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The End of Amnesia? Transnational Collective Memory and Memory Practices
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Kate Cross

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I. Introduction

Collective memory of WWII, the Holocaust, and more recently Stalinism is well-cultivated transnationally in Europe and abroad, yet practices regarding European colonialism are not yet ingrained. While the events are frequently elevated to the status of “defining” traumas of the 20th century, it can be easily argued that continuation of European colonialism from the 19th into the 20th century is equally as consequential, if not more (Assmann 2014, 552). How can we explain the imbalance? Utilizing the theory of collective memory and elements of normative theory, I argue that memory practices are necessary to cultivate and then maintain collective historical memory as it evolves but in order to be effective in promoting new normative attitudes, behaviors, and practices transnationally, a majority consensus on collective memory nationally and transnationally must be reached. If collective memory varies too greatly, as it most certainly does regarding colonialism, effective practices cannot be produced. Therein lies the problem in constructing normative European colonial memory practices. Unlike the Holocaust and Stalinism, there is still widespread and evolving disagreement as to the role of colonialism and colonial powers in the course of European history. Efforts are being made to reach some degree of consensus and to address colonialism in an ongoing dialogue but the process to create effective transnational practices is both gradual and laborious.

The second section of this paper offers literature review of the current scholarship on collective memory, transnational collective memory, and transnational collective memory practices. Section III addresses the same topics as they specifically relate to Europe and the defining traumas of the 20th century, to which I add European colonialism. To assess actors,

efforts, and successes and failures in the construction of collective national and transnational colonial memories and practices to sustain them, I present a brief historical background and a case study analyzing the embassy postings from the French embassy in Algeria and the Algerian embassy in France. An analysis of the postings will elucidate the most recent developments as they pertain to a former European colonial power and a former colonial state and illustrate my argument. In my analysis, I conclude that the fragile nature of memory issues that persists in the Franco-Algeria relations, as well as many other colonial relationships, thwarts significant progress toward the necessary shift from fractured national collective memory to consensus-based transnational colonial memory. Effective transnational memory practices require some modicum of consensus, something that remains elusive regarding European colonialism, and any progress to that end will occur in measured increments. I conclude by offering suggestions for further areas of research and inquiry and projections about the future of transnational collective historical memory and practices.

II. Literature Review – Transnational Memory Politics

The role of memory has always factored into International Relations but has figured more prominently in the past two decades, producing a dearth of scholarly work on the subject. Greater attention to human rights, globalization, technological advances and the myriad channels of information that result enable a wider audience to absorb and interpret the defining events that shape memory, not just on the group or national level, but also transnationally. Scholarship pertaining to collective historical memory defines the ways in which memory is created and shaped, the practices utilized to sustain memory narratives and the implications on international relations. The utilization of memory narratives to drive national and transnational policy has accelerated what has become termed “memory politics” and particularly pervades Europe

because of “the long shadow” of its “violent past...continued in a number of fault lines” (Assmann 2014, 552). European transnational memory and practices/policies evolved initially out of the events of WWII and later expanded to include the oppressive nature of Soviet communism, yet in terms of addressing the European Colonialism, collective amnesia has regularly been the response.

Maurice Halbwachs, Émile Durkheim, Pierre Nora, and more recently, Jeffrey Olick, along with many others, shaped the scholarly understanding of collective memory. In its simplest sense, collective memory refers to the shared members of a community and the ways that “minds work together in society” and “how their operations are structured by social arrangements” (Siddi 2012, 78 and Olick 1999, 334). Collective memory relies on the practices that shape memory, such as the European Union’s Days of Remembrance, among others, that specify days to recognize the victims of the Holocaust and of “all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes” while collective amnesia leads to the convenient omission of such a transnational day to remember colonialism (Sierp, 693). Kathrin Bachleitner argues that collective memory, “in the form of identity...creates a *duty to act*” and such a duty differs from responsibility in that it is “wholly unintentional” and creates a “*good option*” (Bachleitner 2021, 124). Thus, collective memory, through identity, affects the value system of a nation (Bachleitner 2021, 124-125). Bachleitner’s theories are intriguing but fail to explain the paucity of European transnational memory practices to address colonialism.

The field of transnational memory has evolved as a newer faction of the discipline largely because “national frames are no longer the self-evident ones they used to be in daily life and identity formation” (De Cesari and Rigney 2014, 2). Once contained within the nation-state, globalization now facilitates memories that cross borders and are both transnational and

transcultural (Assmann 2014, 547 and De Cesari and Rigney 2014, 4). Borders, Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney argue, are transcended but still important as the because of the ways in which transnational and transcultural memories “deeply entangled” with the “continuous presence and agency of the national” (De Cesari and Rigney 2014, 6). Aline Sierp and Jenny Wüstenberg explore the ways in which memory narratives become transnational but also remain grounded or “rooted” in in “particular places and social structures” and call for further investigation of the “tension” between the two (Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015, 323-324). Aleida Assman designates “two pillars” that have allowed for the shift from national to transnational memories: “the connectivity of digital technologies and media, and new transnational actors and networks that are reshaping the global world from above and below” (Assmann 2014, 547).

Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink’s seminal work, *Activists Without Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, delineates the role of what they term “transnational advocacy networks.” The actors in these networks along with other agents (state representatives, international organizations, etc.) work to create, challenge, and utilize memory to frame narratives and achieve policy goals (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 17). These agents/actors become “memory entrepreneurs” and also often become “norm entrepreneurs” with aspirations to influence and systematize norms regarding collective historical memory narratives (Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015, 325-326). In addition to policy, museums, monuments, publications and media, and education are among the many ways that memory narratives are disseminated to the public, both nationally and transnationally. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink wrote extensively about the influence of transnational agents on norms and norm cascades, label socialization as the “dominant mechanism” needed for norm cascades to occur (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 902). Achieving normative status for transnational collective memory and

practices related to colonialism is an especially difficult process because European former colonial powers are still grappling with opposing viewpoints. If Finnemore and Sikkink's theory is applicable, as nations achieve more consensus surrounding national collective historical memory and create effective memory practices regarding colonialism, "peer pressure" will induce transnational effects (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 902-903).

The framing of collective historical memory to influence practices and collective amnesia are both efforts to control the memory narrative of events. As mentioned earlier, actors on the national and transnational stage have the capability to construct memory and bring about normative change, but collective amnesia, or the silencing of particular historical memories is another way for actors to control the narrative. Filip Edjus argues that collective amnesia is often an "anxiety-driven avoidance mechanism" utilized nationally and transnationally (Edjus 2022, 48-49). It elevates "oblivion" instead of "memory" to move forward but has proven to be a historically inefficient and ineffective way to confront the past. The usage of collective amnesia regarding colonialism is especially apparent in the histories of Belgium and France. Following the atrocities that occurred and Leopold II's Congo Free State (and continued to a large extent when the Congo was transferred to Belgium), a period of collective amnesia began that persisted through various monarchs, independence in 1962 and beyond. Adam Hochschild, titles the final chapter of his book *King Leopold's Ghost* "The Great Forgetting" and details the ways in which the horrors of the Belgian Congo were essentially erased in Belgium, but not worldwide and that has gradually widened (Hochschild 1998, ch. 19). Similarly, the French government practiced and enforced collective amnesia in the decades after the Algerian War of Independence ended in 1962. Both France and Belgium have progressed beyond amnesia in their treatment of

colonialism, but decades of the practice increase the challenges of shaping transnational collective historical memory and practices.

The European field of transnational historical collective memory and practices is particularly complex because of the events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the perception of European dominance over world affairs. Sierp and Wüstenberg point out that, while much has been written concerning European memory narratives, little scholarly work has been done regarding the “*practices of transnational memory*” in Europe (Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015, 322). And while transnational memory practices have been successfully implemented in Europe, they revolve around World War II and the Holocaust and Soviet Communism while similar efforts on the part of Colonialism have either been limited in their success or non-existent. Aline Sierp suggests that the EU’s “ambivalent selective relationship” regarding European memory explains the lack of transnational success in handling the legacy of colonialism (Sierp 2020, 688). Nazism, Fascism, the Holocaust, and most recently Soviet Communism are “weights” of history that have been formally acknowledged and memory measures and policies have been enacted while the atrocities of Colonialism still “divide rather than unite” in Europe (Sierp 2020, 699). What explanations do we have for this division? What progress has been made? And at what point will the normative aspects of transnational condemnation of Fascism, the Holocaust, and Soviet Communism transmit to the atrocities of European Colonialism?

III. Transnational Collective Historical European Memory and Practices: WWII, the Holocaust, Stalinism, European Colonialism as Defining Events

It is abundantly clear from the multitude of museums, monuments, education curriculum, media, official statements and speeches, days of Remembrance, etc. that there is normative

historical narrative regarding Fascism and the Holocaust transnationally both in Europe and internationally. Stalinism is not far behind. Transnational advocacy networks, state actors, and the like successfully advocated on behalf of Europe's "preferred" atrocities to create transnational memory measures and have largely ignored the discussion of transnational efforts to recognize the legacy of colonialism. Why does this "ambivalent selective relationship" regarding European memory narratives and practices exist (Sierp 2020, 688)? What accelerated memories associated with the atrocities of the 20th century on European soil and the subsequent policies that create measures and practices to sustain and solidify those memories? And what causes the same sort of transnational recognition of European Colonialism to lag?

The process of institutionalizing transnational memory narratives is achieved when measures are adopted transnationally to solidify policies and practices that iterate a collective agreement on the way in which events shall be remembered. While the media evidence of the Holocaust began the early shaping of collective memory with little effort, the digital age accelerated it unequivocally to the transnational level. Aleida Assmann uses the example of the ITF (International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research), now called the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance), to illustrate the ways that agreements could be reached transnationally to create common memory that "should inform the values of European civil society and protect the rights of minorities" (Assmann 2014, 548). Today the IHRA, founded in 1998 by Göran Persson, actively engages in education, research, and remembrances regarding the Holocaust, genocide, and other crimes against humanity and has 35 member countries "each of whom recognize that international political coordination is imperative" (www.holocaustremembrance.com). The IHRA clearly fits Keck and Sikkink's descriptions of major actors in advocacy networks and, in concert with other actors, advances the

transnational notion of a “duty to remember” and commemorate the events and victims of the Holocaust (Keck and Sikkink 1999, 41-42). EU institutions recognize the Holocaust and Fascism as “negative founding myths,” they have been the subject of various resolutions, most notably the 1995 resolution that created a “Europe-wide day to commemorate the Holocaust” led by the European Parliament, the only body of the EU that is directly elected (Sierp 2020, 692). The drive by an elected body to create transnational memory practices suggests that, while surely political motives are still involved, it is representative to some extent of the desires of the European people to cultivate shared transnational memory and commemorate their past.

The evolution of Soviet Communist memories to transnational European collective memory and practices followed a similar, albeit perhaps more expedited route. After the fall of the Soviet Union there was initially a period of “memory wars” – a sort of competition between the memory narratives of the defining European historical traumas of the twentieth century: WWII and the Holocaust and Stalinist Communism (Assmann 2014, 552). Aleida Assmann points to the work of Bernd Faulenbach on the Truth Commission as a feasible way to approach the dilemma:

(1) The memory of Stalinist Terror must not be allowed to relativise the memory of the Holocaust. (2) The memory of the Holocaust must not be allowed to trivialise the memory of Stalinist Terror (Assmann 2014, 552).

Rather than compete, the memories could coincide as negative foundation myths, creating a “hierarchy of victims” in Europe (Sierp 2020, 693). A move to recognize the victims of Stalinism gained steam with the 2004 eastern expansion of the EU and “East-Central European norm entrepreneurs” pushed harder in the years that followed, primarily through the European Parliament (Kaiser and Storeide 2018, 802). Efforts by transnational actors were successful, both in the EU and abroad, in achieving days of remembrance/observations. The European Parliament officially recognized a Europe-wide remembrance day in 2009 called a “Day of Remembrance

for the Victims of All Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes” to be held on August 23 each year, the date the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in 1939 (<https://ec.europa.eu> and Shafir 2016, 56). Black Ribbon Day, as it is known in many parts of the world, is also recognized by many different nations and organizations – a major triumph for the memory entrepreneurs that promoted it.

While there are many other observances throughout the year, Europe Day, Holocaust Remembrance Day and the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of All Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes are among the commemorated transnationally. Other events undoubtedly promulgate various memory narratives through the practices of observances and the ensuing public attention, but the significance of the Holocaust, Nazism, and Stalinism are clearly elevated. Notably absent is any type of formal recognition by the EU and various entities of the abuses of European colonialism in the form of transnational memory practices. Why? Aline Sierp charges that by elevating the aforementioned “preferred atrocities,” a comparison “between the Shoah and colonial genocide is a taboo” and assumes “in its worst form racist stereotypes...translating into...amnesia concerning colonialism” (Sierp 2020, 693). Colonial amnesia was historically utilized by both the Belgian and French governments regarding the Congo and Algeria, and throughout Europe, and though colonial memory narratives still do not receive the recognition needed for adequate memory practice, there is evidence that progress is possible. Are the networks continuing to advocate for transnational memory practices related to the Holocaust and Stalinism threatened by the possibility of memory wars with European Colonialism? Michael Rothberg’s work on “multi-directional memory” offers evidence that “memory does not have to work according to the economy of a zero-sum game” (De Cesari and Rigney 2014, 10). While the Holocaust is dominant among European memory narratives and

practices, Rothberg coherently argues that this position need not eliminate or quash other memories (Assmann 2014, 551). Scholars do not routinely associate the “overlapping legacies” of the atrocities of WWII and colonialism but doing so has the potential to enrich studies of both and augment memory narratives and practices (Rothberg 2006, 161). The EU, namely the European Parliament, linked the atrocities of Stalinism to those of Nazism and the Holocaust through official, thus could the same be done for European Colonialism? Scholars enumerate on the links between colonial excesses, atrocities, and exploitations and the events of WWI, WWII and beyond. Rothberg’s advocacy for multi-directional memory, then, of European colonialism and the Holocaust offers potential. Sierp asserts that there is a clear bias of the EU towards the “preferred” atrocities of the 20th century on European soil to create transnational memory measures, thus discussions of transnational efforts to recognize the legacy of colonialism are trailing (Sierp 2020, 694).

Is the lack of meaningful memory work toward practices commemorating colonial atrocities indicative that Europe is unable to embrace atrocities that did not typically take place on European soil and to people perceived to be European? Barry Buzan and George Lawson assert that, at its core, imperialism “was a claim about the material, cultural and moral superiority of the white West” (Buzan and Lawson 2015, 134). Does such a moral superiority still exist in Europe? It seems dated and unlikely but the lack of normative historical memory and practices regarding the atrocities of colonialism suggest significant room for improvement. How then, can Europe move past that to create meaningful transnational memory practices?

The European Parliament, the only elected body of the EU, has made the most progress in addressing colonialism transnationally through the creation and evolution of the European House of History, a process that has captured the attention of many European transnational

memory scholars. The project was launched in 2007 as a “key project for attempts by EU institutions since the 1980s to strengthen the cultural basis for integration, enhance European identity and foster the legitimacy of the EU” (Kaiser 2017, 518). The first concepts in 2008 were favorable to colonialism and though the treatment was altered in the 2013 concept, it was still suggestive “that colonialism was an integral and beneficial part of Europe’s political and economic development” (Sierp 2020, 694). Before the museum opened in 2017 an alternate concept that diverged from earlier versions to delineate colonialism as the “dark side of Europe’s ambition to rise to world power in the 19th century” (Sierp 2020, 694). The treatment of colonialism at the European House of History is still insufficient but the gradual progression from collective amnesia in 2007 to a more critical assessment in 2017 is promising (Sierp 2020, 694). As former colonial powers continue to grapple with the legacies of colonialism, careful attention should be paid to the smaller steps that might eventually lead to a cascade.

IV. France and Algeria - Background

The intertwined histories of France and Algeria affect every aspect of their bilateral relations. French colonial conquest of Algeria began in 1830 when the dey of Algiers surrendered to the French army (Stora 2001, 3). The years that followed were filled with extreme violence as France battled resistance from the various sects of the nation (Stora 2000, 4). French victories, negotiations, and the dismantling of Algerian institutions of government – prompting a French citizen involved in the king’s investigating commission to state ““We have surpassed in barbarism the barbarians we came to civilize”” – led to the official proclamation in 1848 of Algeria as “an integral part of France by the constitution” (Stora 2000, 5, 244). This pronouncement, the formation of three distinct départements within Algeria, and the enormous influx of European settlers between 1841 and 1870 combined to make the relationship between

colonized and colonizer distinctly different from many other colonial arrangements (Evans 1997, 24). Despite the humble origins of the European settlers, colonization created a nearly impenetrable divide between the native Algerians and the Europeans – one that existed throughout the entirety of colonial rule and continues to impact legacies and relations today. Though the years of colonization created an immense interdependence economically and culturally that persists, the oppression, violence and pillaging left a dark history of oppression and opposing collective historical memories.

Algerian soldiers, fighting in the French military, participated in World War I and World War II, something that is frequently highlighted now by the French government through commemorations, but the date of May 8, 1945, was far more important in terms of Franco-Algerian relations. As the rest of the world celebrated the armistice signed in to end the war with Germany, Muslim Algerians, frustrated both by economic conditions and political agitation, protested in the cities, their message, ““Down with fascism and colonialism”” (Stora 2001, 21). The police, most notably and most destructively in Serif, reacted by firing on the protestors, who then attacked officers and other Europeans. (Stora 2001, 21-22). Retaliation was swift and severe on the part of the authorities and not limited to shootings, bombings and executions of the Muslim population, causing 15,000 (French estimates) to 45,000 deaths (Algerian nationalism estimates) (Stora 2000, 22). This turning point in Franco-Algerian relations galvanized the Algerian natives and brought greater and more wide-spread support for Algerian Independence and defined the methods that would not be successful.

From 1954-1962, the events of the Algerian War of Independence created collective historical memories and trauma that defined generations of French and Algerians and still dominate their relations. Though the excesses of colonialism in the 19th century are abhorrent

and created the conditions of violence, it is the post-WWII period of Franco-Algerian relations that continually dominate the historical tension. The events of May 8, 1945, the Battle of Algiers, the excessive use of torture by the French military, the events of October 17, 1961, are focal points of contested memory, and though steps are being taken bilaterally to work through historical trauma, the variations in collective historical memory between the states means that little has been achieved in the way of official transnational memory measures.

To assess the recent progress – or lack thereof – in creating transnational memory practices that might migrate further to the European Union and take on a normative quality transnationally I utilized the website of the French Embassy in Algeria and the Algerian Embassy in France. Information disseminated by the French Embassy in Algiers is highly accessible via their website and social media, including Facebook, twitter, Instagram. The Algerian Embassy in France provides information on their website but does not have a social media presence. To delimit, I used the primary search term “coloniale,” sorting by date, to assess the information published by the embassy and how it might relate to, support, create, or inhibit transnational memory measures. Additionally, the postings are utilized to assess the actors involved, their desired outcomes, and the extent to which their actions shape state and transnational behaviors

V. Case Study: French Embassy in Algeria

A search of the French Embassy in Algeria produced twenty-two results and though they were sorted by date, many were updated from previous publications or pulled from archives and republished on the site. The results fall into three key groupings: the efforts made by former President François Hollande and current President Emmanuel Macron, interviews of French officials with various news outlets, and recognitions of the intertwined histories of Algeria and

France, particularly as they relate to the work of Benjamin Stora and to service in World War I and World War II.

Most of the “mis en jour” articles or interviews were from the time of François Hollande’s presidency, who received praise for at least acknowledging the crimes of the French colonization of Algeria and expanded the dialogue bilaterally and domestically (“President Hollande Accepts French Injustice in Algeria” 2012, 2-4). Macron, like his predecessor Hollande, has offered statements of regret to Algeria but refused to issue a formal apology. As a candidate, he famously called colonialism a “crime against humanity,” perhaps preparing the nation for the further steps in healing the persistent wounds of colonialism. In an interview during his official visit to Algeria in 2020, Macron commented on calls for Franco-Algerian relations to attempt a Franco-German model of reconciliation and partnership, noting that there are distinct differences, but similar ambitions (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2020a.) He also highlighted the existent Franco-Algerian partnership and signaled a notable break from past conceptions of the French relations with North Africa when he called the *Françafrique* approach “un monde d’un autre temps” (a world from another time) (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2020a.). The inclusion of specific documents relating to Hollande and Macron can be conceived as a deliberate attempt to project unity and a progressive stance toward healing. The inflammatory remarks that sparked a swift recall of the Algerian ambassador to France and the ongoing debate over visas either does not appear or is not regarded as problematic.

Macron’s efforts are lauded by the French Ambassador François Gouette in 2021 interviews in both the French language Algerian newspaper *L’Expression* and *Arabnews*. In the interview by *L’Expression*, Gouette highlights Macron’s moves to address the disappearance of Maurice Audin, the excessive use of torture by the French military, the return of the skulls of

Algerian Independence fighters (previously held in Musée de l'Homme), and the Stora report (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2021c.). In terms of bilateral relations, Gouyette emphasizes economic trade and France's efforts to assist with education and training, research, culture, calling the relationship "gagnant-gagnant" or "win-win" – a different outlook than is usually expressed in the media (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2021d.). The elevation of Macron's efforts, though incomplete, promotes a collective memory narrative of the former colony taking repeated steps toward reconciliation. Gouyette's interview with *Arabnews* is similar to *L'Expression*, but clearly defined the two parts of the Stora report in response to critics to emphasize that it is designed both to work toward reconciliation and memory AND to offer tangible actions and response and symbolic measures (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2021d.). *Arabnews* also highlight's the ambassador's links to Algeria but it is unclear in the writing if his knowledge of Arabic and appreciation for Algerian culture is enough to counter the subtext that his family's presence in Algeria denotes him as a "colon" (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2021d.).

There is a notable lack of postings relating directly to major hot-button dates relating Franco-Algerian history, though many of the interviews address French acknowledgement of such events, a clear step forward from the collective amnesia that dominated national strategy for decades. There are several references to honors conferred upon the Algerians who fought alongside the French during WWI and WWII. There is a recurring theme of focusing on "common history" and the shared experiences of Algeria and France as an avenue of reconciliation perhaps, as mentioned above, in the manner of France and Germany (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2021a.) Benjamin Stora, a renowned historian specializing in Algerian history, is referenced frequently in the searched postings. He is lauded by government officials

for his work on producing a commissioned report for Macron on Algeria and France, but an interview conducted before the commission indicates his proposals for improved relations and progress toward a more unified collective memory. Stora mentions work on school curricula, museums, and culture but emphasizes that plans in theory are irrelevant if they are not carried out in practice (Ambassade de France à Algerie. 2021b.)

VI. Case Study: Algeria

The search term “coloniale” produced ten posts on the Algerian Embassy in France that were, unsurprisingly, different in tone than those found on the French Embassy in Algeria. The postings can be grouped into three categories: potential for progress, commemorations of significant events, and inflammatory actions and remarks.

An interview of the new Algerian ambassador to France entitled “Osons Changer le Cours De L’Histoire!” (Let’s Dare to Change the Course of History) and an article entitled “Le Challenge de Deux Présidents” (The Challenge of Two Presidents), both published by the Algerian French language news outlet L’Expression in the first half of 2021, suggest the potential for progress between the nations. The challenges are laid out, the “excellent” relationship between Presidents Tebboune and Macron is highlighted, and the commonalities of the nations are discussed at length. Both articles imply that Algeria highly values its interdependence with France and is amenable to a Mediterranean alliance along the lines of the Franco-German model, suggesting that the construction of a normative collective historical memory of colonialism is possible with increased cooperation. Agreed upon memory practices of commemoration and recognition by both Algeria and France will accelerate this process, but the nature of Franco-Algerian relations regarding history is still too volatile to achieve then necessary consistency.

There are several days of prime historical remembrance regarding 20th events related to the Algerian War of Independence. A 2021 posting describes May 8 celebrations describes banners reading “la mémoire rejette l’oubli” or “memory rejects oblivion” and notes that it was 2020 when President Tebboune established May 8 as a National Day of Memory. The most recent posting was a message from Algerian President Tebboune concerning the 2022 National Day of Remembrance recognizing the massacres of May 8, 1945 (Ambassade d’Algerie en France. 2022a.). Tebboune references May 8, 1945, as a key part of the struggle that was “couronnée par la Glorieuse guerre de liberation” (crowned by the Glorious War of Liberation) that began on November 1, 1954 (Ambassade d’Algerie en France. 2022a.). A prominent post on March 18, 2022, again uses similar terminology to describe the Algerian Revolution for Independence “couronnement d’une revolution glorieuse” (crowning of a glorious revolution) on the 60th anniversary of “Victory Day” (Ambassade d’Algerie en France. 2022b.). Not mentioned on the French Embassy site, March 19 – Victory Day for Algeria - is one of many quandaries for the French government and people. It represents a successful revolution, victory and independence to Algeria but to many in France, especially the ever-shrinking generations that were alive during the colonial French rule whose opinions on the conflict vary widely and are dependent upon their involvement. For the millions with Algerian roots in France, acknowledgement of the date would be powerful, but for the “colons” who were forced to flee and those that might have been a part of the military actions, or just those of certain political persuasions, it is not a date to be feted. To that end, it is symbolic in terms of European colonialism but perhaps not something that will translate to transnational memory practices. and continued efforts toward reconciliation.

The words of President Macron concerning the Algeria and colonization inflamed relations between the nations in September 2021 and are reflected in several embassy posts. Macron reportedly questioned “whether there had been an Algerian national before French colonial rule” (Irish 2021, 2). He was also quoted as stating that the ““politico-military system”” in Algeria had created a history largely on “a hatred of France” (Irish 2021, 2). Macron’s open and brazen questioning of the validity of Algerian collective historical memory regarding colonialism was a significant gaff and is indicative of the fragile nature of Franco-Algerian relations. It also represents a pattern that has made path to transnational collective historical memory and practices much harder traverse. The embassy posted President Tebboune’s press release calling Macron’s remarks “une atteinte intolérable” (and intolérable infringement) on the memory of all the Algerian martyrs from the “5,630,000” who died fighting the French colonial invasion through the War of Algerian Independence and accused the French of genocide (Ambassade d’Algerie en France. 2021a.). Air space was closed to French planes and the Algerian ambassador to France was recalled back for consultations (“Algeria recalls envoy” 2021, 1-3). Accusations of colonial genocide based on Macron’s remarks, after some degree of progress, point to the simmering nature of Franco-Algerian relations. Culturally and within the press, the nature of bilateral relations can turn quite suddenly, while the other factors of interdependence carry on quietly. Another significant factor that compelled the recall of the ambassador was the Algerian government’s outrage over the the French limiting of visas available to Algerian nationals (“Algeria summons French envoy” 2021, 1-7). A message posted from President Tebboune on National Immigration Day and marking the 60th anniversary of the events of October 17, 1961, responds sharply to the French reductions with harsh words seemingly aimed at France and offers welcome to “tous ses enfants de la communauté nationale

établis à l'étranger" (all the children of the national community established abroad) (Ambassade d'Algérie en France. 2021b. The postings regarding inflammatory statements and actions represent a pattern that has made this path to transnational collective historical memory and practices much harder traverse.

VII. Analysis and Conclusions

In order to assess the potential for transnational colonial memory practices to emerge and create new conceptions of collective historical memory and normative practices, I apply an evaluation of the evidence to identify the actors, their desired outcomes, the ways state and transnational behavior is being shaped, the successes and failures, and the possible future of transnational colonial memory practices.

Based on the French embassy website search, the actors involved in transnational memory practices regarding Franco-Algerian colonial memory are primarily government officials, historians, research institutions and other academics. The objective is clear. Actors promoting the French narrative must address the legacies of colonialism in ways that will favor stronger and more stable bilateral relations. The interdependence of Algeria and France was cultivated through shared history and is maintained by economic trade, security, immigration and culture. France continues to benefit from their ties with Algeria in many ways, despite episodes of intense tension over memory and colonial legacy and is particularly vulnerable culturally. Economic and security ties are less subject to brief diplomatic disputes than the Francophonie culture cultivated during the years of colonial rule. French educational institutions and the exchange of research, professionals, and culture are essential to retaining Francophonie influence in Algeria and transnational memory practices such as the 2018 commissioned report recommendations to return "African cultural artifacts taken to French museums during the

colonial era” possibly offer France a way to maintain that connection through goodwill (Cohen 2022, 3). Additionally, as the article states, such efforts have the capability to create a transnational practice of returning colonial plunders rather than displaying them in the museums of former colonial powers. Changes in transnational behavior and practices are occurring, in fits and spurts, and though it has yet to reach a normative practice, there is potential.

Algerian government officials stand out as the chief actors in shaping transnational memory and memory practices, with educators, academics, and commemoration organizers also playing a role. The Algerian aims are more targeted than those of the French. While France seemingly wants to maintain its reputation internationally (perhaps as a memory norm entrepreneur at some junction) and a continuation of the positive aspects of bilateral relations, Algeria at the domestic and international level seeks vindication and recognition for the abuses of colonialism and for the offenses of the 20th century surrounding the Algerian War of Independence. Algerian actors are promoting their collective historical memory narrative in ways that force some degree of transnational recognition. If these memory entrepreneurs cross over to norm entrepreneurs, there is potential for strides to be made in transnational practices (Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015, 325-326).

In what ways are actions on the part of the French and the Algerian transnational actors successful in advancing practices? And what does the future hold for transnational European colonial memory practices? The more concrete the practices, the greater the impact but only if they are done with transparency. In 2020 24 skulls, reportedly of Algerians killed while fighting French colonial forces, were ceremoniously returned to Algeria, attracting significant media attention (“France returns remains” 2020, 1-2). Recent reporting by the New York Times revealed problems related to the exchange, including evidence that only 6 of the 24 skulls were

identified as Algerians (Méheut 2022). The exposure of the “flawed return” brought attention to what some consider to be “secretive, muddled, and politically expedient reparations by France” (Méheut 2022). Significant gestures work to alter collective memory regarding events and in turn have the potential to generate normative historical memory practices but must not be rushed and must be conducted with transparency.

The sensitive nature of Franco-Algerian relations needs to stabilize to gain momentum toward achieving consensus on memory. If the oft-proposed Franco-German model is successfully applied to Franco-Algerian relations, perhaps this consensus will be easier to reach. The emergence of younger generations with no first-hand experiences of colonialism as national and transnational leaders is likely to create greater opportunities for the creation of memory practices but is dependent on the evolution of the political climate. The rise of the far right and populism in Europe has the potential to derail or delay advances towards transnational colonial memory measures. The continued effects of globalization and technology will advance access to knowledge but also inherently offer the possibility of information manipulation.

Macron, born after the War of Algerian Independence, has not shied away from confronting colonial memories and working toward transnational memory practices. The commissioned report by Benjamin Stora, heftily criticized by those varied sectors of society both for its tone and its inability to produce concrete action, it is at the least a step forward that has led government actors to acknowledge colonial legacies more publicly (Bryant, 1-4). Though not recognized at the transnational European level, the search results of the Embassy do reveal that France regularly honors the Algerians that served in WWI and WWII. Though the government has not sponsored any official commemorations of the events of October 17, 1961, in France when as many as 300 Algerians were killed, Macron has acknowledged the events and the

culpability of French authorities and attended an unofficial commemoration in 2021 (“The 1961 massacre” 2021, 3-4). It often seems that Macron, despite his mistakes, has a method for his attempts to enact memory practices. Acutely aware that the political environment in France is not prepared to handle rushed attempts at reconciliation, he makes deliberate moves and careful plans before moving forward – perhaps even just setting the groundwork for future generations of politicians. Thus, while he has blundered comments and reparations and has proved unsuccessful several times in attempts, his groundwork remains and will influence the next generation, assuming the extreme-right does not begin to dominate.

Will normative transnational historical memory and practices regarding European colonialism be produced over the next several decades? Transnationally, in the EU, will it be elevated to the level of WWII, the Holocaust, and Stalinism? There are many avenues to expand scholarship on European colonialism and transnational memory measures and practices. The connection between reassessing colonialism and the Black Lives Matter movement is beginning to appear in scholarship and will undoubtedly contribute to the field. Other transnational human rights and transitional justice movements should be assessed as they relate to colonialism as well. Expansive case studies of other former colonies and former colonial powers will inform scholars on national memory practices that might have the capacity to become normative and transnational.

My case study suggests very gradual movement toward a greater consensus on collective historical memory and practices but illustrates the delicate nature of achieving transnational memory on contentious subjects. To achieve success promoting new normative attitudes, behaviors, and memory practices transnationally, a majority consensus on collective memory

must be reached at both the national and transnational levels regarding colonialism and it will be a measured process.

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