>69</sup>

All those factors contributed to making the fourth stage of colonization which can be described as the stage of the Algerian awakening (1919-1962). During this stage, the conflict between the natives and the colonial rule witnessed its highest point. There were, in fact, two societies in one country. The oppressed society of Algerian Muslim natives lacked all means of survival and was plunged into the misery of illiteracy, famine, poverty, and apartheid, on the one hand. On the other hand, there was the European settlers’ society which had all the means of a prosperous life and all means of development, welfare, and domination. In this context, it is worth mentioning the evidence of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, who described the situation in the following passage. He said:

The two societies were placed in a relation of superior to inferior and separated by institutions or by spontaneous self-defense. The European society, a minority exercising the right of a majority in the social, economic and political spheres, is attempting, through racist ideology, to transform these privileges into law.”<sup>70</sup>

On the side of the settlers, there were many institutions and organizations to fulfill their needs; political, social, economic, religious, cultural and educational institutions. However, on the side of the natives, they were in a terrible situation. All their traditional institutions had been banished and outlawed by the French. Therefore, the religious schools, the

<sup>66</sup>Tamara Sonn, *Between Qur’ān and Crown* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), 93.

<sup>67</sup>Ageron, *Tārīkh al-Jazā’ir*, 78; Entelis, *Algeria*, 35.

<sup>68</sup>Malek Bennabi, *Mudhakkirāt shāhid Li al-Qarn* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1985), 226.

<sup>69</sup>Entelis, *Algeria*, 36.

<sup>70</sup>Bourdieu, *The Algerians*, 133.



mosques, the endowments, the political institutions, as well as the economic system and social structure had been destroyed.

The traditional Islamic culture was prohibited and the Arabic language was considered as a foreign language, which meant its prohibition from official use. Although the French declared their stand for secularism, and their intention to separate religion and the state, they tried to subordinate Islam and Islamic institutions. Muslim judges were abolished or reduced to the rank of notaries, Qur'ānic schools were closed or limited and *Zāwiyyas* (Sufi centers) were controlled, and only education in French schools was allowed.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, it was a stage of establishing and exercising full authority over the colony of Algeria, and to stand against the natives trying to gain equality.<sup>72</sup> In this regard, al-Jundi mentioned that:

In Algeria, the plan of the colonizers was very dangerous. Arabic was eliminated and French was used as the official language for education. In 1938 the law of Shutan was issued, and with it, Arabic considered a foreign language. The French authority refused to issue any warrant for the Algerians to open schools without official permission.<sup>73</sup>

### 5.3. The Impact of the French Colonization on Algerian Society

Those ways adopted by the French had led to the damage of the natives' culture, religion, and identity as well as their social conditions. Consequently, they began to lose control over their private lives just as they had lost it in their public life.

On the other hand, that situation led the natives to begin real revision and self-criticism starting by the intellectuals and leaders of the society towards some inherited cultural traditions that were not originally either Islamic or civilizing. They found themselves, confronted by the invaders, looking for a framework to resolve their problems. Therefore, they began their efforts of resistance and awakening to regain their independence.

As Bennabi mentioned, Algeria, as part of the Muslim world, was during the last three centuries in a state of chaos compared to the glorious history and concerning the standards of Islamic civilization. However, that chaos has two aspects, one internal and the other external. They form together with the dialectic of coloniality and colonialism. The former is the internal factor and the latter is the external one. In fact, colonialism contributed to the chaos with its direct presence in all the spheres of life of the colonized people, in Algeria, Indonesia, or elsewhere.<sup>74</sup>

In the case of Algeria, the colonialism was totalitarian. In this framework, the French colonization process had worked in Algeria. Unlike what may be termed "liberal" colonialism that gives a free hand to the colonized. Totalitarian colonialism intervenes directly in all domains of life of the colonized. It interferes even in the details of his

<sup>71</sup>Ageron, *Tārīkh al-Jazā'ir*, 106.

<sup>72</sup>Harik, *The Civilizing Mission*, 26.

<sup>73</sup>Anwar Jundī, *al-Fikr Wa al-Thaqāfa al-Mu'aşira Fī Shamāl Ifrīqiyya* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya, 1965), 132.

<sup>74</sup>Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, 55.

religious life. This interference extends to all; education of native children in native schools, commerce in native stores, land of the natives and other aspects of their lives. In other words, everything is indigenized and termed with the seal of *indigene* (natives).

Furthermore, this kind of colonialism that Algeria had experienced was assisted by its academies, and schools of colonial sciences. It was put under a general plan, and periodical congresses masking their objectives under various names that kept up to date its colonial policies.

Colonialism was not only an essential element in the crisis of the Muslim world but one which also acted in an occult manner. That is to say, by destroying and breaking down any efforts by the natives to tackle their problems in an honorable manner while encouraging all sorts of myths and vagabondism.<sup>75</sup>

To place the destructive role of colonialism into a frame, Bennabi refers to the Qur’ān, where we find an explanation of the philosophy of colonialism. It is in the Qur’ānic verse, “Indeed kings (tyrants), when they enter a town, ruin it, and reduce the mightiest of its inhabitants to the most abased.”<sup>76</sup> This verse illustrates precisely the colonial philosophy. It denotes that total colonialism and all sorts of colonialism are methodically and systematically organized to set aside the real elite which testify to the highest virtues of a people, and to install a system of preservation, debasement and destruction directed against all dignity, all nobility and all modesty.

Ccolonialism followed another way to accomplish the colonial objectives, especially in the Muslim world. It aimed to halt the march of any civilizing process in the colonized countries by setting up an artificial archaism and dichotomy between the components of society. For example, the debate between *Tajdīd* (reform) and *Taqīd* (tradition) “wherein the puppets –marabouts, *pashas*, fake ‘*Ulama* or university degree holders- must enact the scene of the Islamic tradition- “tradition” that has become the password of the entire colonial policy.”<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, colonialism made efforts to revive all sorts of deviated *Ṣufī* orders, *marraboutism* (cult movements), to facilitate the use of opium and various drugs among natives, and to spread falsified scripts of the Qur’ān. Ccolonialism also followed the way of imposing morally and physically deformed persons to represent Muslims in various assemblies... etc.<sup>78</sup>

French colonization destroyed the social relations network of the Algerians. It contributed to the destruction of the family system and forced many families to flee the

<sup>75</sup>Malek Bennabi, *Wijhat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1989), 55.

<sup>76</sup>Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, *The Qur’an a New English Translation of its Meanings* (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2008), Chapter 27, Verse 34.

<sup>77</sup>Bennabi, *Wijhat al-‘Ālam al-Islāmī*, 56.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 110-111.

country, seeking safety and escaping the annihilation and humiliation caused by the colonizers. It was, as mentioned previously, an organized plan to increase the presence of European settlers in the fertile areas and to eject the natives from them.

In his autobiography, Bennabi mentioned also the catastrophic changes which occurred in the Algerian society during the colonial era. As a native Algerian, He could observe the work of colonialism from inside and keep in touch with its everyday impact on the natives in all aspects of their lives. Therefore, he could see the real damage that colonialism had caused in Algeria and other colonized countries and its effects on the culture, the history, the present as well as the future of humanity. Thus, he considered that “the colonial task is in fact an immense sabotage of history.”<sup>79</sup>

Accordingly, Bennabi considered that colonialism was not myth but was a form of eliminating acts which tended to destroy the values of individual and the possibilities of his development, as seen in countries under total colonization, as was prevalent in Indonesia and Libya and existed in North Africa.<sup>80</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude with, this paper ends up by saying that the French Colonization of Algeria is one of the most violent, radical and hegemonic civilizational encounters between the Muslim world and Europe.

Moreover, Algeria has experienced one of the severe processes of colonization, which affected all aspects of the Algerian natives' lives, and the colonizers changed the structure of society and the social institutions as well as their cultural traditions, which experienced severe damage.

Those various schisms in colonized Algeria and the continuous work of the colonizers, for more than 132 years, in destroying the social and cultural systems had caused everlasting damages to Algerian society, which is still surfing from its effects.

However, the severe type of French totalitarian colonization, paved the way for the decolonization process by which the peoples of the Third World in general and Algerian people in particular gained their independence from their colonial rulers.

Yet, because of the severe damage, the colonizers caused to Algerian society and culture, Algeria is still facing many obstacles in regaining its status as a developed and sovereign country.

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<sup>79</sup>Bennabi, *Islam in History and Society*, 57.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

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