

Anti-racism in the Sarkozy years: SOS
Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes
de la République

Thomas Daniel Martin

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree
of PhD

The University of Leeds
School of Modern Languages and Cultures

September 2013

Intellectual Property and Publication Statements

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

© 2013 The University of Leeds and Thomas Daniel Martin

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my supervisors Jim House and Sarah Waters, who have been consistently helpful and accommodating, and who have been willing to give time, effort and numerous invaluable suggestions over the course of my work.

I am also grateful to Loïc Rigaud of SOS Racisme and Houria Bouteldja of the Mouvement / Parti des Indigènes de la République for clarifying so many key points on the ideologies, strategies and worldviews of their respective movements.

In addition to my supervisors, I would also like to acknowledge the Department of French at the University of Leeds in a wider sense, which over the course of 10 years has allowed me to study at BA, MA and now PhD levels, as well as giving me the opportunity to gain experience in teaching.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, and in particular my father Paul Martin, who in the last few years, just as in the rest of my life, has been endlessly supportive, and has kept me grounded through even the most trying times: without his support, this thesis may not have been possible.

Abstract

This thesis examines the discourse and strategy of two contrasting French anti-racist movements – SOS Racisme, the consensus-seeking centrist movement founded in 1984 and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République (MIR), the radical anti-colonial movement founded in 2005 – over the years 2005 to 2009, a period which I argue is defined by a conservative and potentially exclusionary conception of national identity on the part of Nicolas Sarkozy and his political allies, as well as by an intense debate on colonial legacies and memory (typified by Sarkozy's rhetorical attacks on 'repentance'), a widespread rejection of multiculturalism and *communautarisme*, and a cross-party consensus on the language of republicanism but not the underlying definition of the concept.

I find that the central ideological difference between the two movements can be found in their respective relationships with republicanism. Whereas SOS, in line with the traditions of the French anti-racist movement, bases its ideology on universalist republicanism and sees France's mainstream political culture as fundamentally supportive of anti-racist aims, MIR is highly critical of republicanism, highlighting the way in which 'universalist' principles have been used in French history as a justification for colonialism, racism and discrimination. The thesis argues that the positions of the movements on the defining themes of the period

identified above have caused them substantial issues in campaigning, with MIR's questioning of republicanism, emphasis on colonial memory and support for multiculturalism diametrically opposed to the prevailing political climate, and SOS's favoured republican ideology, thanks to its inherent flexibility, being used by Sarkozy as an implicit means of stigmatising minority populations.

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Contents	6
List of abbreviations	9
Introduction	10
Chapter 1	
French anti-racism and republicanism: contrasting perspectives	35
<i>Why anti-racism and republicanism?</i>	39
<i>Republican ideology and French anti-racism: benefit or impediment?</i>	46
<i>Origins of contemporary debates on anti-racism and republicanism</i>	67
<i>Limitations of existing works</i>	81
Chapter 2	
Sarkozy and national identity 2005-2009	89
<i>Sarkozy and history</i>	96
<i>Sarkozy, repentance and populism</i>	105
<i>Sarkozy, the Republic and communautarisme</i>	118
<i>Sarkozy's national identity discourse: anything new?</i>	133

<i>Significance and meaning?</i>	138
<i>'Sarkozysme' and potential reasons for its success</i>	143

Chapter 3

SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, 2005-2009: an introduction	149
<i>SOS Racisme 2005-2009: republicanism, pragmatism and consensus</i>	153
<i>The Mouvement des Indigènes de la République 2005-2009: radicalism, autonomy and anti-colonialism</i>	165

Chapter 4

SOS, MIR and national identity	180
<i>SOS and national identity: rationale for rejection</i>	184
<i>An alternative conception: the République métissée</i>	195
<i>MIR and national identity: rationale for rejection</i>	201
<i>An alternative conception: multiculturalism and new citizenship</i>	213

Chapter 5

SOS, MIR and colonialism	228
<i>SOS and colonialism: the perils of victimisation</i>	232
<i>MIR and colonialism: the all-encompassing colonial Republic</i>	248

Chapter 6

SOS, MIR and the question of 'race'	273
<i>SOS: republicanism, colour-blindness and the 'social question'</i>	275
<i>MIR: 'republican racism' and the primacy of the 'racial question'</i>	295
Conclusion	316
Bibliography	339

Abbreviations

AFP	Agence France-Presse
CRAN	Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires
CVUH	Comité de vigilance face aux usages publics de l'histoire
EU	European Union
FN	Front National
HLM	Habitation à Loyer Modéré
LDH	Ligue des Droits de l'Homme
LICRA	Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme
MIR	Mouvement des Indigènes de la République
MRAP	Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples
NPA	Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste
PIR	Parti des Indigènes de la République
PS	Parti Socialiste
SOS	SOS Racisme
UE	Union européenne
UMP	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire
UN	United Nations

Introduction

This thesis emerged out of research carried out as part of an MA dissertation entitled 'Redefining Frenchness? – the roots of the contemporary immigration and identity debate'. In the dissertation I aimed to analyse the provenance of the dominant discourse on national identity in contemporary France, considering its historical origins and its transposition into politics and law. In the conclusion to the dissertation, I suggested that one social movement capable of challenging this dominant discourse and promoting a counter-discourse was the anti-racist movement. The question of whether the French anti-racist movement could indeed challenge the type of defensive, narrowly defined and backwards-looking conception of national identity associated particularly with Nicolas Sarkozy therefore provided the platform for my doctoral research. As the research continued however, it became clear that anti-racism in the political context defined by Sarkozy was a substantially (and surprisingly) under-researched area: the majority of scholarly publications on French anti-racism focus on earlier and very different political contexts, particularly that of the early to mid-1980s, when the Left was in power under Mitterrand, and the movement was more visible in the public debate than at any point before or since. Consequently, I decided to concentrate on the reactions of two contrasting anti-racist organisations – SOS Racisme (SOS) and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République (MIR) – to Sarkozy and his

national identity discourse, and on these movements' own discourses and preoccupations over my chosen period.

Underpinning my argument is the question of republicanism, and I shall seek to show that both movements have had to adapt to a context within which the consensus on the *language* of republicanism is accompanied by a semantic ambiguity permitting its use in support of almost any political position – including one which implicitly stigmatises minority populations (Noiriel 2007a). I argue that the political and ideological stances of the two movements I am considering are strongly conditioned by their dialectal relationship to republicanism, a relationship which affects each movement in complex and contradictory ways.

SOS, this thesis argues, aims to protect and enforce the Republic's proclaimed values of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, and frequently proposes practical action aimed at making them a truly universal reality throughout France. At the same time however, it is critical of the way in which these principles are used by those in political power; and has difficulty both in taking targeted action against racial discrimination (due to its belief in republican 'colour-blindness' and consequent rejection of ethnic statistics), and in making critical analyses of colonial history and its ideological links with universalist values (due to its belief that France's mainstream republican political culture is fundamentally just, and supportive of anti-racism).

MIR, on the other hand, adopts a more oppositional stance towards 'republican values', seeing their supposedly emancipatory nature as a myth and preferring to emphasise their use over French history as a justification for colonialism, racism and discrimination. Paradoxically however, even despite this self-definition, in defining itself against republicanism MIR still ultimately finds itself determined by the concept. Furthermore, although highly critical of the uses republican universalism has been put to, it could be argued that MIR is in favour of a genuine universalising of the Republic's proclaimed values of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité* (even if the movement sees this as highly unlikely to happen without a fundamental rethinking of French society). The 2010 manifesto of the PIR (Parti des Indigènes de la République), for example, makes a clear statement to this effect, claiming as a goal 'la fraternité universelle et l'égalité entre les individus, entre les communautés et entre les peuples' ('Principes politiques généraux du Parti des Indigènes de la République', 2010).

In the broader context where, as Denis Sieffert puts it, 'La république [...] a cessé d'être sous la menace d'un système concurrent' (2006: 133), a significant proportion of contemporary French political debate is based around the idea of republicanism, and its meaning and significance. This thesis argues that it is within this political and cultural context that the anti-racist movement must be analysed and understood.

When writing on any given subject it is necessary to consider its meaning.

In the case of anti-racism, however, this is not a simple question.

Although it is possible to identify several points of convergence in the beliefs of the majority of anti-racist organisations – as Alastair Bonnett argues for instance, nearly all forms of anti-racism agree that ‘racism is an intellectual error’; that ‘racism distorts and erases people’s identities’; and that ‘racism is anti-egalitarian and socially unjust’ (2000: 6) – a watertight definition of anti-racism has proven elusive. Even within Bonnett’s minimal definition of inherent beliefs within the anti-racist movement, it is possible to find contradictions, particularly relating to the status of race. As he notes, ‘if we accept that the notion of race is an intellectual error and a cause of both inequality and the destruction of identity, then it follows that enabling people to express their own racial identity and to be accorded equality, and rights, as *races* is problematic.’ (2000: 7) The tension identified by Bonnett is particularly salient in the French context, within which republican ideology has a long tradition (derived from the Enlightenment universalism which forms its foundations) of deep discomfort with the official acknowledgement of race and difference. As the republican centre-left politician Éric Ferrand argues for instance:

“La République exclut [...] toute forme de régression du sentiment national à l’identité ethnique, culturelle ou religieuse, et toute évolution conduisant à la création de sous-communautés sur de tels critères. La Nation telle que la conçoit le républicain, c’est la nation citoyenne garante de la cohésion sociale.” (2007: 10)

Any attempt to define the essence of anti-racism is further complicated by the influence on the movement of the mainstream political culture of a given society. As Alana Lentin argues:

“Just as racism could be differentially conceived as either fundamentally opposed to the ideologies of the state or undeniably grounded within them, so too anti-racism could be interpreted as either upholding the values of the West incorporated in the state or as a challenge to their usage in practice. These values – democracy, freedom, fraternity, human rights, equality – could at once be seen as the very principles upon which the modern state is built and, therefore, the ideals that an anti-racism that seeks widespread public support should uphold, or alternatively, as the hypocritical anchorings of the state in principles of equality and rights that belie the selective nature of their application.”

(2004: 310)

This thesis argues that in the French case there is a substantial division within anti-racism, one which follows closely the contours of Lentin’s analysis. On the one hand are mainstream associations – such as SOS Racisme – which seek to defend and enforce republican *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* and Enlightenment universalism, and therefore do not see it as their role to fight for a radically new conception of society. On the other hand are anti-system associations – such as the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République – which seek to challenge the very structures on which inequality is seen as being founded and reproduced.

The consensual, republican SOS Racisme, founded in 1984, and the radical, anti-colonial Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, founded in 2005, therefore represent, in a number of ways, two very different conceptions of French anti-racism. Comparing the reactions of these two movements to the same political context and the same key themes illustrates the diversity of opinions and positions within French anti-racism, as well as some of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisations' respective approaches. Theoretically speaking, all anti-racist movements want the same thing. To put it as broadly as possible, any movement calling itself 'anti-racist' is against racial discrimination, and in favour of equality of treatment amongst (at the very least) citizens of its own country, regardless of ethnic origin. Beyond this, however, there are almost infinite variations relating to ideology, worldview and priorities. In the French case, SOS and MIR can arguably be located at opposite ends of the spectrum of anti-racism, and thus provide a striking contrast for comparative study. Let us consider some of the areas of discord between the two organisations.

As we have now seen, the central difference to be noted in the positioning of the two movements relates to one of the central issues addressed in the current work, France's self-proclaimed political culture of universalist republicanism. SOS chooses to base its discourse and actions around republican values, with particular emphasis on equality. The movement takes them entirely at face value, sometimes seeing faults in their implementation by the French political class, but never seeing

faults with the ideas themselves. MIR, on the other hand, challenges and calls into question republicanism, seeing 'universal' values as being applicable only to white populations of European origin, and seeing the Enlightenment values which have inspired all of France's republican regimes as being used as ideological cover for colonialism.

A further difference, analysed in chapter 5, relates to the positioning of the two movements on the question of colonialism, and its legacy in contemporary France. For MIR, anti-colonialism is absolutely central to anti-racism: indeed, it is inextricable. One of this movement's central arguments is that France has never 'decolonised': that is to say, post-colonial immigrants and their descendants are still effectively seen as colonial 'subjects' and are treated accordingly, being consigned to 'ghettos' on the peripheries of major cities, discriminated against in access to employment, and treated unequally by the police and justice system. SOS, on the other hand, is sceptical about over-emphasising the links between the past and the present. Whilst it accepts that the colonial period should be properly remembered, it refuses to bring the discussion out of the domain of history, prioritising instead the importance of tackling racism and discrimination here and now, and seeing too much emphasis on history as potentially dangerous, in that it can end up trapping ethnic-minority populations in the role of permanent victims.

A similar story pertains to the two movements' discourse on race, a question which forms the topic of chapter 6. Once again, for MIR this is a

vital issue for French anti-racism. The movement's position is that race (or perhaps more accurately, visible ethnic difference) is responsible, more than any other factor, for determining the life chances of an individual in contemporary France. This positioning leads MIR to emphasise the 'racial question' over the traditional left-wing terrain of the 'social question'. SOS, on the other hand, sees the question of race through the prism of traditional republican 'colour-blindness', and therefore, in my view, does not see it at all. Because of this refusal to take into account ethnic difference, SOS's position, by necessity, is to conceive of equality in economic and social terms.

There are further differences between the two movements in their respective relationships with the political system. Whilst SOS no longer has any official links with the Socialist Party, there remain numerous links at the level of personnel (Harlem Désir, SOS President turned PS First Secretary, being of course the most well known). What is more, much of SOS's action aims to influence the political process from within, via lobbying of sympathetic political figures, rather than challenge it from outside. By way of contrast, MIR aims to be entirely autonomous, and works outside and against a political system seen as perpetuating discrimination against and stereotyping of post-colonial populations.

All in all therefore, choosing to examine these two movements enables a comparative analysis of two distinct types of French anti-racist movement. The first of these, as represented by SOS, is the mainstream movement;

working within the system, searching for consensus, basing its appeal around republican values and lobbying for concrete action (investment, infrastructure, housing, job creation, and so on) on France's social problems. The second meanwhile, as represented by MIR, is the anti-system movement; working outside the system (seen as a source of problems rather than solutions), calling into question the ideological and historical basis of French society and aiming to raise awkward questions, for example around colonialism and the influence of race, that are frequently ignored within mainstream political discussion.

Anti-racist discourse and action additionally needs to be understood in relation to the specific political context within which it takes place. It is my argument that the years 2005-2009 represent a unique context for anti-racism, due firstly to the pervasiveness of a conservative and implicitly exclusionary conception of national identity in the discourse of Nicolas Sarkozy, the most visible French political figure over this period; and secondly to the way in which this debate, along with the associated issues of immigration and security, was repeatedly brought to the surface of political discussion by a number of key events. In order to frame the socio-political context of my thesis, I will begin by considering the defining significance of Sarkozy's discourse on national identity during the period 2005-2009.

Whilst the question of national identity is a long-standing preoccupation within political life in France, I would argue that it exploded into public

consciousness during my chosen period initially as a result of the riots which spread across French cities in the autumn of 2005. The 'grand débat' on national identity launched by the UMP government in late 2009 marked the end of this explosion. Assuming, as seems likely, that this debate had the aim of shoring up support for the UMP ahead of the regional elections of early 2010 it was a resounding failure, with the Socialist Party winning in 21 of the 22 regions of metropolitan France. At the height of the discourse's success and influence however, during the 2007 presidential election campaign, Sarkozy, faced by what Étienne Balibar calls the 'impuissance du Tout-Puissant' (2001: 75) – that is, the powerlessness of national governments in relation to the economic forces which define citizens' lives and prospects – was able to play upon the fear and insecurity of large parts of the French population, diverting it away from the (economic) causes and towards the ('identitarian') symptoms, thus practising what the *Cette France-là* collective (2012) called 'xénophobie d'en haut'. Evidence from multiple opinion polls was ignored that the French public's chief preoccupations were employment and *pouvoir d'achat* (plus retirement, education, healthcare and social inequality, see 2012: 22), in favour of the creation and imposition of an agenda foregrounding immigration and identity. In doing this, Sarkozy implicitly – and always implicitly, the targets of his discourse being insinuated but never identified – presented immigrants as threatening a supposedly ancient and hereditary national identity (a link formalised in the decision during the 2007 campaign to create a 'Ministry of Immigration and National Identity'), and furthermore presented France's

Muslim population as threatening 'republican values' through his recurrent discourse on *communautarisme*. The identity discourse of Sarkozy and his fellow-travellers in politics and the media therefore served to stigmatise and discriminate against a substantial section of the French population: immigrants, citizens of 'immigrant origin' and Muslims, categories frequently blurred and elided together within this discourse. This was a complex context for both of my chosen movements, despite their substantial ideological differences. SOS saw its favoured republican language being used as a rhetorical tool to paint immigrants and Muslims as dangerous and inherently incompatible with French values. MIR's emphasis on colonial memory and support for immigrants' rights to cultural expression were caught up in a pervasive discourse on the dangers of 'repentance' and *communautarisme*, respectively. Both, meanwhile, were strongly opposed to Sarkozy's rhetoric on national identity, seeing it as closed-minded and unwelcoming, presenting immigration solely as a threat, rather than an opportunity or a legitimate component of French identity.

As noted above, this discourse was kept at the top of the political agenda throughout the period examined in the thesis by a number of key events. Firstly, early 2005 saw the foundation of MIR, the new movement's anti-colonial ideology proving highly pertinent in a political climate where debates around France's colonial past were particularly intense, fired by the controversy surrounding the infamous law of 23rd February 2005 demanding acknowledgement of the 'positive role' played by France in its

colonies and its teaching in schools, and by the appearance in public discourse of the ideology of 'anti-repentance' courtesy of conservative-leaning academics such as Daniel Lefeuvre, an ideology taken up with enthusiasm by Sarkozy in the 2007 campaign. Secondly, the chronology can be continued with perhaps the central event of recent French history, the widespread urban disturbances of 2005, during which, as Nasser Demiaty (in Mucchielli and Le Goaziou (eds), 2007) argues, 'Nicolas Sarkozy a délibérément choisi de jouer le jeu de la provocation des jeunes des quartiers populaires et d'y faire monter la tension' (2007: 59), setting out a discourse which includes as its key features the 'dénonciation d'une culture juvénile populaire anti-institutionnelle', 'euphémisation des raisons socio-économiques de leur émergence' and 'théorie du complot dont les acteurs principaux sont les dealers, les caïds et les islamistes' (2007: 68). This zero-tolerance approach, emphasising order over understanding, placed Sarkozy – at the time Interior Minister under his great party rival Jacques Chirac – at the centre of the official response to events, and firmly cemented him in the public consciousness. Indeed, it is quite possible to argue that without the visibility afforded to him at this time, Sarkozy would never have become President. The third key event is central to the thesis, and marks the height of the predominance of 'national identity' in recent French political history. The 2007 Presidential election campaign, as can be seen in chapter 2, was fought by Sarkozy on the grounds of national identity to an unprecedented extent, with the consequences noted above, immigration and France's Muslim population being presented as a threat to the

country's values and wider well-being. As was also noted above, a further key event was announced during the campaign, that of the creation of the new 'Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité nationale et du codéveloppement', a Ministry which gave a legal basis to the supposition that immigration was not intrinsic to French national identity, as claimed by a movement like SOS, but must be placed in opposition to it: as the post-colonial historian Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch puts it, '[le ministère] pose brutalement la question de la place des immigrés, à quelque époque que ce soit, dans la construction de l'identité nationale (2009: 165). What is more, despite its claims to favour 'integration', it appeared in practice to be much more concerned with removing vast numbers of immigrants from French territory, its target-driven approach in this domain being attacked by SOS in a 2009 campaign entitled '30,000 expulsions, c'est la honte'. The final event to be taken into consideration is the 2009 'identity debate' launched by Sarkozy and Minister of Immigration Éric Besson, which while claiming to promote ideas such as *vivre ensemble*, *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, *laïcité* and equality between men and women ('*Éric BESSON lance un grand débat sur l'identité nationale*', immigration.gouv.fr, 2009), again in reality promoted a conservative and narrowly-defined conception of national identity supposedly under threat from immigration and Islam. The reactions of my two chosen movements to this debate give a clear picture of the reasons for their rejection of Sarkozy's discourse, and of their preferred models of society and identity: SOS argues for a *république métissée*, which promotes both physical mixing of populations

(for example in housing and schools) and openness to cultural influence from immigrant populations; while MIR argues for multiculturalism and a rethinking of concepts such as citizenship and nationality.

Having considered the rationale for the choice of the two movements examined in this thesis, and the rationale for the choice of timeframe, I would like now to discuss the sources to be used in this work. My methodology combines a detailed analysis of primary documentation with a wide corpus of secondary literature on anti-racism, national identity and republicanism. Particularly useful in assembling the corpus of primary sources are the two movements' online archives at www.sos-racisme.org and www.indigenes-republique.fr – MIR's in particular is exceptionally comprehensive, assembling every piece written by a member of the movement since its foundation in 2005. The thesis draws on a wide range of relevant material from these archives, including press releases, opinion pieces, petitions, manifestos and mission statements, providing a detailed picture of the movements' discourse and action. Further material on the movements' own ideology and self-perception was provided by their official publications (*Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme*, 2006; *Manifeste pour l'égalité*, 2007; *Nous sommes les Indigènes de la République*, 2012), as well as those of their leaders and key thinkers: for SOS, Sopo (2005, 2007), Boutih (2001), Désir (1987) and Dray (1987); and for MIR Khiari (2006, 2009), Tévanian (2007, 2008) and Lévy (2010). In the case of SOS, information on currently-active campaigns (for example those aiming to fight discrimination in housing and employment) was also

obtained on a 2011 visit to the organisation's headquarters. Finally, although this was not the main focus of the thesis, semi-structured interviews with representatives of each organisation clarified and deepened my understanding of their ideologies and actions, and of their reaction to the political climate examined in the thesis. Certainly, the objection could be raised that focusing mainly on the movements' own discourse and self-perception is unlikely to produce balanced and neutral material. However, throughout the thesis I have attempted to examine this material from a critical perspective, using secondary sources to add to the discussion of the key themes identified (see below). Additional primary sources used were contemporary newspaper articles, which served to add context and depth to discussions of both government and anti-racist action; and extracts from the transcripts of a number of Nicolas Sarkozy's speeches, many taken from the exceptionally useful database maintained by Jean Véronis of the Université de Provence (<http://sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/>), which enabled me to develop a clearer and more detailed view of the political context faced by the French anti-racist movement than would otherwise have been the case.

Although primary sources are at the centre of the thesis and the case for its originality, the present work also makes use of an extensive range of secondary sources. Firstly, the thesis draws on the (not extensive) contemporary critical literature on the two movements examined. In the case of SOS, particularly relevant material can be found in the work of

Robert Gibb (1998, 2003a, 2003b), which discusses key issues such as the consistency or otherwise of SOS's republican positioning since its foundation, the problems caused by too great a focus on anti-discrimination action, and the meaning of the organisation's discourse on *métissage*. Analysis of SOS's ideology can also be found in a number of wider-focused texts on racism and anti-racism in France such as Lentin (2004) and Fysh and Wolfreys (2003), while its foundation is discussed critically by former activists in the 1980s' *Beur* movement such as Abdallah (2000) and Bouamama (1994). In the case of MIR, the movement been the subject of a number of chapters and papers, for example from Sharif Gemie (2010), Stefan Kipfer (2011) and Jérémy Robine (2006, 2011), which cumulatively provide a clear background on the movement's preoccupations and ideology. Taking specifically publications in the period of time since 2005 (the start of my timeframe and the year of MIR's foundation) there is undoubtedly more writing on MIR than on SOS, perhaps due to its novelty, its controversial, iconoclastic positioning and its proximity to debates on postcolonialism. The central use for secondary sources in the thesis, however, is for background and theory. Cited particularly regularly are theorists who have addressed the question of the relationship between anti-racism and French republicanism – a key theme in the thesis – for example Étienne Balibar (1992, 1997, 2001, 2007), who like MIR sees racism as structural and systemic, and Pierre-André Taguieff (1987, 1996, 2000), who refuses to countenance any form of anti-racism which deviates from republican universalism. Other authors cited on this theme include Silverman (1992,

1999), Lloyd (1998) and Koopmans et al. (2005). The endlessly flexible idea of republicanism itself is also a fundamental concept underlying the present work, and its meaning is discussed throughout the thesis with reference to authors such as Hazareesingh (1994), Sieffert (2006), Berstein (2007) and Ferrand (2007). Additionally, the discussion in the thesis of the political context within which the anti-racist movement had to operate over 2005-2009 refers to some of the many works on Sarkozy and national identity which appeared over this period, for example Noiriel (2007a), Martigny (2009), Maillot (2008), De Cock et al. (2008) and Meyran (2009). This is not an exhaustive overview of my secondary sources, but to sum up, the secondary sources used establish a theoretical and political background; the former focusing particularly on the key theme of republicanism and its relationship with French anti-racism, and the latter on the national identity discourse which defined my timeframe. With this theoretical and political background established, primary source-based material is then used to add specific foreground detail on my two chosen movements.

With the rationale and parameters of the thesis thus determined, let us now consider the structure of the present work.

I will begin in chapter 1 by examining existing perspectives on the issue of anti-racism in France, as a means of placing the thesis in academic context. The chapter will be divided into three sections. The first of these considers the central issue of republicanism: what is meant by the term,

and most importantly its relationship with French anti-racism. As I note above, the position taken in relation to republicanism is a central dividing line between SOS and MIR, and the same dividing line can be seen in academic discussion of my chosen subject. Therefore, in this section I look at the contrasting positions taken by key theorists such as Étienne Balibar, who questions Enlightenment universalism and sees racism as ingrained within France's republican political structures, and Pierre-André Taguieff, who sees no alternative to republicanism as an ideological basis for anti-racism. The second section looks at works focusing on the political context of the early-mid 1980s, and more specifically the new ideas of the *Beur* movement and the rise to prominence of SOS Racisme, as a means of illustrating still unresolved debates within the anti-racist movement, debates relating to issues such as autonomy, and the tension between radicalism and consensus. In the third section, finally, I consider the limitations of existing works, noting in particular the substantial differences between the political context examined by the majority of these works, under Mitterrand in the early-mid 1980s, and the political context examined in the present work, under Sarkozy in the early 21st century.

Having looked at the academic context of the thesis in chapter 1, chapter 2 then looks at the political context within which anti-racist organisations had to operate over my chosen period: a context which I argue poses unique challenges to the movement, and a context whose relationship with anti-racism is largely unexamined. As argued earlier in this

introduction, the years examined in the thesis are defined by Nicolas Sarkozy and his discourse on national identity, and it is this discourse which forms the subject of the chapter. Taking examples from Sarkozy's speeches across the period, I identify three recurrent themes which are at the heart of his conception of national identity. The first relates to history, seen not as complex and multifaceted but as singular and simplistic; a parade of 'Great Men' and heroic military feats, with immigration presented solely as a threat, and the colonial period either ignored or seen through the prism of the *mission civilisatrice*. The second relates to 'anti-repentance', a term which can be understood as referring to a rejection of critical analysis of the more controversial or shameful parts of the French past. This term is used by Sarkozy to present anyone who disagrees with his conception of history – critical historians, for example, or immigrants whose family histories lead them to view France's colonial history as not wholly benign – as almost akin to traitors, thus reinforcing his populist, anti-intellectual, anti-immigrant appeal. The third, finally, relates to the Republic. The chapter argues that the concept is used by Sarkozy as an empty signifier of national identity whose 'values' are anything he supports. These values, furthermore, are presented as being under threat from immigrants who are charged with 'not wanting to integrate', and, most of all, from *communautarisme*. This term refers literally to populations whose primary loyalty is to an ethnic or religious group rather than to the Republic, but is used by Sarkozy as a code-word which, drawing upon years of negative and exaggerated media reporting,

serves to stigmatise France's Muslim population, presented as inherently incompatible with the Republic and its principles.

Chapter 3, meanwhile, is the final contextual chapter ahead of the three thematic case-studies which form the centre of the thesis. This chapter serves to analyse in detail the two movements examined in the thesis. It considers each movement in relation to Alana Lentin's useful idea of a continuum of proximity to and distance from mainstream political culture, finding SOS to be at the 'proximity' end of the spectrum thanks to its view of republican political culture as both inherently just and inherently favourable to anti-racist aims, and MIR, conversely, to be at the 'distance' end due to its calling into question of republicanism and anti-system conception of the anti-racist struggle (2004: 1). The chapter considers, furthermore, the circumstances of each movement's foundation, illustrates each movement's ideology with reference to material from press releases, official publications and interviews, and illustrates the movements' respective strategies with representative examples of initiatives taken over the period examined in the thesis. Here, SOS's 2006 'États Généraux pour l'Égalité', which brings together local anti-racist movements with sympathetic political figures in an attempt to find concrete solutions to problems relating to issues such as employment, education and housing, shows the movement's pragmatism, moderation and position at least partially within the political system. This can be contrasted with the anti-colonial and anti-system anger of MIR's marches

in memory of the Sétif massacre of 1945 and the killing of Algerian demonstrators in Paris in October 1961.

As noted above, this thesis centres upon three thematic case-study chapters, each examining the positions of the two movements in relation to three key themes which illustrate the difference between the movements, while placing particular emphasis on the contrast in their relationship with France's republican political culture and their adaptation to the political climate underlying the present work. The first of these, chapter 4, looks at the movements with regard to national identity, the defining theme of my chosen period. In this chapter, I consider the reasons for the movements' rejection of Sarkozy's discourse on the theme, and then look at the question of whether the movements have their own alternative conception. To take the first of these questions, SOS rejects Sarkozy's presentation of immigration as being in opposition to national identity, rejects his use of the language of republicanism in his identity discourse, and sees his backwards-looking and exclusionary conception of national identity as harmful to the future of French society. MIR too is critical of Sarkozy's presentation of immigration in terms of threat, and rejects his conservative and exclusionary identity discourse, but additionally makes links between national identity and colonialism, and between national identity and what they see as the negative aspects of republican universalism. To take the second question, SOS's alternative vision of society is based around the concept of a *République métissée*, which envisages a single French culture, but a 'hybrid' one

open to influences from immigrants and their descendants. MIR on the other hand argues for a decoupling of citizenship from rights, and for a multicultural model of society, within which immigrants are encouraged to preserve and express their own identities.

Chapter 5 moves on to consider the second key theme, that of colonialism, which, as in other areas, is framed by the attitude that the respective movements display towards republicanism. Here, the movements differ substantially on the questions of whether colonialism – or perhaps more accurately colonial memory – has any part to play in the anti-racist movement, whether it has any part to play in wider society, and the importance of the colonial legacy in understanding contemporary society. SOS, although it acknowledges that colonialism is an important area of historical study, is wary of making links between colonialism and its favoured republican ideology. Moreover, it is highly critical of the idea that colonial legacies have to be taken into account by anti-racist groups, and the idea that colonial memory should contribute to the self-perceived identity of post-colonial populations. In both cases, the movement argues that putting too much emphasis on the colonial past leads such populations to either be seen as, or see themselves as, eternal victims. For SOS, this is a dangerous distraction from the central task of fighting inequality and discrimination happening in the present. MIR, conversely, places colonial legacies at the centre of its analysis of contemporary society: the police and justice systems are seen as treating post-colonial populations comparably to their ancestors during the colonial period;

representations of colonial populations are seen as still being at work in the discrimination faced by their descendants in modern France; and the ideological justification for colonialism is held to exist within France's republican political structures.

Finally, in chapter 6, I consider the issue of 'race' (or as there is not biologically speaking a French race, 'visible ethnic difference') the effect it has in society, and whether the acknowledgement of ethnic difference has any part to play in the anti-racist movement. Again, there are substantial differences between the two movements on this question, differences whose origins can be found in the movements' contrasting views on France's mainstream republican political culture: whilst SOS criticises the government's implicit racism and discrimination by demanding that it remains true to foundational republican principles, MIR rejects republicanism, seeing it as an inherent source of racism and discrimination. In this chapter I begin by looking at SOS and its reasons for rejecting the idea of 'race' in principle. I then look at an example of what this rejection of ethnic classification means in practice, by considering the organisation's initiatives against social inequality and discrimination over the period examined in the thesis. In the second half of the chapter, I then look at MIR, and the way in which it sees discrimination and racial hierarchies – burned indelibly into France's collective minds by colonialism – as ingrained within the country's political and social structures. This analysis leads MIR to conclude that the central cleavage in French society is not based on wealth, or class, or

opportunities for social advancement, but race. The conclusion to the thesis, finally, recaps its central arguments, and considers three questions that have emerged from this thesis: what have been the strengths and weaknesses of the two movements' discourse and action over my chosen period? Have the movements had any success in imposing their own agendas? And is the anti-racist movement in fact best placed to fight issues such as racism and discrimination, as opposed to the State, which theoretically has the ability to ameliorate the conditions which encourage racism via action on issues such housing, education and (most of all) employment?

To recap, the aim of the present work is to offer a comparative perspective on two contrasting anti-racist movements – SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République – and the ideological division within French anti-racism which they represent: that is to say, their widely differing perspectives on France's public political culture of republicanism. It will bring in to the public domain a substantial number of previously unused primary sources; contribute to debates around the meaning and application of republicanism (a vital issue in an apparent period of 'republican consensus'); and will go some way towards making up for the lack of sustained academic analysis of the two chosen organisations, and of anti-racism itself in the French context. Perhaps most importantly, the analysis is situated within a distinctive political and ideological context, based upon both the republicanism mentioned above and the predominance of a conservative and potentially exclusionary

conception of national identity. For different reasons, this is a challenging context for the movements being examined: SOS finding its chosen republican ideology being used – by one of the most powerful political organisations in France (that is, the UMP and in particular Sarkozy) – for purposes often in contradiction with its own, and MIR's emphasis on colonial memory and multiculturalism being rejected due to a widespread hostility towards 'repentance' and *communautarisme*. This thesis is therefore highly relevant to contemporary political and social debates, and aims to add to the sum of knowledge within its field, the study of two contrasting organisations enabling an in-depth analysis of the complex relationship between anti-racism and republican ideology in the French context. The first chapter, as we have seen in the structure outlined above, will consider existing scholarship on these key themes of republicanism and anti-racism.

Chapter 1

French anti-racism and republicanism: contrasting perspectives

The central theme of this chapter is the relationship between anti-racism and republican ideology. The idea of republicanism is unavoidable in any discussion of French politics and society, whether at the level of parties or the level of non-governmental organisations, and is of specific relevance to the anti-racist movement, which has historically constructed itself with reference to universalist republicanism. As Catherine Lloyd argues, ‘the republican settlement is predicated on the liberatory and progressive power of Enlightenment ideas’, ideas which are ‘echoed in contemporary discourses in which they are used to legitimate antiracism’ (1998: 1). It is my argument that contemporary anti-racism in France is defined by its relationship with republicanism, but that this relationship works in complex and contradictory ways. This complexity has been exacerbated by the political context examined in the thesis (over the years 2005-2009), which combines a consensus on the language of republicanism with an apparent lack of consensus on its underlying meaning, leading to a situation in which this language could be used as rhetorical cover for almost any political position. As Denis Sieffert puts it, ‘La référence républicaine fait l’objet de toutes les manipulations. C’est le danger pour ceux qui s’y réfèrent avec une authentique sensibilité sociale.’ (2006: 128).

I argue furthermore that many previous works on anti-racism in France have looked at republicanism in a binary way, that is to say, simply as something positive or negative, when the relationship between the two concepts is in reality highly nuanced. This close but complex relationship is visible in my two chosen movements – SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République – both of which, like the French anti-racist movement in a wider sense, can arguably be defined by their relationship with republicanism. SOS sees its role as promoting and protecting ‘republican values’, and ensuring that they are properly applied throughout society by the political authorities. To quote the association’s 2007 mission statement,

“Il est [...] de notre rôle de rappeler que les valeurs de la République sont les seules à même de permettre à chacun de s’épanouir dans la société. Il est de notre rôle de défendre ces valeurs lorsqu’elles sont attaquées et remises en cause. [...] Défendre la République, c’est la faire considérer comme une source d’émancipation, c’est la rendre crédible en faisant que ses valeurs soient vécues par tous et partout dans le quotidien.” (‘SOS Racisme, ‘Nos Missions’, 2007)

In their frequently proclaimed enthusiasm for republicanism, SOS’s positions overlap substantially with those of France’s mainstream political parties, all of which similarly declare themselves to be supporters of republican values – a state of affairs made possible by the existence of both left- and right-wing versions of republicanism. As Sudhir Hazareesingh notes:

“[T]he republican tradition was never simply the preserve of a particular political formation. At the height of its ideological influence it expressed a vision of society and its basic institutions which appealed to a broad range of political organizations, ranging from progressive groups on the Left (forces of ‘movement’) to relatively conservative forces of the centre Right and even Right (forces of ‘order’).” (1994: 65)

Over my chosen period, however, the association found itself opposed to numerous initiatives taken by these self-proclaimed ‘republican’ parties, in particular those of the UMP, whose leader Nicolas Sarkozy used republican rhetoric to a substantial extent in a highly conservative and arguably exclusionary discourse on national identity, one which, entirely contrary to the positions of the similarly ‘republican’ SOS, served to scapegoat immigrants and France’s Muslim population.

MIR, too, had a somewhat ambiguous relationship with republicanism over my chosen period. Certainly, the organisation – almost uniquely within the French anti-racist movement – defined itself largely against republicanism, France’s dominant political ideology being seen as providing rhetorical justification for colonialism, and as incorporating implicit racial hierarchies and stereotypes still having a negative effect on the lives and prospects of ‘post-colonial’ populations today. Referring to Jacques Chirac’s televised address during the large-scale urban disturbances of autumn 2005, in which the former President represented mainstream republican orthodoxy by stating that ‘Je veux dire aux enfants

des quartiers difficiles, quelles que soient leurs origines, qu'ils sont tous les filles et les fils de la République', Jérémy Robine notes of MIR that:

“C'est précisément ce que les “Indigènes de la République” contestent, arguant que cela n'est pas le cas [...] mais aussi que cela n'a jamais été le cas, et que cela ne le sera jamais. La nation française est analysée comme essentiellement raciste, du fait d'une construction historique longue. Il s'agit donc de rompre avec celle-ci, au profit d'une lutte des populations issues de l'immigration des ex-colonies, en leur nom propre. Or, celles-ci ont été dominés dans la colonisation et les traites comme ils le sont dans les ghettos, au motif de leur “race”.” (2011: 149)

Despite MIR's radical anti-republican discourse, however, it is possible to find in the organisation's literature preoccupations shared with republican-based movements, and even uses of republican-influenced language. In the *Appel des Indigènes de la République* of 2005 for example, MIR argues that 'Il est urgent de promouvoir des mesures radicales de justice et d'égalité qui mettent un terme aux discriminations racistes dans l'accès au travail, au logement, à la culture et à la citoyenneté'; links 'la lutte anti-coloniale' with '[le] combat pour l'égalité sociale' (stating that 'Dien Bien Phu n'est pas une défaite mais une victoire de la liberté, de l'égalité et de la fraternité!'); and proclaims the need for 'un combat commun de tous les opprimés et exploités pour une démocratie sociale véritablement égalitaire et universelle.' As we have seen then, although both SOS and MIR can arguably be defined by their relationships with republicanism, these relationships are far from being clear-cut.

The first section of this chapter will set out the theoretical background and context, considering what is meant by republicanism, and why French anti-racism has traditionally been so closely linked with the concept. In the second I will move on to consider the positions of a number of analysts of French anti-racism on the relationship of the movement with the Republic and its principles, contrasting analysts who call into question republicanism (arguably the most prominent in the French case being Étienne Balibar) with those who see it as the only acceptable organisational principle for the movement such as Pierre-André Taguieff, perhaps the best known writer on questions of racism and anti-racism in France. In the third section meanwhile, I retrace the roots of contemporary debates around anti-racism and republicanism via a discussion of the movement in the 1980s, a period in which differing conceptions of the role of anti-racism were represented on the one hand by the autonomy and new thinking of the *Beur* movement, which in some ways served as a model for MIR, and on the other by SOS, which then as now represented the mainstream, consensual, republican perspective. I end the chapter, finally, with a discussion of the limitations of previous works and provide a rationale for the originality of this thesis through comparing and contrasting the political context examined by many previous works with that examined in the thesis. Let us begin, then, by considering the theoretical context of the chapter.

Why anti-racism and republicanism?

Alastair Bonnett defines the fundamental meaning of anti-racism as 'those forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate and/or ameliorate racism. Anti-racism implies the ability to identify a phenomenon – racism – and to do something about it.' (2000: 4). The form that this 'thought' and 'practice' takes, however, varies substantially between different national political contexts. In the French case, republicanism – a long-standing belief system derived from Enlightenment universalism and summed up by the ideals of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité* – is central to any discussion of anti-racism, whether of mainstream organisations like SOS which define themselves as being in favour of republican values (and present anti-racism as being inherent to such values), or of anti-system movements like MIR which largely define themselves *against* republican values. As such, I would like to begin this section by considering further what is meant by republicanism. Although the term can be understood in a number of different ways (for example as referring to a type of political regime with a strong President, centralised institutions and a tradition of seeing the State as 'protecteur des plus faibles' (Berstein 2007: 10)), I intend to focus here on republicanism as an ideology; a system of ideas which is bound up with the exercise of political power in the French context.

A number of authors have attempted to define the key ideas found within republican ideology. Sieffert, for instance, outlines the beliefs of a typical 21st century republican as follows:

“[C]’est un personnage à la fois préoccupé par la question sociale et profondément laïque, c’est- à-dire soucieux de maintenir une ligne de partage ferme entre la sphère privée propre à chaque individu et l’espace public. [...] On ajoutera qu’il regarde toujours le phénomène religieux avec méfiance, sinon avec hostilité, qu’il a en horreur l’affirmation des particularismes identitaires.” (2006: 13)

Many of the features of republicanism identified by Sieffert fit comfortably with the ideas of mainstream anti-racist movements such as SOS: the emphasis on the ‘social question’ (that is, how to solve problems around socio-economic inequality and discrimination); the belief in *laïcité*; and the discomfort with the expression of particularist – generally ethnically- or religiously-based – identities. Much the same could be said for the ‘République laïque, sociale et progressiste’ outlined by Éric Ferrand (2007: 10), which claims for ‘valeurs républicaines’ ideas such as ‘la primauté du politique sur l’économique et de l’intérêt général, mieux, la volonté générale sur les intérêts particuliers, mais aussi la promotion par l’égalité des chances, le travail comme droit et comme fondement du droit social.’ (ibid)

Perhaps unfortunately for the anti-racist movement however, republicanism is not simply a matter of equality of opportunity, full employment, *laïcité* and concern for the ‘social question’. It is important to note that over my chosen period every political party and social movement aiming to participate in the mainstream has attempted to lay

claim to republican values, a state of affairs made possible by the inherent flexibility of the concept. As Berstein notes, in contemporary France there exists 'une culture politique républicaine de caractère consensuel, de plus en plus fréquemment invoquée par les gouvernants de gauche et de droite comme le socle du pacte social garantissant l'identité nationale.' (2007: 13) It is this combination of consensus and flexibility which leads to a situation in which different political groupings use the language of republicanism for seemingly irreconcilable purposes. Hence, as Sarah Waters argues, at the same time as the Left's debates around republicanism 'often involve a re-examination of political traditions, the legacy of the Revolution and the significance of republican values in order to devise responses to today's social problems' (2012: 43), the Right is able to use the Republic 'to justify the most hardline and discriminatory laws against immigrants, implemented in the name of strictly defined republican ideals and in particular, the principle of secularism.' (2012: 42). Republicanism, therefore, is not a neutral system, but is closely linked with relationships of power within the French political arena. In a context where every mainstream political organisation declares itself to be in favour of republican values, but what exactly these values are is not the subject of consensus, the battle to define the way in which they should be interpreted is a highly important one in the French political arena, perhaps even the most important battle of all.

But what of the relationship between anti-racism and republicanism in the French context? This has traditionally been a close one, due to the way

in which mainstream anti-racist groups have had a tendency to conceive of France's republican political culture as inherently compatible with their aims, often drawing on key historical touchstones such as the Dreyfus Affair and the Resistance. Alana Lentin sums up this tendency well in her 2004 book *Racism and Anti-racism in Europe*:

“The importance periodically placed on anti-racism in French post-war politics reflects the extent to which, rather than being the preserve of groups of the racially marginalised, it has been constructed as inherently French, and therefore hegemonic. The ideals of anti-racism have been construed as universally applicable through their connection with the republican principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, strongly emphasised by the large established anti-racist organisations: the LICRA, LDH, MRAP and, more recently, *SOS Racisme*.” (2004: 115)

The French anti-racist movement in many cases traces its lineage to the Enlightenment, and to the universalist ideals associated with it, a linkage made explicit by Loïc Rigaud of *SOS Racisme's comité national*, who in a 2011 interview defined the organisation's conception of 'national identity' as follows:

“Pour nous, c'est la France des Lumières. [...] Une France progressiste, qui accueille tout le monde; basée sur les principes universalistes, républicaines, d'égalité. À savoir, on ne considère pas l'origine des gens en fonction de leur situation sociale. On pense que notre identité nationale serait l'identité des droits de l'homme; l'identité d'une France terre d'immigration.” (Interview with Loïc Rigaud, 29.3.2011)

The movement in France, at the mainstream level at least, is therefore representative of what Koopmans et al refer to as 'universalist antiracism' (2005: 225): 'In France', they write, 'antiracism is clearly grounded in universal principles, notably of unity of humanity, and a denial of particular identities in order to obtain a strict equality between individuals belonging to the same national community. Equality between groups and tolerance for plural identities would constitute a major breach of republican ideals.' (2005: 230)

We therefore have a situation in which anti-racism is conceived of as inherently compatible with republican ideals, a situation which has two major consequences. Firstly, anti-racism is seen by its mainstream practitioners not as challenging the political system and its ideological basis, but as part of the same system and the same traditions. As Lentin notes, this leads 'majoritarian' organisations (such as SOS) to 'use the myths and symbols generally associated with patriotism to attack racism' (2004: 126), hence her term 'hegemonic' to describe republican anti-racism. And secondly, only one way of being an anti-racist movement is seen as acceptable to respectable political opinion: one which rejects multiculturalism, *communautarisme* and particularist identities in favour of an emphasis on universalist republicanism. Whilst there is nothing intrinsically wrong with republican values as a basis for French anti-racism – it is hard to object in principle to *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* – this lack of flexibility within mainstream French anti-racism leads to a lack of room for manoeuvre with regards to the creation and promotion of new discourses and conceptions of society, and furthermore leads it to be

vulnerable to the appropriation of republican language by more powerful political actors – such as Nicolas Sarkozy over the years examined in this thesis – who may use it for purposes which go against those favoured by anti-racist organisations.

Certainly, the existence of this link between anti-racism and republicanism has been challenged. The MIR-affiliated sociologist Pierre Tévanian for instance, like the movement of which he is part, argues that republicanism should be associated not with the fight against racism but with racism itself. He writes:

“Il est vrai [...] qu’au nom de la République”, ou plus précisément de “ses principes”, la liberté, l’égalité et la fraternité, des luttes d’émancipation ont été menées. Mais, justement, si la signification d’un mot dépend des forces qui s’en emparent, il est patent qu’aujourd’hui, le mot “République” est plus souvent prononcé pour justifier une inégalité et “remettre à leur place” les immigrés et leurs enfants que pour revendiquer une réelle égalité de traitement.” (2007: 8)

What is less clear, however, is how this analysis translates into reality. It is undoubtedly possible to argue that republican rhetoric has been used as cover for the stigmatisation of immigrants and their descendants; that ‘l’État républicain a rarement été fidèle à ses idéaux’ (Tévanian 2007: 9); and that anti-racism should therefore be separated from republicanism. In practice however, anti-racist groups operating within the French political context are in somewhat of a bind, in that they effectively have to advocate republican principles in order to participate in the political

mainstream. Of course, movements which challenge republican orthodoxy – such as MIR – have always existed. However, movements which choose to take this position, almost without exception, are restricted to the status of outsiders.

In the first section of this chapter I have aimed to set out its conceptual background, considering what is meant by republicanism and some of the reasons why the ideals implied in it have traditionally been closely linked with anti-racism. In the next section I will move on to examine the perspectives of notable analysts of French anti-racism on the question of republicanism: does it act as an impediment to the movement? Is racism embedded within the structures of the republican state? Or, on the contrary, is republicanism the only effective means of organising the fight against racism?

Republican ideology and French anti-racism: benefit or impediment?

Having considered in the previous section the close relationship between French anti-racism and republicanism, in this section I intend to look at a number of contrasting viewpoints on the consequences of this relationship, asking whether an emphasis on republicanism undermines the anti-racist cause, or on the contrary acts as a sound ideological basis for the movement. I will begin by considering Étienne Balibar, whose ideas – such as linking the Enlightenment universalism which underpins

the Republic with the creation of racial stereotypes and hierarchies – have proved highly influential amongst radical, anti-system movements in the field of anti-racism in France. I will then look at the perspectives of several Anglophone critics, many (Alana Lentin and Max Silverman, for example) influenced by Balibar themselves, on the question of the relationship between French anti-racism and republicanism, finding a common belief that republicanism is overly inflexible and forms an obstacle to the movement adapting to contemporary society. Finally, by way of contrast, I will consider the positions of Pierre-André Taguieff, perhaps the best-known analyst of French anti-racism, who sees a solid foundation in universalist republicanism as a prerequisite for a movement which is both effective and grounded in French political tradition.

Perhaps the most prominent French analyst of anti-racism to take an ‘anti-system’ position and thereby call into question the Republic¹, the nation-state and France’s self-image is the post-Althusserian political philosopher Étienne Balibar. Along similar lines to MIR over the period examined in the thesis, Balibar sees racism not as alien and external, but as inherent within the structures of French society. As he puts it in *Les frontières de la démocratie* (1992):

“La thèse principale que je défends est celle de la structure *institutionnelle* du racisme. Tout racisme n’est pas un racisme d’État, mais tout racisme est ancré dans la structure des institutions et dans le

¹ Or at least, to engage critically with republicanism, for example through his idea of *égalité*, within which Balibar posits that equality and liberty are inseparable, but that both are frequently denied to parts of the population; leading him to reflect on the contradictions of universalist discourse in politics (see Balibar 1992, 2010)

rapport conscient ou inconscient des masses à ces institutions.” (1992: 11)

And as Catherine Lloyd sums up Balibar’s position:

“[Balibar] sees the institutional structure of racism in contemporary France as arising from a contradiction between the egalitarian claims of the liberal state and its citizens’ limited enjoyment of such rights. Racism, he contends, is a strategy of dominant groups to reproduce their conditions of domination.” (1998: 16)

For Balibar therefore, racism is inherent within republican political culture, this culture being seen as resulting from the Enlightenment ideals which form the basis of much of modern Western political thought. According to Balibar’s critique, this fact results in a major paradox in the relationship between anti-racism and the republican state. Whilst he argues that racism exists within the (republican-based) structures of French society, at the same time ‘l’État est en même temps officiellement “antiraciste”’ (1992: 87), due to its insistence on the equality of every citizen regardless of origin. This potential disconnect between reality and self-perception can be seen in the practice of anti-racist action, for instance in Sopo’s account of his organisation’s fight against racial discrimination: the attitude of many of those in political power, he writes, was that ‘[les discriminations] ne peuvent constituer un phénomène généralisé puisque la France les refuse, comme la devise républicaine en atteste’ (2005: 39).

Balibar develops further his ideas on race, the state and republicanism in his discussion of nationalism in *Race, nation, classe* (1997). Here Balibar

notes that theoretical racism is implicitly based on principles of classification and hierarchy; on the idea of what it is to be ‘human’ and ‘civilised’. These concepts of course figure strongly in the Enlightenment notions of progress and perfectibility which intellectually underpinned the Revolution, European modernity and the formation of the French nation state. The Enlightenment sought to define ‘universal’ values, related to the human hierarchy (although it can be argued that this thinking was not ‘neutral’ or ‘universal’ at all but rooted in Western European culture of the 18th and 19th centuries, but that is another question). These ‘universal’ values, however, were made or claimed in relation to the ‘fictive identity’ of the civilised nation state, of which France saw and sees itself as the apotheosis. As Balibar acknowledges, this makes the business of opposing racism all the more difficult. He writes:

“Il n’y aurait pas tant de difficultés à organiser intellectuellement la lutte contre le racisme si le “crime contre l’humanité” ne se perpétrait pas au nom et au moyen d’un discours humaniste.” (1997: 85)

That is to say, ‘racism’ claims – at the theoretical level – to be defending universalistic, ‘civilised’ human values within the particular national context, based on the human hierarchy implicit within such values. This questioning of republican universalism, and vision of ingrained racial hierarchies existing within France’s ostensibly egalitarian political culture, follows similar lines to the critiques made by MIR over the period examined in the thesis. However, it also has potential implications for SOS: by choosing to participate in the ‘republican consensus’ – a consensus which operates at the level of language, but not at the level of

its underlying meaning – the movement, despite of course not favouring racial division and hierarchy, has serious difficulties in differentiating its discourse from that of political actors who use the language of republican universalism to implicitly racist and/or discriminatory ends.

As we have now seen then, Balibar sees racism as inherent to the structures of French society, state and nation and in fact as existing within the Enlightenment thinking which forms the background of French political culture to the present day. If Balibar's critique is to be accepted, how can anti-racist groups hope to challenge the dominant discourse in this area? On the basis of his analysis of the *Beur* movement, to be considered shortly, he would say that it was the job of such groups to promote new thinking around the ideas of citizenship and nationality. However, in the political climate of 2005-2009, which was largely hostile to anything outside traditional republican values, could a group advocating such new thinking make itself heard? And if racism exists within the Enlightenment thinking which underpins republican ideology, can a group like SOS Racisme, which strongly advocates this ideology, hope to solve France's problems in this area?

Although Balibar is focused on anti-racism more indirectly than directly – in that, if as he claims racism is systemic, and inherent to the Enlightenment values which underpin the Republic, it would seem counterproductive for the anti-racist movement to base its appeal on 'republican values' – he does address the movement in his writing on the

Beur movement of the early-mid 1980s; a period in which Balibar saw the potential for a ‘profond bouleversement idéologique et politique de l’identité nationale’ (1992: 71). Balibar’s writing on this subject raises an important question, one which has arguably been the central argument in French anti-racist circles since the early 1980s: should the anti-racist movement fight for a new conception of society, or should it focus simply on promoting and protecting republican values? As may be expected, Balibar is very much in the first of these camps, and as can be seen in his discussion of the *Convergence 84* march, he saw in the *Beur* movement possible directions for this new vision of society. The *Convergence* marchers, he argues, denounce ‘le faux “problème de l’immigration”’ and demand ‘la pure et simple reconnaissance de leurs droits’ (1992: 73). They are not unaware, furthermore, of ‘les rapports de forces et de classes’ (ibid), designating their ‘vrais problèmes’:

“*Celui du racisme*, ancré dans les institutions avant de l’être dans les consciences (et les inconscients); *celui de l’inégalité* devant la fortune, l’emploi, la culture, le pouvoir, qui règne dans la société française à l’encontre des intérêts du plus grand nombre.” (1992: 74)

Balibar, therefore, sees the demands of the *Beurs* as beneficial to French society as a whole, and at that point in time seemed hopeful of a new direction in anti-racism inspired by the movement, calling for ‘une volonté politique collective capable de peser en permanence sur les choix gouvernementaux’ (1992: 78). However, returning to the question in the introduction, written several years later, he finds the movement ‘divisé et affaibli, sous l’effet de ses conflits internes, de son isolement dans la

société française, de l'aggravation de la "galère" dans les banlieues et de la stratégie dilatoire des pouvoirs publics' (1992: 12). Balibar argues that it is thanks to the *Beur* movement that notions of 'intégration', 'droit à la différence' and 'la contradiction *citoyenneté / nationalité*' (1992: 11) were brought to the forefront of political discussion, and with the benefit of further hindsight he was right to do so. Certainly, such issues have never enjoyed a higher profile than they did in the early-mid 1980s, and what is more, it has no obvious heir as a relatively visible and publicly-known movement bringing to the surface complex questions like these. It could perhaps be argued that although MIR, as an autonomous movement challenging republican orthodoxy and claiming to support an ambitious restructuring of French society, follows the lead of the *Beur* movement in some respects, we will see later on that it is less widely-known, positions itself further away from the mainstream, and places more emphasis on colonialism and, relatively speaking, less on questions of social justice. Whilst Balibar in 1992 seems to see some prospect of the *Beur* movement, or something like it, returning to prominence, in the period under discussion in the thesis this prospect arguably seemed further away than ever, with any organisation based on ethnicity or religion being seen as an example of *communautarisme*, and thus to be instantly dismissed by the mainstream.²

² The rise of *communautarisme* as the subject of intense political debate is discussed by the sociologist Fabrice Dhume, who in a 2010 paper argues that 'la diffusion quantitative de ce néologisme typiquement français va de pair avec un changement qualitatif de la configuration du discours politique. Cette nouvelle catégorie autorise un réarmement de l'idéologie ethnonationaliste qui soutient l'État-Nation, et permet la diffusion dans le "débat" national de thèmes de plus en plus interprétés sous l'angle de la menace à l'égard d'un "ennemi intérieur"' (*L'émergence d'une figure obsessionnelle: comment le "communautarisme" a envahi les discours médiatico-politiques français*, REVUE Asylon(s), No. 8, juillet 2010)

Balibar's writing here is arguably heavily influenced by the context of the early-mid 1980s, one in which the anti-racist movement was setting out ideas for a radical rethinking of national identity, some of which coincided with Balibar's own thinking, notably on the link between citizenship and rights, and how to re-articulate such rights within the (republican) nation-state. As a post-Althusserian political philosopher he would not be claiming to make a sociological study of anti-racist movements; furthermore, his attitude to state institutions is a complex one. As we have seen, a key theme in Balibar's work is 'la structure institutionnelle du racisme' (1992: 11), hence his critique of political institutions and the formation of the modern nation-state. At the same time however, Hewlett (2007) criticises Balibar for having 'too much faith in the capacity of the modern state and its structures in bringing about radical transformation (2007: 140). For Hewlett, Balibar 'appears to believe that the necessary political as well as socio-economic upheavals have been achieved to bring about the flowering of a profoundly democratic and just society' (ibid). If Hewlett's position is to be accepted, there would be a contradiction between Balibar's 'positions in support of emancipatory investigations on one hand and political positions which would effect relatively little change on the other' (ibid). Although anti-racism is not the primary focus of Balibar's writing, his work raises numerous questions relevant to this thesis. As Hewlett writes, 'at the heart of [Balibar's] definition of the political is the notion of emancipation, with the defiant actions of ordinary people taking centre-stage' (2007: 116). Lloyd too

appears to agree with this interpretation of Balibar's work, arguing that '[Balibar] supports an antiracist strategy which promotes the autonomous organisation of immigrants and mobilises communal traditions of resistance to exploitation' (1998: 17). Hewlett, then, identifies a tension between on the one hand Balibar's endorsement of agency and autonomy as prerequisites for meaningful political action and on the other hand the way in which, elsewhere, Balibar appears to lend more weight to the constricting political frameworks within which anti-racism frequently has to operate.

The perspective that an inflexible emphasis on republican values is harmful to French anti-racism appears also to be particularly widespread in the Anglophone literature on the movement, perhaps due to scepticism over French claims to 'universality'. Lentin, for instance, sees the 'colour-blindness' and discomfort with difference embodied by republicanism as an impediment to identifying and dealing with the genuinely existing 'racialisation' of substantial sections of the French population:

"French anti-racism's unease as regards the idea of 'race' undoubtedly, as Varikas (1998) rightly points out, stems from the wish to delegitimise its biological and hierarchical connotations. However, the forcefulness with which the egalitarianism of French republican culture is upheld as a panacea for all forms of discrimination means that there is a failure to conceive of racism differently from other discriminations. Racialisation is therefore stripped of its continual power to exclude and violate." (2004: 116)

Max Silverman, meanwhile – on similar lines to MIR, and to Balibar – sees racism as intimately bound up with the formation of the nation-state, and consequently sees a serious contradiction in the mainstream French anti-racist movement’s emphasis on republican patriotism:

“The structural nature of racism within the nation-state (so blandly effaced in simplistic notions of the universalist, individualist and assimilationist tradition) creates problems for the Left’s opposition to racism, as the nationalist tradition is also a fundamental part of its own ideology.” (1992: 119)

A further example of the tendency towards criticism of republicanism in the Anglophone literature on French anti-racism can be found in Peter Fysh and Jim Wolfreys’ *The Politics of Racism in France* (2003), a work whose focus is on two interlinked questions: the unexpected strength of racism in France – as demonstrated by the enduring success of the Front National, the main focus of their work – and the failure of the anti-racist movement successfully to combat it. They argue that the French Republic has never truly lived up to its promises of universalist equality:

““We argue that anti-racism in France, when confronted by the rise of the National Front, suffered from two key weaknesses. One was overestimation of the degree to which the principles of political liberty and administrative and cultural uniformity, exalted by the country which has enshrined the ‘Rights of Man’ in a succession of republican constitutions, would or could guarantee fair and equal treatment of newcomers. The

other is an inadequate understanding of the principal racist organisation in France, the National Front.” (2003: 3)

Along similar lines to a number of writers – Gildea (2002), to take one example – Fysh and Wolfreys argue that the Republic’s ‘founding principles’ are often ‘founding myths’: that is, they are aspirational rather than effectual (a sentiment perhaps echoed in the distinction made by MIR between the ‘République rêvée’ and the ‘République réelle’, as will be seen in chapter 3). They go on to make the case that because of the deep embedding of the theory of uniformity mentioned above, anti-racist groups have too often been weak at defending even small aspects of the ‘right to be different’, in their view limiting the effectiveness of these groups. Moreover, they go as far as to say that French anti-racist movements have tended to be ‘undermined by the republican model’ (2003: 208); in this sense directly challenging the ideas of a thinker such as Pierre-André Taguieff (to be discussed later on in this chapter), who favours consistent rational argument and a reliance on the traditional social mechanisms of republican integration in the fight against racism.

Analysts such as Lentin, Silverman and Fysh and Wolfreys, therefore, examine anti-racism’s relationship with republican discourse through the prism of the limitations that this relationship creates. How can this positioning be judged? In many ways such analysts are correct to be critical of the Republic and its role in French anti-racist discourse. It is justified to say (like Fysh and Wolfreys) that republicanism has frequently not lived up to its promises of universalism and equality in reality, a

problem acknowledged and discussed at length by former SOS President Dominique Sopo – a commentator highly favourable towards republicanism – in his 2005 book *SOS antiracisme*:

“Comprenons-nous bien: les personnes issues de l’immigration ne sont pas tant frustrées par leur situation objective d’infériorité dans la société française que par le fait que la République ne semble pas leur offrir de perspectives de progrès pour elles et leurs enfants. Elles ont conscience, pour l’immense majorité d’entre elles, que la disparition des ghettos urbains, du racisme et des discriminations sera un chemin nécessairement long. Elles demandent juste que ceux qui ont la charge des politiques publiques empruntent ce chemin.” (2005: 46)

It is justified, furthermore, to say (like Silverman) that Enlightenment-influenced universalism, which went on to form the ideological basis of republicanism, and thus also of mainstream anti-racism in France, has at times been used not as a means of promoting equality, but as a rationalisation for the creation of racial hierarchies and *inequality*, in particular in the context of colonialism and the so-called *mission civilisatrice* (Balibar 1997, Khiari 2006, 2009). And it is justified to say (like Lentin) that republican-based French anti-racism is indeed highly uncomfortable with the idea of difference, to the extent that movements like SOS have frequently attempted to fight ethnically-based discrimination using initiatives which refuse resolutely to take into account ethnicity, even as a means of judging the efficacy of such initiatives (Simon 2006, De Rudder 2000).

At the same time however, it could be argued that such critiques underestimate a number of factors about France's relationship with republicanism, and the relationship between republicanism and French anti-racism. The first factor to be underestimated is the extent of the attachment to and pride in republican values in France – even if their exact definition is up for debate – and their centrality to the country's self-image (the statement in the introduction to SOS's *Manifeste pour l'égalité* that 'La devise de notre République renferme en elle les valeurs les plus belles et les plus universelles' (2007: 11) is representative of this viewpoint). It is perhaps unrealistic to say simply that they are a myth and the anti-racist movement should leave them behind, whatever elements of truth are contained in the proposition. The second factor to be underestimated, very much linked to the first, relates to the practical issues raised earlier in this chapter: that anti-racist groups effectively have to emphasise republicanism in order to participate in the political mainstream. Again, whilst greater ideological flexibility within the movement may be beneficial (for example in allowing the use of ethnic statistics to gauge the effectiveness of anti-discrimination action, or placing greater emphasis on colonial memory) building a new, non-republican ideological framework whilst continuing to influence mainstream debate is easier said than done. The third factor to be underestimated is the willingness of republican-influenced anti-racist activists to question and critique their favoured ideology. As can be seen in the quotation from Sopo above, there is acknowledgement that the republican system is not running as it should, and that it needs to improve

and live up to its promises if immigrants and their descendants are not to become alienated from and hostile towards French society: the discourse of movements like SOS is not just unthinking and abstract proclamations of republican patriotism. The fourth factor to be underestimated, finally, is the effectiveness of universalist republicanism as a rhetorical basis for movements, like anti-racism, which aim to promote equality. As Tzvetan Todorov argues for instance (directly contradicting the argument of MIR, which links Enlightenment universalism with racism and colonial subjugation), 'The anti-colonialist movements were [...] directly inspired by the principles of the Enlightenment, in particular when they posited human universality, equality between peoples and individual freedom.' (2009: 31) Pierre Tévanian, who raises the issue of republicanism solely to attack it as a justification for racism, acknowledges himself that 'Il est vrai [...] qu'"au nom de la République", ou plus précisément de "ses principes", la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité, des luttes d'émancipation ont été menées' (2007: 8). It is undoubtedly the case that there has always been significant tension within anti-racist and anti-colonial movements between the emancipatory power of universalist republican language and its potential use as a justification for racial hierarchies and discrimination (as noted by authors like Balibar and Silverman and movements like MIR). Despite the imperfections and contradictions contained within republican values however, *liberté, égalité, fraternité* remains a succinct, effective and resonant call for social justice. Indeed, it often appears that in the French context, even analysts critical of republicanism can never entirely separate themselves from the idea. Just as MIR has periodically utilised

the language of republicanism as a means of demanding a genuine universalising of its principles, Balibar's ideas on 'new citizenship' can also be seen from this perspective: while he critiques the link between nationality and citizenship, his emphasis on citizenship as a concept is itself somewhat 'republican'.

In this section of the chapter I have considered different authors' perspectives on the effect of France's republican political culture on anti-racist groups. So far, I have examined the viewpoints (seemingly, it must be noted, much more widespread in the critical literature than in than in mainstream political debate) that this culture could limit the effectiveness of anti-racist movements, and that racism is in fact inherent within the social structures of the republican state (the position of Balibar and, as we will see later on in the thesis, MIR). Before ending the section however, I would like to consider the positions of Pierre-André Taguieff, perhaps the most influential and prolific writer on anti-racism in France, who looks at the issue from an entirely different angle: his central argument on the theme is that close adherence to universalist republican principles is the only way to organise the movement, and that any other approach is both contrary to French political traditions and inevitably doomed to failure.

Throughout his work, Taguieff therefore makes clear his rejection of non-republican conceptions of anti-racism. In 1996's *La République menacée*, for instance, he dismisses the idea of 'une démocratie multi-ethnique et

pluriculturelle, fondée sur le principe de l'égalité entre "communautés" (1996: 72) – an idea similar to that which would later be proposed by MIR, whose concept for reforming 'national identity' is based around multiculturalism and equality between cultures as well as individuals – as '[une] utopie confuse, dangereuse' (ibid). Similarly, he has warned consistently of the dangers of allowing *communautarisme* and particularist identities into the anti-racist movement. As he puts it in a 1996 article entitled 'Les raisons d'un échec patent: Les sept péchés de l'antiracisme' (in Bitterlin (ed.) 1996):

"Les arguments particularistes sont également distribués chez les "antiracistes" et les "racistes", dont le principe commun est ainsi formulable: à chacun son groupe, son identité ou sa différence, qu'il lui faut défendre contre des ennemis haïssables. Ce qui paraît une véritable nouveauté, dans l'espace public français, c'est la naissance d'un antiracisme communautaire, ethnocentré, élevant un obstacle inattendu devant les efforts déployés par les partisans iréniques du modèle républicain d'intégration." (1996: 19)

In making such a critique, Taguieff arguably anticipates the mainstream 'republican' consensus on anti-*communautarisme* found over the period examined in this thesis, a consensus which at times led both SOS and Sarkozy, despite their substantial differences in orientation, to denounce the concept with equal vehemence. He also arguably anticipates the criticisms that would go on to be made of MIR, which even if it claims to base its action 'sur une identité politique plutôt qu'ethnique' (Robine 2011: 152), has been the subject of a certain amount of suspicion from pro-

republican commentators, due to its emphasis on multiculturalism, colonial memory and Islamophobia, and its high concentration of members with origins in France's former colonies in North Africa: as Robine acknowledges, 'La nature du "nous" de l'appel a été l'un des motifs principaux de critique. Il serait "communautariste" d'après ceux qui se sont le plus frontalement opposés à la démarche des Indigènes de la République.' (2011: 153)

As may be expected given this strong rejection of multiculturalism and particularist identities, Taguieff has consistently argued in favour of republicanism. In *La République menacée*, for example, he argues that the central political project in France should be the following:

"Redéfinir et surtout réaffirmer clairement la légitimité et la nécessité actuelle du cadre national à la républicaine, replacer l'idéal de laïcité au cœur du civisme, faire enfin de la citoyenneté française un motif de fierté." (1996: 56)

He goes as far as to argue that the central division in French society is between the Republic and its 'enemies':

"Ce qu'il faut défendre et illustrer, c'est l'idée républicaine. Le grand clivage se situe entre les républicains et les ennemis de la République (mondialisateurs, racistes, nationalistes xénophobes, communautaristes radicaux, intégristes, etc.)." (1996: 113)

Underlying Taguieff's beliefs is a long-standing faith in universalism. Certainly, he acknowledges that the concept can have its dangers. It can have, he writes in 1987's *La force du préjugé*, a 'tendance à

l'immodération: l'exigence d'universalité doit être l'étoile guidant une quête, non le drapeau flottant sur l'assurance d'être dans le vrai et le bien' (1987: 489). Nevertheless, Taguieff argues that the idea should form an essential ideological basis for the anti-racist movement:

“Universalisme ou barbarie: telle est la forme de l'alternative qu'il convient *malgré tout* d'affirmer face aux célébrations exclusivistes de la différence, face aux archéo-nationalistes qui proclament “La France aux Français” ou, de façon euphémisée, “Les Français d'abord”.” (1987: 489)

For Taguieff therefore, the task of French anti-racism is to promote republicanism and make it work in reality. He sets out elements of what he sees as the role of anti-racism in a second contribution to Bitterlin's 1996 volume, entitled 'De l'antiracisme médiatique au civisme républicain'. Here, he argues for a 'nouveau républicanisme' (1996: 295), based on the understanding that 'l'État-nation républicain n'est pas la communauté ethnique, exclusiviste et xénophobe' (1996: 296). A 'new republican' anti-racism, he argues, would recognise that 'le racisme est un phénomène multifactoriel, et doit se dire au pluriel' (1996: 303); move 'de l'éthico-légal au politique, du rappel des principes à l'affrontement des problèmes réels' (ibid); and define itself as 'une lutte contre toutes les formes de mises à l'écart, de traitements discriminatoires, de désocialisation' (1996: 302). It would focus on making republican integration work in practice as in theory, prioritising 'le fonctionnement de tous les instruments d'intégration traditionnels (l'école, les syndicats, l'entreprise etc.) ou

émergents (les associations), qui contribuent à supprimer certains facteurs de racisation' (1996: 305). And finally, it would:

“Lutter tout d’abord, et inséparablement, contre l’exclusion sociale et contre l’auto-exclusion, ou l’auto-ségrégation des catégories mises à l’écart. Ce qui implique de lutter contre les tendances aux regroupements sur des bases ethno-religieuses ou nationales-communautaires; lutter contre les mécanismes producteurs de ségrégation résidentielle.” (1996: 306)

As noted above, Taguieff’s model for the French anti-racist movement here shares numerous similarities with that proposed by SOS over the period examined in the thesis: both emphasise republican values; both argue that concrete action should be prioritised over simple declarations of principle; both see the fight against discrimination as a central role for the movement; and both see the need to fight both *communautarisme* and *ghettoïsation*. Despite these similarities however, it is clear from the article that Taguieff believes that no anti-racist movement has succeeded in implementing a plan which aligns with his beliefs. As is almost invariably the case in Taguieff’s work, no actual anti-racist movements are named in the discussion: the piece operates very much on the level of theoretical recommendations, seemingly giving little thought to what anti-racist movements actually do, and failing to consider the possibility that aspects of his recommendations may already exist within anti-racist organisations.

This failure to make a link between his detailed theoretical discussions and the way anti-racism works in reality is a serious issue in Taguieff's work. As Robert Gibb argues in a 2003 paper:

“[The main weakness of Taguieff's approach] is its lack of grounding in a sociological understanding of the heterogeneous nature and evolution of the anti-racist movement and its action in contemporary France. He presents a highly selective account of anti-racism, which ignores whole sections of the anti-racist movement and shows little appreciation of developments after (around) 1985.” (2003a: 87)

This apparent lack of interest in the real-life workings of anti-racism has arguably led Taguieff to fail to take into account instances where anti-racist organisations focus not on the differentialist multiculturalism he frequently denounces in theoretical terms, but on republicanism. Gibb writes:

“His claim that the media-oriented anti-racism of the late 1980s was characterised by multiculturalist ‘anti-nationalism’ [...] fails to take into account the role played by associations such as SOS Racisme during this period in the promotion of a type of ‘republican nationalism’ (Lorcerie 1994) based on the notion of a distinctive – republican – model of citizenship and integration.” (2003a: 88)

Although Taguieff has published little on anti-racism in recent years, focusing more on political populism and, particularly, anti-Semitism, on the evidence of an article published on www.diplomatie.gouv in 2000 the issues in his work on the theme remained unaddressed at this point.

Here, once again, he denounces what he sees as the anti-racist

movement's 'combat ultramédiatisé contre l'extrême droite' and its 'antinationalisme' and even 'antinationisme'. He reiterates his emphasis on Enlightenment-derived universalism, defining anti-racism as 'la poursuite du combat des Lumières contre les ténèbres de l'ignorance ou des idées préconçues'; and suggests that action against racism should be focused around 'lutte intellectuelle, éducation, action sur les causes sociales et économiques, sanction judiciaire et action politique'. Again, no specific groups are analysed, and again, there is no acknowledgement that his suggested focuses for the anti-racist movement – political action, legal work, action against the social and economic causes of racism, education, Enlightenment universalism as a theoretical inspiration – match those of SOS almost exactly. It must be acknowledged that Taguieff has analysed anti-racism in greater theoretical detail than almost any other analyst. It could perhaps be argued however that his work on the subject can be read only on the levels of abstraction and polemic, telling the reader little about the way anti-racist organisations function in reality.

In this section I have considered the differing viewpoints of a number of key authors on the relationship between French anti-racism and the country's central political ideology of universalist republicanism. I began by looking at the ideas of Étienne Balibar, perhaps the best-known analyst of French anti-racism to take a position critical of republicanism, noting that (like MIR) he sees racism as an inherent part of France's political structures, due to the implicit links between racial classification

and hierarchy on the one hand, and Enlightenment conceptions of what it means to be 'human' and 'civilised' on the other. I then noted the related viewpoint, seemingly widespread in the Anglophone literature in this field, that strict adherence to such 'republican values' serves to hold back the movement, preventing it from fully understanding and adjusting to a genuinely pluralistic society. Finally, by way of contrast, I looked at the key ideas of Pierre-André Taguieff, probably the best-known critic of French anti-racism, finding him strongly favourable to republicanism (and therefore almost certainly closer to mainstream opinion in France than the authors previously examined), but at the same time noting that his ideas have limited applicability to real life; in that his models are highly theoretical and inflexible, and that no actual anti-racist movement appears to live up to his expectations, even those (like SOS Racisme) whose worldview is arguably as republican-based as Taguieff's own.

Origins of contemporary debates on anti-racism and republicanism

Up to this point in the chapter I have considered the relationship between anti-racism and republicanism in the French context, examining the meaning of republicanism and its ideological connections with the movement, and the perspectives of a number of prominent authors on the value and utility of these connections. It is my contention that contemporary debates around French anti-racism are defined by this complex and contradictory relationship with republicanism, with my two

chosen organisations, SOS and MIR, representing opposite conceptions of this relationship. In this section meanwhile, I argue that the roots of this fundamental debate can be found in the early to mid 1980s, a period when new thinking around anti-racism was briefly visible in the mainstream political debate, and when much of the French public became aware for the first time of conceptions of anti-racism other than the *Droits de l'Homme*-influenced, classically republican model.

At this point therefore (that is, during the early to mid 1980s), the central debate on anti-racism was between a conception which emphasised a questioning of social and political structures, and which promoted a rethinking of society encompassing a radical redefinition of ideas such as citizenship and nationality; and a conception which sought consensus and compromise based on a reaffirmation of republican principles. The first of these positions was taken in the 1980s context by many activists within the *Beur* movement, and (although there are important differences) was developed in the context of 2005-2009 by MIR, while the second was taken in both contexts by SOS, an organisation which has throughout its history been part of the 'majoritarian' wing of French anti-racism.

This debate brings also to the surface issues of autonomy. Of course, there is the question of political autonomy; that is to say, whether movements should work inside the system with political parties, or challenge and question it from the outside. However, there is also the related question of autonomy of thought and ideology, encompassing

issues such as the balance to be struck between 'pure' but often unsuccessful radicalism and inevitably compromised consensus, and in relation specifically to my chosen area of study, whether it is the job of French anti-racism to fight for new conceptions of nationality, citizenship and society, or whether it should stick to defending republican values. In many ways, SOS and MIR can be seen as representative of different perspectives on these issues. SOS, whilst now officially independent from the Socialist Party, retains numerous links at the level of personnel, and furthermore frequently operates within the political system via lobbying of sympathetic politicians. This positioning arguably leads the organisation to prioritise consensus over confrontation (a stance, as we shall see, seen by its critics as lack of ambition and avoidance of difficult questions), and thus to emphasise the importance of widely-held republican values as a basis for anti-racism. MIR, on the other hand, operates outside the mainstream party system and frequently calls it into question, and therefore feels able to demand a radical rethinking of French society without concern as to whether it is realistic, or whether political partners are in agreement. Although the political context of the early-mid 1980s is a very different one to 2005-2009, many of the debates and issues raised in the former period – conceptions of citizenship and nationality, the relationship between anti-racism and mainstream politics, the balance between radicalism and consensus – are still far from being resolved.

In relation to structure, the section will focus on two central themes. The first of these considers some of the key ideas brought to the surface by *Beur* activists, whose anti-system positioning and questioning of consensus conceivably served as a model for MIR. The second, meanwhile, examines perspectives on the rise of SOS, a movement which represents a move away from the radicalism of the *Beur* movement, and towards a more consensual form of anti-racism based around the egalitarian principles of the French Republic. Doing this will allow me to consider some of the continuities within debates around French anti-racism, ahead of the third and final section of the chapter, which in contrast will consider some of the limitations of previous works on the subject.

The early 1980s' upsurge of interest in anti-racism can largely be attributed to the emergence in the public consciousness of the *Beurs*, second-generation 'immigrants' (in fact generally French citizens) with origins in France's former colonies in North Africa. While the sociologist, former *Beur* activist and current MIR member Saïd Bouamama (1994) traces the movement's roots as far back as the Algerian War and anti-colonial activism, it was widely perceived by the French public as a *rupture* with previous forms of collective action and previous generations of immigrants (1994: 23), a perception which arguably contributed to its initial success. Following the key formative event of 1983's 'Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme', this perceived new generation of political actors would go on to challenge mainstream thinking on national identity,

citizenship and republican ideology in the discourse behind *Convergence* 84, the second and arguably the last major manifestation of the *Beur* movement. Bouamama identifies three key ideas in this discourse.

The first of these is 'L'affirmation multiculturelle' (1994: 102): that is, the demand for France to be recognised as a multicultural society, implying a 'rupture avec le mythe d'une nation homogène' (ibid) and promotion of the idea that the existence of numerous communities and cultures should not be considered as a threat to the unity of the nation. As we will see in chapter 4, this is very similar to the conception of national identity promoted by MIR, a conception which also questions the Republic's tendencies towards assimilation and uniformity, proposing instead 'de reconnaître et d'encourager le développement des cultures portées par les populations issues de l'immigration coloniale, de favoriser enfin des échanges interculturels égalitaires' (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, 'Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l'"identité nationale"', 6.11.2009).

The second key idea is 'L'exigence d'égalité', which is to be considered a necessity for life in a multicultural society because, as Bouamama writes, 'le droit à la différence sans l'égalité sociale, économique et politique ne constitue qu'un processus visant à maintenir les injustices' (ibid). It could perhaps be argued that the use by the *Beurs* of vocabulary associated with universalist republicanism was part of the reason for the movement's initial mainstream acceptance, and for its inadvertent role in the rise of

SOS Racisme, which to the present day has placed great emphasis on the question of equality. It could also perhaps be argued that this discourse differentiates the *Beurs* from MIR, which in some ways sees itself as the heir to this radical and autonomous strain of French anti-racism. As Jérémy Robine notes, although there were numerous differences of opinion on strategy within the French anti-racist movement circa 1983-1984, 'Il n'y a pas alors de controverse quant aux finalités du mouvement: tous revendiquent l'égalité républicaine. Ce n'est que bien plus tard que seront contestés l'universalisme républicain et les fameuses "valeurs" de la République.' (2011: 109) While the *Beur* movement was ethnically-based, its demands of justice and equality could be supported by a sympathetic government without calling into question France's political ideals. MIR, on the other hand, is far more uncompromising – claiming that racism and inequality, inherited from colonialism, are intrinsic to the very structures of French society – and gives little idea of realistic reforms which could contribute to achieving its aims. This overt (post-) colonial dynamic within contemporary social movements led by activists of 'immigrant origin' is a key difference from the 1980s: as Abdellali Hajjat (in Stora and Temime (eds.), 2007) points out, while 'l'héritage colonial est devenu un enjeu politique majeur dans la France contemporaine' (2007: 195), 'la reconnaissance des crimes coloniaux est pratiquement absente des revendications de la Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme de 1983.' (2007: 196).

The third key idea, finally, is referred to by Bouamama as ‘Vers une nouvelle citoyenneté’: this states that if equality is a requirement in contemporary society, everything which prevents equality should be challenged. Therefore, it is argued, the link between nationality and access to rights – in particular citizenship – must be broken (Bouamama 1994: 103). In making this argument the movement is pointing out a contradiction within French political culture which has been the subject of debate for well over two centuries, but which has yet to be resolved: the contradiction between the universalistic rights of man, on the one hand, and the particularistic rights of the citizen, on the other³.

The discussion around anti-racism in the early-mid 1980s also brought to the surface questions of autonomy, of action but also of thought. During this period, Robine writes, there was a ‘conflit entre ceux qui estiment qu’un mouvement doit, pour réussir, réunir le plus largement possible [...] et ceux qui prônent au contraire un mouvement autonome des personnes issues de l’immigration’ (2011: 108). Alongside the closely related issue of the movement’s links with republicanism, this notion of autonomy is at the heart of debates around the second key issue in this section of the chapter, the rise of SOS Racisme. The difficult questions faced by French social movements can be illustrated by the dilemmas faced by the *Beurs*. As Fysh and Wolfreys write, ‘if mainstream French associations or parties [...] were allowed to join the march and the support committees, was there not a danger that they would attempt to take over, imposing

³ A contradiction also discussed by Balibar: see for example the chapter ‘“Droits de l’homme” et “droits du citoyen”: La dialectique moderne de l’égalité et de la liberté’, in *Les frontières de la démocratie* (1992)

their own slogans, and then take credit for whatever the march managed to achieve?’ (2003: 170) At the same time however, ‘those who warned against the manipulative and self-interested tendencies of the French left were accused of proposing a purely ‘ethnic’ strategy, a *repli communautaire*, which would have little resonance for the thousands of Beurs whose cultural references were already mostly French and succeed only in condemning the ‘community’ to continued marginality and discrimination’ (ibid). For movements operating outside the mainstream, or movements aiming to bring radical ideas into the mainstream, these dilemmas have remained identical ever since. Indeed, the second dilemma identified by Fysh and Wolfreys, that relating to the difficulty of proposing an ethnically-based strategy, has become even more acute since this period, with an almost hysterical discourse on the dangers of *communautarisme* arguably reaching its peak during the period examined in the thesis. Due to the relatively narrow range of expressible positions within the French political mainstream, it is perhaps the case that any anti-racist organisation hoping to exercise any influence has to work on a basis of consensus, compromise and (supposed) shared values: implying, of course, a republican-based campaigning discourse. SOS Racisme, for the most part, was and is such an organisation. As Robine puts it:

“La vision politique qui anime SOS Racisme est très républicaine [...] Dès le début, ses dirigeants font l’analyse que la réussite de la première marche [pour l’égalité et contre le racisme] et donc le futur succès de leur association tiennent précisément au fait qu’il s’agit d’une

mobilisation de toute une génération, consensuelle et “morale”.” (2011: 113)

Bouamama makes the case that the rise of SOS was seen by many *Beur* activists and *jeunes des cités* as a usurping. With its ‘consecration’ (1994: 119) as the public face of anti-racism, young people and the *Beurs*, the original marchers felt the history and memory of their movement was being taken away from them. Furthermore, he claims, there was a conscious decision on the part of the new movement not to focus explicitly on anti-Arab racism, as it was feared that such actions, in a context of social, economic and identity crisis, could increase support for the Front National. Thus the anti-racist movement is transformed from one denouncing ‘inégalités concrètes’ (1994: 121) and making specific demands into one making a moral, abstract denunciation of racism. He argues that the government was uneasy about action on the part of immigrant-origin youth making specific demands, as it may lead to an obligation to make policy commitments that would be difficult to reverse. There was, however, a desire to mobilise young people to its advantage; accordingly, a ‘consensual’ anti-racist movement could be used to draw a dividing line between Left and Right. During the mid-1980s the FN had succeeded in imposing the issue of ‘national identity’ in the national debate, and it had seemingly touched a chord with voters. The ‘identity’ discourse of the new movement therefore had to be acceptable to these voters: it must not be seen to endorse the multi-cultural nature of French society; more precisely, it must not be seen to recognise the existence of

an Arab identity in France (1994: 123). In addition, Bouamama writes, the movement had to be compatible with an increasingly restrictive immigration policy (1994: 124) and offer a 'third way' between the discourse of multiculturalism and that of 'national identity', which came in the promotion of 'métissage': even if the population was mixed, 'l'identité française reste unique et monolithique' (1994: 123).

Bouamama's analysis makes a number of perceptive and accurate points. For example, he is right that SOS was able to come to prominence largely because of the specific political context of the early-mid 1980s, and right that it drew on the energy and momentum created in the anti-racist movement by the *Beurs*. He is also correct in his analysis of SOS's position on identity and multiculturalism: as we will see in chapter 4, 'métissage' is still at the centre of the organisation's discourse over the period examined in the thesis, allowing it to reject both multiculturalism, seen as shading too easily into *communautarisme*, and Sarkozy's inflexible and backwards-looking vision of national identity. As touched upon earlier however, it must be noted that Bouamama was active in the *Beur* movement, and later on in MIR, so is unlikely to be neutral in his writing on SOS: his account of the movement's origins at times comes across more like a conspiracy theory than a balanced analysis. What is more, critics of SOS such as Bouamama often seem to start from the debatable assumption that the creation of a consensual, republican-based anti-racist movement is inherently a bad thing, forgetting that republican principles are both widely supported and – according to most

interpretations at least – highly compatible with the egalitarian aims of anti-racism. Indeed, over the years examined in the current work SOS's emphasis on equality and social opportunity has led to it making far more 'concrete' proposals (on issues such as housing, employment and education) than a more radical, anti-system movement like MIR, which deals mainly in theory and abstraction: a state of play entirely the opposite to that described by Bouamama.

Despite the potential issues with Bouamama's argument, a similar critique is made by a number of authors. Alana Lentin, for example, writes of SOS's 'success in overturning the serious political challenge posed by the *Mouvement Beur* in favour of a republican project of anti-racism based on the teachings of collective memory inherited from the longer-established organisations [...] and the rejection of 'difference' in favour of a vision of a unified youth, unhindered by particularist attachments' (2004: 125). In other words, it could be argued that SOS took away ownership of the anti-racist struggle from both militants at street level and the wider group of those arguing for the development of an 'openly multicultural vision' (ibid) of a future French society, thus re-grounding the anti-racist movement more strongly within a republican framework. Abdallah (2000), like Bouamama a former *Beur* activist, also makes a similar point, underlining what he sees as the need for anti-racism to remain autonomous from the parliamentary Left. He argues that the new social dynamic embodied by the *Beur* movement, and

Convergence 84's project for a new conception of citizenship, were eclipsed by the new movement and its consensual, 'moral' approach:

“Quand un pouvoir politique fait de la morale et non plus de la politique, c'est suspect: pas de prêchi-prêcha, il faut transformer les conditions économiques et sociales.” (2000: 69)

For Abdallah, the problems with SOS's approach are summed up in its 'touche pas à mon pote' slogan: it involves, he argues, a (white) French anti-racist addressing a (white) French racist, in order to protect a 'pote' of immigrant origin. Thus, as SOS's conception of anti-racism becomes dominant, immigrant origin youth cease to be seen as political actors in their own right, instead becoming passive and anonymous; a legacy against which MIR, with its aim to create '[une] puissance politique autonome des indigènes' ('Principes politiques généraux du Parti des Indigènes de la République', 2010), arguably defines itself.

The focus on autonomy, it could be argued, is embodied in critical reactions to SOS from analysts currently or formerly within the far-left. Bouamama, Abdallah, Lentin and Fysh and Wolfreys (the first two of whom were themselves involved in the movements they analyse) to a greater or lesser extent all appear to see SOS as representing 'incorporation' and all its attendant dangers. Conversely, all seemed hopeful that the *Beur* movement could help to redefine French political culture, though in the event all were disappointed (as was Balibar, who does not discuss the rise of SOS in his writing).

Although the desire for an autonomous anti-racist movement rethinking national identity and challenging republican norms is, as we have seen, quite widespread within the literature on the subject, its salience within the wider political debate should perhaps not be overstated. It is illustrative in this regard to note SOS Racisme's own self-perception at this time. The organisation's founding President Harlem Désir, in his 1987 book *SOS Désirs*, locates anti-racism squarely within the traditional values of French politics. It is not, he argues, a marginal concern, but one based on 'une certitude absolue': that 'la France du racisme n'est pas la France' (1987: 20). His stance is unequivocally integrationist: France 'invented' integration; the process has worked in the past, and, he argues, can work again in the future if some of the obstacles and false ideologies preventing it from doing so can be continually challenged. He attempts, furthermore, to claim for anti-racism a different narrative of the 'true France' from that propounded by the Right and parts of the media:

"La France de SOS, ce n'est pas celle du sang ou de la race, ce n'est pas celle des frontières et de l'exclusion. Ce n'est pas la France de Barrès et de Maurras. La France de SOS, c'est celle de 1789, celle du libre contrat et des droits respectés." (ibid)

For Désir, therefore, a French citizen who truly lives up to such values is 'celui qui accepte la culture des droits de l'homme: c'est le point décisif, qui met hors jeu toutes les conceptions raciales et culturalistes, qui fait passer la liberté et ses principes avant l'atavisme du sol et des ancêtres' (1987: 21). Whilst many of the authors studied so far in this section have been sceptical about this kind of discourse, one which eschews radical

change in favour of a reassertion of universalism and the Rights of Man, it is undeniable that the argument is framed in language which would have resonance with a substantial constituency across French society: one which simultaneously rejects racism and a narrowly defined national identity, favours traditional republican values, and does not favour radical questioning of such values. Perhaps surprisingly, given the moderate nature of Désir's language and its appeal to republican principles, Taguieff (1987, 1996) is noticeably hostile to SOS in his writing on this period, criticising what he sees as its ideologically empty 'spectacle antiracism' and its 'manipulation' by the PS. It is interesting to note that SOS, despite being by far the most popular and high-profile anti-racist movement during this period (or perhaps, because of this), thus ends up being attacked in the literature from both radical left and traditionalist republican perspectives.

In this section of this chapter I have considered a number of perspectives on the anti-racist movement in France in the early-mid 1980s, noting that although the political context was significantly different to that examined in this thesis, many of the underlying questions facing the movement remain the same. Studying the short-lived prominence of the *Beur* movement and the rise of SOS Racisme brings to the surface a number of debates around the question of the role of anti-racism, such as autonomy, the balance between radicalism and consensus, and whether the movement should demand new thinking in relation to issues such as nationality and citizenship, or stick to defending universalist republicanism.

The *Beur* movement, which was arguably responsible (initially at least) for the coming to prominence of the anti-racist movement during this period, could in general be placed at the autonomous and free-thinking end of the spectrum. In this way it could be said to be a model for a movement like MIR, although there are differences between the two worldviews; the demands of the *Beurs* being less focused on colonial memory, and more focused on social justice and the genuine universalising (ie. to non-citizens as well as citizens) of rights. SOS Racisme, meanwhile, has consistently represented a more mainstream, consensual conception of anti-racism, working within the political system and emphasising the defence of republican values. A number of former *Beur* activists like Bouamama and Abdallah, and academics sympathetic to the movement like Lentin, favour autonomy and present the rise of SOS as a 'usurping'. Whilst there is an element of truth here, this argument serves to downplay the genuine attachment of much of the French population to republican values, and fails to take into account that such values have the potential to be a sound basis for the anti-racist project. Both of these basic truths were skilfully taken up by Désir in the mid-1980s, and have formed the basis of SOS's worldview ever since.

Limitations of existing works

Although there are a number of important continuities between the central debates in French anti-racism in the early-mid 1980s and those of my

chosen period in the early 21st century, at the same time there are a number of potential limitations in previous key works on the subject. These limitations are in part conceptual: as I note below, few existing works provide a balanced discussion of the implications of the relationship between French anti-racism and republicanism, and of the complexities of this relationship. To a large extent however, such limitations relate to the timeframe on which these works are focused: the central works examined in this chapter were almost all published prior to my chosen period, and all focus at least in part on a very different political context; that of the early to mid 1980s, when anti-racism was at its height of visibility and influence under the Presidency of François Mitterrand. In this final section, therefore, I aim to identify some of these issues, and thus consequently to make a case for the distinctiveness of the perspective offered by the current work.

Let us begin, then, by noting two potential issues relating to existing works on the theme of anti-racism in France. Firstly, it is noticeable that many of the best-known analysts of the field had moved on to study different areas by the time examined in the thesis. To take two prominent examples, much of Taguieff's later work focused on issues such as anti-Semitism (*La nouvelle judéophobie*, 2002) and political populism (*L'illusion populiste*, 2007), rather than the critical analysis of anti-racism with which he made his name. Similarly, it is undeniable that Balibar is a highly influential figure in the autonomous, anti-system wing of French anti-racism – encompassing movements such as MIR – due to his

questioning of Enlightenment-influenced republicanism and his presentation of racism as institutionalised within the political system. However, the majority of his work, outside that written in the context of the early-mid 1980s when he saw in the *Beur* movement the potential for new conceptions of citizenship, nationality and identity, focuses not on anti-racism *per se*, but on an analysis of state institutions, his central argument being that such institutions exist primarily to perpetuate the capitalist system. There is a relative lack, therefore, of works focusing on anti-racism during my chosen timeframe – certainly in comparison to the number which focus on the subject in the mid-1980s under Mitterrand, a very different political context, as we will see shortly.

Secondly, it became clear during the writing of this chapter that surprisingly few analysts provided a balanced discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of republicanism as a basis for anti-racist discourse and strategy: most appear to discuss it solely as a positive or a negative influence. It is to be hoped that the comparative structure of the thesis, looking at the same questions from the perspectives of two contrasting movements, one broadly republican and one broadly anti-republican, can provide some insight into both sides of the debate. This is a complex and quite nuanced question: whilst SOS and MIR are theoretically favourable and critical towards the Republic respectively, MIR occasionally uses republican rhetoric and is unlikely to be fundamentally opposed to ideals of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*, even if (like Balibar) it is critical of the way in which Enlightenment-influenced universalism has at times been used

to justify racism and exclusion. Conversely, SOS, although consistently favourable towards republicanism, has over my chosen period been repeatedly critical of politicians who have misused the concept for discriminatory ends, and has frequently warned of the dangers of seeing 'republican values' as something to be simply recited unthinkingly: for SOS, the question is how to make the Republic live up to its proclaimed principles in reality, again a position which MIR is unlikely to disagree with entirely, even if the two organisations have markedly different opinions on whether this can genuinely happen.

The central point to be taken into account when considering potential issues concerning the relevance of existing works is, however, that relating to the difference between the political context previous works were written in (or about) and the political context behind the present work. All of the authors considered in this chapter – Balibar, Taguieff, Lentin, Fysh and Wolfreys, Silverman, Bouamama, Abdallah and Désir, to take the most notable examples – focus either partially or wholly on French anti-racism in the context of the early-mid 1980s under the presidency of François Mitterrand. As a political climate for anti-racism, however, it was more the exception than the rule. Whilst Mitterrand's economic radicalism was short lived post-1981, a liberal discourse on human rights and identity politics was a hallmark of the administration's early years: to take a few examples, the death penalty was abolished; homosexuality officially decriminalised; and a new Ministry of Women's Rights created. This social liberalism was also visible in regard

specifically to immigration: immigrants were permitted to join trade unions and political parties, and those in the country illegally were offered the chance to declare themselves and become registered residents. In this climate of optimism following the Socialist victory, 'A new visibility and confidence of immigrants were evident' (Kedward, 2005: 488), with 'Hundreds, and soon thousands, of local associations [being] launched to pursue the welfare, leisure and cultural interests of people of immigrant origin' (ibid). It was in this specific climate that the *Marche des Beurs* took place, and significantly, was welcomed by Mitterrand himself on its arrival in Paris. It was in this climate that there was a significant public enthusiasm for 'an expansive and inclusive cultural identity for modern France (Kedward 2005: 503), rejecting defensive nationalism and a uniform, conservative conception of society. And it was in the wake of this climate that SOS Racisme gained unprecedented visibility and media profile for the anti-racist movement, benefiting from equally unprecedented official support from the government, which had everything to gain from backing a mass youth movement like SOS. This liberal political context lasted only until approximately the middle of the 1980s – overlapping with the rise of SOS, which focused to a substantial extent on fighting the Front National – when an FN-inspired discourse on national identity, crime, immigration and insecurity began to impose itself on the public debate. During this period however, the French political climate was marked for the anti-racist movement by openness to new thinking, the presence of allies in political power, a certain tolerance of protest, and a willingness to make policy which coincided with at least

some of the movement's interests. Of course, the extent to which this constitutes a favourable context depends on the perspective the question is examined from: should social movements work within or against the mainstream political system? Nevertheless, it is arguable that such conditions have not existed to the same extent either before or since.

The contrasts between the early-mid 1980s and 2005-2009 as contexts for French anti-racism are striking. As noted at the start of this chapter, very few works have examined anti-racism in the context of the 'Sarkozy years'. It is my argument, however, that these years form a unique and highly challenging period for the movement. Let us consider a few of the reasons why.

Firstly, although national identity as a theme in French politics is far from being unique to my chosen period, the extent to which it dominated political discussion over these years was without precedent. Nicolas Sarkozy, to take one example, fought his 2007 presidential election campaign almost exclusively on the terrain of national identity. He would go on, furthermore, to make it the basis of the controversial 'Ministry of Immigration and National Identity', and to attempt to resurrect the theme ahead of the 2010 regional elections with the 'identity debate' of late 2009. Whilst there is nothing inherently wrong with debating issues of national identity, it must be noted that Sarkozy's approach was less about debate than it was about imposing a particular conception of the idea. Sarkozy's 'national identity', as we will see shortly in chapter 2, aimed to look back

with unambiguous pride at a glorious French past, a story from which immigrants and their descendants are entirely shut out – immigrants being presented in this discourse almost entirely in terms of threat, as is arguably manifested in the name of the new Ministry placing ‘immigration’ and ‘national identity’ in opposition – and a story which deliberately avoids any awkward questions about France’s behaviour during the colonial period (Noiriel 2007a, Meyran 2009, Maillot 2008).

Secondly, the predominance of this discourse on national identity was concomitant with a consensus on the language of republicanism on the part of political actors across the ideological spectrum. Because of this, almost every argument made in the political mainstream over this period was made with reference to ‘republican values’, stretching the idea almost to breaking point. Most notably in terms of my argument, it was frequently used by Sarkozy and his allies not in a positive sense, emphasising universal equality and brotherhood regardless of race or religion, but in a negative sense: that is, it was used as a rhetorical tool for attacking those held to be threatening these ideals, implicitly (it is never explicitly spelled out) France’s Muslim population (Noiriel 2007a, De Cock et al. 2008, Martigny 2009).

Thirdly and finally, contained within Sarkozy’s national identity discourse during this political context were rhetorical features designed to shut down debate and shut out his critics. Anyone aiming to raise the awkward questions on colonialism this discourse was attempting to forget,

or who deviated from the idea of a single, glorious, unifying history, would be accused of 'repentance', whilst anyone of immigrant origin who was unwilling or (far more likely, due to lack of jobs or opportunities for social advancement) unable to 'integrate' would be accused of *communautarisme*: both terms, in the 'us versus them' framework of Sarkozy's discourse, implying 'enemy of France' or 'enemy of the Republic' (CVUH 2007, Boubeker 2010, Tissot and Tévanian 2010).

In many ways, therefore, we have the opposite of the context in the early-mid 1980s: a political élite closed to new thinking; no allies of the anti-racist movement in government; little tolerance of protest or opposition; and little interest in making policy which coincided with the interests of the movement. Indeed, despite their substantial differences in orientation, both SOS and MIR found the period examined in this thesis to be a highly challenging one: SOS finding its chosen republican ideology being used as rhetorical cover for the stigmatisation of a substantially-sized sector of the French population, and MIR's emphasis on colonial memory and multiculturalism running up against the twin ideological roadblocks of anti-repentance and anti-*communautarisme*. In chapter 2 therefore, I would like to examine in detail the political context of the period under discussion in the thesis, via a closer look at the discourse which defines the period: that of Nicolas Sarkozy and his allies on national identity.

Chapter 2

Sarkozy and national identity 2005-2009

Having considered in chapter 1 the conceptual and analytical framework of the thesis, in this chapter I move on to examine the political and ideological context within which anti-racist movements had to operate over my chosen period. As was noted in the previous chapter, much existing work on French anti-racism focuses on the early to mid 1980s, a period when the Left was in government and was apparently receptive to the anti-racist cause. It is my argument however that 2005-2009 is itself a distinctive period for the study of anti-racism in France, one which differs substantially from the earlier context, and one which has been the subject of significantly less analysis. My argument for the distinctiveness of this period is based on three factors: the pervasiveness of an exclusionary and backwards-looking conception of national identity; the prevalence of terms such as 'repentance' and *communautarisme* (implying a rejection, as we will see, of post-colonialism, critical history, immigration, Islam, and the possibility of multiculturalism) in political debate; and the existence of an apparently universal consensus on republicanism, a consensus which, for differing reasons, caused difficulties for both movements like MIR which question the Republic, and movements like SOS which support its proclaimed principles.

The first and most central reason for positing 2005-2009 as a distinctive period for the study of French anti-racism, then, relates to national identity, and the predominance of this theme in political discussion over these years. I would argue that this period represented the height of the power and visibility of this discourse in the early 21st century, encompassing a number of key events which were used by Sarkozy and his allies to place the issues of national identity, immigration and security at the forefront of public debate. These events included the widespread urban riots of 2005, during which 'Nicolas Sarkozy a délibérément choisi de jouer le jeu de la provocation des jeunes des quartiers populaires et d'y faire monter la tension' (Demiaty, in Mucchielli and Le Goaziou (eds) (2007: 59); the Presidential election campaign of 2007, in which Sarkozy emphasised national identity to an unprecedented extent and played upon fears of immigration and Islam; the creation on 2007 of a new 'Ministry of Immigration and National Identity', which gave a legal basis to the supposition that immigration was not part of national identity but in opposition to it; and the 'identity debate' of late 2009, which aimed (unsuccessfully) to recapture the winning formula of 2007 ahead of the 2010 regional elections.

Predominant in political debate over these years, however, was not simply national identity, but a very specific conception of national identity. It was defined in a way which was consistently conservative, unchanging and backwards-looking, giving post-colonial immigrants and their descendants no part in the 'national story' (other than as something to be

feared and distrusted), and rejecting any critical examination of France's colonial past. Despite their significantly different ideological orientations, and their widely diverging visions of an ideal society (see chapter 4), both SOS and MIR are strongly critical of Sarkozy's conception of national identity. SOS sees it as leading to '[une] muséification mortière pour la vitalité d'une société' (SOS Racisme, 'Identité nationale: "un débat à rebours"', 2009), while MIR criticises what it sees as 'une identité nationale fermée, figée et chauvine' (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, 'Communiqué de presse du MIR: "Ministère de l'Immigration et de l'Identité nationale" ou "Ministère des Affaires Indigènes"?', 9.3.2007).

Two further reasons for the distinctiveness of 2005-2009 as a context for the study of French anti-racism can also be noted, each of which has particular repercussions for one of the movements examined in this thesis. The first of these relates to the currency of terms such as 'repentance' and *communautarisme* in political discourse. 'Repentance' is a term used frequently by Sarkozy over these years, always in a pejorative sense. It signifies rejection of critical examination of France's past in favour of a patriotic and simplistic national narrative, perhaps in reaction to the brief ascendance of left-wing ideas circa 1997-2002 under Lionel Jospin, and to the willingness of Sarkozy's predecessor Jacques Chirac to make official apologies for practices and events such as slavery, the mass round-up of Jews at the *Vélodrome d'Hiver* in 1942, and (via the French ambassador to Algeria) the Sétif massacre of 1945. *Communautarisme*,

meanwhile, refers literally to the idea of communities feeling their primary loyalty to be to a religious or ethnic community rather than to the 'universalist' Republic, but came over this period to signify an implicitly Muslim 'enemy within' (Dhume 2010), the discourse drawing upon years of alarmist media reporting of issues such as the veil, halal meat or forced marriages. The prevalence of these terms meant that radical movements like MIR, which emphasise colonial memory (seen as 'repentance') and a multicultural model of society (seen as *communautarisme*) were unlikely to get a fair hearing for their arguments within mainstream political debate.

Finally, over the period examined in the thesis there existed a 'republican consensus', with the language of republicanism being used by political actors from across the ideological spectrum. As Sarah Waters notes:

"In France today, republican identity has found a broad consensus across the Left and Right, overcoming previous ideological divisions and political differences. Indeed, the appeal of the republican model seemed to stem from its porous and malleable nature and its capacity to be harnessed towards entirely different political ends." (2012: 42)

Whilst there is a consensus on republican language therefore, and a consensus that republicanism is the central component of French identity, there is no consensus on the exact meaning of republicanism. The concept can therefore be used by Sarkozy in an arguably discriminatory way, as a rhetorical contrast to Islam, immigration and *communautarisme*, just as much as it can be used by movements like SOS as an ideological basis for action against discrimination and in favour of equality of

opportunity. Because of this consensus, SOS has frequently found it difficult to articulate a distinctive campaigning discourse over this period. At the same time, by articulating a highly critical stance towards republicanism MIR effectively shuts itself out from participation in the mainstream political debate. The difficulties faced by SOS and (for completely different reasons) MIR serve therefore to illustrate the impact on anti-racism of Sarkozy's dominant positions.

In terms of structure, in this chapter I would like to examine the way in which these defining issues for the anti-racist movement over the timeframe of the thesis – a conservative and exclusionary conception of national identity, 'repentance', *communautarisme* and the Republic – are used by Sarkozy. I will begin by looking at the way in which he uses history to shape his conception of national identity: a conception (as noted above) which aims to create a singular, patriotic *roman national* whilst ignoring immigration and colonial memory, contrary to the more fluid and flexible vision favoured by much of the anti-racist movement. I will then move on to consider the related issues of 'repentance' and colonial memory, and the way in which they are used by Sarkozy to scapegoat as 'anti-French' critics of his discourse on history; rhetoric which undoubtedly affects a movement like MIR, even if it is not targeted by name. I will subsequently look at Sarkozy's usage of the idea of republicanism, seen not as an egalitarian political project but as a rhetorical tool and signifier of 'national identity', and used chiefly as a means of attacking practices held to threaten it, such as immigration and

communautarisme. As again was noted above, this usage of the Republic causes serious difficulties to SOS, which uses republicanism as an ideological basis for fighting discrimination and inequality. Finally, I will end the chapter by considering the arguments of a number of key analysts (Noiriel 2007a, Martigny 2009, Maillot 2008, Tissot and Tévanian 2010, Badiou 2007) on the significance and novelty of Sarkozy's discourse, and possible reasons for its success.

Although national identity has been the subject of a great deal of debate over the years examined in the thesis, there is little consensus on the exact meaning of the term. As Sarah Waters notes:

“On the one hand, there are those who see French identity as an essence, something primordial, hereditary and natural that is transmitted unchanged from one generation to the next. [...] On the other hand, there are those who see French identity as a mere construct, something that is constantly reinvented in response to changing contingencies and needs.” (2012:15)

There is a long-running debate between these essentialist and constructivist ideas of the nation and national identity in French society. Indeed, the differing positions of Sarkozy and my chosen movements on this question can arguably be seen as an incarnation of this debate. Whereas Sarkozy takes the essentialist view, presenting French identity as something ancient, mystical and intangible which newcomers cannot truly be part of, anti-racist movements in France have traditionally attempted to question any essentialisation of national identity, arguing

instead for an identity which is open, flexible and open to evolution. As former SOS President Dominique Sopo puts it in his reaction to the 'identity debate' of 2009, for instance:

“Ce que nous jugeons comme une inestimable valeur dans les sociétés au sein desquelles nous évoluons, c'est tout au contraire leur complexité, leurs contradictions, leur perpétuel changement où chaque jour s'invente une part de la société à venir.” (SOS Racisme, 'Identité nationale: “un débat à rebours”', 2009)

Certain analysts, furthermore, have argued that the idea of national identity is too inexact to be of practical use in understanding how societies work. As Dominique Schnapper writes, for example, 'Au terme “d'identité nationale”, je préférerais celui “d'identification à la nation”, since 'La notion d'identité comporte deux connotations, la similitude et l'unité, elle évoque l'éternité et l'immobilisme. Or cela est faux: les collectivités historiques, les identifications à la nation changent avec le temps.' (*Regards sur l'actualité: l'identité nationale en débat* (2010: 18)). Regardless of terminology however, what is at issue in this chapter is the way in which Sarkozy used the concept of national identity over the years 2005-2009, as well as its impact on my chosen anti-racist movements. Why did Sarkozy place such emphasis on 'national identity'? There are several possible reasons. Firstly, the discourse played upon the fear and insecurity felt by substantial parts of the French population when faced on the one hand by growing unemployment and *précarité*, and on the other hand by years of alarmist media coverage of radical Islam, terrorism and

communautarisme. Secondly, it functions as a ‘smokescreen’, covering up the often economically-related causes of the anxiety mentioned above and the inability or unwillingness of the government to do anything about them, and diverting attention instead towards its identity-related symptoms. And thirdly, it consistently creates a binary of ‘us’ against ‘them’; the ‘them’ in this discourse taking in numerous different groups: immigrants, Islamists and *communautaristes*, certainly, but also left-wing intellectuals and historians, and even the political élite as a whole, in spite of the fact that Sarkozy is thoroughly embedded within the political élite. This rhetorical technique, common to populist political organisations in Europe and elsewhere, and used by Sarkozy as a means of presenting himself as a man of the people and candidate of *rupture*, recurs frequently throughout all the key themes of Sarkozy’s discourse identified in this chapter. I will begin by looking at Sarkozy’s use of history, what this says about his conception of national identity, and how this serves to frame anti-racist discourse and action.

Sarkozy and history

As we have now seen, the period examined in this thesis is arguably defined by a conservative and ‘essentialist’ discourse on national identity on the part of Sarkozy and his allies and supporters. This discourse can be contrasted with the more constructivist approach to the question taken by the majority of the French anti-racist movement. Sarkozy’s discourse

also serves to present immigration as a threat to identity in a way considered unacceptable to both SOS and MIR, and implicitly stigmatises or marginalises those of certain foreign origins, even when they are French citizens, again offending the principles of both SOS and MIR, despite their widely differing ideologies: in the former case, the principle of republican 'colour-blindness' and indifference to origins, and in the latter, the principle that stereotypes, discrimination and racial hierarchies which work against populations of post-colonial immigrant origin must end if France is to adapt to the reality of a multicultural society. As can be seen by an examination of Sarkozy's speeches over 2005-2009 (particularly those made in the 2007 Presidential election campaign and during the 'identity debate' of late 2009), this exclusive and exclusionary conception of national identity is put together with extensive reference to history.

A representative quotation from Sarkozy on the subject of history is the following, taken from a 2007 campaign speech in Caen devoted almost entirely to the issue of national identity:

"La France ce n'est pas une page blanche. C'est un pays qui a une longue histoire. C'est un pays qui s'est forgé au cours des siècles une identité, une personnalité qu'il faut respecter, qu'on ne peut pas effacer, qu'on ne peut pas ignorer, qui est une part de l'identité de chacun, qui est faite de mille apports, de commémorations, de leçons d'instituteurs, de réminiscences qui se transmettent de génération en génération, de souvenirs d'enfance, de vieilles histoires de grands-pères

qui ont fait la guerre et qui racontent à leur tour à leurs petits-enfants ce que leurs grands-pères leur ont raconté jadis.” (Caen, 2007)

What is immediately obvious in this quotation are the references to '*une longue histoire*'; '*une identité*'; '*une personnalité*'. Sarkozy's conception of history is of a unitary phenomenon and force for social cohesion. He rejects, therefore, the idea of history as a multiplicity of competing interpretations of the past, operating on an opposite set of assumptions from a movement like MIR which emphasises the importance of memory in the formation of the identities of post-colonial populations, but equally operating in a manner consistent with his rejection of 'repentance'. The reference to the need to 'respect' France's history and identity implies the need to assimilate, but looking at his thoughts on the factors said to form '*l'identité de chacun*' it is difficult to see how any newcomer could realistically do this. The allusions to '*leçons d'instituteurs*', '*réminiscences qui se transmettent de génération en génération*' and '*vieilles histoires de grands-pères*' paint 'Frenchness' as something mystical and mysterious passed down over the centuries, something more than just a nationality. It is arguable that Sarkozy's discourse on history is largely based on myth, a link discussed by Régis Meyran in *Le mythe de l'identité nationale* (2009). As Meyran writes in his discussion of national myth, '*ces récits mythiques définissent en négatif ceux qui ne sont pas des Français: les immigrés, mais aussi les nationaux de fraîche date, ou bien ceux dont la race ou les traditions ne sont pas "compatibles"*' (2009: 11). 'History' therefore becomes a single, officially sanctioned set of myths, which has

the effect of raising the bar of 'true Frenchness' for any new incoming group. It could perhaps be argued that this conception of history forms one of the unspoken ideological bases for Sarkozy's 2006 comments that 's'il y en a que cela gêne d'être en France, qu'ils ne se gênent pas pour quitter un pays qu'ils n'aiment pas' (commonly remembered as 'aimez-la ou quittez-la' - see *Le Monde* 24.5.2006). It is seemingly necessary to assimilate not only to the 'values' of the present day, but to a certain idea of the past. As we shall see in the remainder of this chapter, much of Sarkozy's discourse aims to establish a 'them' and an 'us', an idea at odds with the fundamental demand of the French anti-racist movement for equality and fraternity. The creation and reflection of national myth is a subtle but unmistakable way of achieving this aim.

In addition to presenting French history in an exclusionary and 'essentialist' way – contrary to both SOS's celebration of the universalist ideology of the Enlightenment and the Revolution, and the emphasis placed by MIR on the legacies of colonialism – Sarkozy's historical discourse rejects nuance and analysis in a way regarded as intellectually reductive by critical historians. This approach to history can be seen, to take one example, in his usage of the memories of prominent historical figures. As he states in the Caen speech cited earlier:

“Oui je me reconnais dans Jaurès et dans Blum, dans Jules Ferry, dans Clemenceau, comme je me reconnais dans Péguy, dans Lyautey et dans le Général De Gaulle, Chaban, dans Jean Monnet, dans Georges Pompidou.” (Caen, 2007)

Again, what can be seen is Sarkozy's idea of a single, consensual national history, made up of great events and heroic individuals, wherever they may have stood on the political spectrum. His constant references to these 'Great Men', devoid of any historical context, would seem to have the aim of intentionally blurring historical meaning and disarming all possible criticisms from his adversaries. This has two major effects. The first is to reinforce the 'national myth' discussed above, and the second is to present himself as 'père de la nation': the heir to these great historical figures and the only patriotic choice to lead the nation. The names he lists were undoubtedly carefully chosen. To take just a few examples, they illustrate his attempt to take 'ownership' of the Left's iconic figures (Blum, Jaurès); his appeal to a classical model of the Republic and its education system (Ferry); and perhaps most interestingly, his rehabilitation of the colonial enterprise (Lyautey). De Gaulle, finally, would seem to be a model for Sarkozy's desire to paint himself as a unifying figure, above party politics.

De Cock, Madeline, Offenstadt and Wahnich (2008) argue that this aspect of Sarkozy's discourse reduces history to 'name dropping', with the aim of creating '[un] nouveau rêve national dépolitisé' (2008: 14). Sarkozy rejects, they write, 'l'histoire savante et critique' which can help us to understand our place in the present, and possible destinations in the future, in favour of a list of decontextualised 'heroes' designed to do nothing more than elicit an emotional response in his audience (2008: 21). It is not a question of understanding the past, but of validating his own

political project. They go on to compare Sarkozy's version of history to those found in primary school textbooks of the Third Republic such as *Le tour de la France par deux enfants*, the hugely popular patriotic storybook with the stated aims of 'groupant [...] toutes les connaissances morales et civiques autour de l'idée de la France' and 'présenter aux enfants la patrie sous ses traits les plus nobles' (1884: préface). It is, they write, 'une histoire lisse et fermée, sans questionnement latéral, une histoire où l'analyse cède le pas à l'exaltation de la patrie' (2008: 17); a simplified, moralistic reading of events 'destinée à des enfants de 6 à 12 ans'. (2008: 21) A similar point is made in a 2007 work by the *Comité de vigilance face aux usages publics de l'histoire* (CVUH), a group of historians and academics opposed to the misappropriation and distortion of history by politicians, whose highest-profile member is perhaps the historian of immigration Gérard Noiriel. This work, however, adds the idea that Sarkozy's use of history serves to 'détourner l'attention de son programme réel que l'on peut qualifier de national-libéral et dont les premières victimes seront les cibles directes de ses discours de récupération' (2007: 1). As we will see later on in this chapter, the charge that national identity – of which this evocation of history is evidently a part – functions as a 'smokescreen' hiding more significant (particularly socio-economic) issues is one made frequently by Sarkozy's critics in academia and the media.

As a final example of the reaction of many critical historians to Sarkozy's use of history can be taken Gérard Noiriel, the historian of immigration

touched upon above. Noiriel has been a consistent critic of Sarkozy's national identity discourse, resigning from his role as an advisor for the *Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration* in 2007, in protest at Sarkozy's foundation of the new *Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité nationale et du Développement solidaire*. As Max Silverman notes in his review of *À quoi sert "l'identité nationale"* (2007a) (Noiriel's critical examination of Sarkozy's use of national identity, and perhaps the key text on this theme), Noiriel perceives himself as a 'committed intellectual', with a 'responsibility to guarantee equality of treatment and guard against the creation of dangerous stereotypes' (in *Modern and Contemporary France*, 18:1, 115-118, 2010). Accordingly, Noiriel highlights in this text what he sees as the empty, and historically nonsensical, rhetoric which makes up Sarkozy's discourse on history and national identity. Noiriel describes the way in which Sarkozy evokes the essentialist, 'spiritual' model of nationhood discussed above – the France of 'the land' and of 2000 years of eternal values – then moves without a pause into the France founded on the principles of the revolutionary Republic: the beacon of liberty, equality and fraternity and champion of the Rights of Man. So is there one France, eternal and unchanging, or a new France representing new human and political values? As Noiriel points out, in his electoral discourse Sarkozy wraps up Frenchness as both these traditions, with no apparent need for analysis or qualification. In Sarkozy's all-encompassing definition, France is local but central, unchanging yet revolutionary, Christian yet secular. To Noiriel, Sarkozy's historical discourse is beset with contradictions. As he writes:

"L'identité de la France, c'est Barrès et Jaurès enfin devenus amis, le chantre de l'antisémitisme cheminant bras dessus, bras dessous, sur les routes de la France avec le militant des droits de l'homme" (2007a: 87)

Noiriel argues elsewhere in the text that this aspect of Sarkozy's discourse represents 'une vision de l'histoire de la France plus proche d'un film hollywoodien que des travaux universitaires' (2007a: 90). It could perhaps be argued that this 'reconciliation of opposites' has the same subtext as much of Sarkozy's historically-based rhetoric: 'there is only one history of France, it contains what I say it does, everyone must respect it, and I am the only one who embodies it today'. Such rhetoric arguably finds its physical manifestation in Sarkozy's plans to create a new 'Maison de l'histoire de la France' which, according to Hervé Lemoine's official report of April 2008, aimed to remedy 'le renoncement aux principes de l'histoire' and 'la remise en cause du "roman national"'. As was frequently the case with Sarkozy's national identity-centred projects, these plans provoked substantial criticism and intense debate, a group of critical historians including Noiriel and Offenstadt publishing a joint opinion piece in *Le Monde* in which they write that 'une telle maison serait en quelque sorte la vitrine historique de la supposée "identité nationale" dont l'incantation ne cesse de mobiliser les esprits depuis 2007 avec des implications terribles pour les plus vulnérables et déshonorantes pour ceux qui leur donnent réalité'. (21.10.2010) While national identity is not unique to the years examined in the thesis, it is the potential for 'implications terribles pour les plus vulnérables' contained

within Sarkozy's conception of the theme that makes the reaction of the anti-racist movement a key issue over this period.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the aspects which make up Sarkozy's discourse on national identity in the years 2005-2009, in order to give an idea of the political and discursive climate in which anti-racist groups had to operate during this period, as well as the constraining factors for the movement caused by this climate. The first of these aspects to be identified is history. From a reading of both primary and secondary sources, a consistent picture can be determined. For Sarkozy, there is a single national history, embodied by 'Great Men' to whom Sarkozy implicitly presents himself as the rightful heir. Perhaps most relevant to this thesis, however, is his willingness both to create and reflect national myth. This can be detected within the very idea of a 'single national history', which almost by definition is made up of an officially sanctioned set of myths. Most importantly, it can also be seen in his evocation of French national identity as something spiritual and intangible built up over the centuries. This myth-making has the effect of creating an exclusive, 'frozen' version of national identity, one which is difficult for newcomers to accede to, particularly if their cultural traditions are held to be incompatible, as we will see in the discussion of the Republic and its 'opposites' later on in the chapter. Sarkozy's conception of national identity is rejected by both SOS and MIR, the former preferring to promote a 'République métissée' accepting of immigration and open to cultural influence from immigrants and their descendants (*Qu'est-ce que*

SOS Racisme (2006: 90)); and the latter promoting equality not only between individuals but between cultures within France (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l’"identité nationale"', 6.11.2009). Nevertheless, the predominance of this conception meant firstly that the movements could not avoid engaging with it, and secondly that their alternative visions had little visibility outside activist circles.

Sarkozy, repentance and populism

Linked to the theme of history is that of 'anti-repentance'. As will now be clear, Sarkozy favours a conception of history in which there is one history of France, to be learned and respected by all citizens, and rejects entirely the idea that history is made up of numerous competing interpretations. As such, those who deviate from his version and look back critically at the more controversial episodes in France's past are frequently accused of 'repentance', a major offence in the scheme of Sarkozy's discourse. Although not named specifically by Sarkozy, MIR – as a visible and controversial movement which places great importance on colonial memory – is undoubtedly implicated in this climate, as can be seen in the influential conservative academic Daniel Lefeuvre's denunciation of a new generation of anti-colonialists who ‘mène combat sur les plateaux de télévision et dans la presse politiquement correcte [...] multipliant les appels ou les pétitions en faveur des “indigènes de la

République” (2006: 7). There is no shortage of references to ‘repentance’ to be found in Sarkozy’s speeches over 2005-2009. To take an illustrative example:

“[...] la mode de la repentance est une mode exécration.

Je n'accepte pas que l'on demande aux fils d'expié les fautes des pères.

Je n'accepte pas que l'on juge toujours le passé avec les préjugés du présent.

Je n'accepte pas cette bonne conscience moralisatrice qui réécrit l'histoire dans le seul but de mettre la nation en accusation.

Je n'accepte pas ce dénigrement systématique de la nation qui est la forme ultime de la détestation de soi.

Car pour un français, haïr la France c'est se haïr lui-même.

Je n'accepte pas que l'on veuille vivre en France en professant la haine de la France” (Metz, 2007)

This quotation is a typical representation of Sarkozy’s discourse on the theme. ‘Repentance’, for him, is linked to ‘self-hate’ and ‘denigration of the nation’, which in turn is often cited as a major cause of the ‘crisis of identity’ that Sarkozy presents himself as the man to solve. This discourse is routinely linked to an attempted rehabilitation of France’s colonial enterprise:

“La vérité c'est qu'il n'y a pas eu beaucoup de puissances coloniales dans le monde qui aient tant oeuvré pour la civilisation et si peu pour l'exploitation” (Caen, 2007)

Sarkozy presents colonialism as being linked with 'civilisation' and as being largely beneficial for the countries and people being colonised, whilst using language which avoids any negative judgement on the enterprise. His arguments on the theme are thus diametrically opposed to a movement like MIR, which presents colonialism as synonymous with racism, discrimination and exploitation, and sees such practices as continuing to apply to the descendants of colonial populations in France's poor suburbs. As Sarkozy states in a campaign speech in Toulon:

“On peut désapprouver la colonisation avec les valeurs qui sont les nôtres aujourd'hui. Mais on doit respecter les hommes et les femmes de bonne volonté qui ont pensé de bonne foi oeuvrer utilement pour un idéal de civilisation auquel ils croyaient.” (Toulon, 2007)

As noted above, it is worth noting the lexical choice here. In the French context, 'colonisation' and 'colonialisme' have quite different meanings. 'Colonisation', the term chosen by Sarkozy here, has more neutral connotations, describing a process more than an ideology. 'Colonialisme', meanwhile, is a term most likely to be used in left-wing, anti-colonial circles, and implies that the colonial idea does in fact form an ideology and an exploitative system. As Dulucq and Klein write in 'Les mots de la Colonisation' (2008):

"Le mot colonialisme prend en français un sens clairement péjoratif [...] ceux qui l'utilisent [...] insistent sur l'exploitation des territoires et des peuples conquis; ils dénoncent une colonisation qui profite aux seules métropoles" (2008: 30)

De Cock et al link Sarkozy's rehabilitation of colonisation to his portrayal of France as 'globalement bonne' (2008: 148). According to Sarkozy, France has never committed a genocide or crime against humanity, always fought for *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*, and was the colonial power most devoted to civilisation and development: what, then, is there to 'repent' for? This argument, in the view of De Cock et al, bears little relationship with reality. They argue that far from spreading civilisation, development and 'universalist' values, colonialism is 'contradictoire avec les principes d'égalité et de droits des peuples à la liberté' (2008: 149), a contradiction between principle and practice frequently emphasised by MIR, as we will see particularly in chapter 5. Sarkozy's calculations, however, are fundamentally political. In praising colonialism and rejecting 'repentance' he aimed to ensure the support and votes of several groups: those directly involved in colonisation and its aftermath (*rapatriés* from North Africa, *harkis* and their descendants, *anciens combattants*), Front National sympathisers and anyone nostalgic for France's lost status as a great colonial power.

Implicit in Sarkozy's rehabilitation of colonisation and refusal of 'repentance' is a rejection of 'post-colonial' ideas, ideas which (as in French academia and wider society) are the subject of some controversy in the anti-racist movement, with MIR placing them at the heart of its discourse and worldview and SOS substantially more wary, seeing too much emphasis on the past as potentially trapping post-colonial populations both in their 'communities' and in the role of permanent

victims (Sopo 2005). Vincent Martigny (2009), in a piece seemingly written with the aim of challenging both analysts who see Sarkozy's discourse as something new and Sarkozy's own claims to 'rupture', argues that 'une réfutation de la mémoire post-coloniale et la relecture de l'histoire de la France' (2009: 33) is one of the major planks of Sarkozy's discourse. It is Martigny's claim that the theme of 'le refus de la repentance' is not fundamentally a new idea in conservative Republican discourse, despite 'une rénovation sémantique et une insistance notable sur ce type de rhétorique' (2009: 34). He links the return of the theme to 'la difficile gestion française de la question post-coloniale qui touche le pays depuis le milieu des années 90, notamment au travers des revendications autour de la mémoire' (2009: 28), with the implication that Sarkozy's discourse is reacting to the - albeit limited - opening up of France's politics of memory in this period. Notable examples of this trend include Jacques Chirac's recognition of the French state's culpability for the 'Rafle du Vel d'Hiv' of 1942 in a speech in July 1995, the 2001 adoption of a law recognising slavery as a crime against humanity, and the apology for the Sétif massacre of 1945 made by Hubert Colin de Verdière, the French ambassador to Algeria, in 2005. These concessions, Martigny writes, 'ont heurté une partie de l'opinion publique (souvent sa partie la plus âgée), qui y a vu une raison de plus de constater les signes d'un déclin français' (ibid). Noiriel, meanwhile, posits the idea that the 'anti-repentance' discourse could have been a way for Sarkozy to distance himself from his predecessor and rival Jacques Chirac, whose period in office, as noted above, was marked by an admission of

culpability for the state's role in the persecution of France's Jewish population – an admission 'ouvrant du même coup la porte à d'autres revendications mémorielles, concernant principalement la colonisation et l'esclavage' (2007a: 102). If this is the case therefore, Sarkozy's discourse is informed by a desire to appear a candidate of 'rupture', both in the political scene as a whole and, seemingly, within his own party.

Earlier in this chapter I touched upon the idea of 'us against them' being an important one in Sarkozy's discourse, and the way in which such deliberate divisiveness contradicted with the emphasis traditionally placed on equality and fraternity by the French anti-racist movement. Like his use of history, which implicitly presented post-colonial immigrants and their descendants as incompatible with and unassimilable into French society, the discourse on anti-repentance has the effect of stigmatising certain 'undesirable elements' in French society. In this case, two groups are targeted. The first of these groups is made up, again, of immigrants and those of 'immigrant origin', who are unlikely to agree with his discourse on colonisation. As Sarkozy states in the Metz speech quoted earlier, 'je n'accepte pas que l'on veuille vivre en France en professant la haine de la France'. De Cock et al (2008: 159) link Sarkozy's refusal to 'repent' about France's colonial past with his refusal to accept that prejudices formed in colonial times could influence the situation of immigrants and 'ethnic minorities' in contemporary French society, again implicitly rejecting the post-colonial ideas favoured by MIR. Immigrants, he argues, are responsible for their own failure to assimilate; some, it is

implied, cannot be assimilated at all. As De Cock et al point out, 'le souci pour les violences passées est systématiquement associé au "refus de s'intégrer" de certains immigrés' (2008: 157). That is to say, concern about the more controversial or shameful episodes in France's past, particularly those related to colonialism, is linked to the rejection of 'une intégration réduite à la seule assimilation' (ibid). This argument enables Sarkozy to scapegoat both *communautarisme* (a term which will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter), and left-wing intellectuals who reject his discourse on immigration, national identity and colonialism.

Left-wing historians and intellectuals, those most likely to publish works looking critically at France's past, are therefore the second group targeted, implicitly or explicitly, by Sarkozy's discourse on anti-repentance. When Sarkozy states in the 2007 Metz speech that 'je n'accepte pas cette bonne conscience moralisatrice qui réécrit l'histoire dans le seul but de mettre la nation en accusation', for example, it is likely that this is the group being referred to. De Cock et al note that Sarkozy routinely criticises historians, accusing them of 'falsification de l'histoire', 'révisionnisme historique' and being part of 'la "gauche bien-pensante" qui "juge le passé avec les préjugés du présent"' (2008: 158). Whilst the vast majority of French historians would be somewhat surprised to hear that they were 'rewriting history' with 'le seul but de mettre la nation en accusation', as is almost invariably the case with Sarkozy there are political calculations behind the claim. As Noiriel notes, in relation to the reasons for Sarkozy's discourse on history and memory:

“La raison majeure tient au fait qu’en se saisissant de ces enjeux mémoriels il a pu satisfaire à une règle essentielle du discours national-sécuritaire: établir un lien entre les ennemis extérieurs et les ennemis intérieurs de la France” (2007a: 102)

Sarkozy’s language here, he argues, rejects reason and operates entirely on emotion. As Noiriél puts it, ‘il opère ainsi une confusion complète entre le registre rationnel de la critique et le registre affectif de la haine’ (ibid). Thus, Noiriél claims, Sarkozy can label his critics in matters of immigration and national identity - historians, intellectuals, immigrants themselves - as ‘enemies of France’. It could perhaps also be argued that Sarkozy’s position here is linked to his professed antipathy to May ’68 and its legacy, as the student movement was strongly associated with anti-imperialist values.

De Cock et al argue that Sarkozy’s aim in targeting historians and intellectuals is to ‘séduire un électorat populaire présumé anti-intellectualiste, du moins certifier un ancrage populaire’ (2008: 158). It could perhaps be argued that this ‘anti-intellectualism’ shades into anti-élitism and populism, despite the notable contradiction that Sarkozy is, by any definition, a member of the élite. Those presented as the ‘élite’ who have lost touch with the ‘people’ tend most often in Sarkozy’s discourse to be, again, left-wing intellectuals, despite their lack of any real power. There are numerous examples of appeals to ‘the people’ in Sarkozy’s discourse. To take one:

“Je veux pouvoir parler au peuple de France, je veux pouvoir être le porte-parole du peuple français. Je veux parler au nom de ce peuple que l'on veut tenir à l'écart de tout, de ce peuple que l'on ne veut plus écouter, que l'on ne veut plus entendre. [...] Je veux être le candidat de cette France qui souffre et non celui des appareils, celui des notables, celui des élites qui prétendent penser et décider à la place du peuple.” (Montpellier, 2007)

This idea of promoting the cause of 'the people', defined in opposition to 'élites', is an important one in most definitions of populism as a political style. A full discussion of the nature of populism is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is worth considering the question of how Sarkozy employs aspects of this style. In *L'illusion populiste* (2007), Pierre-André Taguieff notes that populism is a style that can be employed by right- and left-wing movements, to democratic or anti-democratic ends, but emphasises that it is not an ideology or type of regime. Possibly the closest he gets to a definition is the following:

“un style politique, fondé sur le recours systématique à la rhétorique de l'appel au peuple et la mise en oeuvre d'un mode de légitimation de type charismatique, le plus propre à valoriser le “changement”” (2007: 9)

It is important to note that Taguieff does not refer to Sarkozy by name, or seemingly intend the analysis to apply to him. I would argue, however, that elements of Taguieff's definition could be applied to Sarkozy's rhetoric and to the political 'character' he plays.

First of all in Taguieff's schema, we have the figure of 'the leader' himself, 'personnage qui est à la fois expression, guide et "sauveur" du "peuple"' (2007: 10). This leader is likely to be charismatic and media-savvy ('télégénique' as Taguieff puts it), sending out the message of "Suivez-moi" or "Faites-moi confiance" (2007: 33). Aspects of this figure can arguably be seen in Sarkozy, or at least in the political character he plays. As Noiriél writes, Sarkozy presents himself as 'L'homme qui dit toujours la vérité aux Français' (2007: 85); the man who sets out the idea that there is a 'crisis' in French identity, then presents himself as the only one who can solve it. As Sarkozy himself puts it in the Caen speech, 'Je suis le candidat qui exprime les idées que pensent et que portent les Français'. It is interesting to note, what is more, that Noiriél attributes the announcement of the new 'Ministry of Immigration and National Identity' to the media management of Sarkozy and his advisors (2007: 84), giving an idea of the importance of controlling the media agenda in Sarkozy's campaign. There is in fact a school of thought that his media support was a more important factor in Sarkozy's 2007 success than the 'quality' of his discourse, as we shall see later in the chapter.

An additional key component in Taguieff's discussion of populism is the idea of 'L'appel personnel au *peuple* lancé par le leader' (2007: 34).

Taguieff writes:

“Le populisme politique implique la valorisation du peuple, opposé soit aux élites, soit aux étrangers, soit encore aux élites et aux étrangers” (2007: 19)

'The people' in this conception are held to incarnate 'des vertus d'authenticité et d'honnêteté qui le distinguent face aux élites supposées illégitimes et corrompues' (ibid). This can be seen quite clearly in the example from the Montpellier speech above. Sarkozy claims that he wants to 'parler au nom de ce peuple que l'on veut tenir à l'écart de tout, de ce peuple que l'on ne veut plus écouter, que l'on ne veut plus entendre', thus implicitly presenting the dominant ethnic group as victims. And he does not want to be the candidate of '[la France] des élites qui prétendent penser et décider à la place du peuple'. From my reading of Sarkozy's speeches, he does not generally oppose 'peuple' and 'étrangers' in an explicit sense. As we will see however, the figure of 'the foreigner' is frequently presented as a threat to 'the Republic' and its 'values', arguably to similar effects. Continuing on the theme of 'the people' in populism, Taguieff talks of 'la dimension mythologique de tout populisme, qui réside dans la thèse, toujours présumée, que “le peuple” existe et qu'il est doté d'une unité, laquelle lui donne son identité' (2007: 31). As we have seen at the start of this chapter, in the discussion of history, this is very much part of Sarkozy's discourse, and can have the indirect effect of excluding or stigmatising those of certain foreign origins, even if they are French citizens.

Taguieff goes on to consider (2007: 14) common positions of contemporary 'national populist' movements in Western Europe. In common with Sarkozy are 'le rejet de l'immigration (stigmatisée comme facteur de perte d'identité nationale / régionale)' and 'un fort sentiment d'insécurité et la demande d'un rétablissement autoritaire de l'ordre' – as can be seen most clearly in my chosen period during the 2005 riots and their aftermath. Generally less emphasised by Sarkozy are 'l'hostilité à l'Europe et à la globalisation': as a supporter of neo-liberal economics, and of voting 'yes' in 2005's referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, it would seem illogical for him to do so. The idea of Sarkozy being linked ideologically to the wave of European 'national populist' movements which came to prominence in the early 2000s is an interesting one, and one which can be taken into account in the discussion of the novelty of Sarkozy's discourse, and the possible reasons for its success, at the end of this chapter. There is one further point worth mentioning in Taguieff's argument before moving on, coming in a digression during his discussion of the Front National. As we have now seen, the 'classical' model of populism opposes 'petits' and 'gros'. Whilst there are obviously elements of this model in the FN's discourse – and Sarkozy's – Taguieff argues that theirs could just as easily be classified as 'un populisme des “moyens” contre les “petits”', setting 'les “moyens inférieurs”, bénéficiant d'avantages sociaux, contre les “exclus” (les “immigrés” avant tout), censés “vivre aux crochets” des Français' (2007: 22). Whilst anti-racism is not an explicit target of Sarkozy's populism, a political discourse which places 'the people' in opposition to 'élites' and 'foreigners' is always likely

to have implications for the movement, as by definition anti-racism aims to act in the interest of these same 'foreigners' and 'immigrants' (categories which in fact encompass numerous French citizens of 'ethnic minority' origin) presented as delinquents, scroungers, thieves and religious fundamentalists. Anti-racism can therefore potentially be presented in this discourse as against the interests of 'the people', a term which implicitly gains a racial dimension entirely contrary to the 'colour-blind' universalism associated with the French Republic.

As has already been touched upon, Sarkozy's appeal to 'the people' and opposition to 'élites' can perhaps be seen in his consistent efforts to present himself as an outsider, daring to speak the truth and contradict 'la dictature du politiquement correct et de la pensée unique' (Caen, 2007). Taguieff talks of citizens' disaffection towards the political system as something potentially played upon by populist movements. It could perhaps be argued that Sarkozy himself attempts to play on these feelings, despite him being a career politician in a major mainstream party. The way in which Sarkozy uses rhetorical techniques common to 'insurgent', 'anti-system' movements, despite his status very much within the 'system', is a major contradiction, and arguably part of what makes him an interesting political figure to examine.

Summing up, after my discussion of Sarkozy's use of history, I moved on to examine the connected theme of 'anti-repentance'. To recap, Sarkozy favours a conception of history in which there is one history of France, to

be learned and respected by all citizens. As such, those who deviate from his version and look back critically at the more shameful episodes in France's past are accused of 'repentance', associated with 'self-hate' and 'denigration of the nation'. This has the effect of stigmatising both those of 'immigrant origin' and left-wing intellectuals and historians, a situation which, in terms of anti-racism, has a particular effect on the ability of MIR to receive a fair hearing for its arguments – arguably an example of Sarkozy's success in marginalising critical political voices. To end the section, I then used the idea of 'anti-intellectualism' and 'anti-élitism' in Sarkozy's discourse as a starting point to consider the idea of populism, an idea which has to be taken into account in an analysis of the meaning and success of this discourse. In the next section, I will consider the use made by Sarkozy of the Republic, an aspect of his campaigning language with substantial implications for the capacity of SOS to articulate a distinctive alternative discourse.

Sarkozy, the Republic and *communautarisme*

As can be seen throughout the thesis, SOS, like the majority of mainstream anti-racist movements in France, bases its action on republicanism. More specifically, it promotes a liberal conception of the idea, emphasising equality, tolerance and 'colour-blindness'. For SOS, to

quote the organisation's 2007 mission statement, anti-racism is '[un] projet de fraternité et d'égalité':

“L'antiracisme n'a jamais été pour nous la volonté de défendre telle population contre telle autre [...] L'antiracisme, pour nous, a toujours été la volonté de voir chacun vivre à égale dignité dans la société, quelles que soient ses origines, sa confession ou ses pratiques culturelles.” (SOS Racisme, 'Nos Missions', 2007)

Republicanism, however, is a highly flexible concept. At the same time as it was used by SOS as a basis for promoting equality and fighting discrimination, it was used by Sarkozy as a rhetorical tool which served to stigmatise both immigrants and French citizens of foreign origin, in particular the country's Muslim population. Let us consider the way in which this happens.

There would appear to be a recurrent trope in Sarkozy's discourse in which he praises the Republic and what he sees as its 'values', then goes on to argue that these values are 'in crisis' or 'under threat'. I will consider this idea in full shortly, but firstly it is worth considering the question of what Sarkozy means by 'the Republic' and 'republican values'. On this question, the answer is not entirely clear. It is perhaps arguable that the term is repeated so often it loses any meaning it once had. Consider, for example, Sarkozy's 2006 speech in Périgueux, in which, according to the lexical analysis of Jean Véronis of the University of Provence (<http://sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/>), he used

the term 'République' no less than 76 times. I have chosen to take examples, however, from Sarkozy's 2009 speech in La Chapelle-en-Vercors, as this speech was given to mark the launch of the 'identity debate' of late that year, and thus illustrates the 'official' viewpoints on key concepts to be used in the debate. In this speech, Sarkozy has the following to say about the Republic:

“La République, c'est la souveraineté de la Nation. La République, c'est l'autorité et d'abord l'autorité de l'État. La République, c'est l'égalité des chances. La République, c'est le mérite, c'est le travail. La République, c'est la laïcité. La République, c'est la compréhension, le respect et la solidarité” (La Chapelle-en-Vercors, 2009)

This is fairly uncontroversial territory for a mainstream French politician, although it is noticeable that Sarkozy promotes aspects of his conservative worldview in the references to 'autorité', 'travail' and 'respect'. This technique of using 'the Republic' as a means of providing ideological backing for his policies and positions can also be seen in this extract from the same speech:

“Que reste-t-il de la République si l'on se met à considérer de la même manière le délinquant et la victime, celui qui fait son devoir et celui qui ne le fait pas, celui qui fait son travail et celui qui ne fait rien? Que reste-t-il de la République quand on place sur le même plan l'intérêt particulier et l'intérêt général, le principe d'égalité et le droit à la différence?”

Again, Sarkozy associates republican values with work, in keeping with his rhetoric of 'travailler plus pour gagner plus' (Réunion des nouveaux

adhérents à l'UMP, 2006, and elsewhere), and with his proclaimed 'rupture' – one of many – with the 35 hour week. To this he adds his campaign against 'delinquency', one which continues throughout my timeframe and almost exclusively targets young men of 'immigrant origin' in the banlieues. The implication that the idea of *le droit à la différence* is 'anti-republican' is also noteworthy: SOS Racisme, the movement with which the idea is widely associated, had also seemingly come to this conclusion well before the timeframe examined in the thesis⁴.

De Cock et al, noting Sarkozy's self-identification as a spokesman for 'une droite "républicaine"', themselves consider the question of what he means by 'the Republic'. They argue that Sarkozy deliberately strips away much of the concept's political significance:

“Davantage perçue comme une notion juridique (un type de régime constitutionnel) que politique (un projet démocratique de politique égalitaire), la République peut alors servir d'habits confortables pour prétendre incarner une tradition progressiste quand on prolonge plutôt la révolution réactionnaire” (2008: 19)

According to this argument therefore, Sarkozy is simply paying lip service to the radical political agenda originally embodied by the Republic, defining it in a way which fits his own interests and using it as a cover for his reactionary policies: a problem for a movement like SOS which places the Republic's Enlightenment- and Revolution-inspired egalitarianism at the heart of its understanding of the idea. Of course, every mainstream

⁴ As I note elsewhere in the thesis, as long ago as 1990 founding SOS President Harlem Désir claimed of the organisation that 'nous n'avons jamais fait du droit à la différence le principe de notre action' ('Harlem Désir: Vive la nation!', *Nouvel Observateur* 13.6.1990)

politician in France claims to respect the Republic, so the battle to define what it stands for and which values it represents is still of vital importance. According to Martigny this battle was an undercurrent in the 2007 election campaign, and could be detected in the national identity discourse of the two main candidates. While Ségolène Royal's 'républicaine-pluraliste' conception accepted the multiple reality of French history and saw national identity as something continually under construction, albeit on a basis of fundamental shared values (2009: 31), Sarkozy's 'républicaine-conservatrice' conception, as we have seen, rejected critical alternative views of history and based itself (amongst other things) on assimilationist 'Jacobin' republicanism – which, as Martigny notes, passed as a theme from Left to Right during the 1980s (2009: 34). Accordingly, immigrants are required to adopt 'une identité nationale pré-établie', as opposed to the more open, 'constructivist' conception associated with the French anti-racist movement. As Martigny sums up:

“Cette conception de l'identité nationale comme un facteur figé s'opposant à la perception de l'identité comme un *compromis historique* en perpétuelle évolution est la marque de fabrique du candidat Sarkozy” (ibid)

This battle over the meaning of 'the Republic' - and thus of national identity itself - would seem unlikely to end in the near future, as this would involve a move away from republican ideology on the part of one of the major parties. Certainly, during the period under discussion in my thesis, it appeared as entrenched as ever, the discourse of the 'droit à la différence' having moved away from the mainstream since the mid-1980s,

even being appropriated by the far-Right for its own purposes (see Lebovics (2004: 132) for a discussion of this ideological shift).

Noiriel too considers the question of what Sarkozy means when he talks about 'the Republic', arguing that in keeping with his all-encompassing (and often contradictory) conception of history, Sarkozy simply links the idea of the Republic with every aspect of French society he approves of. As Noiriel sees it, Sarkozy's 'Republic' is 'une République à la fois libérale, sociale, radicale, laïque, chrétienne, qui revendique en même temps la baisse de l'impôt sur les grandes fortunes, la sécurité sociale et le droit au travail' (2007a: 87). Furthermore, Sarkozy argues that 'republican values' exist 'dans l'éternité de l'histoire, en affirmant que, "depuis toujours", les Français les avaient défendues' (2007a: 88), neatly resolving the contradictions between the 'eternal' and 'post-Revolutionary' conceptions of France discussed earlier, but at the same time moving the concept even further away from a specific definition.

In many ways, it would seem that Sarkozy's use of the Republic is merely a symbolic tool divested of ideological or historical significance; a mere signifier of national identity (although of course, depoliticising a régime theoretically based around universal liberty, equality and fraternity is itself a highly political act). Noiriel makes the point that Sarkozy plays down the role of the French Revolution and places the origins of 'republican values' far back in history (in the case of his 2007 speech at Caen, to the time of the Vikings). In addition, Sarkozy - like de Gaulle before him -

frequently attempts to present himself as transcending the traditional Left/Right divide; as 'l'homme du peuple' who incarnates a national identity portrayed as something above party politics. Like his conception of history as a single 'national story' to be learned and respected by every citizen, his evocation of the Republic is representative of this self-portrayal. Perhaps in this conception 'the Republic' is representative of 'une hérédité des valeurs' (Noiriel 2007a: 91), or as Meyran put it, an example of the 'récits mythiques [qui] définissent en négatif ceux qui ne sont pas des Français' (2009: 11). Looking at Sarkozy's discourse on the threats to the Republic and its values, this point is worth keeping in mind.

Most relevant to this chapter, however, is Sarkozy's conception of the 'opposite' of the Republic and its values, an idea which links clearly which the recurring theme of 'us against them' in his campaigning discourse.

As he puts it, 'On ne peut pas vouloir tous les avantages de la République si l'on ne respecte aucune de ses lois, aucune de ses valeurs, aucun de ses principes' (La Chapelle-en-Vercors, 2009). But who is he referring to when he makes this argument? As usual in Sarkozy's discourse he does not name names, but it could perhaps be argued that the 'opposite' of Republican values is 'the foreigner', a figure represented by two terms: 'le clandestin' and *communautarisme*. As Sarkozy says on the subject of the 'clandestin', firstly:

“Être français, c'est parler et écrire le français. Être français, c'est respecter la loi. Celui qui entre clandestinement en France, celui qui ne

fait aucun effort pour s'intégrer, celui-là ne doit pas attendre à se voir reconnaître les mêmes droits qu'un français" (Caen, 2007)

This aspect of Sarkozy's discourse is noted by Noiriel, who argues that 'le procédé rhétorique utilisé pour accentuer la présentation péjorative de ces personnes consiste toujours à les opposer aux véritables nationaux' (2007a: 93). The picture of the 'clandestin' is painted by 'une chaîne d'équivalences négatives permettant de dresser le portrait robot de l'antithèse du Français' (ibid): someone who does not speak French, does not respect the law and makes no effort to integrate. As may be expected, there is no acknowledgement of the discrimination faced by immigrants, or that for an illegal immigrant it might be difficult to 'integrate' without being deported, or that, given time, immigrants and their descendants could in fact integrate into society. And this argument, which as Noiriel points out, attributes to all 'clandestins' behaviour which applies in reality to 'une infime partie d'entre eux' (2007a: 94), is 'légitimé par des références constantes aux "valeurs" éternelles de la République' (ibid).

The most important idea in a discussion of this theme, however, is that of *communautarisme*. Sarkozy's usage of this term causes substantial difficulties for SOS, which similarly opposes the practice, on the grounds that choosing to live solely in ethnically- or religiously-based communities is contrary to republican universalism and colour-blindness. However, whereas SOS sees *communautarisme* as undesirable but understandable – as a support system for immigrant and immigrant-origin

populations, which can be fought by bringing them into wider society via action against discrimination and poverty – for Sarkozy the term is used as an emotive trigger-word, designed to bring to his audience's mind fear of 'threats to society' from illegal immigration, social disorder and radical Islam.

As with 'repentance', discussed earlier, Sarkozy's discourse portrays *communautarisme* as a serious crime, and frequently blames the phenomenon for much of what has supposedly gone wrong with French society. Let us take a typical example of the way Sarkozy presents the term:

“Affaiblir le sentiment national c'est laisser le champ libre au communautarisme. Je ne veux pas du communautarisme. Je veux l'intégration qui permet de tisser du lien social, de la solidarité, de la compréhension et du respect.

Le communautarisme c'est enfermer chacun dans ses origines et ses croyances.

Le communautarisme c'est prendre le risque que ce qui nous sépare devienne plus important que ce qui nous unit.

Le communautarisme c'est la porte ouverte à l'exclusion, à l'intolérance, à la violence et aux tribus.

Le communautarisme c'est la condamnation de l'universalisme des Lumières. C'est la fin de notre conception universaliste de l'Homme.

Le communautarisme c'est la fin de l'idée que nous nous faisons de la République.” (Metz, 2007)

So what is *communautarisme*? In literal terms this refers to the possible consequences of 'multiculturalism' as perceived within French society, but in the discourse of Sarkozy it represents nothing less than 'la fin de notre conception universaliste de l'Homme'. Again, Sarkozy does not define exactly what he means by *communautarisme*, although the use of the term allows Sarkozy to represent multiculturalism to a French audience in the way that he wants – one key understanding would be that a person's primary loyalty is to an ethnic or religious group, rather than to the nation-state. He goes on to work by insinuation, using what Noiriel calls a 'chaîne des équivalences' which illustrates what he sees as 'le contraire de la République' (2007a: 95). This extract from the 2007 Caen speech is representative of this technique

“Celui qui ne veut pas respecter nos valeurs de liberté n'est pas obligé de rester.

Celui qui ne veut pas respecter notre conception de l'homme, celui qui récuse l'humanisme et l'universalisme, celui qui récuse l'usage de la raison, celui qui veut abolir l'héritage des Lumières et celui de la Révolution, celui qui ne veut pas reconnaître que la femme est l'égal de l'homme, celui qui veut cloîtrer sa femme, obliger sa fille à porter le voile, à se faire exciser ou à se marier de force, celui-là n'a rien à faire en France et il doit savoir que s'il reste, les lois et les principes de la République s'appliqueront à lui comme à tous les autres citoyens” (Caen, 2007)

As Noiriél points out, 'chacun des exemples cités pour désigner l'anti-France renvoie à un sujet qui a été mis au devant de l'actualité par les médias dans les années précédentes, et qui tous évoquent l'immigration en provenance du Maghreb et d'Afrique noire' (2007a: 95). So to take this idea to its logical conclusion, the opposite of 'republican values' in Sarkozy's discourse is in fact Islam, although this is never made explicit. As Noiriél puts it, 'Sarkozy ne désigne jamais nommément le groupe qu'il montre du doigt. Néanmoins, il utilise la même technique de communication de Jean-Marie Le Pen' (2007a: 96). Again, as with the discussions of history and repentance earlier in the chapter, the logic is that of 'us against them'. In Sarkozy's speeches, Islam is evoked only by implied negativity, playing upon negative stereotypes that had built up in political and media discourse over the preceding years. Due to the vague way it is formulated accusations of racism can be denied, but it is evident that the audience can be trusted to fill in the gaps for themselves. To sum up, Sarkozy would seem to use the idea of the Republic to embody all that is 'good' in his conception of French society, while simultaneously setting up *communautarisme* as representative of everything the Republic should reject. This rhetorical technique is then used as a cover for the targeting of certain specific groups within French society, whether members of these groups are French or not. The effect, thus, is to elide sans-papiers, legitimate immigrants and French citizens of visible ethnic minority origin into a single category; the latter becoming what Ahmed Boubeker (2010: 265) calls 'étrangers de l'intérieur'; *de facto* second-class citizens. If this critique is to be accepted there is a major

contradiction at the heart of Sarkozy's discourse - he promotes republicanism, but ignores one of its central tenets: that every French citizen should be equal. As we will see in chapter 3, this use of republicanism for purposes which serve to stigmatise a significant minority of the French population causes substantial problems for SOS, which itself basis its appeals for tolerance and equality on the ever flexible idea of 'republican values'. What is more, a discourse which implicitly presents Islam as contrary to the Republic inevitably has implications for MIR, a movement which contains numerous Muslim members and places substantial emphasis on the fight against Islamophobia.

It could perhaps be argued, finally, that this discourse on the Republic and its 'opposites' forms the basis of Sarkozy's discourse on security, which reappears throughout my timeframe, but is most in evidence in the aftermath of the riots of 2005. As Boubeker writes on the representation of the banlieues in contemporary political discourse:

“C'est le thème de la dérive mafieuse, ethnique, islamique, communautariste... des quartiers. Une nouvelle version des “classes dangereuses” qui seraient liguées contre la République et la sacro-sainte communauté des citoyens.” (2010: 271)

Such a representation can be seen in Sarkozy's speech of November 2005, in which, as Minister for the Interior, he announced the imposition of a state of emergency. As he said at this time:

“Au-delà donc des facteurs économiques et sociaux, il y a un autre facteur, un facteur central: c'est la volonté de ceux qui ont fait de la délinquance leur activité principale de résister à l'ambition de la République de réinstaller son ordre, celui de ses lois, dans leur territoire” (Assemblée nationale, 2005)

And he goes on to make his position clear:

“Si ce n'est pas l'ordre de la République qui règne dans ces quartiers, ce sera celui des bandes ou des extrémistes”

There are numerous other examples that could have been chosen, but the tone of Sarkozy's discourse is quite apparent in these quotations. The picture he paints of the banlieues is one of 'delinquents', 'gangs' and 'extremists'. By 'extremists' he almost certainly intends his audience to understand 'Islamic extremists', although as usual he does not say so in as many words. As for the Republic in this scenario, it is explicitly contrasted with these 'gangs' and 'extremists'. And there is no middle ground: you have either one or the other. There is quite a militaristic tone to Sarkozy's comments at this time: the Republic has to 'reconquer' the 'territory' of the banlieues and re-establish order, a discourse seen by MIR as evidence of the continuity between colonial and post-colonial France⁵. The rioters, it is implied furthermore, should be condemned without the need for understanding. As Demiaty (in Mucchielli and Le Goaziou (eds.), 2007) writes, 'c'est le sens du langage de M. Sarkozy qui,

⁵ In the sense that post-colonial immigrants are largely confined to France's poor suburbs and are subject to repressive treatment from the authorities – so MIR's argument goes – in the same way as their 'native' ancestors in the French colonies (hence the name of the movement).

en cherchant surtout à criminaliser les émeutiers, vise à ôter à leurs actes toute signification ou justification politique'. Once again, the effect of Sarkozy's language is to create an amalgam; a composite figure incorporating all the negative stereotypes that had built up around immigration, the banlieues and radical Islam in the preceding years. It is ignored or downplayed that the majority of the 2005 rioters were French citizens, many of whom will have wanted to 'integrate' into French society but found they were unable to, due to racial prejudice and lack of opportunities for social advancement.

In this section, using a combination of primary and secondary sources, I have examined some of the key aspects of Sarkozy's discourse on national identity, as a means of firmly establishing the political and ideological context within which anti-racist movements had to act over my chosen period. It is arguable that all of these aspects are connected, and that all can be explained, partially at least, with reference to the idea of 'us against them'. The first theme to be examined was that of history. Here Sarkozy sets up the idea of a single, consensual national history, made up of great events and heroic individuals, to which he presents himself as the heir. Perhaps most importantly, he also plays upon the idea of national myth, painting 'Frenchness' as something more than just a nationality. This has the effect of making it difficult for new immigrants ever to be seen as truly assimilated, especially if their cultural practices are held to be incompatible with French tradition. The second theme was that of 'anti-repentance', often linked with a defence of France's colonial

enterprise. This allows critics of Sarkozy's patriotic, all-encompassing, singular version of history to be stigmatised as 'enemies of France'. Those targeted are France's population of 'immigrant origin', and left-wing historians and intellectuals. Targeting the latter group enables Sarkozy to pose as a populist anti-élitist, defending the rights of 'the People' and the 'true France'. This theme also allows Sarkozy to break away from the Chirac regime, under which there was a limited opening up of the French state's politics of memory. The final theme is that of the Republic, held to embody everything worthwhile about French society, and its 'opposites', embodied by *communautarisme* and the theoretical figure, based on the stereotypes built up over several years of news stories, of the fundamentalist (male) Muslim, possibly a criminal, who refuses to integrate and forces his wife to wear the veil. This context was a complicated one for both the movements examined in the thesis, for three central reasons. Firstly, because a conservative, essentialist conception of national identity was predominant in political discourse over this period, meaning that more liberal or radical visions of the concept had little visibility, and implanting in the public mind the ideas that immigration is a threat to identity, and that certain elements within the French population can never truly assimilate. Secondly (an issue particularly for MIR), because terms such as *communautarisme* and 'repentance' were widespread, and presented as something to be feared, meaning that movements which emphasised multiculturalism, colonial memory and the fight against Islamophobia were considered as inherently suspicious. And thirdly (an issue particularly for SOS), because there was a

consensus on the language of republicanism across the political spectrum, meaning that it could be used simultaneously as a basis for fighting racism, discrimination and inequality, and as a basis for stigmatising minority populations, a situation which made it difficult for mainstream republican movements to articulate a distinctive campaigning discourse.

In the remainder of this chapter I intend, based on a number of critical texts which focus on my chosen period, to examine the novelty (or otherwise), significance and reason for the success of Sarkozy's discourse. I will end the chapter, finally, with my thoughts on the question posed right at the start of it: what is 'Sarkozysme'?

Sarkozy's national identity discourse: anything new?

On then to the first of these questions: is Sarkozy's discourse new? Based on extensive reading of contemporary secondary sources, the consensus would seem to be that it is not – which evidently would give the lie to his claim of being a candidate of 'rupture'. The question, however, is evidently more complicated than that. While none of the authors examined found Sarkozy's discourse to be entirely new, all of them found something new in the relationship between this discourse and the political context in which it was being pronounced.

For example, Martigny argues that there is nothing new in Sarkozy's discourse: 'le contenu de son discours a été extrêmement typique d'un républicanisme civique autoritaire inscrit dans la tradition française' (2009: 24). However there are two things that, for Martigny, are new *about* Sarkozy's discourse. The first is 'la position centrale de ce thème [ie. national identity] dans la campagne présidentielle' (2009: 23). The second, perhaps the most important, is the willingness of Sarkozy's audience to receive his message. This willingness is linked to the political and social climate of the years leading up to the 2007 election, or more specifically 'une série d'événements générateurs d'angoisses relatives à l'identité de la France dans l'opinion publique depuis 2001' (2009: 26). He divides these 'générateurs d'angoisses' into three categories:

“(1) les craintes d'une dilution de l'identité française dans l'Europe et la mondialisation face à une situation économique déprimée, (2) les angoisses liées à la question migratoire, à la crise du melting-pot républicain et au *défi multiculturel*, dont découle (3) la difficile gestion de la question post-coloniale, illustrée par un débat vif sur la mémoire nationale et “la repentance” (ibid)

If Martigny's critique is to be accepted, the implication is that Sarkozy was following rather than leading events, adapting his discourse to take advantage of anxieties that were already 'in the air'. Certainly, there are a number of similarities between Martigny's 'générateurs d'angoisses' and my own list of recurring themes in Sarkozy's discourse. It is noticeable however that none of the authors I have examined identified

the threat to French identity from globalisation and the European Union as a key theme in Sarkozy's discourse; where there were 'threats' mentioned they came from immigrants, 'repentance' and *communautarisme*. This could perhaps be seen as evidence of a certain disconnect between Sarkozy's neo-liberal economic policy - which is in favour of globalisation and European free trade - and his 'national identity' agenda, which seemingly ignores this as a source of anxiety. In a text explicitly written in response to the creation of the new Ministry mentioned earlier, Agnès Maillot (2008), whose ideas I will return to shortly, argues that before 2007 no 'mainstream' presidential candidate had made national identity a priority. On similar lines to Martigny, however, she writes that 'en effet, à l'heure de l'élargissement de l'UE et de la mondialisation, ce thème ne manque pas de pertinence' (2008: 7)

Noiriel's answer to the question about the novelty of Sarkozy's discourse is in many ways comparable to that of Martigny. Having looked at the deep roots of conservative discourse on 'the nation', he too identifies a number of 'événements d'actualité qui mettent en scène des jeunes issus de l'immigration' (2007a: 79) in the early 2000s such as the 'affaire du voile islamique' of 2004 and the riots of 2005. Such events, he writes, served to establish a 'grille de lecture' (2007a: 80) in which Islam was represented as a threat to France by politicians, the media, and conservative intellectuals such as Alain Finkielkraut (the latter praised by Sarkozy in 2005 as 'un intellectuel qui fait honneur à l'intelligence française', see *Le Monde* 4.12.2005). Much of Sarkozy's pitch to the

electorate, as we have seen, came in the form of presenting himself as a candidate of 'rupture'; an outsider daring to speak the truth. It is Noiriel's argument that, intellectually, he had no right to do so. Again however, what was new was the prominent role played by the idea of national identity - 'Le thème de "l'identité nationale"', Noiriel writes, 'a été brutalement replacé au centre du débat public par Nicolas Sarkozy' (2007a: 81) - and his decision to give it a legal manifestation in the shape of the new Ministry. As he writes on this subject:

"Pour éternaliser le "problème", le plus sûr était en effet de l'étatiser. Mais lorsque des mots entrent dans le langage de l'État, leurs effets sont infiniment plus redoutables que des propos de campagne. L'association "immigration et identité nationale", dorénavant inscrite dans la loi, est devenue une catégorie de pensée et d'action qui s'impose à tous, quelle que soit l'actualité du jour" (2007a: 146)

The final authors to be examined on this question are Sylvie Tissot and Pierre Tévanian. In a compendium of their work under the umbrella of the collective 'Les mots sont importants' (2010), an essay entitled 'Qu'est-ce que le Sarkozysme?' sums up their attitude. The publication date of this collection is likely to be incidental, marking as it does ten years of the collective, although some of the later pieces touch upon the 'identity debate' of late 2009, as we shall see. Tévanian, it seems, has always seen his role as challenging power and official thinking, in words (eg. *La République du mépris*, 2007) and in deeds (signing the *Appel des Indigènes de la République*), and his writing style, generally more

polemical than the texts cited so far, is much in evidence in this collection.

In the essay mentioned above, the authors argue that Sarkozy's programme is the most unambiguously right-wing since World War 2:

“Jamais entre 1945 et 2007 un candidat de droite n'avait construit sa campagne sur l'ensemble des fondamentaux de la droite la plus droitière” (2010: 205)

At the same time, they find nothing new in it:

“Comme dans toute révolution conservatrice, il n'y rien d'absolument nouveau si l'on analyse séparément chaque segment idéologique ou imaginaire du programme, de la campagne et du personnage Sarkozy” (ibid)

They go on to place 'la synthèse Sarkozyste' (2010: 202) in the 'shameful' tradition of Pétain and Maurras, arguing that his electoral success is based on mobilising the most right-wing elements in French society. Much of the rest of the essay is devoted to asking why this 'mobilisation' was successful, and on this subject their analysis diverges from the works studied so far. They have two main arguments here. The first is that his massive media support - due to his close links with the business world - was a more important factor in his success than the 'quality' of his discourse. And the second, finally, is that he was helped by the weakness of the Left's 'counter-discourse': as they write, 'et si Sarkozy n'avait été fort que de la faiblesse de ses adversaires?' (2010: 209) The Left, they argue, had over the last 20 years accepted the Right's arguments on issues such as the security, the 'problem of immigration' and the need to ban the Muslim headscarf; 'vingt ans de

consensus libéral, sécuritaire et xénophobe' (2010: 211) allowed Sarkozy to run a 'hard-right' campaign without the need for compromise, while the Left was unable to provide effective opposition. As they sum up, 'la droite n'est donc pas devenue intelligente: elle est devenue hégémonique' (ibid).

Summing up, the predominant impression gained from a reading of the sources above is that Sarkozy's discourse is not in itself new, but that due to the political and social context of the period under discussion, it was able to find a receptive audience. This was a period in which anxieties around France's place in Europe and the world were ever-present, in which there were numerous media controversies surrounding France's Muslim population, and in which political parties of all persuasions seemingly accepted the Right's arguments on 'security'. Perhaps in such a climate, it was a question of turning events to his advantage, rather than necessarily creating anything 'new'. That is to say, Sarkozy managed to seize the political initiative, with the help of a discourse which took advantage of the inherently polysemic nature of republicanism in the French context.

Significance and meaning?

Before ending this section, I intend to examine the question of what contemporary authors see as the underlying significance of Sarkozy's discourse. As we have seen, in the discussion above of whether

Sarkozy's discourse was new there was one predominant interpretation which appeared, in various forms, in all the texts examined. This, to reiterate, was that this discourse was not inherently new, but that it fitted with the political and social context of the time. Similarly, a number of analysts also agree that issues of immigration and national identity have been used as a form of 'smokescreen', obscuring the genuinely important questions in French society.

For example, written following the announcement of the new 'Ministry of Immigration and National Identity', Agnès Maillot's 'Identité nationale et immigration: la liaison dangereuse' concludes that focusing relentlessly on immigration, and linking it to national identity, represents 'un écran de fumée pratique pour ceux qui veulent éviter un débat plus profond, tel celui qui pose la question des inégalités sociales, qu'elles soient culturelles ou économiques' (2008: 141). One of the underlying arguments behind Maillot's book is that 'la question identitaire n'est pertinente que si son objectif est d'atteindre une plus grande cohésion sociale' (2008: 8). She warns against using it for political purposes, and against reducing the idea solely to opposition to immigration. In the creation of the new Ministry she finds Sarkozy and Brice Hortefeux guilty on both of these counts. As she writes:

"En liant les thèmes de l'identité et de l'immigration, le nouveau ministère suppose une corrélation entre les deux, et ne cherche donc pas plus loin les possibles raisons de la crise d'identité que traverse le pays" (2008: 19)

It is Maillot's argument, then, that in the creation of the new Ministry, Sarkozy and Hortefeux lay the entire blame for a supposed 'crisis of identity' on immigration. This, she points out, is logically nonsensical. However, she does not deny the existence of a potential 'crisis of identity' in France, going on to list a number of possible - genuine - causes that Sarkozy and his allies ignore. These causes include the decline of industrial society, the erosion of class solidarity and the loss of communism as an alternative vision of society. As she concludes:

"On assiste donc à une érosion des liens sociaux traditionnels, de la solidarité de classe, ainsi qu'à une augmentation de la marginalisation et de l'exclusion" (2008: 20)

The picture, therefore, is of Sarkozy's preoccupation with national identity obscuring the truly important debates in French society. Maillot's critique shares some similarities with Pierre Nora's article in the 2008 *Cahiers français* special issue on national identity. Also written following the announcement of the new Ministry, in this article Nora declares himself to be in favour of talking openly about immigration, and discussing national identity, but against linking the two. He agrees with Sarkozy that there is 'crisis' of national identity, but like Maillot argues that it is wrong to attribute this crisis to immigration. Alternative factors he identifies include France's loss of power following the end of empire and 'l'altération des paramètres traditionnels de la souveraineté' linked to incorporation into the EU (2008: 8).

Tissot and Tévanian, in their essay 'Les dessous de l'identité nationale', argue on similar lines, albeit using a more class-based, Marxist-influenced analysis. Writing about the 'identity debate' of late 2009, the authors set out their interpretation of this discourse as '[une] stratégie de diversion et de division' (2010: 235). They sum up what they see as the political function of the focus on questions of national identity as follows:

"Il s'agit, en produisant des affects d'amour (de la patrie) et de haine (de "l'étranger"), d'"unir ceux qui pourraient s'opposer" (les petits blancs exploités et leurs exploiters blancs) tout en "divisant ceux qui pourraient s'unir" (les exploités blancs et non blancs, français et étrangers, musulmans et non musulmans)" (ibid)

Their call is for unity amongst the working class, on the basis that 'le travailleur français' has far more in common with his foreign, African or Muslim workmate or neighbour than with the political or business class. For Tissot and Tévanian, the 2009 debate, in fact the entire debate on the 'problem' of immigration and national identity, functions as a 'smokescreen'. As they write, 'il s'agit en somme d'occuper tout le terrain idéologique et médiatique afin d'écartier ou d'étouffer d'autres questions' (2010: 234). More specifically, 'la recherche d'une identité a pour fonction première d'évacuer la demande d'égalité' (ibid).

Related to the idea of national identity as a 'smokescreen', finally, is Alain Badiou's discussion of the 'politics of fear'. This comes in 'De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom?' (2007), the fourth in a series of five extended political essays written by the Marxist philosopher in the early years of the

21st century, and his biggest-selling text by some distance (*Marianne*, 18.12.2007). It is a highly critical work, and has numerous facets to its argument, of which this is only one. According to his conception of the idea, the privileged, 'dominant' classes feel that their privilege is under threat. This is translated into a 'fear' of 'des jeunes des banlieues, des musulmans, des noirs venus d'Afrique...' (2007: 9), which is in fact spread more widely throughout society. This fear, for many of the voters targeted by Sarkozy, 'crée le désir d'avoir un maître qui vous protège, fût-ce en vous opprimant et paupérisant plus encore' (ibid). Thus, in Badiou's view, fear goes hand in hand with the perpetuation of capitalist society: voters can be persuaded to act against their own economic interests for the sake of 'security'. For Badiou, this constant resort to the 'politics of fear' pushes aside far more important debates, such as those on the social effects of capitalism, and the necessity of creating an alliance with 'les habitants de "l'autre" monde' (2007: 11) - that is, the populations of the deprived global South, some of whom may emigrate to France and find themselves treated as criminals. For him, resorting to these 'politics of fear' and ignoring such important questions represents a failure amongst the political class as a whole.

In this section I have considered the question of what various authors see as the meaning and significance behind Sarkozy's discourse. It is noticeable that all these authors, although they approach the issue from different angles, conclude that this focus on questions of national identity and immigration is based on a wilful ignorance or a deliberate obfuscation

of the most important issues facing contemporary France. Perhaps it would be apposite, therefore, to end this discussion on Meyran's warning:

"Le sentiment d'identité nationale, sentiment diffus d'appartenir à une communauté de destin, existe probablement chez tout individu au sein d'un État-nation. Mais un tel sentiment est susceptible d'être manipulé au gré des idéologies dominantes." (2009: 10)

'Sarkozysme' and potential reasons for its success

The main thesis behind the Badiou text mentioned above is that Sarkozy is representative of a latent 'pétainisme' (2007: 18) in French society. This presents itself as a 'rupture' or 'revolution', but, in Badiou's view, is actually a capitulation. In Pétain's case the 'capitulation' was to Nazi Germany; in Sarkozy's, he argues, it is to international capitalism (2007: 106). This 'pétainisme', furthermore, claims to be reacting to a 'crise morale' (ibid), each version defining itself against a recent event that it was deemed necessary to repudiate: for the original the Front Populaire; for Sarkozy's version May '68 (2007: 108). Badiou's view of Sarkozy as a potential danger to French democracy and the Republic has been challenged by Thomas Legrand, author of *Ce n'est rien qu'un Président qui nous fait perdre du temps* (2010), who in an interview at rue89.com argues that 'contrairement à ce qu'il dit, il n'a rien révolutionné, il n'a même modernisé la gouvernance' (20.1.2010). Nevertheless, this part of

Badiou's argument brings to the surface an interesting question: is Sarkozy directly comparable with any one personality from French history?

There are a number of potential antecedents to Sarkozy, from Le Pen, to Poujade, to de Gaulle. It could be argued that he has taken aspects from all of these figures: from Le Pen, insistent focus on issues of immigration and national identity; from Poujade, anti-intellectualism and appeal to the lower-middle class; from de Gaulle, strong defence of 'the Republic' and self-presentation as a unifying figure above party politics, and so on.

There are also those who place Sarkozy within a certain French intellectual current, such as Charles Tshimanga (in Tshimanga, Gondola and Bloom (eds), 2009) who places Sarkozy in the lineage of 'New Right' political thinking. As he writes, 'the central thesis that the New Right sells to the public as "common sense" is that an immutable French identity has existed since the dawn of time' (2009: 266). It is his argument that the 'New Right' notion of national identity has become dominant over the last 30 years, marginalising ethnic minorities as 'dangerous foreigners' and enabling a succession of conservative politicians to mask their failures on issues such as unemployment. I would argue that Sarkozy could not be considered as the successor to any single personality in French political history, or even be considered as belonging, at least not entirely, to any one school of political thought. What could be argued, however, is that Sarkozy's discourse is made up of a synthesis of existing right-wing ideas, seemingly chosen because of their pertinence to the period in which he is operating. Philippe Marlière argues on similar lines

in the November 2007 issue of *Modern and Contemporary France*, claiming that Sarkozy 'pragmatically rotates' (2007: 9) between the long-standing currents of right-wing French thought (Bonapartist, Orleanist, legitimist) for reasons of political expediency. In the same issue, Nick Hewlett places Sarkozy in the Bonapartist tradition: an 'authoritarian but charismatic leader' taking advantage of 'disarray amongst other political forces' and emphasising 'nationalism and national unity', 'modernisation and progress' (2007: 3).

So, what else is 'Sarkozysme', other than the 'synthesis' mentioned above? As was touched upon earlier in this chapter, much of Sarkozy's discourse could be termed as 'populist'. This can be quite an elusive term, but based on several discussions of the subject (Taguieff 2007, Berezin 2009, Birnbaum 1995) there would appear to be a number of recurrent elements. These elements include anti-intellectualism, rejection of 'ideology', opposition of the 'real people' against the corrupt or dishonest political élites, and definition of 'us' against perceived enemies who are 'the other'. On this basis, it could perhaps be argued that Sarkozy bears more resemblance to the 'national populist' movements that came to prominence in Western Europe in the early 2000s (in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Austria and Switzerland amongst others) than to any one antecedent in France. Throughout Europe in this period such movements have played upon worries about globalisation, immigration, demographics and radical Islam, as arguably has Sarkozy during his time in the political spotlight. Of course, it must be pointed out that these movements were

explicitly anti-system whereas Sarkozy is coming from a well-established parliamentary Right, but there are numerous rhetorical similarities to be found.

As Maillot pointed out earlier in the chapter, furthermore, there has at the same time been a move away from relatively stable class-based politics, in favour of individualistic 'values and identity' politics. As Olivier Duhamel, Professor of Political Science at Sciences Po, wrote in the pages of *Le Monde*:

“C'est la droite populiste xénophobe qui offre aujourd'hui cette réponse simple aux souffrances, en disant “vous souffrez à cause de tous ces gens pas comme nous”. Et c'est efficace.” (25.9.2010)

And Mabel Berezin, Associate Professor of Sociology at Cornell University, argues along similar lines in her book 'Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times':

“The assortment of phenomena that populism embraces as its own is a *cri de coeur* over social assumptions that were hard won and developed in the nineteenth century, fully institutionalised in the twentieth century – but that appear to be approaching obsolescence in the twenty-first century” (2009: 36)

It is Sarkozy's skill – and, I would argue, a major reason for his success – that he was able to use this climate to his advantage. He articulated a discourse with substantial populist and nationalist overtones, but did so from within a major mainstream party, benefiting from the respectability inherent to his position to gain the votes of those who may agree with

aspects of FN ideology, but who do not see themselves as 'extremists'. At the same time, he was able to avoid alienating more moderate voters, thus was able to build a substantial electoral coalition. Certainly, it is possible to point out a number of contradictions within his discourse, as I have done throughout this chapter, but for the majority of voters it would seem to have been unimportant.

In this chapter I have considered the question of what makes up Sarkozy's discourse on national identity, as a means of understanding the context within which anti-racism was operating during the period examined in the thesis. The main section of the chapter examined the key features of this discourse, all of which, as was noted earlier, arguably fit into a logic of 'us against them'. The choice of these features – history, anti-repentance and the Republic – allowed me to discuss a number of central debates with which the anti-racist movement was heavily involved: the construction of a conservative and essentialist conception of national identity, and the concomitant presentation of immigration as a threat and populations of post-colonial immigrant origin as inherently 'incompatible'; controversies around colonial memory; the issues caused by the existence of a consensus on the language of republicanism but not its underlying meaning; and the use of *communautarisme* as a rhetorical tool serving to stoke fears around immigration, crime and Islamic fundamentalism. I then looked at contemporary analysis of Sarkozy's discourse, noting that the majority of authors under review considered that this discourse could be seen as a form of 'smokescreen', and that

although it is not entirely new, it is well tailored to the context in which it is being pronounced. I ended, finally, with my own thoughts on what this discourse is, concluding that although it could be seen as a synthesis of several strands of French right-wing thought, it arguably has more in common with Western European 'national populist' movements of the early 2000s. The reaction of anti-racist groups to this discourse and political context is a central theme in the following chapters, the first of which introduces the two movements examined in the thesis: SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République.

Chapter 3

SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République,

2005-2009: an introduction

In this thesis, I examine two central research questions. The first of these asks how anti-racist movements in France have reacted to the political context of 2005-2009, a context defined by Nicolas Sarkozy's hard-line conservative positions on national identity and immigration, as well as by the claims made by political actors from across the ideological spectrum to France's self-proclaimed political culture of universalist republicanism. The second, meanwhile, considers the positions of SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République – chosen because of their substantial differences in this regard – in relation to this republican political culture: these differing relationships largely inform these two movements' policies and viewpoints when faced with the political context of my chosen period. These questions will inform the three 'case-study' chapters which follow. Before moving on to these chapters, this final contextual chapter introduces SOS, MIR and their ideologies and strategies over the years examined in the thesis, keeping in mind three major questions: what were the key elements of the groups' thought and principles during this period? What, based on the evidence of initiatives taken over the years examined in the thesis, were their stances in relation to mainstream political culture? And what approaches did they employ in order to communicate their message?

While SOS Racisme has been the subject of a number of academic examinations, these focus, almost without exception, on the movement's peak of media visibility and mainstream political support in the 1980s⁶. This was, as noted in chapter 1, a very different political context to the one under discussion in my thesis. It was a time when the Left was in power and was receptive to the anti-racist cause, even if this had ambiguous effects for the wider movement, in that the autonomous *Beur* associations which brought anti-racism to the forefront of political debate circa 1983-84 found themselves displaced from the limelight by the more 'consensual', Socialist Party- backed SOS (Bouamama 1994, Abdallah 2000). As for MIR, in its short life so far it has provoked a number of controversies and polemics, due to its outspoken criticisms of France's republican political structures and its insistence on the acknowledgement of race, Islamophobia and the history and legacy of colonialism, but less in the way of impartial analysis. This chapter hopes to address these issues, and in doing so, to provide an overview of some of the key debates in French anti-racism over 2005-2009. In terms of structure, the chapter is divided into two sub-sections, the first looking at SOS and the second looking at MIR. In each of these sections, I will begin by considering the movement under discussion in relation to Alana Lentin's useful idea of a continuum of proximity to and distance from mainstream political culture. I will then, very briefly, consider the context of each

⁶ As can be seen in chapter 1, the movement over this period was examined by well-known analysts of racism and anti-racism such as Pierre André Taguieff (1987, 1995); former *Beur* activists such as Saïd Bouamama (1994) and Mogniss H. Abdallah (2000); and its own key figures such as Harlem Désir (1987) and Julien Dray (1987), amongst many others.

movement's foundation, and the influence this has had on its contemporary positioning. The centre of each section will consist of an introduction to the key points of the movements' ideology and strategy, illustrated with examples from relevant initiatives taken between 2005 and 2009. I will end my analysis of each movement with a concluding discussion, considering how the positions I have examined may have affected their reactions to Sarkozy's discourse.

Let us recap, firstly, the key defining characteristics of the context within which the anti-racist movement had to act between 2005 and 2009. As we have seen in chapter 2, Nicolas Sarkozy's discourse on race, immigration and national identity has been one of the defining themes of recent French politics. Less attention, however, has been afforded to groups which may consider it their role to present an alternative view of society. This chapter, therefore, serves to introduce the worldviews and policy positions of the two contrasting anti-racist groups examined in this thesis in relation to the political climate of 2005-2009, during which as a highly visible Interior Minister, Presidential candidate and finally President, Sarkozy was apparently omnipresent in French politics, becoming associated with a conservative, backwards-looking and implicitly intolerant discourse on national identity. This discourse was particularly visible during the 2007 presidential election campaign, and has three major linked components. The first of these is a narrow and arguably exclusionary conception of history, according to which there is a single version of the French past, to be learned and respected by every French

inhabitant, with no consideration of alternative perspectives such as those of families with a background in the (former) colonies. Linked to this is a denunciation of 'repentance' aimed at those who reject his conception of history: as Sarkozy puts it in his 2007 speech in Metz, 'Je n'accepte pas ce dénigrement systématique de la nation qui est la forme ultime de la détestation de soi' (Discours de Nicolas Sarkozy à Metz, 17.4.2007).

Much of Sarkozy's discourse had a deliberately socially divisive subtext, and in this case two groups are targeted: critical historians, presented as an out-of-touch élite who rewrite history in order to vilify the nation, the better to reinforce his self-presentation as a straight-talking man of the people; and populations of immigrant origin, whose continuing demand for recognition of the violence and oppression of the colonial period, and their contemporary consequences, is reduced to refusal to integrate and 'hatred of France'. The third component is a repeated rhetorical use of the Republic, defined almost entirely by what it is not, the resulting list of threats to society drawing heavily on years of headlines relating to Muslim cultural practices of negligible (at best) importance to wider society: the Burqa, forced marriages, Halal meat and so on. These threats were then subsumed in Sarkozy's rhetoric into the overarching menace of *communautarisme*, a term which refers to the consequences of multiculturalism as perceived by a French audience, that is to say, of populations feeling their loyalty to be primarily towards an ethnic or religious group, rather than the Republic.

This political climate was a difficult one for both movements examined in this chapter, despite their substantial differences in orientation. The radical post-colonial movement MIR, with its emphasis on the importance of colonial memory, belief that universalist republican ideology lies behind the subjugation of colonial populations and their descendants in contemporary France, and promotion of a form of multiculturalism as a model for society, was almost directly at odds with prevailing political thought in France. For SOS, perhaps the best-known anti-racist group in France, the relationship with the dominant discourse associated with Sarkozy was more ambiguous. This ambiguity, to a large extent, was caused by the existence of an apparent consensus on the language of republicanism, coupled with an apparent lack of consensus on its underlying meaning. Like Sarkozy, SOS activists proclaim themselves to be in favour of the Republic, and against *communautarisme* and too much emphasis on colonial memory, and it is only with detailed knowledge of the intended subtexts that the differences between their positions become clear.

Let us begin this introductory review of my two chosen movements, then, by looking at SOS Racisme.

SOS Racisme 2005-2009: republicanism, pragmatism and consensus

Alana Lentin argues that anti-racism can be characterised as 'existing along a continuum of proximity-to-distance from the public political culture of the nation-state' (2004: 1). Groups which fall at the 'proximity' end of the spectrum see anti-racism as synonymous with 'democracy, solidarity, freedom, equality, tolerance, respect and dignity' (2004: 2), and most importantly, see such principles as inherent to the state in which they operate. In other words, as Lentin puts it, the position of proximity to public political culture 'relates the principles of anti-racism to the historically constructed ideologies of the democratic European nation-state' (ibid). Movements which adopt this stance can and do criticise the state's actions, but this criticism does not alter their 'belief in the just nature of the principles upon which the dominant political thought is founded' (2004: 3). The goal of this form of anti-racism therefore is to appeal to as many people as possible, via a discourse which emphasises pride in national traditions of liberalism, tolerance and anti-fascism. There are, however, potential negative consequences in adopting this stance: such movements can be 'neglectful of the exclusion of the racialised, the non-national or minority-ethnic groups' (2004: 235), and can often 'overlook the origins of the racialisation process' (ibid) – thus finding themselves unable to articulate a discourse which appeals to the victims of racism and exclusion themselves. In the French case, the position of proximity can be seen in SOS, which during the years between 2005 and 2009 has demonstrated an unshakeable faith in the universalist republican values of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, regardless of the uses they are put to by political adversaries such as Sarkozy. As we shall see,

this can be contrasted with the position of MIR, which sees such values as having rarely, if ever, lived up to their claims, and thus sees grounds for calling them into question.

SOS Racisme was formed in 1984. According to the movement's self-published histories it was founded by a group of friends, who were angry about one of them – a young Senegalese man – being falsely accused of stealing a woman's purse (*Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme*, 2006). Whether or not this incident happened is unclear, but in any case, it can be stated with confidence that the association was initially made up of a coalition of students and left-wing political and union activists, organised around Julien Dray, now a socialist deputy in the French National Assembly (Dray, 1987). SOS was the subject of a number of criticisms from the existing French anti-racist movement, notably from the autonomous movement of French North Africans (a tradition which MIR is arguably attempting to take up) which grew up in the early 1980s, many of whose members felt they had been usurped by a movement seen to be controlled by the Socialist Party for the latter's own electoral gain. However, it soon became a phenomenon, and came to be associated in the public mind with massive, heavily mediatised public events – a free music festival at the Place de la Concorde in 1985 attracting 300,000 people – and a form of liberal multiculturalism known as 'the right to difference' (*le droit à la différence*). However, as long ago as 1990, the organisation's founding president Harlem Désir was claiming, in an interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*, that this widespread interpretation

of the association's philosophy was mistaken, stating that 'nous n'avons jamais fait du droit à la différence le principe de notre action' ('Harlem Désir: Vive la nation!', 13.6.1990). Adrian Favell (1998), meanwhile, argues that SOS, having found itself on the wrong side of public opinion over the Gulf War and the first 'headscarf affair' in the early 1990s, chose to become part of a growing republican consensus, thereafter articulating a discourse which stressed equality of opportunity, *laïcité*, and 'colour-blindness' in relation to race.

Regardless of when, or if, the conversion happened, it is evident that SOS, over my chosen timeframe, saw its role as promoting and defending republican values. Problematically for the organisation however, Sarkozy derived much of his popular pitch from the same consensual terms of reference. It is of course clear, as Gérard Noiriel (2007a) and others have convincingly pointed out, that in the case of Sarkozy and his political associates, the appeal to republican tradition is combined with an implicit scapegoating of groups held to infringe its values – a process supported by negative media coverage of Islamism and at a deeper level by an exploitation of anxieties about French identity in the globalised, post-colonial world. To contest Sarkozian discourse and policy, SOS alleges the perversion of republican ideology. For example, in response to the "great debate" on national identity launched by the Sarkozy government in 2009, SOS President Dominique Sopo is forthright: 'Le jargon républicain utilisé dans le présent débat ne saurait ici faire illusion. Le débat sur l'identité nationale est fondamentalement

nauséabond.’ (‘Identité nationale: “un débat à rebours”’, 2009). Despite the apparently mainstream and consensual nature of its discourse, SOS has found itself increasingly at odds with government initiatives, and its task has been to expose and challenge the government’s conservative and exclusionary conceptualisation of national identity, preferring to emphasise the mixed and inclusive society which the association has consistently argued is closer to the founding principles of the Republic.

SOS maintains that republican values, authentically applied, provide a true basis for an anti-racist strategy. Its central role therefore is to promote adherence to the founding principles of the Republic amongst the political establishment, and its initiatives are consistent with this aim, for example the ‘night of testing’ in 2007, in which racial discrimination is exposed by having young people of visibly different ethnic origin enter, for instance, the same nightclub, refusals of admission based on race potentially being punished via legal action (SOS Racisme, ‘Une nouvelle nuit du testing pour SOS Racisme’, 2007). In addition, SOS challenged the government’s setting of deportation targets, which were argued to infringe the republican value of ‘indivisible fraternity’:

“Parce que ses fondements et ce qu’elle entraîne sont profondément contraires à l’idée que nous nous faisons de la dignité humaine et mettent en péril l’idéal de fraternité indissociable de la promesse républicaine, nous appelons le Gouvernement à mettre fin à sa politique du chiffre en matière d’expulsions.” (SOS Racisme, ‘Manifeste “30.000 expulsions, c’est la honte”’, 2009)

SOS's 2007 publication *Manifeste pour l'égalité* affirms its position as follows:

“Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité”. La devise de notre République renferme en elle les valeurs les plus belles et les plus universelles. Appliquer la devise républicaine, c'est après tout la meilleure garantie de vivre dans une société débarrassée des miasmes du racisme, de l'antisémitisme et des discriminations.” (2007: 11)

Sopo of course recognises the discrepancy between language and lived reality. Inscribing equality in law is far from creating an egalitarian Republic, as he acknowledges in his 2005 book *SOS antiracisme*. All too often, he argues, 'une équivalence est posée entre l'existence juridique des principes et leur inscription dans la vie quotidienne. Comme si consigner l'égalité dans les lois faisait *ipso facto* de notre pays une république égalitaire!' (2005: 38). Nevertheless, for SOS the Republic is always the solution, never the problem. There may be deep faults in the Republic, but the way to eradicate them is to strive continuously to make republican equality work. As the association's 2007 'mission statement' declares, 'lorsqu'il existe des failles dans la République, le seul moyen de résorber ces failles, c'est bien d'avoir l'ambition de faire vivre l'égalité républicaine' (SOS Racisme, 'Nos Missions', 2007). This consistent position, as will be shown, contrasts with that of MIR, whose key thinkers see contradictions within the ideology – for example between proclaimed universalism and colonial mentalities – and who therefore seek to call it into question.

A consequence of SOS's fundamentalist republicanism is a hostility towards *communautarisme* which, ostensibly at least, it shares with Sarkozy: *communautarisme* is held by both to be inherently anti-republican. In his 2007 Metz speech, Sarkozy presents it as undermining universalism ('Le communautarisme, c'est [...] la fin de notre conception universaliste de l'Homme'), while SOS presents it as a danger on a level with 'fascism':

“Nôtre rôle, c'est [...] de contribuer à ce que de nouvelles générations s'engagent dans le combat antiraciste pour affirmer qu'il est urgent de lutter contre le fascisme et le communautarisme, pour construire une société qui refuse que les gens se construisent les uns contre les autres.” (SOS Racisme, 'Nos Missions', 2007)

However, context and sub-text create significant contrasts, Sarkozy's arguments appearing to stigmatise French Muslims and *banlieue* inhabitants more generally. As Loïc Rigaud, head of SOS's anti-discrimination section, put it in a 2011 interview:

“Comme Sarkozy, on veut lutter contre le communautarisme. Il faut bien savoir qu'est-ce que le communautarisme et où il se situe, et non pas se servir de ce mot-là pour stigmatiser l'ensemble d'une population. On ne doit pas utiliser le mot à des fins politiques et électoralistes – ce qui fait Sarkozy.” (Interview with Loïc Rigaud, 29.3.2011)

SOS sees *communautarisme* as a self-protecting mechanism which essentially can only be fought by challenging discrimination and poverty;

for Sarkozy on the other hand the term functions as a code-word, tapping into a semantic field of ‘threats to society’ – from radical Islam, social disorder and illegal immigration. The extent to which such nuances and differences of emphasis would be clear to a general audience unaware of the finer points of the movement’s ideology, however, can undoubtedly be called into question.

SOS’s campaigning strategies over the period examined in the current work derive directly from its determination to reinforce republican ideals, particularly in relation to equality. The approach is practical and low-key, contrasting with its (possibly unfair) perceived popular 1980s association with spectacle and showbusiness. This approach can be illustrated by a number of initiatives taken by the movement within the timeframe discussed in the opening paragraph. In keeping with the pragmatism of SOS’s approach during my chosen period, the ‘Manifeste pour l’égalité’ of 2007, to take one example, promised ‘un échange sérieux et technique sur la base de propositions réfléchies, efficaces mais surtout à l’épreuve de la réalité’ (SOS Racisme, ‘SOS Racisme a organisé les “États Généraux pour l’Égalité” les 27, 28 et 29 octobre à l’Hôtel de Ville de Paris’, 2006). The final document contains 60 ‘propositions pour l’égalité’, divided into six categories: ‘Emploi’, ‘Education’, ‘Culture et vie associative’, ‘Logement’, ‘Police et Justice’ and ‘Médias et banlieues’. It would be impractical to summarise all of these propositions, but to take a few illustrative examples, plans in employment include obligatory anonymous CVs, designed to negate possible racial discrimination

amongst employers (2007: 62); in education it is suggested that preparatory classes for the *grandes écoles* are offered in ‘les lycées dits “sensibles”’ (2007: 95); cultural proposals include making ‘high cultural’ sites (concert halls, opera houses, museums) available for ‘[les] productions artistiques issues de la culture urbaine’ (2007: 121); their policies on housing include greatly increasing the construction of social housing (2007: 135) and ensuring that each new housing development contains 10% ‘logements à loyer modéré’ (2007: 138), and so on. These measures emphasise concrete action against discrimination and inequality – as opposed to MIR’s more theoretical and ideological approach – and support SOS’s self-perception as part of the mainstream decision-making process in French politics. Further evidence of this self-perception can be seen in the ‘États Généraux’ from which the movement’s proposals arose: with its combination of meetings amongst ‘acteurs sociaux qui œuvrent dans les quartiers’ and presentations to ‘grandes formations politiques’ (SOS Racisme, ‘SOS Racisme a organisé les “États Généraux pour l’Égalité” les 27, 28 et 29 octobre à l’Hôtel de Ville de Paris’, 2006), this event posits SOS as an intermediary between the world of the *quartiers* and the world of mainstream politics, and shows that although the movement no longer has an overt relationship with any political parties, it evidently still sees its role as attempting to lobby and influence political institutions from within, rather than trying to challenge them from the outside.

The policy of 'testing', carried out continuously by the association since the start of the 21st century, similarly stresses practical action in favour of republican 'colour-blindness', providing theatrical and media-friendly proof of racial discrimination. Whilst challenging discrimination may seem a fundamental objective for an anti-racist movement, critics such as Robert Gibb (2003b) see this narrow focus as a dilution of the anti-racist movement's potential to fight for a new conceptualisation of society, due to the way in which 'la discrimination est considérée sous l'angle unique d'un rapport entre deux individus', thus ignoring 'le caractère structurel et structurant du racisme au sein de la société française'. Although Gibb's article predates the foundation of MIR, his argument shares with this movement an emphasis on racism and discrimination as systemic, rather than something which can be treated as a conventional crime, with a perpetrator and a victim. This failure to consider the structural nature of racism, in favour of 'colour-blindness' and anti-discrimination, is arguably a weakness of SOS's discourse, as it does not take into account (as MIR points out) the racial hierarchies hidden behind the formal equality of the French state, or the way in which subconsciously held opinions and prejudices, resulting from an entire history of representations of colonial and post-colonial populations, can influence behaviour. SOS's rejection of the idea that racism is systemic can be seen as an inevitable consequence of the 'republican consensus' discussed earlier: if a movement bases its appeal on republican values it is unlikely to call into question the structures of a state which theoretically embodies such values. MIR on the other hand, as an autonomous movement in thought

and action, feels able to challenge the mainstream consensus and propose radical alternative viewpoints (Gemie 2010).

So, based on these initiatives, and the association's official literature, how can the positions of SOS during the years 2005-2009 be summed up?

Firstly, its approach during this period was generally practical and low-key, contrasting with its heyday of media visibility in the mid-1980s, although the movement was clearly still aware of the importance of media profile as can be seen in its rationale for 'testing': as the originator of the policy, former SOS President Malek Boutih, put it in 2001, 'je reconnais que nous n'apportons rien d'autre qu'une preuve théâtralisée dont se nourrissent les médias' (2001: 92). Secondly, in terms of political ideology, its position was relatively straightforward – promoting republican values and pressing for their proper implementation. Conversely there is a hostility towards *communautarisme* and towards non-republican forms of anti-racism, notably that described by Sopo as 'exotico-victimaire' (2005: 26) in which communities become 'trapped' in the role of victims, past suffering becoming an essential support for their identity. This criticism on the part of SOS, one similar to many received by MIR from critics of its emphasis on colonial memory, will be examined in greater detail in chapter 5.

Finally, how do the organisation's political and ideological stances affect its reactions to Sarkozy's discourse? As discussed above, there are superficial discursive similarities, but I would argue that these are an

occupational hazard for any group working in the field of mainstream French politics. Republicanism, as a highly flexible concept, is supported in some form by all mainstream political organisations in France, so the battle to define exactly what it means is of vital importance. As Philippe Petit and Alexis Lacroix wrote in *Marianne* in 2011, 'La République étant, à la fois, une idée, un corps de doctrines, des principes et un idéal, elle appartient à tous et – c'est bien là le problème – chacun peut s'en réclamer: de Jean-Luc Mélenchon à Marine Le Pen' ('République-démocratie: reprenons le débat!', 22.1.2011). Essentially SOS is fighting to ensure that its interpretation of republicanism, stressing equality and tolerance, prevails in the public debate, rather than that of Sarkozy, where the concept is used as cover for the stigmatisation of supposedly 'incompatible' groups within French society. The movement has had a certain amount of success imposing its agenda over recent years, seeing its proposal for anonymous CVs discussed in the French Senate, albeit without them eventually becoming compulsory (*Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme*, 2006: 109); claiming responsibility for the defeat of Sarkozy's plans for DNA testing of immigrants (as Rigaud notes, 'Nous avons mis en échec les tests ADN pour les immigrés, qui vérifieraient les liens parentaux qu'ils ont avec leurs enfants.');

and arguably contributing to the political failure of 2009's 'great debate' on national identity, following which Sarkozy's ruling UMP were defeated comprehensively in the regional elections of January 2010, via a petition published in the left-wing newspaper *Libération* which received tens of thousands of

signatures (SOS Racisme, 'Arrêtez ce débat, monsieur le Président!', 2009).

Somewhat confusingly however, due to the constraints of mainstream French political language, much of the movement's discourse is expressed in almost exactly the same terms of that of its adversaries. This makes it very difficult for SOS to get its message across, a problem only exacerbated by the massive imbalance in media visibility between the official viewpoint and that of even the best-known social movement. Certainly, the organisation makes use of the tools at its disposal: awareness-raising concerts, online petitions, even the policy of *testing* has one eye on media visibility. In the end however, how can SOS articulate a distinctive and memorable campaigning discourse when the fight is over definitions of words, rather than black and white policy differences? It is not certain whether the movement found a satisfactory answer to this question over the years examined in the chapter. What is more, as SOS sees France's mainstream republican political culture as both inherently just and inherently supportive of the aims of anti-racism, it is difficult to see how the organisation can have much room for manoeuvre in terms of the promotion of a new alternative discourse.

The Mouvement des Indigènes de la République 2005-2009: radicalism,
autonomy and anti-colonialism

Before moving on to consider the values and strategies of the *Mouvement des Indigènes de la République* over the same period, I will consider how Lentin's schema relates to this movement. As we have seen, SOS can be located at the 'proximity' end of her proposed continuum. MIR, on the other hand, could be placed towards the 'distance' end of this continuum, a position in which groups consider the essence of anti-racism to be 'emancipation, empowerment, resistance, liberation and self-determination' (2004: 2). An emphasis on these factors, as Lentin points out, 'denote[s] a critique of the state's readiness to guarantee freedom and equality, justice and fairness' (ibid).

Furthermore, this association between anti-racism, and emancipation and resistance carries with it the idea that public political culture is either complicit in or responsible for racism in contemporary society: 'Far from supposing an extension of rights and freedoms', Lentin writes, 'democratic political thought is regarded as existing in an historically ambivalent relationship with their parallel denial to certain groups, known as 'inferior races'.' (2004: 3) MIR, with its radical critique of republican ideology, seen as being used to justify the suppression of colonial populations, and its view that France remains a colonial state at the level of stereotypes and representations of post-colonial populations, the discrimination they face and their treatment by the police and justice system, can be placed at this end of Lentin's continuum, providing a striking contrast with SOS. Inevitably however, there are negative consequences to this positioning: MIR's questioning of universalist republicanism – the founding ideology of the modern French state and a

continuing source of national pride – immediately denies it the support of a large majority of the French population, ensuring that its status can never, in all likelihood, be anything more than that of an anti-system pressure group. SOS on the other hand, despite (or because of) its moderate, consensual and relatively unambitious positioning, can have a realistic hope of influencing government policy, particularly in the event of the Socialist Party – with which the movement has numerous links at the level of personnel – being in power.

Opposition to colonialism and its legacy is a key aspect of MIR's ideology. The group was formed in 2005, during a period in which debates about France's colonial past and its contemporary diversity were particularly intense. As Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch wrote in 2009:

“[L]e thème colonial a-t-il resurgi dans la société française sous la forme de représentations réactivées notamment pour des besoins politiques. Mais il s'agit aussi de la résurgence d'une réalité (et pas seulement d'un imaginaire): la “non-décolonisation” de la société française. Un demi-siècle après les indépendances, le fait colonial et / ou esclavagiste n'a jamais été aussi présent dans les médias, dans les publications, dans les commentaires politiques et dans les lois.” (2009: 166)

Much of this debate derived from the proposed law of 23rd February 2005 which evoked the ‘positive aspects’ of colonialism, before this reference was removed by order of Jacques Chirac, the President at the time.

Conservative-leaning academics, for example Daniel Lefeuvre in *Pour en*

finir avec la repentance coloniale also, like Sarkozy, addressed and denounced ‘repentance’. The bitterness of the debate can be gauged from the unacademic strength of Lefeuvre’s language: ‘Prétendre que les Français doivent faire acte de repentance pour expier la page coloniale de leur histoire et réduire les fractures de la société française relève du charlatanisme ou de l’aveuglement’ (2006: 229). Later, in 2007, Sarkozy’s fierce attacks on critics of the rehabilitation of colonialism and of his highly conservative framing of French history constituted a prominent strand in his presidential election campaign. The *Indigènes* were undoubtedly implicated in, and responsive to, this climate of debate. Lefeuvre for instance writes ironically of the new generation of anti-colonialists who ‘mène combat sur les plateaux de télévision et dans la presse politiquement correcte [...] multipliant les appels ou les pétitions en faveur des “indigènes de la République”’ (2006: 7).

As argued earlier, Sarkozy’s preoccupation with issues of colonialism and ‘repentance’ may in part have been framed to differentiate himself from his predecessor Chirac, who had shown some willingness to reappraise aspects of French history, for example recognising the state’s complicity in the mass round-up of Jews at the *Vélodrome d’Hiver* in 1942, promoting a law declaring slavery a crime against humanity and apologising, through the French Ambassador to Algeria, for the Sétif massacre of 1945. As Vincent Martigny (2009) has argued, such concessions were seen by many older, more conservative sections of the electorate as signs of weakness and decline, and Sarkozy was able to

catch this mood by exploiting social anxieties and simultaneously capitalising on a nostalgia for France's great colonial past. Two groups bore the brunt of his electioneering rhetoric: firstly, critical historians, usually left-wing, who could be presented as an out-of-touch élite thus reinforcing Sarkozy's own populist credentials; and secondly, immigrants and their descendants who were challenging a view of history which served seemingly to exclude them and to deny the validity of their own memory. In this climate, MIR was both responding to a prevailing discourse and arguably helping set an agenda, by keeping unwelcome issues of colonialism and multiculturalism in the public eye.

For MIR there are undeniable continuities between contemporary France and the colonial period. Their founding document, the *Appel des Indigènes de la République* of January 2005, forcefully makes this point:

“Discriminés à l'embauche, au logement, à la santé, à l'école et aux loisirs, les personnes issues des colonies, anciennes ou actuelles, et de l'immigration post-coloniale sont les premières victimes de l'exclusion sociale et de la précarisation. Indépendamment de leurs origines effectives, les populations des “quartiers” sont “indigénisées”, reléguées aux marges de la société.”

This self-identification as *indigènes* has proved highly controversial. Dulucq and Klein note that in the colonial context, 'indigène' is 'une classification ethno-raciale', often confused with 'sujet', which is 'une catégorie politico-juridique' (2008: 55). For MIR however, its connotations are clear: the term is taken to refer to a non-white inhabitant

of the French colonies, denied full citizen status, denied equality in the hierarchy of civilisations and in many cases, denied equality before the law through subjection to the *code de l'indigénat*, under which colonial administrators were able to apply disciplinary sanctions without judicial procedure. Sadri Khiari, one of the movement's founders, sums up the rationale for the use of the term by arguing that whilst *indigène* no longer exists as a legal status in the (self-proclaimed) universalist and egalitarian Republic, the stereotypes and racial hierarchies forged in the colonial period continue to make their presence felt:

“‘Nous sommes les indigènes de la République’ signifie: la République se prétend égalitaire et universelle; l'indigène n'existe certes plus en tant que statut juridique, pourtant, sous des formes renouvelées, souvent inédites, le ‘régime de l'indigénat’ hante continûment institutions, pratiques et idéologies.” (2006: 17)

In his postface to *Manifeste pour l'égalité*, SOS president Dominique Sopo challenges the above position, arguing that the status of *indigène* in colonial times was ‘un statut de négation de la citoyenneté, qui ne reconnaissait aucun droit, aucune liberté à nos ancêtres’ (2007: 182). In contemporary France, on the other hand, ‘nous sommes libres et citoyens’ (ibid). Nevertheless it is possible to see the appeal of MIR's contention for those who feel that the Republic's declared principles are not, and indeed never were quite what they claimed to be. Many supporters of MIR, furthermore, dismiss the semantic debate as reductive. Saïd Bouamama, sociologist and signatory of the *Appel*, for example

points out that the juxtaposition of the colonial period and contemporary France is figurative and not literal. What is important in his view is the continuity of processes, logics and representations between the two periods (2009: 110).

As we will see in chapter 5, this disagreement between the two movements on the issue of the potential continuities between the colonial period and contemporary France is a fundamental ideological cleavage. Dominique Sopo argues that a combination of what he calls 'la mauvaise conscience postcoloniale' (2005: 27) and 'l'approche communautariste de l'antiracisme' (2005: 26) leads to a 'concurrence morbide des drames subis dans l'Histoire par telle ou telle population' (2005: 27), real historical hardship leading by this means to an unproductive inability to define identity other than through confrontation (2005: 29). For Sopo there is no way forward if social groups, finding a kind of pride in their status as victims, abandon the struggle for equality within the republican framework.

For MIR on the other hand, remembering and understanding colonialism is a central task for French anti-racism. The present Republic is seen as inextricably bound up with the colonial mindset, which itself derives from historical republican discourse. Houria Boutledja, MIR spokesperson and de facto leader, eloquently expressed this linkage in a 2011 interview:

“Dans ces structures, elle [la République] est considérée comme émancipatrice, comme universaliste, comme droit-de-l'homme, etc., mais c'est parfaitement bien accommodée au colonialisme. Ce qui nous

intéresse, c'est la contradiction profonde entre le fait qu'on peut être un citoyen français libre, et, en même temps, imposer la soumission, la domination, au peuple colonisé. [...] Et cette contradiction profonde existe par rapport à l'histoire coloniale, et aussi par rapport au présent postcoloniale, puisque la France est toujours, officiellement, émancipatrice et universelle. Mais en même temps, elle discrimine tout le temps." (Interview with Houria Bouteldja, 9.8.2011)

According to a 2005 MIR statement, the difference between the idealised ('fantasy') and the real republic must be understood. The ostensible defender of universal human rights has, in the name of this same universalism, engaged in what MIR sees as the crime of colonial exploitation and subjugation:

"La République dont nous parlons, nous la regardons dans ses œuvres et au ras de ses pratiques, non dans les discours qu'elle tient sur elle-même. Si nous dénonçons avec vigueur certaines œuvres de la République réelle comme la colonisation et la répression, l'exclusion et le racisme, nous ne perdons pas notre temps à évoquer la République rêvée, celle qui définit un monde qui n'a eu d'existence ou si peu, et dont la seule fonction historique aura été de masquer, précisément, la République réelle." (Héricord, Lévy and Khiari, 'Indigènes de la République, réponses à quelques objections...', 2005)

Khiari, similarly, argues that French racism has, through the colonial enterprise, become progressively institutionalised, leading to what he calls a 'republican pact' based on race and ethnicity which belies the republican claim of 'colour-blindness' (2009: 45).

Thus, unlike SOS which sees racism as a phenomenon which can be defined and challenged, practically and judicially, MIR presents racism and discrimination as systemic. The very existence of the Republic's proclaimed universalism is questioned by Bouteldja, who refers to it as 'un universalisme blanc qui masque et nie les hiérarchies structurelles qui constituent la république française' ('Le "racisme anti-blanc" des Indigènes de la République', 2011). In other words the universalist principles inherited from the Enlightenment, principles forming the basis of republican ideology, were only ever applicable to white populations of European origin. For MIR therefore, the Republic is not a safeguard against racial inequalities; it is fundamentally based on such inequalities. It is this aspect of MIR's ideology – the belief that racism and discrimination are perpetuated by France's social and political structures – that leads to the organisation's support for a radical rethink of French political culture, and which sets it apart from SOS, which sees mainstream political culture, properly applied, as intrinsically supportive of the anti-racist cause.

Linked to the movement's discourse on the continuing influence of colonial ideology is an emphasis on colonial memory. This linkage can be seen in the decision to hold an annual *Marche des Indigènes* on 8th May, the anniversary of the 1945 Sétif massacre in Algeria⁷, the

⁷ In which celebrations of the end of World War II in the Constantine region of Algeria became demonstrations for Algerian independence, which were attacked by French colonial forces, leading to reprisal attacks on European populations in Algeria and a

juxtaposition of national celebration (at Nazi capitulation) and colonial brutality serving to illustrate the contradictions within France's social and political structures:

“Le 8 mai 1945, la République révèle ses paradoxes: le jour même où les Français fêtent la capitulation nazie, une répression inouïe s'abat sur les colonisés algériens du Nord-Constantinois: des milliers de morts!” (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, 'Appel des Mouvement des Indigènes de la République', 2005)

Of similar significance in MIR's strategy and discourse is its prominent participation in 2006's march for 'Vérité et Justice' commemorating events in Paris on 17th and 18th October 1961, when the Paris police's violent repression of a protest by the city's Algerian population against a curfew led to hundreds (figures are still disputed) of demonstrators being tortured and killed (see House and MacMaster 2009). The demands of the marchers in 2006 – recognition of a crime committed by the state, freedom of access to historical archives and a memorial to the victims of colonialism – convey the essence of MIR's claims-making on the state.

Whilst participants in this march included the Green Party, the Communist Party and certain other anti-racist groups (for example MRAP and LDH), it is noteworthy that SOS is not involved: as we have seen, it prefers to concentrate on present inequality and discrimination, seeing too great a focus on the past as counterproductive, potentially trapping 'post-colonial' populations in the role of victims.

wider uprising, which was repressed by means of the massacre of – at least – several thousand Algerian civilians (Manceron 2013)

In the material supporting the march, MIR extends the idea of colonial memory from political necessity to the level of moral duty:

“Ce n’est qu’à ce prix [ie. of ‘remembering’] que pourront disparaître les séquelles les plus graves de la guerre d’Algérie: le racisme dont sont victimes aujourd’hui les ressortissants d’origine algérienne ou, par extension, du Maghreb ou d’anciennes colonies” (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘17 octobre 1961-17 octobre 2006: Vérité et Justice’, 2006)

Whilst their ultimate aims may be similar, in the sense that all anti-racist groups want racial equality and an end to discrimination, we therefore see MIR reaching quite different conclusions to SOS on the question of colonial memory. Whereas SOS sees colonial memory as a potential impediment to practical anti-racist action, MIR argues on the contrary that it is only by facing up to the past that a new future may be created.

As a result of its analysis of France as a colonial state, MIR calls for a radical rethinking of French political culture. To quote the *Appel*:

“La République de l’Égalité est un mythe. L’État et la société doivent opérer un retour critique radical sur leur passé-présent colonial. Il est temps que la France interroge ses Lumières, que l’universalisme égalitaire, affirmé pendant la Révolution Française, refoule ce nationalisme arc-bouté au “chauvinisme de l’universel”, censé “civiliser” sauvages et sauvageons”.

But what does such a rethinking imply? Some answers to this question can be found in the movement's reaction to the 'great debate' on national identity launched by the Sarkozy government in late 2009. Whereas SOS favours the promotion of a liberal 'mixed' Republic in which there remains a single unified French culture but one which, contrary to Sarkozy's exclusionary conception, is open to evolution and to enrichment from all groups within society, MIR favours – as we will see in chapter 4 – 'une véritable alternative multiculturelle et décoloniale' (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, 'Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l'"identité nationale"', 2009). The movement here calls into question the viability of a single uniform national identity, prescribed and imposed from above – an identity arguably never truly available to those whose origins are in the former colonies. MIR's 'alternative' embraces the concept of a range of popular cultures, hitherto disregarded or 'crushed' by the centralising state. This position implies a redefinition of the idea of equality, adding to the traditional concept of equality between individuals a new form of equality between contributing cultures within France. For MIR, France should be a state in which each person is entitled to define their own identity – even if this involves definition based on ethnicity, religion or origin. In a political climate where multiculturalism, not only in France but across much of Europe, has become seen in terms of social danger, this is of course not an easy message to promote.

Finally, how do MIR's positions affect its reactions to Sarkozy's discourse?

The movement has been successful in causing controversy even if,

predictably, much of the media coverage attracted has been negative. Furthermore, MIR has presented an imagined alternative to the mainstream political consensus, one which may appeal particularly to disaffected minority populations. The Republic, it argues, has not lived up to its stated principles – or perhaps more accurately its pretensions. If this is the case, the diagnoses of SOS and MIR have some similarities (ironically given the antipathy between the two movements, and their very different worldviews). Their suggested remedies for the disconnect between the Republic's principle and practice, however, differ substantially – for SOS, ensuring that republican ideology is more thoroughly and honestly applied; and for MIR, challenging the very basis of the Republic's authority. MIR was never a mass movement during my chosen timeframe, and given the radical nature of its discourse, it is unlikely that this situation will change. However, its self-perceived role is seemingly to challenge official discourse from the outside, keeping its viewpoints in the national conversation from an autonomous, anti-system position. At the time of the writing of this chapter Nicolas Sarkozy's tenure as President has been ended, but for MIR, one suspects, his replacement by François Hollande marks no great change. Although his abrasive politics may have influenced MIR's formation, the movement was never simply fighting Sarkozy: he was a prominent antagonist, but its real target was what its activists saw as the systemic nature of racism and discrimination in French society. Bouteldja clarifies this point as follows: 'On n'existe pas par rapport à Sarkozy [...] pour nous, Sarkozy,

c'est la suite normale de Chirac, la suite normale de Mitterrand et les socialistes' (Interview, 9.8.2011)

That is to say, for her and for MIR, Sarkozy is nothing but the latest administrator of the colonial system. As we will see in chapter 6, this presentation of racism as largely if not wholly systemic, whilst justified in some ways, potentially has serious repercussions for the movement's ability to ameliorate genuine problems of racism and discrimination: in arguing for a complete re-ordering of French society, and nothing short of it, MIR effectively prevents itself from moving out of the domain of theory and into the inevitably imperfect and compromised domain of practical action.

To sum up, in this chapter I have attempted to offer a comparative perspective on two contrasting anti-racist movements – SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République – and the ideological divisions within French anti-racism which they represent: that is to say, their widely differing perspectives on France's public political culture of republicanism. This analysis is situated within a distinctive political and ideological context, based simultaneously upon a consensus on the language of republicanism and the predominance of a conservative and potentially exclusionary conception of national identity. The movements stand at opposite ends of Lentin's continuum of proximity to and distance from the mainstream political culture. At the 'proximity' end is SOS, which seeks to enforce and reinforce Republican ideology in the belief that ultimately this will ensure equitable treatment of all members of

French society regardless of race or religion. At the 'distance' end, meanwhile, is MIR, which sees France's political and social structures as perpetuating the racism, discrimination and inequality derived from colonialism. Despite the substantial differences between the ideological positions of the two movements, this has proved a highly challenging context for both: SOS finding its chosen republican ideology being used – by one of the most powerful political organisations in France – for purposes often in total contradiction to its own, and MIR's emphasis on colonial memory and multiculturalism being rejected due to a widespread hostility towards 'repentance' and *communautarisme*. Having examined the academic and political context of the thesis, and introduced the two movements to be analysed, I now move on to the three thematic 'case-study' chapters. The first of these looks at the key theme of national identity, from the perspective of my two chosen movements: on what grounds do they challenge Sarkozy's discourse? And do they have their own alternative model?

Chapter 4

SOS, MIR and national identity

In the first three chapters of the thesis I have focused on establishing background and context. Chapter 1 reviewed existing academic literature on French anti-racism, with particular emphasis on the divide within the field between those who consider that only an emphasis on republican values will combat racism, and those who call into question France's political structures and propose a new model of citizenship and nationality. In chapter 2 meanwhile, I considered Nicolas Sarkozy's discourse on national identity, a discourse which arguably defined my chosen period, and one whose central preoccupations – immigration, *communautarisme*, colonialism and 'repentance' – were at the heart of debates within the anti-racist movement. Chapter 3, finally, served to introduce the ideology and strategy of the two movements examined in the thesis, SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, with SOS's republican positioning and emphasis on lobbying for practical action being contrasted with MIR's questioning of republicanism, emphasis on the importance of colonialism and anti-system positioning. In the following three chapters, I move on to the central part of the research. My aim is to provide a comparative analysis of the positions of my two chosen movements in relation to three key themes, by using a combination of press releases, official publications and interview material alongside relevant secondary sources. In this chapter, I will begin by

considering the reactions of the movements to Sarkozy's discourse on national identity, and their own contrasting visions of this concept. In chapter 5 I will then analyse the organisations' positions on colonialism, examining the role of colonial remembrance within contemporary anti-racist discourse. In chapter 6, finally, I will look at the related question of 'race', and whether racial hierarchies and stereotypes inherited from colonialism cast doubt upon the republican ideal of 'colour-blindness'. These three themes – national identity, colonialism and race – allow me to link the ideologies of my chosen organisations with the political climate under discussion in the thesis, and furthermore allow me to draw comparisons between the positions of the movements in relation to France's mainstream political culture of universalist republicanism. The following three chapters argue that the respective positioning of the two movements – SOS working within the political system to promote republican *égalité*, and MIR taking an anti-system orientation and calling into question the existence of universalism – creates significant contrasts. Furthermore, the widely differing nature of the movements' positioning serves to underline the ideological diversity of anti-racism in the French context.

This first 'case-study' chapter, then, looks at the question of national identity. Both SOS and MIR are critical of what they see as Sarkozy's cynical use of the concept for political gain; both reject his narrowly-defined and arguably exclusionary conception of the idea; and more widely speaking, both appear to reject what Sarah Waters calls a

'traditional and essentialist conception of identity' (2012: 38), in favour of an emphasis on 'the invented, imagined, constructed and performed nature of identity and [...] the political and instrumental uses to which it is put' (ibid). Despite these apparent similarities, however, there are a number of apparently irreconcilable differences between the positions of the two movements, and it is these similarities and differences which are the subject of this chapter. In relation to structure, a section on each movement will focus firstly on the ideological reasons for their rejection of Sarkozy's discourse on national identity, and secondly on the form of 'identity' proposed as an alternative. I argue that the positions of the two movements on national identity are informed by their respective positions on republicanism; with SOS's conception of a *République métissée* as a positive goal for French society contrasting with MIR's presentation of national identity as intimately linked with a negatively-defined *République coloniale*.

I will begin by looking at SOS, which rejects Sarkozy's discourse for three central reasons. Firstly, the organisation rejects the way that immigration is presented solely as a threat to identity. Secondly, the use by Sarkozy and his allies of the vocabulary of 'republican values' to justify and defend their identity discourse is seen by SOS as a serious misuse of such values. Thirdly and finally, SOS sees the conservative and backwards-looking conception of national identity touched upon above as dangerous for the future of French society, and as being at odds with the association's ideal of a flexible, constantly evolving and inherently tolerant

society. As a consequence of these positions, SOS promotes as an alternative conception of society a *République métissée*: a liberal and open variation of the unitary French Republic, whose culture is open and accepting of influences from those of immigrant populations.

I will then move on to consider MIR, which like SOS is strongly critical of the conservative and backwards-looking nature of Sarkozy's identity discourse, and also like SOS, rejects the way in which immigration is seen solely in terms of threat. Other reasons for MIR's rejection of the discourse, however, differ substantially: national identity is seen by the movement as being linked with colonialism, and the idea is also linked by MIR to the negative aspects of republican universalism. As such, the organisation's alternative conception of society is at odds with that of SOS, encompassing new conceptions of citizenship; the inalienable right of immigrants and their descendants to express their own identities; and most controversially, promotion of a form of multiculturalism.

The predominance of the 'Sarkozian' conception of national identity over my chosen timeframe created problems for both the movements examined in the thesis, despite their substantial differences in orientation: MIR, with its emphasis on colonial memory and support for multiculturalism, found itself almost exactly at odds with a political climate hostile to 'repentance' and *communautarisme*. 'Multiculturalism', what is more, is widely seen in France's contemporary political culture as being *inherently* unacceptable in the republican tradition: a narrative in which,

as Silverman puts it, “cultural difference’ [...] becomes a euphemism for ‘anti-France” (1999: 59). For SOS on the other hand, the situation was more ambiguous: the organisation shared in the political consensus on republicanism (having long since abandoned its own putatively ‘multiculturalist’ ideal of the *droit à la différence*, perhaps wary of the potential for appropriation of the idea of ‘difference’ by the extreme-right; see Lebovics 2004: 132)), but the existence of this consensus – which led political actors from across the ideological spectrum to lay claim to republican values – meant that republicanism was often being used for purposes contrary to the organisation’s own.

SOS and national identity: rationale for rejection

Let us begin, then, by considering SOS Racisme, and the association’s rejection of Sarkozy’s presentation of immigration in opposition to national identity. Illustrative in this regard is SOS’s reaction to the announcement in 2007 of a new ‘Ministry of Immigration and National Identity’: a Ministry which, despite claiming to support *intégration* and *développement solidaire* in its official title, was in practice mainly concerned with removing immigrants from French territory⁸, and which was widely criticised for implicitly presenting immigration as contrary to national identity, rather than as part of national identity (as Gérard Noiriel argues

⁸ For example, when Brice Hortefeux took charge of the new Ministry following Sarkozy’s victory in 2007 he proclaimed the objective of removing 25,000 immigrants over the course of the year (‘Immigration: Brice Hortefeux s’explique’, *Le Figaro* 1.6.2007)

for instance, it is ‘un ministère qui légitime un amalgame inacceptable’, (2007a: 145). The organisation’s objections to the Ministry were based principally upon two related viewpoints. The first of these was that Sarkozy was using national identity for political purposes, thus presenting a vision of what the historian and ‘Black studies’ theorist Pap Ndiaye, in a 2011 article for *Le Monde Magazine*, called ‘un bloc français homogène, un “nous” bien circonscrit’ (2011: 26), a vision which furthermore served to hide the genuinely existing plurality in both French society and French identity. The second related to the association’s ideological hostility to the way in which immigration is presented solely in terms of a threat to national identity, seemingly ignoring the possibility that immigrants could make a positive contribution to French society. This vision on the part of the President and his party, to quote the same article, presented ‘les migrants comme des personnes incapables d’évoluer et de s’adapter’ (ibid). As Loïc Rigaud of SOS’s anti-discrimination section put it in a 2011 interview:

“Le fait de relier ‘identité nationale’ [à l’immigration], ça dirait que l’immigration est en opposition avec l’identité nationale. C’est utilisé par Sarkozy pour dire que, en haut, il y a une identité française d’origine des Gaulois, qui s’opposerait à la question d’immigration ‘extra-gaulois’. C’est une utilisation très politique, et c’est un concept qui a été dénoncé par SOS Racisme dès le début. On est content que, aujourd’hui, le Ministère de l’Immigration et l’Identité Nationale ait disparu. Encore une fois, c’est une manipulation pour stigmatiser les immigrés comme les gens qui attaqueraient notre identité nationale.” (Interview with Loïc

Rigaud, SOS Racisme, pôle anti-discrimination, responsable prévention, Paris, 29.3.2011)

Rigaud's reference to 'une identité française d'origine des Gaulois, qui s'opposerait à la question d'immigration 'extra-gaulois'' is a critique of Sarkozy's discourse which is consistent with the ideas considered in chapter 2 in relation to his usage of history. Sarkozy uses French history, or at least selected parts of it, mixed with historical myth, in order to create an inflexible and exclusionary form of national identity which is never truly open to populations of post-colonial immigrant origin. This narrowly-conceived and backwards-looking version of national identity can be contrasted with SOS's ideal of a 'République métissée' (*Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme*, 2006: 90), an idea (also referred to simply as *métissage*) which has formed an important part of the organisation's worldview since the mid-1980s, under its founding President Harlem Désir. It suggests a society which is built on republican structures and rejects *communautarisme*, and one which, in common with classical republicanism, has a single common culture. This common culture, however, is seen not as fixed and unchanging but 'diverse and heterogeneous' (Gibb 1998: 159), evolving and mutating under the influence of the 'mixed' French population. This idea will be discussed in greater detail later on in this section, when I look at SOS's own vision for the ideal society.

Sarkozy, therefore, presents the history of France as ancient, mystical and intangible, the backbone of an identity which is, as he puts it in his 2007 campaign speech in Caen, ‘faite de mille apports, de commémorations, de leçons d’instituteurs, de réminiscences qui se transmettent de génération en génération, de souvenirs d’enfance, de vieilles histoires de grands-pères qui ont fait la guerre et qui racontent à leur tour à leurs petits-enfants ce que leurs grands-pères leur ont raconté jadis’ (9.3.2007, accessed at sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007). Immigrants, and French citizens of post-colonial immigrant origin, are considered as relating to this history and the ‘national identity’ which results from it in two ways: firstly as a threat, and secondly as ‘subjects’ required to assimilate to French values and accept the official version of history. There is no acknowledgement that these populations have the right to see history differently, and no acknowledgement that they can contribute to French identity in their own right. As such, this discourse is a long way from accepting what theorists such as the post-colonial historian Nicolas Bancel see as the necessity of a new politics which recognises ‘la multiplicité des modes de vie’, and in which ‘la modernité doit désormais se conjuguer au pluriel’ (2010: 10).

SOS, for its part, rejects entirely this idea that immigration and national identity should be placed in opposition. As Rigaud argues,

“L’identité de la France, c’est les droits de l’homme. L’identité de la France c’est aussi l’accueil politique, des demandeurs d’asile. [...] La France est une terre d’immigration depuis des années, des centaines

d'années; l'identité de la France c'est plutôt une identité multiculturelle qu'une identité blanche d'origine chrétienne" (Interview with Loïc Rigaud, 29.3.2011)

He calls into question two widely held views on immigration which are perpetuated by the discourse of Sarkozy and the UMP government: that it is something new in society, and that it is a threat to French values.

Rigaud and SOS see the question from an entirely different angle to Sarkozy, the welcoming of immigrants being presented not in opposition to national identity, but as a key part of it, and one which is to be celebrated. This viewpoint is reinforced by the reference to 'les droits de l'homme': this appeal to universal human rights, a fundamental founding principle of the Republic, is used as a critique of those in political power who have neglected this principle for short-term electoral gain, reinforcing the idea that SOS sees its role as a guardian of republican ideals of equality and tolerance.

The links made by SOS between universalist republican values and the acceptance of immigration connect to the second central reason for the organisation's rejection of Sarkozy's discourse: the way in which it was presented was seen as a misappropriation of the language of republicanism. Again, this can be illustrated with reference to a key event which brought to the forefront of political debate questions of immigration and national identity.

One of the most high-profile initiatives taken by the Ministry before its dissolution in November 2010 was the ‘great debate’ on national identity held in late 2009, a debate with the proclaimed aim to ‘favoriser la construction d'une vision mieux partagée de ce qu'est l'identité nationale aujourd'hui’ (*Le Monde* 2.11.2009), but which was seen by its critics as promoting a narrow and exclusionary conception of the idea, and as implicitly giving permission to express racist and Islamophobic opinions (see for example Tissot and Tévanian, ‘Les dessous de l’identité nationale: Cinq remarques sur une offensive idéologique’ in *Les mots sont importants*, 2010: 229).

SOS opposed the debate on both practical and political grounds, using an argument common to the majority of the initiative’s critics: it is the movement’s contention that the debate was not a neutral discussion on French identity in the modern world, but a cynical attempt to recapture the winning formula of 2007 ahead of the 2010 regional elections. It is the ideological reasons for the organisation’s opposition, however, which are most relevant to the current discussion.

The official press release announcing the debate defines it in terms which SOS is highly familiar with: *vivre ensemble*, *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, *laïcité* and equality between men and women are all evoked, and are all values which the organisation would be happy to lay claim to in its own right (‘*Éric BESSON lance un grand débat sur l’identité nationale*’, immigration.gouv.fr, 2009). However, the very usage by the government

of such values is a major component in SOS's opposition to the debate. The movement itself is attempting to affirm the same concepts in its construction of a liberal and tolerant *République métissée*, and in doing this is acting in a manner common to mainstream anti-racist organisations in France. As Koopmans et al put it in relation to such movements, 'Instead of seeing the cultural differences brought by immigration as a threat to national cohesion and identity, pro-migrant and antiracist activists *define the nation as an open and universal sphere.*' (2005: 207, my italics). Accordingly, it is clear that SOS does not see a government which has used the vocabulary of republicanism to stigmatise France's minority populations as a suitable guardian of the Republic's principles.

This interpretation of SOS's standpoint is clearly illustrated in the press release written in reaction to the debate by the organisation's President Dominique Sopo: he states unequivocally that 'Le jargon républicain utilisé dans le présent débat ne saurait ici faire illusion. Le débat sur l'identité nationale est fondamentalement nauséabond.' ('Identité nationale: "un débat à rebours"', 9.12.2009). For SOS then, the debate is representative of a misuse of republican values, a danger similarly noted by Ndiaye, who warns of:

"[L]a position française "républicaniste" rigide qui, au nom d'une conception abstraite et universelle de la citoyenneté, est indifférente au racisme et aux discriminations, hostile à l'égard de certaines demandes mémorielles, et tend à devenir un nationalisme chauvin, bien incarné par la fameuse "identité nationale". (2011: 29)

This critique, on the part of SOS and of analysts like Ndiaye, links in with one of the movement's recurrent arguments: that those in political power, despite their frequent use of the rhetoric of republicanism, all too often have little or no interest in taking serious action to ensure that republican principles are applied fairly and consistently throughout society. As Sopo writes in *SOS antiracisme*:

“[L]e discours républicain est d'autant moins crédible qu'il se limite à sa simple émission. Comment ainsi s'étonner que les ghettos et les discriminations créent objectivement un terreau favorable à des forces communautaristes si la République se cantonne au rappel désincarné de ses principes?” (2005: 41)

There would appear, in SOS's view, to be two levels of misuse in relation to republican values. The first allows these values to be reduced, as in the quotation above, to an unthinking recitation, which ignores the reality behind them. The second meanwhile, as in the case of the debate, or the 2011 'burqa ban' which, according to Sopo, was representative of a 'volonté non dite de stigmatiser une partie de la population en se drapant dans les habits des plus nobles idéaux' ('Tribune de Dominique Sopo sur la loi sur le voile intégral', 2010), uses the vocabulary of republicanism to disguise an outcome which would appear to be the very opposite of its proclaimed principles. In either case, it is the movement's argument that republican values are only weakened by their use for what its activists see as dishonest purposes, leading to *communautarisme* appearing an attractive prospect for those who feel these values do not apply to them,

and to the principles themselves being called into question, as can be seen in the discourse of MIR. It is this line of reasoning which leads SOS to prioritise practical action to make republicanism work in reality, a position similar to that of the Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe, whose notion of 'radical democracy' argues that while the egalitarian principles of modern democracy are in themselves sound, they are frequently not implemented, thus bringing about the necessity of defending and reaffirming these principles, and of forcing societies to live up to their proclaimed ideals (1992: 1). In the case of issues such as the 2009 debate, however, in which the language of republicanism is used to stigmatise minority populations for political gain, a vital strategic question remains unanswered: how is the movement able to fight successfully on this terrain, when the government, via its initiatives on immigration and national identity, presents itself as *protecting* republican values from enemies within and without? This is arguably the single most important question faced by the movement over my chosen timeframe, and one to which it never entirely found a satisfactory answer.

As we have now seen then, SOS opposes the government's discourse on national identity on the grounds that it is contrary to republican values, or at least, its interpretation of the highly flexible concept of republican values. In addition – moving on now to the final aspect of SOS's opposition – the organisation is opposed to the backwards-looking and arguably exclusionary nature of this discourse, a discourse which critics such as François Durpaire see as leading France towards becoming 'une

communauté recroquevillée sur elle-même, enracinée dans un passé mythifié et sourde à tout enrichissement – une communauté fondée sur l'exclusion et la division' (2012: 55). Evidently therefore, such a discourse is held to be incompatible with SOS's more open and inclusive conception of society:

“Il faut dire que ce débat, fondamentalement, reste l'otage de l'idéologie du Front National, qui interdit de penser la Nation de façon “trop” ouverte et qui pousse à la concevoir comme un ensemble de traits muséifiés, renvoyant ainsi à la tare originelle de ce ministère qui accole dans son intitulé l'Immigration et l'Identité nationale, sous-entendant que cette dernière devrait être administrée – et donc obligatoirement formalisée – tandis que le danger qui la menacerait est tout identifié: l'immigré et ses mauvaises manières.” (SOS Racisme, 'Identité nationale: “un débat à rebours”', 2009)

For SOS therefore, the debate is representative of the same worldview as the 'Ministry of Immigration and National Identity', and much of Sarkozy's 2007 election campaign: Sarkozy consistently made clear that there is a single non-negotiable national identity, which results from a single non-negotiable conception of history. As Gérard Noiriel puts it in *Racisme: la responsabilité des élites*:

“La notion d'identité nationale a pu être défendue, évidemment, par des gens qui n'étaient ni nationalistes ni racistes. Néanmoins, lorsqu'elle est *politisée*, elle véhicule des références négatives pour les groupes présentés comme des “étrangers”. Depuis la fin du XIXe siècle,

l'identité nationale est reliée à l'idée de protection ou de conservation. Comme permanence et conservation d'un passé figé. C'est pour cela que les propos sur l'"identité nationale" ont toujours accompagné les discours négatifs sur les immigrés." (2007b: 91)

It is not difficult to see how SOS's denunciation of a form of political rhetoric which paints the nation as a collection of 'traits muséifiés' is linked to Sarkozy's discourse on history. As was noted in chapter 2, this discourse excludes immigration and critical analysis of colonialism, and presents French history as consisting of a list of Great Men and heroic military campaigns, a conception embodied in his proposal (withdrawn in 2012 by the incoming socialist government) for a 'Maison de l'histoire de la France', which had the declared aims of remedying 'le renoncement aux principes de l'histoire' and 'la remise en cause du "roman national"' (Lemoine, H. "La Maison de l'Histoire de France" – Pour la creation d'un centre de recherche et de collections permanentes dédié à l'histoire civile et militaire de la France', 2008).

Although SOS, like Sarkozy, declares itself to be in favour of republican integrationism, in the sense that the association rejects *communautarisme* and the primary loyalty to a religious or ethnic group which this implies, its leaders see Sarkozy's rigidly inflexible conception of national identity, closed to cultural influences from outside, as counterproductive and dangerous for the future of French society. As Sopo argues in his response to the 'identity debate' of 2009, for example:

“Ce que nous jugeons comme une inestimable valeur dans les sociétés au sein desquelles nous évoluons, c’est tout au contraire leur complexité, leurs contradictions, leur perpétuel changement où chaque jour s’invente une part de la société à venir. Le débat sur l’identité nationale est à rebours de cette richesse car, tel qu’il est posé, il ne peut qu’aboutir à cette muséification mortifère pour la vitalité d’une société. Les habitudes et les codes de l’autre n’y sont en effet plus une source de curiosité et de découverte mais un danger qu’il faut éloigner à tout prix, quel que soit l’attirail sémantique – fût-il traversé du lexique républicain – déployé à cette fin.” (SOS Racisme, ‘Identité nationale: “un débat à rebours”’, 2009)

According to Sopo, therefore, the conception of national identity favoured by Sarkozy, as embodied by the ‘Ministry of Immigration and National Identity’ and by the 2009 ‘identity debate’, leads to a ‘muséification mortifère pour la vitalité d’une société’. What, though, is proposed is proposed by SOS as an alternative? It is this question which is examined in the next section.

An alternative conception: the *République métissée*

This clear rejection of the national identity discourse of Sarkozy and the UMP government raises the question of the form of national identity supported by SOS. It is evident that Sopo favours a more liberal and flexible conception: as can be seen in the quotation above, he sees

‘complexité’, ‘contradictions’ and ‘perpétuel changement où chaque jour s’invente une part de la société à venir’ not as complications for society but as strengths. Similarly, he argues that the cultures brought to France by immigrant populations should not be seen as a threat but as an opportunity: ‘une source de curiosité et de découverte’.

The question for SOS is how to reconcile this belief in a flexible, mutating, constantly evolving form of national identity with its belief in republican values as an ideological framework for society. The organisation aims to solve this problem by supporting the creation of a ‘République métissée’: that is to say, by using the inherent flexibility of republican values to define them in a way which fits the movement’s existing agenda (just as Sarkozy was able to paint the Republic as synonymous with authority, hard work, and the fight against delinquency and *communautarisme*). But what does this idea of a ‘République métissée’ consist of? According to Sopo in an interview reproduced in *Qu’est-ce que SOS Racisme*, the concept has existed since the early days of the organisation:

“Ce concept est le fruit de notre combat initial, visant à faire accepter à la société française son nouveau visage: celui d’une France diverse, composée d’individus aux origines, aux religions et aux cultures différentes.” (2006: 90)

This idea of a ‘mixed Republic’ consists of two parts. The first of these relates to practical action designed to promote literal mixing of populations, with the goal of reducing ‘la méconnaissance et donc la peur

de l'autre' (2006: 91). It is this aspect of the idea which is behind SOS's fight against *ghettoïsation*, and it is also at the heart the organisation's action in relation to issues such as education and housing, as is made clear in many of the proposals in 2007's *Manifeste pour l'égalité*. This first component of the concept, therefore, relates to SOS's views on public policy, which should prioritise, in the eyes of the association, the fight against spatio-ethnic segregation and the promotion of *brassage social*, as can be seen for example in its proposals following the riots of autumn 2005 for both increased construction of social housing and anonymisation of applications for such housing (SOS Racisme, 'Le temps de l'action', 2005). For SOS, social mixing is a prerequisite for an effective fight against racism, prejudice and harmful stereotypes.

The second part of the concept relates to the movement's understanding of French culture. Unlike Sarkozy and his political allies, SOS does not see France's national culture, and thus its national identity, as frozen and unchanging. At the same time however, a multicultural conception of society is considered as contrary to the ideals of the Republic. As noted earlier in this section, this is an important issue: republican political thought in France has a long tradition of deep discomfort with the idea of 'difference'. As Robert Gildea puts it in relation to republicans of the 19th century, for example:

“[I]t was argued that assimilation was possible only for individuals, not for communities, and that while it was permissible to practise religion and ethnic traditions in private, there could be no public recognition of

ethnic or religious communities that might assert claims against and fragment the French nation state.” (2002: 171)

The way in which the movement attempts to square this circle was identified by Robert Gibb in a 1998 paper, underlining, as we have just seen, the extent to which SOS Racisme’s positions have remained relatively consistent across several decades. In a discussion of Harlem Désir’s use of the term *métissage* in the mid-1980s – a usage which can perhaps trace its roots to the *Convergence 84* movement, whose most famous slogan stated that ‘La France c’est comme une Mobylette, pour avancer il lui faut du mélange’ (Bouamama 1994: 77) – Gibb identifies in SOS’s discourse a conception of a ‘hybrid culture’, which ‘incorporates elements from a diverse range of sources’. French culture, therefore, is seen by the movement as ‘diverse and heterogeneous’. At the same time however, ‘it is nevertheless singular in the sense of being shared by and common to all groups in society’ (1998: 159). The ‘hybridisation’ implied by SOS’s discourse here is similarly noted by Ndiaye, who however sees this as a naturally occurring process:

“Il est caricatural de réduire les immigrés postcoloniaux à leurs cultures d’origine, définies comme radicalement étrangères et incompatibles avec les sociétés européennes. Les particularités culturelles sont changeantes et s’hybrident mutuellement, de telle sorte que les sociétés d’origine et d’accueil sont transformées par les migrations.” (2011: 26)

The fact that, in SOS's vision, there is still a singular culture and a singular French identity does potentially raise questions. For example, how, then, does the idea differ fundamentally from simple 'integration'? One potential difference lies in the idea of reciprocity (an idea also considered by Gibb, in a later paper (2003a: 92)). That is to say, it is not a question of 'them' being integrated into an unaltered 'us', but a notion which implies an element of movement on both sides. Further questions could relate to the issue of republicanism in a wider sense. As Silverman argues, there is 'a frightening discrepancy in France between official discourse and that of republican social commentary, on the one hand, and everyday life, on the other, in which cultural/ethnic difference is ubiquitous' (1999: 60). Does SOS's republicanism, even if it is more flexible than Sarkozy's, therefore fail to take into account the realities of contemporary society? Leaving aside these reservations however, it is not difficult to see how this idea of a culture which is 'singular' yet 'hybrid' fits comfortably with SOS's ideology over the period examined in the thesis: such a conception of French identity allows the movement to lay claim to republican values, whilst rejecting both a multiculturalism which is seen as shading too easily into *communautarisme*, and the inflexible, exclusionary conception of national identity embodied by Sarkozy.

This vision of French society is unlikely to be acceptable to more radical movements such as MIR, as it leaves the structures of society unchanged

and unquestioned⁹, and does not present to immigrants and their descendants an explicit offer of autonomy and self-determination. Having said this however, it is very much compatible with the positions of France's moderate republican centre-left, a potentially vast constituency which at the time of writing in is represented by the President François Hollande, and by much of the socialist majority in government. While this positioning might seem unambitious to the movement's critics, it is potentially useful, therefore, for the purposes of building a broad coalition in favour of a conception of national identity which clearly moves on from that of Sarkozy, but does not cause controversy by calling into question the ideological underpinnings of French politics and society.

To sum up, in the first section of this chapter I have considered the relationship between SOS Racisme and the conservative discourse on national identity which defined my chosen period. Using interview material, official publications and press releases reacting to the key events which brought this discourse to the forefront of political discussion, I began by considering the rationale for the movement's rejection of Sarkozy's worldview on the subject. This rationale can broadly be divided into three areas. The first of these relates to SOS's rejection of the way in which immigration is presented solely as a threat to French identity. The second is that the presentation and ideological justification of this identity discourse by its proponents is seen by the organisation as a

⁹ SOS is seen by MIR as a 'white' movement, which fails both to understand the systemic nature of racism and to act in the interest of France's *indigènes*; and whose members 'sont convaincus que le racisme n'est qu'un archaïsme idéologique propre à la droite ou rechignent à reconnaître qu'ils ont eux-mêmes partie prenante du racisme institutionnel' (Bouteldja and Khiari, *À quoi sert l'antiracisme universel?*, 16.6.2011)

misuse of republican values. The third, finally, is that Sarkozy's 'frozen' and backwards-looking version of national identity is seen as contrary to SOS's ideal of a dynamic and constantly evolving society. I then moved on to consider the movement's alternative conception of national identity, one which, as we have seen above, rejects both Sarkozy's discourse and multiculturalism as a means of organising French society, in favour of a liberal 'mixed Republic', within which French culture is conceived as singular, but diverse, flexible and open to outside influences. In the next part of the chapter, I will examine the positions of MIR in relation to the same dominant discourse, and see how its vision of an ideal society differs from that of SOS, most notably with regard to the links made between national identity and colonialism, the emphasis placed on the negative aspects of republican universalism, and the support expressed for a form of multiculturalism as an ideological and organisational principle.

MIR and national identity: rationale for rejection

As noted at the start of this chapter, despite the substantial differences between the ideological orientations of SOS and MIR, the two movements do share some of the same reasons for rejecting Sarkozy's discourse on national identity. These similarities can be illustrated by taking an extract from the movement's press release reacting to the initial proposal for the new Ministry, in March 2007:

“La dernière déclaration du candidat Sarkozy [...] signifie tout bonnement la création d’un ministère de la protection d’une identité nationale fermée, figée et chauvine, contre les populations immigrées issues des anciennes colonies françaises. On les reprochait communément de “prendre le pain des Français”; on leur accuse de plus en plus de polluer l’identité de la France plutôt que d’y voir un enrichissement culturel et civilisationnel au bénéfice de tous.”

(Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘Communiqué de presse du MIR: “Ministère de l’Immigration et de l’Identité nationale” ou “Ministère des Affaires Indigènes”’, 9.3.2007)

Whether it is because the proposal was still at this point at the idea stage, or because a press release is designed to be acceptable to wider public opinion, this critique is less radical than might be expected, choosing not to focus on controversial issues such as race and religion. As noted above, it covers very similar ground to SOS’s opposition to Sarkozy’s discourse, which is summed up in Sopo’s reaction to the ‘grand débat’ of late 2009 (SOS Racisme, ‘Identité nationale: “un débat à rebours”’, 2009). In both cases, Sarkozy’s narrowly defined, backwards-looking conception of national identity is criticised, MIR describing ‘une identité nationale fermée, figée et chauvine’, and Sopo writing of the debate leading to ‘[une] muséification mortière pour la vitalité d’une société’. Both also criticise the way in which immigration is presented as a threat to national identity (MIR: ‘on leur accuse de plus en plus de polluer l’identité de la France’; Sopo: ‘le danger qui la [l’identité] menacerait est tout identifié: l’immigré et

ses mauvaises manières’). And both argue that immigration should be seen not as a threat but as an opportunity (MIR: ‘un enrichissement culturel et civilisationnel au bénéfice de tous’; Sopo: ‘Les habitudes et les codes de l’autre n’y sont en effet plus une source de curiosité et de découverte mais un danger qu’il faut éloigner à tout prix’.)

It was not until Sarkozy’s victory in the 2007 Presidential elections, and the plan for the new Ministry being put into action, that MIR’s positioning diverged from more mainstream critiques and began to set out more clearly key aspects of the movement’s ideology. In these later press releases – in sharp distinction with the arguments of SOS, which is sceptical of postcolonialism (see chapter 5) and strongly favourable towards republicanism – MIR makes connections between national identity and anti-colonialism, and between the discriminatory conception of national identity in contemporary France and what MIR sees as the inherent faults within republican universalism. These critiques share numerous similarities with those made by Saïd Bouamama, who would go on to become a prominent member of the movement. As he argues in 1994’s *Dix ans de marche des beurs*:

“La France contemporaine hérite d’un rapport à l’altérité et à la différence qui est loin d’être positif. Les racines sont anciennes et se reproduisent en permanence. [...] Le rapport à l’immigration s’est construit sur la base [de] peur de la différence, pression assimilationniste, diabolisation de l’altérité.” (1994: 230)

A communiqué from June 2007 sums up MIR's positioning on these questions of republicanism and colonialism, stating that:

“La République [...] a montré à quel point sont associées, dans l’imaginaire comme dans le réel, la politique néocoloniale en Afrique et le traitement en France-même des populations issues de la colonisation et de l’esclavage.” (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, “Couscous, Boubous, Youyous: Halte à la pollution identitaire, et vive le ministère de l’identité nationale, de l’immigration, de l’intégration et du co-développement”, 28.6.2007)

From the beginning of this piece, national identity is linked with colonial history, with the post-colonial situation in metropolitan France, and with the ‘neo-colonialism’ associated with unequal relationships between the global North and South in the modern geo-political arena, a wide-ranging critique similar to that made by Nicolas Bancel, who connects ‘l’obsession sécuritaire, le mythe identitaire et le déchaînement nouveau des passions xénophobes’ (2010: 10) with the pressures of globalisation, the failures of the European project and France’s refusal to accept the importance of the legacy of colonialism in contemporary society.

The link made in MIR’s discourse between national identity and colonialism is then spelled out explicitly: national identity is stated to be a ‘variation actuelle du vieux refrain nationaliste et colonial’ (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, “Couscous, Boubous, Youyous: Halte à la pollution identitaire, et vive le ministère de l’identité nationale, de l’immigration, de l’intégration et du co-développement”, 28.6.2007). MIR

suggests, as it did in the March 2007 press release, and SOS did in its reaction to the ‘identity debate’ of late 2009, that immigrants are presented by Sarkozy and his associates as being a threat to French identity. Here however, it is made clear that it is specifically post-colonial immigrants who are being targeted:

“À travers lui [Sarkozy], la République dit désormais tout haut ce qu’elle pensait tout bas: les Français noirs, arabes et musulmans ne sont que de “faux Français”. Ils ne peuvent participer à ce qu’est la France. Sujets et non citoyens, ils se doivent d’accepter sans mot dire les inégalités raciales. Ils se doivent d’oublier leurs cultures, leurs langues, de nier la richesse et la multiplicité de leurs histoires. Pour être tolérés, ils doivent admettre leur archaïsme en se prosternant devant l’”identité nationale”, c’est à dire la Glorieuse Histoire de France. Ainsi, peut-être (mais c’est pas sûr), ils montreront qu’ils sont capables – progressivement, très progressivement... d’accéder à la Civilisation.” (ibid)

This emphasis on colonialism and the negative aspects of the Republic comes across as highly provocative in a political context typified by a cross-party consensus on republicanism (Waters 2012), and to some extent by a rejection of ‘repentance’ (De Cock et al 2008, Noiriel 2007a). It also sets MIR apart from a more mainstream, consensus-seeking movement like SOS, which is prepared to fight government initiatives on national identity, but only to the extent in which they threaten the association’s conception of a liberal ‘République métissée’. According to SOS’s way of seeing the issue, immigrants are welcome to contribute to

the common culture of the Republic, but the political and ideological structures of the nation are not called into question. What is more, self-organisation amongst immigrants and their descendants is often considered – by SOS as by Sarkozy, despite the differing levels of nuance in their arguments – as *communautarisme*, and thus as a threat to the Republic. MIR attempts to move away from a paradigm in which republicanism is seen as an unambiguous good, and colonial history is not taken into account, towards one in which the idea of national identity is placed in historical context, however uncomfortable the resulting reading of French history may be for majority opinion.

The passage cited above, therefore, is illustrative of a number of the movement's preoccupations, and how these fit in with its positions on national identity. Firstly, racism is considered to exist within the structures of the Republic, and consequently within France's perceived national identity. If Blacks, Arabs and Muslims are 'faux Français', the evident subtext is that French identity is ethnically based, a recurrent feature of MIR's discourse which will be examined in chapter 6. Also implicit in MIR's viewpoint is a critique of the idea of integration, an impression reinforced by the argument that immigrants and their descendants are expected to forget their cultures, languages and histories. As Koopmans et al note, France 'requires from migrants a high degree of assimilation in the public sphere and gives little or no recognition to their cultural differences.' (2005: 8) It is MIR's argument that, because of this restrictive conception of culture and identity, even if

these populations wanted to integrate, they would not be let to do so by wider society. As Khiari (2006) puts it:

“On vous exclut et on vous somme en même temps de vous intégrer. Comme vous ne le faites pas, c’est bien vous le coupable et non pas le système politique. Et comme vous êtes coupables, cela prouve bien que celui-ci a raison de vous exclure!” (2006: 55)

Seen this way, ‘national identity’ is a way of excluding a significant part of the population from true participation in the life of the nation, even if it is presented as almost exactly the opposite – that is, its acceptance being a prerequisite for participation.

Secondly, the reference to populations of immigrant origin being ‘sujets et non citoyens’ is a reiteration of the idea that, like methods of colonial administration in relation to areas such as policing and the justice system, representations of colonial populations are still at play in the conception of national identity which serves to shut out their descendants in contemporary France. Thirdly, there is a criticism of the narrowly-focused, conservative vision of ‘la Glorieuse Histoire de France’, which makes up much of the ‘Sarkozian’ conception of national identity. As we have seen earlier on in this chapter, for Sarkozy there is a single national history, made up of an officially-sanctioned set of myths and rejecting critical analysis of controversial issues like colonialism; a history (and consequently a ‘national identity’) which furthermore is presented as something ancient and intangible. Again, this has the effect of ‘shutting out’ newcomers from full access to French identity: even if they have

French nationality on paper, they do not share the deep bonds that define the 'true' Frenchman, an impression reinforced in Sarkozy's discourse by the supposed cultural incompatibility of Muslims, immigrants or *communautaristes*. Finally, the reference to 'la Civilisation', with a capital 'C', would appear to be a reference to the *mission civilisatrice*¹⁰, a lexical choice which reinforces the link made by MIR between the exclusionary conception of national identity which defined my chosen period, and the universalist republican ideology which, as we shall see in chapter 5, was used (according to the anti-colonialist viewpoint) as a justification for France's colonial expansion.

The cumulative impression created by the passage is that the idea of national identity, as conceived by Sarkozy, contains a false universalism and a false integrationism, which claim to offer emancipation, but in reality have the effect of freezing out those considered to be culturally incompatible: that is to say, 'post-colonial' immigrants and their descendants. For Khiari (2006: 150), it is necessary to break the post-colonial order and its 'national-chauvinist' conception of identity. The 'Indigène', he writes, refuses the idea that France is a fixed and homogenous 'essence', as well as the idea of a messianic national identity charged with the task of bringing reason and culture to the world. Linked to this is a rejection of the idea that the nation is not simply composed of citizens, but is an expression of 'eternal' culture, history and values. 'National character', he continues, is never a persistent fact

¹⁰ See Dulucq, Klein and Stora, eds. (2008: 74) for a useful discussion of the meaning and ambiguities of this term

throughout history, but ‘un devenir et une disparition continuel’ (2006: 151). In his view, identities participate in a process of permanent recomposition of national identity, but this ‘recomposition’ supposes a recognition of the legitimacy and right to exist of multiple identities, constructed and reconstructed, in a space where the social and political hierarchies of postcolonialism have been removed.

How this can happen, however, is another question, particularly in a political climate where alternative conceptions of identity, and the related question of alternative conceptions of history, appear to be considered as inherently suspicious, as can be seen by the currency of terms such as *communautarisme* and ‘repentance’. Such terms, as Houria Bouteldja argues in a 2011 interview, serve to pre-emptively delegitimise autonomous movements made up of immigrants and their descendants. As she states in relation to the use of *communautarisme* in mainstream political discourse, for example, ‘C’est véritablement une arme contre les Arabes, les Noirs... Ça nous intimide. On est accusé d’être ‘communautariste’. En fait c’est pour nous empêcher d’être ensemble: quand on est ensemble, potentiellement, on peut faire la politique. On sait c’est que pour nous empêcher d’être ensemble. Et ça marche.’ (Interview with Houria Bouteldja, 9.8.2011)

Bouteldja, I would argue, is justified in saying that the spectre of *communautarisme* – as noted even by SOS, itself highly critical of the phenomenon – has been used by Sarkozy and his allies to shut down

debate, and to stigmatise 'visible minorities' and *banlieue* inhabitants as a whole. What is perhaps more debatable, however, is the proposition that movements like MIR are rejected by mainstream opinion because many of their members are of visible ethnic minority origin. Whilst this may be a contributory factor, it is the organisation's ideological positions which are at the heart of the issue, in particular its rejection of republicanism, and what Éric Ferrand calls the 'sentiment national' (2007: 10) which accompanies the idea: that is, the sense of pride and solidarity derived from belonging to 'une communauté fondée sur la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité', within which 'tous les citoyens ont, sur tout le territoire de la République, les mêmes droits et les mêmes devoirs' (ibid). Of course, the argument of MIR is that is that the views of republican patriots like Ferrand bear little relationship with reality, with mainstream discourse on republicanism 'ayant plus à voir avec les représentations idéales et incantatoires forgées par les doctrinaires de tout poil qu'avec la réalité des pratiques' – practices which MIR argue include racism, discrimination and colonialism (Héricord, Lévy and Khiari, 'Indigènes de la République, réponses à quelques objections...', 2005). Nevertheless, in rejecting the minimal but consensual form of 'national identity' represented by a shared belief in republicanism, MIR chooses to place itself entirely at odds with political and public opinion, a position consistent with what Sharif Gemie sees as the movement's potential 'consensus-breaking' role within the landscape of French political debate (2010: 141).

On similar lines to analysts such as Étienne Balibar and Gérard Noiriel, Khiari traces the origins of today's discourse on national identity to the late 19th century, during the Third Republic. It was at this time, he argues, that a 'mythical' conception of national identity came to be created: a 'lien social républicain' which 'fabrique et propage le fantasme d'une histoire française, glorieuse et triomphante', and 'exalte un nationalisme des plus chauvins' (2009: 50). It was also around this time, he points out, that the notion of nationality began formally to be codified, leading to 'la distinction *contemporaine* entre "nationaux" et "étrangers", fondée sur une inégalité croissante en termes de droits civils et sur la privation des principaux attributs de la citoyenneté' (ibid). What is more, in addition to the increasing disparity in the civic rights granted to 'nationals' and 'foreigners', it is Khiari's contention that the notion of 'nationality', which entered into French law for the first time in 1889, already at this point had numerous cultural, ethnic and racial connotations.

These 19th century political issues are relevant to today's society because they are at the root of contemporary questions of identity which, as we have seen throughout the current work, have been at the forefront of political discourse over the years examined in the thesis. Ever since the early years of the Third Republic, Khiari argues, French 'national identity' has contained two key aspects. Firstly, there is the dimension usually understood as constituting national identity: that based around history, the 'national story' and '[le] mythe de la France éternelle aux origines prétendument gauloises' (2009: 56). It is this conception which is at the

surface of Sarkozy's discourse on national identity, as can be seen in chapter 2. But there is also, paradoxically, a second, *transnational*, dimension to 'national identity' based on 'la suprématie blanche-européenne-chrétienne' (ibid), an idea which appears to bear some relation to Balibar's conception of a supranational dimension of racism, or 'internationalisme nationaliste' (1988: 91). It could perhaps be argued that this colonial/racial conception of national/western identity can be seen in the subtexts of Sarkozy's evocation of national identity, in which post-colonial immigrants, assumed to be Muslims, are painted as inherently incompatible with the French, or western, or 'white' way of life. In Khiari's discussion of the Third Republic, therefore, there is a reiteration of one of the key aspects of MIR's discourse: that republicanism should not be equated with freedom and equality, but with nationalism and colonialism.

As with Bouteldja's statement cited above, I would argue that this aspect of MIR's ideology is to some extent correct, in that 'universalist' republican ideology was indeed used to justify colonialism, the concept of the *mission civilisatrice* finding its roots in the Revolution of 1789 and reaching its peak of influence under the Third Republic (Dulucq, Klein and Stora (eds.) 2008: 74). The movement is also justified in demanding that the French state should look back critically at the colonial period, rather than dismissing such self-examination as 'repentance'. It is difficult to see, however, how any movement for social justice, even MIR, could object in principle to the Republic's ideals of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*:

even if their implementation in reality has left a lot to be desired, a genuine ‘universalising’ of these ideals (much easier said than done, of course) would serve to remove many of the entirely justified grievances felt by post-colonial populations¹¹.

Inherent in MIR’s criticism of the idea of national identity, therefore, is a criticism of France’s political structures, and arguably of the nation-state itself. Both are seen by MIR as perpetuating racism, xenophobia and inequality. It evidently follows, then, that a rethinking of national identity is required: not an easy task in, as Sharif Gemie puts it, ‘the context of one of the most stubbornly old-fashioned state forms of the twenty-first century, doggedly loyal to nineteenth-century concepts of nation, culture and identity.’ (2010: 158). In the next part of this section, I will consider whether it is possible to detect within MIR’s discourse the outlines of an alternative conception of national identity, and how this differs from the position of SOS.

An alternative conception: multiculturalism and new citizenship

One answer to this question can be found in an opinion piece published by the movement in *Le Monde* in 2005, in which the writers call into question the methods by which newcomers to society are expected to become French:

¹¹ As may be recalled from the Introduction, the manifesto of the PIR indeed demands ‘la fraternité universelle et l’égalité entre les individus, entre les communautés et entre les peuples’ (‘Principes politiques généraux du Parti des Indigènes de la République’, 2010)

“Le fait est que nous ne sommes pas plus “intégrationnistes” que “communautaristes”. Nous ne considérons pas que la République fait un honneur particulier à ses anciens colonisés en les accueillant chez elle. Nous ne considérons pas qu’ils doivent lui en être reconnaissants. *Ils sont ici chez eux, elles sont ici chez elles. Nous sommes ici chez nous, c’est-à-dire, que l’on ait ou non la nationalité française, dans un pays où chacune et chacun doit jouir des mêmes droits, sans avoir l’obligation de se fondre dans une quelconque identité majoritaire. Chez soi, c’est-à-dire avec un droit absolu à l’ostentation de ce que l’on est. Chez soi, c’est-à-dire dans une égalité de droit, de dignité, d’espérances.*” (Quoted by Lévy (2005: 122), my italics)

MIR makes it clear that, contrary to the political consensus of my chosen period, the Republic is nothing to be revered or aspired to. At the same time, the organisation rejects ‘integrationism’, which can be considered here as the centralisation and standardisation of French culture and identity, originating in the nation-building process of the 18th and 19th centuries, and arguably still visible in Sarkozy’s evocation of a single ‘consensual’ national identity backed up with a patriotic ‘roman national’ conception of history. MIR asks why immigrants and their descendants must have ‘l’obligation de se fondre dans une quelconque identité majoritaire’, rather than the right to keep hold of their own identities, integrationism presuming such an effort to be made. One of the major differences between MIR’s approach and that of SOS is also reinforced in the quotation cited by Lévy above. As will be clear from the

chapter up to this point, both movements reject Sarkozy's conservative, backwards-looking conception of national identity, but they diverge on the question of the conclusions drawn from this rejection. According to SOS's ideal of the 'République métissée' there is still one unified Republic and still, essentially, one national identity. They differ from Sarkozy in that they conceive of a more flexible national identity, enriched by the cultures of France's immigrant populations. MIR, on the other hand, ask uncontroversially for 'une égalité de droit, de dignité, d'espérances', but at the same time demand 'un droit absolu à l'ostentation de ce que l'on est'. It would appear therefore that the other side of the movement's rejection of 'integrationism' is a support for a form of multiculturalism as a means of organising society, a position which places them directly at odds with prevailing political thought during the period covered by the thesis. I will consider the substance of MIR's proposed 'multicultural' society, and some of its potential drawbacks, later on in this chapter.

Also notable in the opinion piece quoted above is MIR's argument that 'Nous sommes ici chez nous, c'est-à-dire, que l'on ait ou non la nationalité française, dans un pays où chacune et chacun doit jouir des mêmes droits'. The impression given is that the movement is in favour of a decoupling of nationality from citizenship and civil rights, beyond that already envisaged by European integration and citizenship. This is a subject which has been addressed relatively frequently in French political thought, notably by Balibar, who in 1992's *Les frontières de la démocratie*

traces the modern conception of citizenship to the time of the Revolution (1992: 111), and then goes on to ask whether it is possible for a political community to found itself solely on universal human rights, or whether some form of discrimination between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ is in fact an intrinsic attribute of the nation-state (1992: 114). In the case of MIR, however, it could perhaps be argued that the movement’s position on nationality and citizenship implicitly refers back to the *Beur* movement of the early- mid-1980s, of which MIR possibly sees itself as a descendant, even if, as was noted in chapter 1, it is arguably more radical and confrontational, and places far greater emphasis on the memory and legacies of colonialism (Hajjat, in Stora and Temime (eds.), 2007: 196). The similarities between the positions on citizenship of MIR and the *Beurs* can be seen by taking an example of Bouamama’s analysis of the political positions of the *Convergence 84* march. He argues, like MIR, that true equality will not exist until everybody benefits from the same rights regardless of nationality:

“En effet, si l’égalité est une exigence et un besoin des sociétés contemporaines, il faut supprimer tout ce qui peut aujourd’hui l’entraver. En particulier, l’égalité suppose que soit brisé le lien actuel entre nationalité et accès aux droits, c’est-à-dire, que la citoyenneté actuelle soit remplacée par une nouvelle citoyenneté.” (1994: 103)

From the extract cited by Lévy, therefore, it is possible to see two aspects of MIR’s vision for an alternative society. Firstly, there is a demand for populations of immigrant origin to express their own identity and culture,

rather than having to assimilate to a pre-existing national identity which requires these identities and cultures – and even memories and histories when they do not fit in to the official narrative – to be forgotten or suppressed. Secondly, it is argued that civil rights should not be dependent on citizenship and nationality, a position which could perhaps be seen as challenging the Republic to live up to its claims of universality by making rights genuinely applicable to all populations, regardless of legal status. Such positions can be seen as a critique and rejection of the double-bind identified by Ahmed Boubeker – ‘minorities’ are not recognised as ‘true French’, but at the same time are strongly discouraged from developing their own identities:

“Privés d’accès à titre individuel aux positions sociales reconnues, on leur refuse aussi toute forme d’expression collective, perçue comme une dérive communautariste. Invisibles dans les lieux de représentation de la démocratie française, on les accuse de casser l’égalité républicaine quand ils revendiquent de trouver leur place.” (2010: 275)

As was the case with SOS, further indications of MIR’s positions on national identity can also be found in the movement’s reaction to the ‘grand débat’ of late 2009. Like SOS, MIR is critical of the political motivations for the debate, which is seen as an attempt to regain support ahead of the 2010 regional elections, and as a diversion from more important social issues. More relevantly however, the press release reacting to the debate also takes in two distinctive aspects of the movement’s discourse. Firstly, the link between republicanism, race and

national identity is reiterated: the debate is representative of ‘le choix stratégique de consolider le pilier blanc-européen-chrétien du “pacte républicain” dans le cadre du nouvel espace impérial européen en construction’ (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l’”identité nationale”’, 6.11.2009). It may be recalled that this idea, that ‘national identity’ has a transnational dimension based on being white, Christian and European, features heavily in Khiari’s *La contre-révolution coloniale en France*, and it will be discussed further in chapter 6. Secondly, it is made clear that even if the current controversy relates to Sarkozy and the UMP, ‘national identity’ is the subject of a consensus across mainstream politics:

“Il y a longtemps que la défense de “l’identité nationale” contre les cultures portées par les minorités originaires des anciennes colonies est un thème largement partagé à droite comme à gauche. Il est, de ce fait, parfaitement vain et bien souvent hypocrite de prétendre s’opposer à la politique raciste du gouvernement en l’accusant d’aller chasser sur les terres du Front National.” (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l’”identité nationale”’, 6.11.2009)

This positioning on the part of MIR emphasises a number of parts of their ideology. Firstly, by calling into question the mainstream political system as a whole, the movement’s own autonomy is highlighted. Secondly, it is made clear that the problems of French society – or at least, those related to race, discrimination and so on – are systemic, relating to the ‘République coloniale’ supported by both parliamentary Left and Right.

And thirdly, linked to both of the above points, it is strongly implied that these problems will not be solved by the Socialist Party coming to power, as would be argued, MIR's argument perhaps implies, by a mainstream movement like SOS Racisme. As Bouteldja and Khiari argue in a 2011 article, 'on ne combattra pas le racisme en ayant pour unique adversaire la droite sarkoziste et l'extrême droite car l'un des vecteurs majeurs de la politique raciste est également le PS et certaines franges islamophobes de la "gauche de la gauche"' (À quoi sert l'antiracisme universel?, 16.6.2011)

Leaving aside MIR's criticisms of the debate and its ideological underpinnings, however, what does the movement's alternative conception of national identity, alluded to in the title of the press release reacting to the 2009 debate ('Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l'"identité nationale"'), consist of? To begin with, it is specified that MIR favours 'une véritable alternative multiculturelle et décoloniale'. As noted earlier in this section, an emphasis on multiculturalism on the part of MIR can be seen as the logical extension of the movement's rejection of 'integrationism' and the expectation that immigrants and their descendants must assimilate to pre-existing 'republican values'. However, as has also been noted throughout the thesis, the prevailing French view on multiculturalism, amongst mainstream thinkers, politicians and social movements (including SOS Racisme) is that it is a danger to the Republic, leading to the formation of ghettos and the imposition of *communautarisme*. It is evident that if MIR's ideas were to be widely

accepted, it would require a major change in France's political culture.

Nevertheless, what does MIR's proposed version of multiculturalism consist of? Firstly,

“Il s'agit de mettre en place des dispositifs permettant la promotion des cultures populaires écrasées par deux siècles de centralisme parisien uniformisateur et par la mondialisation libérale, de reconnaître et d'encourager le développement des cultures portées par les populations issues de l'immigration coloniale, de favoriser enfin des échanges interculturels égaux.” (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l'identité nationale’, 6.11.2009)

As is often the case with MIR, how this is to happen is not addressed, perhaps supporting the idea that the movement is more focused on ideas than on action – it could perhaps be argued that the organisation functions more like a thinktank, attempting to place radical ideas into the national political conversation, than a traditional activist movement.

Leaving aside the point that it is not clear what the proposed ‘dispositifs’ involve, however, the quotation gives further insight into the multicultural society envisaged by MIR. Again, the long-standing political structures of the French state are called into question, in the shape of its ‘centralisation’ and ‘uniformisation’, a position – like that relating to France's rejection of ‘difference’ in a wider sense – which was set out in similar terms by Bouamama prior to the movement's foundation (‘La construction nationale française s'est déroulée à partir d'une négation de

la diversité culturelle française et d'une lutte pour la destruction de toutes les cultures et langues régionales' (1994: 230)). This position provides further evidence for the movement's rejection of the idea that there is a single 'national identity' that can be imposed from above – an idea strongly supported by Sarkozy over my chosen timeframe, as we have seen. It is to be replaced, in MIR's alternative view of society, by a support for the popular cultures 'crushed' by the centralising state. As may be expected given its status as a post-colonial and anti-colonial movement, MIR emphasises the cultures of 'les populations issues de l'immigration coloniale', but the wording perhaps also implies a respect for the local and regional cultures suppressed (as Bouamama notes in the quotation above) in the process of nation-building.

Following on from this point, there is perhaps the suggestion in MIR's discourse of a redefinition of the idea of 'equality'. While the notion has generally been assumed to apply to equality between individuals – although what type of equality, of opportunity or of outcome, is another question – MIR appears to suggest in this press release that the concept could also apply to equality between cultures within France. This interpretation of MIR's ideology is supported by the manifesto of the PIR (Parti des Indigènes de la République), which promotes 'la liberté [note, as with 'equality', the use of the traditional language of republicanism] des communautés particulières de préserver et de faire valoir leurs langues, leurs cultures et leurs spiritualités' (Parti des Indigènes de la République, 'Principes politiques généraux du Parti des Indigènes de la République',

2010). However, this new conception of equality between cultures does not replace the idea of equality between individuals: the same document argues for ‘l’égalité effective entre les citoyens, dans l’égale dignité de leurs couleurs, de leurs origines, de leurs cultures et de leurs croyances.’ It would appear that the central part of MIR’s alternative view of society – or, to put it another way, of the organisation’s conception of national identity – is multiculturalism and inter-cultural exchange, but this is to be placed alongside the more traditional idea of equality between individuals. The movement’s argument about equality within a proposed multicultural society therefore relates to two, linked, levels: the individual, but also the collective.

MIR’s proposed ‘multiculturalism’ potentially raises questions that the movement has not fully answered. Firstly, the term needs, if it is to form the basis of a new society, to be defined in greater detail: does it refer to the naturally occurring multiculturalism which exists in day-to-day life, or to multiculturalism as state policy? Secondly, does it serve to distract from less radical policies which would actually be more beneficial to minority populations? As Ndiaye argues:

“Il me semble que les personnes issues des migrations postcoloniales demandent avant tout aux autorités publiques qu’elles engagent une lutte efficace contre les discriminations et le racisme, [...] plutôt que d’obtenir la reconnaissance de leurs éventuels particularismes culturels.” (2011: 29)

Thirdly and finally, as Michel Wieviorka (in Bancel et al, 2010) points out, cultural identities are not 'facts' which are stable, but are constantly evolving (2010: 252). Therefore, does the danger not exist that a conception of society based on cultural 'communities' may lead (like Sarkozy's national identity discourse, albeit from a different direction) to a 'freezing' of identities? All of these questions would need to be addressed if this model of society was to become a reality. As noted above however, MIR works more on ideas than practicality. With this in mind, the movement's proposals for a multicultural society can be seen less as a concrete model for reform than as an implicit critique of narrow and exclusive conceptions of national identity, and of a universalist republican political culture which has difficulty coping with a genuinely plural society.

The press release reacting to the 'great debate' also offers two further types of reform that, in MIR's view, must take place if France is to move away from a single, centrally-imposed form of national identity towards, as the organisation sees it, a model built around inter-cultural respect. The first of these relates to *laïcité*. This idea refers, very briefly, to the religious neutrality of the state, but Sarkozy's critics have accused him of overtly favouring Christianity, and of evoking the concept as a means of

stigmatising France's Muslim population¹². This, however, is not the movement's objection, in this case at least. The press release states that:

“Une autre laïcité devra préserver la séparation de l'État et des religions mais considérer les spiritualités, chrétiennes, musulmanes, juives comme les religions dites traditionnelles d'origine africaine, antillaise ou d'ailleurs, comme autant de besoins sociaux et comme des composantes à part entière de l'identité de ce pays.” (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l'”identité nationale”’, 6.11.2009)

MIR's position on *laïcité* in relation to national identity, then, would involve less of an overt reform than an extension. The essence of the term – the separation between the state and religion – would be retained, but the major religions in France would be joined in official recognition by ‘traditional’ religions from the former colonies. This idea is in keeping with what we have seen so far about MIR's position on ‘national identity’: of a society in which each person is entitled to their identity – even if this involves joining up in groups based on ethnicity, religion, nationality, etc. – rather than having to adapt to a pre-existing dominant identity which, arguably, is never truly available to those whose origins are in France's former colonies.

The final suggested area of reform relates to education, on which the document states:

¹² See for example the 2012 article for *Le Nouvel Observateur* written by François Hollande's 2012 campaign spokesman Bernard Cazeneuve (‘Comment Nicolas Sarkozy a bradé la laïcité’, 2.4.2012)

“Le multiculturalisme et l’interculturalisme réellement assumés ont également comme impératif une réforme des programmes de l’enseignement destinée à battre en brèche le national-chauvinisme et la suprématie blanche qui les caractérisent actuellement.” (‘Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l’”identité nationale”’, 2009)

It is undoubtedly true that the education system is key to the formation of a sense of national identity, and quite possible that it teaches (in particular) History in a way which serves to alienate those with ‘colonial’ roots. It would be useful, however, to have more information about how the system should be changed: is the idea to teach more colonial history? To establish separate schools for different communities (a form of segregation likely to be unacceptable to the vast majority of public opinion)? To teach all pupils about the different communities and cultures in France (again, very much against republican principles, plus any understanding gained would be superficial at best)? It almost goes without saying, furthermore, that whichever type of reform is meant by MIR, the movement is diametrically opposed to the mainstream political climate in the period under discussion, as typified by a President who has repeatedly made it clear that, in his view, there is just one history of France, which is to be learned and respected by every one of the country’s citizens.

This chapter has considered national identity, the theme which arguably defined the period examined in the thesis. I have attempted to define what it is about Sarkozy’s discourse that both SOS and MIR object to,

and what their alternative conceptions of French society consist of. Answering these questions gives clear insights into their reaction to the political context of 2005-2009 – a fundamental issue in the thesis – and furthermore allows me to draw conclusions about their ideological positions, with particular reference to their relationship with France's proclaimed political culture of universalist republicanism. I began by looking at SOS Racisme, which rejects Sarkozy's discourse on the grounds that it abuses the vocabulary of republicanism, presents immigration solely as a threat rather than a potential opportunity, and paints national identity as something inflexible and intolerant rather than something open to change and evolution. SOS's alternative conception of society is based on the promotion of a *République métissée*, a more liberal and open version of the Republic which accepts cultural input from immigrant populations, but leaves the basic structures of French society unchanged. I then moved on to look at the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, which like SOS rejects Sarkozy's conservative and exclusionary vision of national identity, but sees it not as a perversion of virtuous republican ideology but as inherent to France's social and political structures, seen as embodying racial hierarchy and colonialism. MIR's alternative view of society, therefore, is based not around mild reform but a fundamental rethinking, promoting multiculturalism and the right to define your identity however you wish – even on an ethnic or religious basis – rather than having to adapt to a pre-existing national identity. It almost goes without saying that, in adopting this stance, MIR places itself directly at odds with a political context in which

multiculturalism is seen as synonymous with *communautarisme*, and thus a threat to the very existence of the Republic. In relation to SOS on the other hand, it is quite possible to imagine the principle of the *République métissée* being adopted by the political mainstream without disrupting the republican consensus in contemporary France. It remains to be seen whether François Hollande or the socialist majority in government from 2012 will take any steps in this direction. In the next chapter I will continue the thematic analysis of the two movements by looking at their positions on another key issue: that of colonialism, its legacies in contemporary France, and the question of how much emphasis should be placed by the anti-racist movement on colonial memory.

Chapter 5

SOS, MIR and colonialism

As we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, colonial memory, and the part it should play in contemporary French society, was a major issue during the period examined in this thesis. It is also one which, when applied to two contrasting anti-racist groups, forms the basis of a profitable study of some of the ideological divisions within anti-racism, and of the differing relationships between anti-racist movements and mainstream political discourse. As with the other two themes examined in the three central case-study chapters, my chosen movements' respective positions on republicanism play some part in the formation of their views on colonialism. For MIR, colonialism and the Republic are intimately linked, with this relationship being seen as central in understanding contemporary French society. SOS, however, is substantially more wary about making this kind of critique, the association seeing the Republic as essentially a force for good: a promoter of equality rather than a colonial oppressor.

In this chapter, using as before material from interviews, press releases and official publications, I intend to consider the positions of SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République in relation to the issue of colonialism. As the chapter will make clear, the two organisations are largely opposed in their viewpoints on the use of the

legacies of France's colonial past, both within anti-racism and within French society as a whole. It could perhaps be argued that, in this way, they are representative of the divisions exposed in society by the debate. Very broadly speaking, SOS rejects any recourse to colonial memory amongst both post-colonial populations and their sympathisers, preferring to concentrate on inequality and discrimination happening in the present, and seeing too much focus on the past as potentially placing these populations permanently in the role of victims. For MIR on the other hand, the question of colonialism and its legacies in contemporary society is of paramount importance: the ideological justification for colonialism is held to exist within France's republican political structures; representations of colonial populations are seen as still being at work in the discrimination faced by their descendants in contemporary society; and the police and justice systems are seen as treating post-colonial populations comparably to their ancestors in the colonial period. Despite the substantial differences in the positions of the two movements, it could perhaps be argued that, paradoxically, both SOS and MIR see contemporary post-colonial populations in terms of victimhood: that is to say, as being victims of the colonial past. They differ, however, in the conclusions drawn from this understanding: whereas SOS sees this as a negative representation which impedes collective action, MIR sees it as a constructive and enabling representation which fosters collective action.

The first section of the chapter will look at the viewpoints of SOS, but before doing this I would like briefly to review the political context in relation to colonialism and its place in society.

The early part of the 21st century, during which my timeframe falls, was a period in which issues around France's colonial past were the subject of heated and passionate debate. As *Respect Mag's* 2010 'Appel pour une République multiculturelle et postraciale', launched by authors including the post-colonial historian Pascal Blanchard and the French football captain turned anti-racist activist Lilian Thuram, summed up this period:

“Cinquante-cinq ans après Dien Bien Phu et le début du conflit algérien (1954), [la] politique de *non-mémoire* semble se fissurer aujourd'hui. Le silence n'est plus possible. Une page est tournée, au cours de laquelle nous avons pris conscience de la fracture coloniale dans la société française. Cette prise de conscience a été portée par le travail des historiens, les commémorations engagées sur la traite et les abolitions de l'esclavage depuis 1998, les demandes sociales d'une mémoire apaisée mais aussi, paradoxalement, par les “dérapages” de la loi datant de février 2005 sur le “*rôle positif de la colonisation*” (2010, accessed at www.respectmag.com)

This proposed law of 23rd February 2005 was particularly controversial, arguably bringing to prominence the *fracture coloniale*¹³ touched upon

¹³ The idea of *la fracture coloniale* was popularised by Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire in their 2005 book of the same name. As they note in the introduction, 'Ce concept voudrait à la fois signifier la tension et les effets de la postcolonialité: il recouvre des réalités multiples et des situations hétérogènes, dans la mesure où ces réalités et ces situations peuvent être éclairées, en partie, par des processus de longue durée, reliés à la situation coloniale.' (2005: 13)

above to a greater extent than any other event over the period. It was to evoke the 'le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord' (LOI n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005, accessed at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr>) and order their teaching in schools, a move seen by critics such as Gérard Noiriel as an attempt to impose 'une logique mémorielle fondée sur des jugements de valeur' (2007b: 85). The then President Jacques Chirac, seeing that a poisonous national argument would ensue, personally ordered the removal of the offending passage. As Dulucq, Klein and Stora point out however, the debate around colonialism was intimately bound up with the debate on national identity which, as was discussed in chapter 4, arguably defined my chosen period:

“Le passé colonial constitue l’un des points de cristallisation de la réflexion fébrile qui s’est nouée autour de l’”identité nationale”, au sein d’une société française éminemment diverse dans ses origines.” (2008: 3)

This was especially noticeable in the discourse of Sarkozy and his political and intellectual allies on 'repentance'. This discourse is closely linked to Sarkozy's usage of history: as will be clear from the thesis so far, he favours the idea that there is a single history of France, to be learned and respected by every French inhabitant, and rejects the argument that history is made up of a multiplicity of competing interpretations. Those who deviate from his viewpoint, therefore, find themselves accused of 'repentance', 'self-hate' and 'denigration of the nation', presented as being at the root of the 'crisis of identity' which Sarkozy presents himself

as the man to solve. As may be recalled from chapter 2, targeted by this discourse are two groups: firstly, historians and academics who look back critically at France's colonial past; and secondly immigrants and their descendants, whose family background in the colonies leads them to see French history differently to the ostensibly consensual 'national story' promoted by Sarkozy. As De Cock et al note, Sarkozy strongly rejects post-colonial ideas. The authors link his refusal to 'repent' about France's colonial past with his refusal to accept that prejudices formed in colonial times could influence the situation of immigrants and 'ethnic minorities' in contemporary French society (2008: 159), and argue that he systematically associates 'le souci pour les violences passées' with '[le] "refus de s'intégrer" de certains immigrants' (2008: 157). For Sarkozy therefore, post-colonial thinking and colonial memory (or at least, forms of colonial memory based around criticism and questioning rather than justification and celebration) are inherently incompatible with national identity, and by extension with the Republic in a wider sense, as they are contrary to his favoured ideal of assimilation, seen as implying complete acceptance of the official version of history. Keeping in mind this context, I will now start by considering the position on colonialism of SOS Racisme.

SOS and colonialism: the perils of victimisation

While Sarkozy's positioning, then, is relatively unambiguous, the characterisation of SOS made in the first paragraph of this chapter – as a movement which entirely rejects the idea that colonial memory has any part to play in anti-racism – deserves (although it is largely accurate) to be nuanced somewhat in my analysis. As the interview with Dominique Sopo and former SOS vice-President Samuel Thomas in *Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme* makes clear, the organisation is opposed to France's apparent 'horreur de revenir sur les pages sombres de son passé' (2006: 116). Attempting to forget or cover up the darker aspects of French history, according to this viewpoint, is harmful to French society and its prospects for social cohesion, and can lead to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and discrimination, a position which, as we will see later on in this chapter, is surprisingly similar to that of MIR. As Sopo and Thomas argue:

“Ne pas revenir sur l'esclavage, c'est en quelque sorte ne pas revenir sur l'idée selon laquelle le Noir serait un grand enfant ou un sauvage. Ne pas revenir sur la guerre d'Algerie, c'est entretenir l'idée selon laquelle les Algériens, et par extension les Maghrébins et les personnes d'origine maghrébine nées en France, seraient des individus violents et toujours prêts à vous poignarder dans le dos.” (ibid)

For SOS therefore, historical work on issues such as colonialism and slavery has an important role to play in putting such issues in the past and coming to terms with them, eventually leading to a genuinely shared history, which like the organisation's ideal Republic, is not 'frozen' and exclusionary but open to evolution and discussion. It would perhaps be

more accurate, consequently, to say not that SOS is opposed to colonial memory *per se*, but that it rejects any attempt to bring it out of the domain of history. That is to say, it rejects the idea that it should affect the way in which post-colonial populations are seen and treated in contemporary France; it rejects the idea that it should form the backbone of these populations' identities; and it rejects the idea that immigrants and their descendants have the right to see themselves as victims solely because of their colonial heritage. In this positioning, SOS is partially supported by Noiriél, who argues that the stereotypes and discrimination faced by post-colonial populations 'ne s'expliquent pas, principalement, par l'"imaginaire colonial"' (2007b: 24), but who elsewhere provides little comfort for SOS or the wider anti-racist movement, claiming that such stereotypes and discrimination are caused primarily by recurrent media images of violence in the *banlieues*, Islamist terrorism and wars in the middle-east, and that 'on ne peut pas lutter contre cela avec les outils et les catégories de pensée de l'antiracisme actuel' (ibid). Most relevantly for this thesis however, it is in this rejection of post-colonialism that the positioning of SOS diverges substantially from that of MIR, which sees understanding the legacies of colonialism as the key to understanding modern French society. And it is to this positioning that I now turn.

SOS's discourse on the extent to which the colonial past can be used to explain the present is the subject of a detailed analysis by Sopo, in his 2005 book *SOS antiracisme*. It is his view that two related worldviews in relation to the theme – worldviews he refers to as 'la mauvaise

conscience postcoloniale’ and ‘le discours exotico-victimaire’ – have proved highly detrimental to anti-racism, or at least to the form of anti-racism, based on republican principles of equality, seen as appropriate by SOS. According to Sopo’s argument, these two discourses have been harmful in two ways: to the relationship between (presumably white) French anti-racists and post-colonial populations, and to the self-perceived identities of immigrants and their descendants. I will begin by looking at the first of these arguments.

Sopo makes clear that he rejects colonial nostalgia, and the vision of the ‘ex-colonisé’ – ‘barbare et rétif aux lumières civilisatrices que l’Occident prétendait vouloir lui apporter’ (2005: 16) – which comes along with it. However, perhaps influenced by Pierre-André Taguieff, who in *La force du préjugé* (1987) claimed that anti-racism all too often contented itself with being the ‘double’ of racism, Sopo argues that this negative vision of colonial and post-colonial populations has an unwelcome mirror image amongst those members of the French population who see themselves as anti-racist. This mirror image replaces the representation of colonial ‘natives’ (and implicitly their children and grandchildren in contemporary France) as uncivilised and uncivilisable savages with one which places them in the role of victims. As Sopo puts it:

“Effrayées par les crimes passés (et présents) de l’Occident, les personnes submergées par la mauvaise conscience postcoloniale ne conçoivent leurs relations avec le tiers-monde et avec les populations d’origine maghrébine et africaine que comme une perpétuelle action de

repentir. Repentir d'autant plus justifié, dans leur esprit, qu'il s'exerce à l'endroit d'individus assignés au rôle de victimes tous terrains et toutes époques." (2005: 17)

For Sopo and SOS, this discourse of 'victimisation' is a trap which must be avoided by any anti-racist movement which is serious about attempting to solve France's social problems. It leads, in their view, to a situation in which those belonging to populations of immigrant origin cease to be considered as individuals, and begin to be considered – in contradiction with republican ideology which, theoretically at least, judges individuals in their own right rather than as representatives of an ethnic group or religious affiliation – as existing solely in the 'exotic' category in which they have mentally been placed. It also leads, Sopo argues, to a situation in which 'la critique d'un comportement individuel équivaut à la critique d'une population déterminée' (2005: 18). That is to say, that because whole populations have stopped being seen as individuals, instead being placed in a box labelled 'post-colonial-thus-victim', any criticism of individual behaviour within these populations becomes perceived as criticism of a whole community, and any critical examination is equated with stigmatisation. And this situation, in turn, leads to the denial of the existence of problems which genuinely exist, such as delinquency in the *banlieues*, leaving the field clear for racist interpretations from the extreme-right. Again, this argument is on very similar lines to that of Taguieff, who is critical of the way in which anti-racist movements can inadvertently cement social divisions via a

discourse which makes stereotypical assumptions about the racial and cultural identity of whole groups, as if all members of communities are the same, and categories and affiliations are fixed (1987: 380). It is somewhat ironic that SOS, having been (implicitly or explicitly) the target of Taguieff's rhetorical ire in the late 1980s, has come to agree with many of his critiques and prescriptions in relation to anti-racism, rejecting communitarian / sectarian rights and identity movements in favour of the universalised, secular principles which he himself espouses.

To sum up this argument then, it is SOS's position that too many of those who see themselves as anti-racist, although well-meaning, in fact harm their cause by replacing racist representations of colonial and post-colonial populations with a discourse which sees such populations solely in terms of victimhood. As was also the case with *communautarisme*, discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis, this argument is rational and fully consistent with the movement's proclaimed ideology, but at the same time it is arguably of little utility as the basis of a campaigning strategy in the particular political context examined in the present work. Sopo, it must be acknowledged, takes care to point out that 'la surdélinquance est le fruit des conditions économiques, sociales et urbaines dans lesquelles les populations concernées ont été placées' (2005: 20), thus rejecting any analysis which presents young Black or Arab men as inherently predisposed to delinquency, and taking the opportunity to reiterate his frequent calls for investment in the *quartiers* and action against racial discrimination. What is more, he acknowledges in a footnote the

weaknesses of the French justice system, and the continuing influence on it of ingrained negative images of post-colonial populations, a problem also highlighted by MIR. He writes:

“Les institutions de l’État impliquées dans le traitement pénal de la délinquance – la police et la justice – fonctionnent partiellement comme le reste de la société. Les clichés, les stéréotypes et les *à priori* y jouent un rôle. La justice est peut-être réputée aveugle mais ceux qui la rendent ont des yeux...” (2005: 19)

Again, these are valuable points, and well made. The problems faced by SOS in respect to this positioning, however, are the result of the political context examined in the thesis – in particular, of course, Sarkozy’s discourse on immigration, security and national identity. This discourse, repeated unceasingly in the media over my chosen timeframe, served to turn terms such as ‘delinquency’ and ‘repentance’ – both used, as we have seen, in SOS’s official publications – into highly emotive trigger-words evoking threats to society from immigrants and their ‘unassimilated’ descendants. Despite the nuances of SOS’s discourse, therefore, it can appear on the surface as if the association is supporting what Ahmed Boubeker calls ‘un consensus politique [qui] tend à réduire le malaise des banlieues à un problème d’ordre public causé par quelques minorités délinquantes’ (2010: 271).

It is for this reason that it would have been difficult for SOS to base a campaign around such terms: any nuances would disappear when faced by the dominant interpretations of Sarkozy and his allies. Indeed, the

movement itself appears to have been of a similar mind. Despite the importance of the issue and its prominence in political debate, there do not appear to be any examples of SOS campaigns with an explicitly post-colonial dimension over my chosen period. Their lobbying for equality of opportunity and action against discrimination, as we shall see in chapter 6, focused instead on socio-economic factors, with an ideological basis in classical republican 'colour-blindness'.

The second part of SOS's critical discourse on 'la mauvaise conscience postcoloniale' and 'le discours exotico-victimaire' relates to what the movement sees as the negative consequences of colonial memory on the anti-racist struggle, as well as to its negative consequences on the self-perception and identity of post-colonial populations. I will begin by looking at the first of these issues, summed up well by the following argument from Sopo, an argument whose different elements, in particular that relating to agency, will be dealt with shortly:

“Définir l'antiracisme permet également de dire ce qu'il n'est pas: la défense d'une minorité contre une majorité ou celle d'une minorité contre une autre minorité. Or, le discours exotico-victimaire [...] ne peut atteindre le but de l'antiracisme (pour des raisons ontologiques – on ne peut pas atteindre l'égalité quand on se vit comme une victime – et pour des raisons stratégiques – on ne se mobilise pas quand on se vit comme une victime).” (2005: 26)

This quotation clearly highlights SOS's position on what anti-racism should and should not be: the organisation, as can be seen throughout this thesis, sees it as a fight for equality, in common with the proclaimed principles of the Republic. This is conceived of in concrete, socio-economic terms in the movement's discourse on equality of opportunity, but also, secondarily, in less measurable ways such as the 'égale dignité' touched on above. SOS's republican positioning can also be seen in the statement that anti-racism is not 'the defence of a minority against a majority' or 'the defence of a minority against another minority'. This argument is of a piece with the movement's hostility towards *communautarisme*, a central understanding of which being that, as Rigaud puts it, 'on se réunit dans votre communauté, pour défendre les valeurs contre ceux des autres' (Interview, 29.3.2011). If anti-racism is to be, as envisaged by SOS, a republican combat, it must in the view of the association be at least theoretically 'universal': open to all and based upon consensual ideological principles. It can be surmised therefore that for SOS, the 'ideal type' anti-racist organisation is something very much like itself, while smaller autonomous movements which reject republican ideology and base themselves on ethnic or religious grounds are to be viewed with considerable suspicion. This position is consistent with SOS's ideology, but the organisation's inflexibility in seeing republican universalism as the only acceptable organisational principle for anti-racist movements arguably has the effect of making it appear irrelevant to those who suffer most from racism and discrimination: post-colonial populations who have seen the Republic consistently fail to live up to its promises,

consequently turning to religiously or ethnically based groups in a search for pride and identity in an apparently hostile society. It should be acknowledged that SOS is aware of this problem, and argues that genuine action and investment to fight the problems of the *banlieues* will increase attachment to the Republic and its values by translating into action its rhetoric on equality¹⁴. While this is potentially an effective strategy in the long run, SOS's attachment to moderate mainstream republicanism can have the effect of making it appear out of touch with the realities of life in France's poor suburbs, and thus unrepresentative of the populations in whose name it theoretically speaks. In this positioning, SOS is representative of the wider mainstream left in France. As Herman Lebovics argues, from the mid-late 1980s:

“This sentiment [of unitary republicanism] prevailed, finally, on the left. Official *recognition* of mixity, multiplicity and difference faded in the move to close ranks against the sowers of ethnic discord.” (2004: 187)

Although the principles of universalist republicanism make an excellent starting point for anti-racist ideology – a point related to Chantal Mouffe's argument (1992: 1) that the assertion within modern democracy that all human beings are free and equal can be used as the basis for a radical refoundation of the concept – without a certain amount of flexibility, to at least acknowledge the legacy of colonialism and the continuing impact of ethnic origin in French society, both SOS and the parliamentary left will

¹⁴ See for example the critical and nuanced discussion of the State's urban policies in *Manifeste pour l'égalité* (2007), in which the association argues that 'si l'on veut que la politique de la ville réussisse, il est impératif de tenir deux exigences. Il faut qu'elle soit un "plus" pour les populations qui seraient concernées afin de rétablir une égalité réelle entre les populations et les territoires. Mais il faut également que les outils dont elle se dote deviennent des outils d'excellence qui se généraliseraient dans l'ensemble de la société.' (2007: 15)

find it difficult to solve this crisis of legitimacy and representation. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

At the centre of SOS's suspicion of post-colonialism, however, is its rejection of the discourse of 'victimhood'. As we have already seen in this chapter, the movement rejects the 'well-meaning' liberal discourse which as a result of past colonial crimes (of which SOS does not deny the existence), paints immigrants and their descendants as eternal victims. On similar lines, the organisation refuses to accept – as can be seen in the quotation above – the idea that a sense of shared victimhood can form the basis of an anti-racist movement: it is regarded as an impediment to mobilisation and a justification for inaction (because it can become seen as an excuse and all-purpose explanation for the situation of post-colonial populations in contemporary France), and as an obstacle to the formation of a society based on universal equality. It could also perhaps be argued that victimhood does not lend itself easily to the construction of a positive identity upon which to mobilise. As we will see later on in this section, this refusal to link the treatment of 'native' populations during the colonial period with the treatment of their descendants in modern-day French society leads to a considerable hostility to movements like MIR, which place this link at the centre of their proclaimed worldview.

Similarly, SOS rejects 'victimhood' as a basis for the identity of post-colonial populations, seeing the risk of 'une concurrence morbide des drames subis dans l'Histoire par telle ou telle population' (2005: 27), and

a situation in which such populations find 'une fierté à travers un statut de victimes' (ibid). Again, it should be pointed out that SOS does not deny the importance of the colonial past, and sees it as an important area of historical study. What the movement does reject, however, is any situation in which the suffering of different populations becomes an essential support for their identities, which therefore come to conceive of themselves in terms of confrontation and hierarchy with other identities. According to Sopo, slavery or the Holocaust, for example, should be seen as 'des leçons pour l'humanité' and 'des messages universels sur les méfaits de la folie humaine' (2005: 29), rather than as central to the identity of Black and Jewish populations respectively. Furthermore, he argues that for populations who have suffered from racism, anti-Semitism and discrimination, pride should come from acquiring a status as a full citizen, while coming to terms with history rather than letting it define you. For Sopo, conflating, for instance, Black experience as a whole with that of victims of slavery, is to reduce Black people to the status of passive *indigènes*, incapable of writing their own history (2005: 32): a position which, according to this argument, serves (ironically) to maintain the colonial stereotype that 'native' populations had no worthwhile history of their own, one controversially reinforced by Sarkozy in his 2007 speech in Dakar, in which he stated that '*l'homme africain n'est pas assez entré dans l'Histoire*', due to a mentality in which '*il n'y a de place ni pour l'aventure humaine ni pour l'idée de progrès.*' (Discours de Nicolas Sarkozy à Dakar, 26.7.2007, accessed at http://www.geo-philie.net/IMG/pdf/discours_de_dakar-2.pdf)

SOS's warnings about the dangers of self-definition as *indigènes* are reflective of the movement's rejection of the use of the colonial past as a way of understanding and constructing the present, and also reflective of their rejection of victimhood as a basis for personal identity. Whilst it is not clear whether MIR is specifically targeted, it is clear that their way of thinking is not seen by SOS as an appropriate way of organising the anti-racist movement. As Sopo puts it in the postface to *Manifeste pour l'égalité*:

“Alors, ne cédez pas aux sirènes de ceux qui vous diraient que vous êtes traités aujourd’hui dans les quartiers comme l’étaient vos ancêtres dans les colonies. Ne cédez pas aux sirènes de ceux qui vous expliquent que, finalement, rien n’a changé et rien ne changera jamais. Nos grands-parents et nos parents se sont battus pour préparer un avenir meilleur à leurs enfants. Respectons leur combat car il n’a certainement été vain!” (2007: 182)

For Sopo and SOS then, drawing parallels between the colonial period and contemporary France is not a source of pride and unity, or even a legitimate basis for a protest movement, but a sign of resignation and submission. They argue furthermore that such comparisons are inaccurate, as colonial populations had few rights, little freedom and no citizenship, whereas their descendants benefit from all three.

Aspects of this argument can and have been called into question. Saïd Bouamama for example, in a response to the criticisms received by MIR,

questions ‘la dénonciation de l’amalgame que réaliserait l’appel entre la période coloniale et la situation actuelle’ (2009: 109). To say, as SOS implies in the quotation above, that movements like MIR which place an emphasis on post-colonial thinking argue simply that *banlieue* inhabitants are treated the same as their ancestors in the colonies is, for Bouamama, evidence of wilful misunderstanding and stereotyping. As he points out:

“Mettre en analogie deux facteurs ne signifie pas qu’on les considère comme identiques. C’est tout simplement souligner qu’ils ont à voir l’un avec l’autre ou qu’ils empruntent des processus, des logiques et des représentations qui sont en proximité. Parler de racisme post-colonial, ce n’est donc pas non plus prétendre que les descendants de colonisés vivent une situation identique en tous points à celle de leurs ancêtres.” (2009: 110)

SOS, as was touched upon in the introduction to this chapter, chooses not to emphasise colonial memory and post-colonial thinking, preferring to prioritise racism and discrimination happening in the present. This emphasis, although not problematic in itself, leads to the organisation taking little care to acknowledge the nuances in the worldviews of movements which do emphasise these themes, as can be seen in the difference between Sopo’s simplistic denunciation of ‘ceux qui vous diraient que vous êtes traités aujourd’hui dans les quartiers comme l’étaient vos ancêtres dans les colonies’ and Bouamama’s argument that the question is more complicated than MIR’s critics allow, taking in ‘des processus, des logiques et des représentations’, perpetuated both consciously and unconsciously over generations.

Furthermore, SOS's scepticism about the possibility of post-colonial explanations to contemporary social issues causes the movement to downplay the importance of the theme in its campaigning discourse, thus downplaying in turn its importance in society. This arguably leads SOS to appear remote from the problems of poor French inhabitants of colonial origin, who experience racism and discrimination precisely because of these origins. As Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch puts it:

“Une bonne partie des Français voient les descendants d’immigrés d’origine coloniale avec un regard particulier parce qu’ils les relient aux “indigènes”, c’est-à-dire à une caste inférieure légalement.” (2009: 165)

Although the movement, unlike Sarkozy and his allies in politics and the media, acknowledges the importance of the colonial period as an area of critical historical study, it appears to see a divide between the colonial past and post-colonial present which, at the time of writing, is a long way from existing in reality.

So, how can SOS's discourse on colonialism over my chosen timeframe be summed up? Much as with national identity, discussed in the previous chapter, the organisation is charting an awkward course between the intolerant conservatism of Sarkozy and the radical positioning of an autonomous, anti-system movement such as MIR. In the previous case, this led to the rejection of both multiculturalism (as favoured by MIR) and Sarkozy's inflexible and arguably exclusionary conception of national identity, in favour of a consensual and moderate liberal position focused

on the idea of a *République métissée*. In this case, as noted above, SOS does not accept (at least not entirely) Sarkozy's discourse on 'repentance', seeing the colonial past as an important area of critical historical study. Elsewhere however, despite the intense political and academic debate over the colonial past during my chosen period, the theme is downplayed by the movement. Perhaps because of the awkward questions it raises about the association's favoured ideology of universalist republicanism, SOS rejects the post-colonial interpretation of society, according to which stereotypes, representations and logics inherited from the colonial period are central to the racism and discrimination faced by post-colonial populations in contemporary France (Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire (eds.), 2005). This rejection, supported by a discourse which presents as a danger the perception and self-perception of these populations as 'victims', serves to cut off the organisation from an important and enduringly relevant area of debate. Whilst SOS's emphasis on practical action against racial discrimination and in favour of equality of opportunity is potentially highly beneficial to French society, the lack of importance it places on post-colonialism is a possible weakness in their discourse. The movement is aiming to treat the symptoms of France's social problems, but at the same time it chooses not to focus on one of the major causes: as Silverman puts it, in an important argument of the type not fully accepted by SOS, 'The 'post-colonial' era is not a clean break with the colonial past; it is thoroughly determined by it.' (1992: 110) Or to put it another way, returning to the *Respect Mag* appeal cited at the start of the chapter:

“La France [...] est une des rares nations où les traumatismes du passé sont encore visibles dans le présent. Identités, enjeux politiques et représentativité, égalité sociale, discriminations... Autant de questions essentielles qui trouvent une partie de leurs origines dans ce temps colonial.” (‘Appel pour une République multiculturelle et postraciale’, www.respectmag.com, 2010)

Having considered in the first part of this chapter the reluctance of SOS to acknowledge the importance of colonialism to contemporary society, due to potential dangers around confining post-colonial populations to an identity of victimhood, and perhaps also due to a disinclination to make a societal critique which links its favoured republican ideology with colonial racism and exploitation, in the second I will examine the positions of MIR, for whom, in contrast, this question is absolutely central.

MIR and colonialism: the all-encompassing colonial Republic

MIR's emphasis on colonialism takes a number of different forms, of which two are particularly notable in the context of this thesis. The first of these relates to the continuities seen by the movement between the administrative and legal treatment of colonial and post-colonial populations. The second relates to the link made by MIR between republican ideology and colonialism from the late 19th century to the present day. In both these ways, MIR's positions are in complete contrast to those of SOS, which does not see the Republic's past links with

colonialism as a reason for calling its underlying ideology into question, and as we have seen, is exceptionally wary about making links between the colonial past and the post-colonial present. Having examined these key aspects of MIR's anti-colonial ideology, I will go on to consider what this anti-colonialism means in practice: that is to say, what the influence of this ideology is on MIR's strategy and practical aims.

One of the major contentions made by MIR in relation to the legacy of colonialism in contemporary French society is that there is a continuity between the legal and juridical methods used in the colonial period and those used in recent years, particularly in France's poor suburbs, home to many of the descendants of formerly colonised populations. As the French-Cameroonian political philosopher Achille Mbembe notes, this continuity affects post-colonial populations regardless of legal status. He argues that:

“[A] conflation is occurring between colonial modes of control, treatment and segregation, the treatment in metropolitan France of men and women judged undesirable, and the treatment of citizens considered to be second-class simply because they are not “French of pure stock” or “of the white race”.” (2009: 52)

MIR's position concerning this argument can be illustrated with an example in which the movement's discourse on colonialism coincides with one of the key events in my chosen timeframe: the widespread urban riots of autumn 2005. In a press release reacting to the imposition of a

curfew, entitled – in a way which makes the organisation's position clear from the start – ‘Non au couvre-feu colonial! La révolte n’est pas un crime! Les véritables incendiaires sont au pouvoir!’, MIR claims that strategies used to quell anti-colonial revolts in previous decades are now being used in the repression of the riots and rioters of 2005. Noting that the law which allowed the declaration of a state of emergency, and therefore a curfew, was adopted in 1955 in the fight against the Algerian independence movement, and used on the night of the 17th October 1961 when possibly hundreds of Algerian demonstrators were tortured and killed by the Paris police (House and MacMaster 2009), MIR emphasises the historical continuity of colonial practices:

“La matrice idéologique ayant permis ces crimes coloniaux animent toujours les manières institutionnelles de voir, de penser, de ressentir et de traiter administrativement les populations issues de la colonisation et assignées à résidence dans ces nouvelles zones d’indigénat que sont les quartiers populaires.” (‘Non au couvre-feu colonial! La révolte n’est pas un crime! Les véritables incendiaires sont au pouvoir!’, 9.11.2005)

For MIR, as can be seen in the 2005 *Appel* which launched the movement, post-colonial populations are discriminated against in every area of society, are victims of social exclusion, and are not equal before the law: a claim which, if true, means that the Republic has broken one of the oldest and most central parts of the universalist promise, dating back as far as the *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme* of 1789. Although it was

the Right which was in power throughout my chosen period, MIR's press release takes care to point out that 'la gestion coloniale des populations issues de l'immigration' exists 'quel que soit le régime en place, de droite comme de gauche'. This positioning is illustrative of the movement's emphasis on autonomy, as well as of its position that racism and discrimination are systemic, rather than the fault of individuals. This is a major distinction from SOS's strategy, according to which it is beneficial to identify cases of racial discrimination and take legal action, and has major implications for MIR's reaction to the political climate under discussion in the thesis. Even if the period was defined by Sarkozy and his discourse on national identity, race and immigration, MIR does not concentrate its efforts on combating him specifically: as Bouteldja puts it, 'On n'existe pas par rapport à Sarkozy', specifying that 'pour nous, Sarkozy, c'est la suite normale de Chirac, la suite normale de Mitterrand et les socialistes'. For MIR therefore, Sarkozy is nothing but the latest administrator of the colonial system, while the parliamentary Left, hidebound by a consensus on the universalist ideology used to justify colonialism, is unwilling to promote an alternative view of society¹⁵.

The continuity of the colonial system, regardless of who is nominally at its head, is a key theme of Sadri Khiari's 2009 book *La contre-révolution coloniale en France*. For Khiari, the 2005 riots were 'une résistance à la

¹⁵ It is MIR's argument that the role of 'universalist' anti-racist movements should not (solely) be to fight the right and far-right, but to force parties of the left to take genuine anti-racist action: 'Transformer les rapports de forces suppose, outre la mobilisation et l'organisation autonome des indigènes eux-mêmes, de transformer en profondeur la gauche elle-même. C'est là une des tâches de l'antiracisme universel sincère: bousculer la gauche, la dénoncer, l'obliger à se rallier à une démarche anti-raciste.' (Bouteldja and Khiari, *À quoi sert l'antiracisme universel?*, 2011)

politique coloniale poursuivie dans les quartiers, notamment en termes de gestion policière' (2009: 121), and he concludes from this that 'La révolte nationale en novembre 2005 est, à ce titre, une *révolte anticolonialiste*.' (2009: 122). Somewhat counterintuitively however, he then goes on to argue that the fact that those involved do not themselves see it this way does not alter the underlying truth of what he is saying, a line of argument similar to the Marxist idea of false consciousness:

“Il importe peu, de point de vue qui nous préoccupe ici, que les propos qui ont été tenus par les acteurs de cette révolte ne contestaient pas explicitement le système de l'indigénat. [...] Cette révolte a été une protestation en acte, rassemblant indigènes et Blancs, contre la politique d'indigénisation des banlieues populaires menée par les différents gouvernements depuis des années.” (ibid)

It would certainly be possible to question this interpretation: there is a sense that Khiari is retrospectively telling the rioters what they should have been thinking, rather than listening to what they were saying. Furthermore, there is a sense that the facts are being placed into a pre-determined framework of anti-colonialism, rather than being let to speak for themselves. Nevertheless, Khiari's comments provide further evidence of the consistency of MIR's positions. The emphasis is again placed on the continuity between the colonial period and contemporary France ('indigénisation' of banlieues), and the continuity in policy between different governments, as was also pointed out by Bouteldja.

As Jérémy Robine argues in a recent chapter on the movement, MIR's discourse has the aim of turning 'la situation post-coloniale' – that is, the simple fact of a society which exists after the formal end of colonisation – into 'un problème post-colonial': the promotion of a worldview according to which 'la représentation selon laquelle les traces laissées par les rapports coloniaux sont aujourd'hui problématiques pour le fonctionnement de la société, et même [...] pour les représentations dominantes de la nation et des identités.' (2011: 142) Again, as Robine points out, this idea can be questioned: is it not too much of a generalisation to say that modern French society is first and foremost the result of the legacies of colonialism? And is it not too simplistic to argue that the inequality and discrimination suffered by immigrants and their descendants can similarly be explained by such legacies, rather than by socio-economic factors, globalisation, xenophobia and racism, or Islamophobia? (ibid) These are both pertinent questions for the movement, but in making this critique, which unambiguously links colonialism with the state of contemporary French society and the position within it of post-colonial immigrant-origin populations, MIR has been able to define a memorable campaigning discourse, and to find a niche within the French political landscape – as Gemie argues, MIR has 'claim[ed] the right to exist within the political invisibility of the Republic (2010: 158). What is more, the breadth and flexibility of MIR's central position means that the movement can legitimately claim that xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia and so on are themselves part of the legacy of colonialism. MIR's arguments on the 'continuum colonial', although they

can be criticised, allow it to keep its discourse in the public eye, despite its small size¹⁶, lack of mainstream political support and apparent incompatibility with France's republican political culture.

Khiari's comments also highlight a notable contrast between an ambitiously theoretical movement like MIR and a far less ambitious, but far more practically-minded movement like SOS Racisme. MIR has a closely thought out anti-colonial ideology which provides an interpretation for events involving 'post-colonial' populations in France, as can be seen above. What the movement does not have, however, is a clear position in relation to what should be done about the problems faced by these populations. SOS, on the other hand, is perhaps too quick to reject out of hand the continuing influence of colonial thinking, but has a simple view on social issues which arguably addresses more of the daily problems faced by the inhabitants of France's poor suburbs, for example lack of opportunities and discrimination in employment. The problem for SOS, however, is that it is widely seen as out of touch with the situation 'on the ground' in the *banlieues* – MIR's view of SOS, one shared with many *Beur* activists in the 1980s, that it represents 'un antiracisme "touche pas à mon pote", paternaliste, exclusivement moral, abstrait' ('À quoi sert l'antiracisme universel?', 16.6.2011) is typical of this criticism – and that its lobbying of the government for concrete initiatives to solve the

¹⁶ Gemie notes that 'It is hard to provide any estimate of numbers [for MIR's membership]: it is quite possible that there may only be a hundred hardcore militants in the MIR. However, to date, its importance has been more as a forum to debate ideas rather than as a group which organizes events, and it is probable that its influence stretches far more widely than its dedicated members' (2010: 155)

problems it analyses has frequently not been effective enough to make a real difference.

However, the major underlying difference between MIR and the majority of the French anti-racist movement, as we have seen throughout the thesis, is its positioning on republicanism. This positioning can be linked with the aspect of MIR's discourse discussed above, that of the link between the administration of 'natives' during the colonial period and the administration of *banlieue* populations, containing many of their descendants, in the post-colonial period. As will now be clear, SOS downplays the importance of colonial history and memory, and presents the Republic in a universally positive manner. As Sopo argues,

“Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité”. La devise de notre République renferme en elle les valeurs les plus belles et les plus universelles. Appliquer la devise républicaine, c'est après tout la meilleure garantie de vivre dans une société débarrassée des miasmes du racisme, de l'antisémitisme et des discriminations.” (2007: 11)

Any possible link between the Republic and colonialism, moreover, is disregarded or considered as irrelevant. For MIR, however, this link is absolutely central in understanding the systems of domination that have been faced by both colonial and post-colonial populations. It is this link in MIR's discourse that I now intend to examine.

The movement's position is summed up by Houria Bouteldja in the interview cited earlier. Bouteldja argues of the Republic that:

“Dans ces structures, elle est considérée comme émancipatrice, comme universaliste, comme droit-de-l’homme, etc., mais c’est parfaitement bien accommodée au colonialisme. Ce qui nous intéresse, c’est la contradiction profonde entre le fait qu’on peut être un citoyen français libre, et, en même temps, imposer la soumission, la domination, au peuple colonisé. [...] Et cette contradiction profonde existe par rapport à l’histoire coloniale, et aussi par rapport au présent postcolonial, puisque la France est toujours, officiellement, émancipatrice et universelle. Mais en même temps, elle discrimine tout le temps.” (Interview 9.8.2011)

Bouteldja’s analysis here is similar to that made by MIR in a document released by the movement in February 2005 following the first wave of controversy surrounding the *Appel*. In this document, the authors argue that the Republic evoked by politicians across the ideological spectrum, and by ‘consensual’ anti-racist movements like SOS, is nothing but a ‘République rêvée’. This Republic, which believes in *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*, and universal human rights, has only ever existed in an abstract sense; in ‘les discours qu’elle tient sur elle-même’. The contrast is made with the ‘République réelle’. It is this version of the Republic which is the subject of MIR’s criticisms: one which uses the language of civilisation and universalism as a cover for ‘colonisation, repression, exclusion and racism’ (Héricord, Lévy and Khiari, ‘Indigènes de la République, réponses à quelques objections...’, 24.2.2005).

This contradiction, between an ‘official’ Republic which is universalist, emancipatory and a defender of human rights and the way in which, often

in the name of this same universalism, it has engaged in what MIR sees as the crime of colonial exploitation and subjugation, has not gone unnoticed even by some committed universalists. Tzvetan Todorov, for example, notes that:

“One of the common reproaches directed against the Enlightenment is that it provided the ideological foundations for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century European colonialism. The reasoning runs as follows: the Enlightenment posited the unity of the human race and hence the universality of values; convinced they stood for superior values, European states considered themselves authorized to bring their civilisation to those less privileged than they and to guarantee the success of their enterprise; thus, they had to occupy the territories where these populations lived.” (2009: 28)

For Todorov however, colonialism was never a true reflection of the values of the Enlightenment. All that the rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice* proves, in his view, is that the idea of the Enlightenment ‘enjoyed great prestige at the time’ (2009: 30) and the colonisers therefore wanted it on their side, as had been the case with Christianity in the Spanish and Portuguese colonisations of the sixteenth century (ibid). What is more, he points out that the colonisers were quick to drop their humanitarian arguments: ‘The politics of colonization were camouflaged behind Enlightenment ideals, but in reality they were driven by straightforward national interests.’ (2009: 31). He goes as far as to turn the arguments of those who link universalist ideals with colonialism entirely on their heads, by claiming the Enlightenment for the *anti-colonial*

camp. As he argues: 'The anti-colonialist movements were [...] much more directly inspired by the principles of the Enlightenment, in particular when they posited human universality, equality between peoples and individual freedom.' (ibid). Therefore, although Todorov acknowledges the anti-colonial critique of Enlightenment universalism, he does not, largely speaking, accept it. For him, the *mission civilisatrice* argument was a misuse of universalist values, and a smokescreen which served to hide a genuine agenda based on nationalism and self-interest. It is notable that this 'smokescreen' argument is similar to that made by those who aim to attack Sarkozy from a republican position over my chosen timeframe, as can be seen in the discussion of SOS Racisme in this thesis: much of the language used is the same, so the case has to be made that Sarkozy is using it incorrectly and dishonestly. Importantly, in both cases – Todorov on the self-proclaimed 'universalism' of French and European colonisers, and SOS on the self-proclaimed 'republicanism' of Sarkozy – the underlying ideology remains unscathed and unquestioned.

MIR, for its part, rejects this kind of argument in two ways. Firstly, rather than seeing colonialism as the exception, and continuing to present the Republic as essentially a force for good, its activists use the fact that France's colonial enterprise was justified with reference to the same Enlightenment thinking which underpins the Republic as a platform for a wider-spread critique of mainstream French political thinking. And secondly, this link between republicanism and colonialism is placed, in MIR's discourse, at the centre of a long-established ideological system

which has acted consistently against the interests of *indigènes* (with a small 'i'), and conversely in favour of white, western 'colonialists'.

Although MIR sees the entire history of western colonialism as one of racially-based domination, Sadri Khiari (2009) places the origins of this 'République coloniale' – that is to say, the system which links colonialism with French political ideology – in the Third Republic, which ran from 1870 to 1940. Khiari writes of this regime that: "C'est à elle que l'on doit l'institutionnalisation du nationalisme français, du racialisme et du colonialisme, comme autant de réalités *indissociables*." (2009: 45). It is his argument therefore that the 'pacte républicain' (2009: 44) which results from this 'institutionnalisation' is inherently based on ethnicity (contrary to republican claims of 'colour-blindness' in relation to race), and inseparable in its origins from France's colonial enterprise.

In making this link between colonialism, race and France's political structures, Khiari follows the lead (amongst others) of Étienne Balibar, who in *Les frontières de la démocratie* argues that 'Rien n'est plus faux que de se représenter la colonisation comme une entreprise "extérieure"' (1992: 57); and that 'Le racisme en France est d'essence coloniale, non au sens d'une "survivance" du passé, mais au sens d'une production continuée de rapports actuels.' (1992: 63) The question which must be considered in relation to this worldview as expressed by MIR is how these factors manifest themselves in a modern society, in which colonialism, officially at least, no longer exists. The first way in which this happens

relates to the idea discussed earlier in this chapter, of a continuity between colonial and post-colonial periods. As Stefan Kipfer (2011) argues in his analysis of the movement, one of MIR's key missions is to draw attention to the fact that the French Republic, contrary to its proclaimed ideals of equality, treats some of its residents as 'quasi-colonial subjects' who are 'relegated to the margins of society'. The second relates to the defining theme of the period under discussion in the thesis: that of national identity. It is Khiari's argument that within the 'pacte républicain' increasing emphasis has been placed upon an ethnically-based form of identity:

“L'équation identitaire qui fonde le pacte républicain – et donne aujourd'hui sa raison d'être au ministère de Hortefeux – peut se dire en deux propositions: 1) Le Français est blanc; 2) Le meilleur du blanc est français.” (2009: 60)

For Khiari, this ethnically-based form of national identity has grown in importance for political reasons. More specifically, it has grown in importance due to a political context in which the Republic (in the sense of the political regime) has, in practice if not in theory, abandoned many of its proclaimed principles in favour of a consensus on economic liberalism and the 'fight' against immigration. Sylvie Tissot and Pierre Tévanian of the *Les mots sont importants* collective make a similar analysis, arguing that 'vingt ans de consensus libéral, sécuritaire et xénophobe [...] ont supprimé le risque de sursaut humaniste et antiraciste.' (2010: 211) Sarkozy, according to this viewpoint, was

elected to protect the white population and their privileges from 'indigènes' within and outside France, while promoting a form of identity ('la suprématie blanche') compatible with European construction and 'la globalisation libérale-coloniale' (Khiari 2009: 219). Both of these ways in which the colonially-based 'pacte républicain' manifests itself in contemporary France – via the continuities in the treatment by the authorities of colonial and post-colonial populations, and via the formation of a national identity implicitly based on ethnicity – can be linked to a further key theme in MIR's discourse, that of the continuing importance of 'race' (despite the Republic's promises of colour-blindness) in French society. The positions of my chosen movements in relation to this question will form the basis of chapter 6.

So far in this section I have considered MIR's positions in connection with the influence of colonialism on contemporary French society, looking at the links made by the movement between the administrative and legal treatment of colonial and post-colonial populations, a critique which has encouraged a lively debate amongst academics writing on contemporary France. As Jim House writes on MIR, for example:

“This group's claims, often made in deliberately bold terms, were challenged, at times aggressively, as the organization was accused of collapsing both the distinctions between colony and metropolis and those between past and present. From an academic perspective, these highly polemical debates were arguably useful to have: historians of contemporary France interested in colonial legacies examine precisely

the 'space' that exists between what might be similar – to varying degrees – with previous or indeed simultaneous modes of unequal power relations occurring in different geographical settings (or possibly the same places), and yet what is certainly not identical.” ('October 1961: On the Past and its Presence', *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 3.2 (Autumn 2012))

In addition, I have considered the links made by the movement between republican ideology and colonialism, a critique which is at the centre of the differences of opinion between MIR and SOS on this issue: whilst MIR presents the Republic as synonymous with colonial racism and exploitation, it is seen by SOS as representing equality and emancipation. The respective viewpoints of the two movements on the Republic typify their positions at opposite ends of the 'continuum of proximity-to-distance from the public political culture of the nation-state' (2004: 1) proposed by Alana Lentin in her analysis of European anti-racism, as was discussed in chapter 3. In the remainder of this section, I intend to consider what MIR's anti-colonial positioning means in practice: that is, what it means for the movement's strategy, and for its vision for an ideal society.

According to Houria Bouteldja, MIR's anti-colonial positioning translates into an emphasis on the need for the creation of a 'décolonial' form of society and politics. Again, the movement's thinking echoes that of Balibar, who argues that:

“C'est donc [...] d'une véritable décolonisation de la France qu'il faut aujourd'hui parler, en remettant pratiquement en cause le fait même d'une construction nationale qui implique toujours la coexistence de deux populations à droit inégaux, l'une dominante [...], l'autre sujette et dominée.” (1992: 65)

It is not however, in her view, possible to give a simple definition of what this 'decolonised' society involves. The alterations to be made seem quite intangible – ‘un procès en mouvement’ in Bouteldja’s words (Interview 9.8.2011) – involving the questioning of the racially- and colonially-based structures of French and western society, and a move away from traditional western forms of thought, even those, Marxism for example, towards which the movement is broadly favourable. It is also a question, it appears, of increasing awareness of the continuing influence of colonial ideology:

“Notre priorité, c’est de faire comprendre le fait colonial, et la persistance de la pensée coloniale, dans le monde actuellement. Donc pour nous, le combat, c’est de décoloniser en sens global du terme: décoloniser la pensée, décoloniser la politique... c’est une approche extrêmement globale.” (Interview 9.8.2011)

The apparent vagueness of this proposal is representative of a recurrent weakness in MIR's discourse. While the question of how to 'decolonise' French society may be an interesting one to discuss within the movement, there is no clue given to how this might happen in reality, or even what the first steps towards it may be. MIR, it must be acknowledged, does function mainly as a theoretically-based movement, a kind of radically

anti-colonial thinktank periodically issuing provocative statements and awkward questions designed to keep their positions in the national political conversation. Considered purely in these terms, the organisation is relatively successful. However, the lack of emphasis placed by MIR on practicalities does raise questions as to its effectiveness and credibility as a social movement, as opposed to a simple protest group. As Gemie argues, despite being broadly favourable towards the movement:

“There remains one crucial weakness [in MIR’s discourse]: while the MIR has come a long way in re-thinking ideas about identity, exclusion and autonomy, while they have actually grown and developed as a discussion group and activist organisation, they are still very weak in presenting positive ideas. [...] MIR is a political group, and has to function in a political world. In order to continue to grow, it will have to develop a political programme through which to represent its supporters’ interests.” (2010: 157)

Linked to this hope for a ‘decolonised’ society is a wish for an anti-colonial reading of history to be shared across French society. This is a recurring theme in the discourse of MIR and its key representatives, appearing in Khiari’s works, in the interview with Bouteldja, and in the movement’s original *Appel*, which states that ‘la lutte anti-coloniale est indissociable du combat pour l’égalité sociale, la justice et la citoyenneté’; and that ‘Dien Bien Phu n’est pas une défaite mais une victoire pour la liberté, de l’égalité et de la fraternité!’ (As with Todorov earlier in this section there seems to be a connection drawn between anti-colonialism

and Enlightenment values, but it is arrived at by MIR via a very different route). It is clear that for MIR, a widespread acknowledgement of the importance of colonial memory is a prerequisite for the existence of a decolonised society. This position is made explicit by Bouteldja when she asks, 'Comment être une société ensemble quand une partie, une grande partie de la société française, pense que notre victoire à nous de libération, d'émancipation du colonialisme, c'est leur défaite à eux?' (Interview 9.8.2011) The apparent existence of this prerequisite for the creation of MIR's ideal society would seem to be a substantial obstacle for the movement, as the trend in my chosen timeframe is in almost entirely the opposite direction. As will be clear from chapter 2, the mainstream conception of history in this period, as represented by Sarkozy, involves a rehabilitation of France's colonial enterprise, and a denunciation of critical examinations of the past as 'repentance' and even 'self-hate'.

This phenomenon is acknowledged by Khiari, who argues that the revival of colonialism as a dimension of national identity – first seen, it may be recalled from earlier in this section, under the Third Republic in the 19th century – is seen as 'une des préoccupations principales du Pouvoir blanc' (2009: 173), and is best represented by the proposed law of 23rd February 2005, which evoked the 'positive role' of France in the colonies. This rehabilitation involves an attempt to 'dissocier les méthodes les plus violentes de l'expansion coloniale de la vérité républicaine, nécessairement salutaire pour les colonisés.' (ibid) But despite the

unfavourable political context, Khiari does not intend to soften his line: as he reminds his readers, 'L'identité de la République, c'est la colonisation, c'est-à-dire la hiérarchie raciale.' (2009: 174) Again, there is seemingly little thought given to the way in which the movement's aims might be achieved. And again, MIR is a step more radical than most of its anti-racist peers, few of whom would argue that the Republic's identity is inextricable from colonisation and racial hierarchy. In this case however, with only a relatively small amount of compromise the movement could find itself within a substantial coalition of academics and historians (Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Sandrine Lemaire, Achille Mbembe, Benjamin Stora and Sylvie Thénault, amongst others), social movements and political actors, who favour a conception of history unafraid to look back critically at France's colonial past. As noted in chapter 3, MIR has already taken part in a march in memory of the events of October 17th 1961, alongside the Communist Party, the Green Party, and the anti-racist movements MRAP and LDH. Whether the movement, in the longer term, makes alliances where it is realistic to do so, or whether it prioritises absolute ideological purity, remains to be seen.

In his 2006 book *Pour une politique de la racaille*, Khiari identifies three aspects of unity and shared identity between the *indigènes* of France. The first of these is a heritage of oppression: he argues that these populations are discriminated against *because* they are the descendants of slaves and colonial subjects. The second relates to memory:

descendants of slaves and colonial subjects have a shared collective memory of colonial atrocities, and society's blindness about these atrocities excludes these populations from the 'vivre ensemble' promoted widely across mainstream politics in France (including frequently by SOS Racisme). The third, finally, relates to a common heritage of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggle, which reconstructs the 'histoire brisée' (2006: 103) of post-colonial populations, enabling them to recreate 'un lien positif qui comble le vide des mémoires' (ibid). Again, we can see the importance of colonial memory for Khiari and MIR. However, whereas the examples discussed earlier focused on its importance for society as a whole, this part of Khiari's argument focuses on its importance to 'post-colonial' populations themselves, as a way of defining themselves within a political system which rejects their cultures of origin as unacceptable *communautarisme*, but rarely lets them truly 'assimilate' to a version of French culture too often defined, MIR would argue, with reference to ethnicity. Khiari, thus, writes of the movement's desire to construct 'une identité de lutte comme identité anticolonialiste'; an identity not narrowly focused on culture or religion but 'une identité pour l'action' (ibid), inspired by anti-colonial movements throughout history. Khiari pursues this line in the 2009 text quoted earlier. The importance of the movement, he argues, does not come from its capacities for action and mobilisation, but from 'la problématique coloniale/postcoloniale qu'il a systématisée' (2009: 139). MIR, for him, has been responsible for a reading of contemporary French and world reality as a renewed process of colonial domination and the reproduction of 'la fracture raciale' (ibid), opening up the possibility of

a 'convergence décoloniale' of different *indigène* communities in France. This, then, would appear to be the intended outcome of MIR's anti-colonial ideology: a situation in which different groups of 'post-colonial' immigrants and their descendants join together to fight against the 'colonial' representations, and consequent treatment by the authorities, discussed earlier in this section, an aim of consciousness-raising within 'minority' communities which perhaps echoes Black Power thinking in 1960s America¹⁷. This point is reinforced later on in Khiari's book in his argument that: 'La décolonisation de la société française [...] ne se fera pas si les indigènes échouent à se constituer en puissance politique autonome.' (2009: 221) It is perhaps this desire for an autonomous, anti-colonial political force which led to the decision to launch the PIR (Parti des Indigènes de la République).

The anti-colonial nature of the new Party is made clear throughout its 'manifesto', written in 2010. This can be seen immediately in the preamble to article 1: 'La dignité humaine a pour principale négation l'impérialisme, le colonialisme et la hiérarchisation raciale qui en est consécutive.' Also made clear is the importance of autonomy, as mentioned above. The Party aims for 'la conquête par les indigènes de leur liberté de pensée, de décision et d'action par rapport à l'idéologie coloniale et raciale, par rapport à l'État et ses institutions ainsi que par rapport à l'ensemble des forces politiques non-indigènes'. This is a

¹⁷ MIR's discourse frequently refers to the Black Power movement – the conference at which the principles of the PIR were established, for instance, was known as the 'Congrès Malcolm X' ('Le Congrès constitutif du « Parti des Indigènes de la République » (P.I.R.) a eu lieu', 2010)

declaration of autonomy in relation to France's major political parties (SOS Racisme's relationship with the PS perhaps serving as a counter-example), and also a declaration of autonomy in terms of thought, therefore a rejection of the 'republican consensus' discussed in chapter 3, in which a disproportionate amount of political debate comes down to a battle to define what 'republicanism' stands for. Leaving aside the principles of the Party, however, what does it intend to do in relation to the anti-colonial struggle? Firstly, it appears that the aim is to organise the political activity of France's 'indigènes':

“Le PIR a pour objectif la construction d'une Puissance politique indigène indépendante, représentant les intérêts et les aspirations légitimes des indigènes et capable d'organiser et d'orienter leurs résistances dans une perspective décoloniale.”

And secondly, it aims eventually to create a political grouping powerful enough to enact its 'decolonial' reforms:

“Le PIR a pour objectif politique l'avènement d'une majorité politique contrôlant les principaux leviers institutionnels et déterminée à engager les profondes réformes institutionnelles, sociales, économiques et culturelles, nécessaires pour poursuivre le processus décolonial, dans ses différentes dimensions, et combattre les inégalités raciales.”

But how does it intend to go about achieving these objectives? As often seems to be the case in relation to MIR, this is not made clear. Indeed, in certain cases, as with the example above, the Party's principles seem to be in contradiction with its aims: how, for instance, is a desire for

complete autonomy from mainstream political parties compatible with the aim of creating ‘une majorité politique contrôlant les principaux leviers institutionnels’? There are signs that even those within the movement are aware that the grand plans set out in the PIR’s constitution are not imminently achievable. The constitution itself ends with a section on the importance of the media, including the pledge that ‘Le PIR agit pour combattre l’expression du racisme et des idéologies coloniales dans l’espace médiatique’. In a similar vein, Houria Bouteldja acknowledges that the difference between the MIR and the PIR rests largely in semantics: ‘si s’appeler parti politique a plus d’impact que s’appeler mouvement politique, on est parti politique’ (Interview 9.8.2011). While the situation may change in the future, in the political climate under discussion in the thesis, in which many of the movement’s key positions were anathema to mainstream politicians, MIR’s anti-colonial struggle can by necessity consist of little more than keeping its positions in the public eye, and fighting ‘l’expression du racisme et des idéologies coloniales dans l’espace médiatique’. It is in this light that the decision to launch the PIR can perhaps best be seen.

Summing up, in this chapter I have considered the positions of SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République in relation to colonialism and its continuing impact in contemporary French society. Of course, SOS and MIR do not represent the full spectrum of opinion on this question amongst French anti-racist movements: MRAP (*Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples*), for instance,

arguably represents a middle way between my chosen movements, being a long-established and relatively mainstream organisation, but one which places substantial emphasis on 'Histoire, mémoire [et] anticolonialisme en France' (see www.mrap.fr/histoire-et-memoire).

Nevertheless, examining the positions of SOS and MIR on the issue provides a case-study of two distinctively different approaches, even if it is possible to argue, as noted at the start of the chapter, that both movements, despite their differences, see contemporary post-colonial populations potentially as victims of the colonial past, with SOS arguing against this representation and MIR seeing it as a basis for unity and collective action.

Broadly speaking, SOS accepts colonialism as a legitimate area of historical study, but rejects the idea that its legacy should be seen as a vital determining factor in modern-day France, seeing as dangerous any discourse which presents post-colonial populations as victims. For MIR on the other hand, the link between colonialism and contemporary France is of paramount importance, a connection being made between the legal and juridical management of colonial populations and that of their descendants in France's poor suburbs, and between colonialism and the ideology of universalist republicanism. How can these two positions be evaluated? I would argue that SOS is justified in saying that victimhood is not a sustainable basis for an identity, and in saying that priority should be given to racism and discrimination happening in the present. It is

perhaps over-simplistic, however, to label as 'victimhood' any identity which draws upon the colonial past. The organisation is also perhaps too quick to dismiss the effect of this past on the post-colonial present. MIR, meanwhile, is justified in drawing attention to the links between colonial and post-colonial periods which SOS – and the majority of mainstream political discourse – choose to ignore. It is again an over-simplification, however, to present the Republic in purely negative terms, and in addition, the movement could do more to balance its justified critiques of society with ideas about where it could go next. A weakness of both movements is that, due to their positions at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, neither is entirely open to a compromise position which combines an emphasis on practical action to reinforce republican values with a willingness to look back critically at the colonial past and accept its links with the present. These are both important issues for the French anti-racist movement, and there is, I would argue, no need for them to be seen as mutually exclusive.

In the next chapter, the last of the three which focus on comparative analysis of my two chosen movements, I will consider the question of race, and the tenability of the republican ideal of 'colour-blindness'.

Chapter 6

SOS, MIR and the question of 'race'

In the first two of the three 'case study' chapters which form the centre of this thesis, I have considered the positions of my two chosen movements in relation to the issues of national identity (chapter 4) and colonialism (chapter 5). The examination of these issues has provided insights into the reaction of SOS and MIR to the political context defined by the discourse of Nicolas Sarkozy and his allies on 'Frenchness', and the supposed threat to it from immigration, Islam and historical 'repentance'. These chapters have also had the aim of examining the second central question in the thesis: the relationship of the two movements with France's self-proclaimed political culture of universalist republicanism. It is this question which is at the heart of the current chapter, which considers the ever controversial issue of 'race'¹⁸. It should of course be pointed out that there is not, biologically speaking, a 'French race', and that neither of the movements examined in the thesis believe this to be the case. It would perhaps be more accurate to talk of 'visible ethnic difference', the effect it has in society, and whether the acknowledgement of such ethnic difference has any part to play within the French anti-racist movement. The very different answers given by SOS and MIR in respect to these questions are informed by their equally very different positions

¹⁸ As this chapter is finalised, this potential for controversy is being illustrated by the debate around the attempts of the socialist government elected in 2012 to remove the word 'race' from French legislation, and eventually from the Constitution (*Le Monde* 16.5.2013)

concerning the universalist republican political culture touched upon above. The central difference here – a substantial one, to say the least – is that SOS criticises the government by demanding that it remains true to foundational republican principles, whilst MIR rejects republicanism, seeing it as an inherent source of racism and discrimination. In other words, the one calls for a reinforcement of republican principles as a response to racism, whilst the other calls for a rejection of the Republic, as a source of racism.

As with chapters 4 and 5, this final thematic ‘case study’ chapter will be divided into two sections. The first of these will look at SOS. I will begin this section by considering why SOS rejects in principle the idea of ‘race’, or ethnic difference, and its potential use as a means of classifying the population. I will then consider an example of what this rejection means in practice, by looking at the organisation’s action against discrimination and social inequality over my chosen timeframe. The second section, meanwhile, looks at MIR, and the way in which the movement sees racial hierarchies and discrimination, inherited from colonialism, as ingrained in France’s social and political structures. This analysis, as we will see, leads MIR to posit forcefully that the central cleavage in French society is not based on class or wealth, but race. The primacy of the ‘racial question’ over the ‘social question’ in MIR’s discourse can be seen as further evidence, if more were needed, of the seemingly irreconcilable differences between its worldview and that of more mainstream organisations such as SOS.

SOS: republicanism, colour-blindness and the 'social question'

Let us begin, then, by considering the positions of SOS Racisme. As will be clear from the thesis up to this point, the organisation bases its action, and its appeal to the French population, on its interpretation of republican values, emphasising *égalité* in its vision of an ideal French society ('equality' being considered in the sense of equality of opportunity and equality before the law rather than equality of outcome, an interpretation dating back at least as far as the *Déclaration des droits de l'Homme* of 1789), and *fraternité* in its dealings with immigrants and *sans-papiers*. In the case of SOS's positioning in relation to 'race' however, the association evokes not (or at least not directly) the classical republican *devise*, but a principle which has come to constitute a core component of French republican identity: that of 'colour-blindness'. As Article 1 of the Fifth Republic's constitution states, 'La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion.'

The extent to which the ideal of colour-blindness reflects the reality of French society has been questioned, by radical anti-system movements like MIR, as we will see, and by a number of academic analysts. As Silverman puts it for example, the French state has for much of its history 'preached inclusion according to universalist criteria', while simultaneously 'practising exclusion through racialising the French

community and its other' (1992: 9). Nevertheless, the mere existence in principle of this colour-blindness has had a significant effect on mainstream French anti-racist movements like SOS, in that it is seen as supporting evidence for the idea that republican principles are inherently favourable to anti-racism. As Alana Lentin argues:

“French conceptualisations of anti-racism are to a great extent tied to the republican ideologies that are central to the public political culture of that country. [...] The importance periodically placed on anti-racism in French post-war politics reflects the extent to which, rather than being the preserve of groups of the racially marginalised, it has been constructed as inherently French, and therefore hegemonic. The ideals of anti-racism have been construed as universally applicable through their connection with the republican principle of liberty, equality and fraternity.” (2004: 115)

Lentin's analysis of French anti-racism is very much applicable to SOS, a movement which, as we have seen throughout this thesis, positions itself firmly in the political mainstream in terms of ideology, seeing universalist principles as an unambiguous good – regardless of the discriminatory purposes they may periodically have been put to over the course of French history – and as the only acceptable way of organising the wider anti-racist movement. This ideological inflexibility has the potential to lead to a certain measure of disarray in the event of the language of republicanism being appropriated by powerful political actors like Sarkozy, for purposes which, as we saw in chapter 2, serve to divide rather than unify the population. Leaving aside this reservation however, it is clear

that SOS, as it does with republican principles as a whole, chooses to take the idea of colour-blindness entirely at face value. As Loïc Rigaud of the organisation's anti-discrimination section puts it in a 2011 interview, for example:

“On ne doit pas concevoir la République française par un biais ethnique. [...] En France, on considère que tous les citoyens sont égaux, et qu'on ne peut pas différencier les gens en raison de leurs origines. En raison de leur comportement peut-être, en raison de leur niveau social, mais pas au niveau ethnique, ce n'est pas un biais qu'on prend en compte en France.” (Interview 29.3.2011)

This way of seeing things on the part of SOS has notable consequences, relating particularly to the way in which, within mainstream French anti-racism and mainstream French political thinking more widely, 'racism is deracinated from its roots as a political idea with an historical function in the modern French state' (Lentin 2004: 116). That is to say, SOS rejects the idea, strongly favoured by MIR as we will see, that racism and discrimination are systemic, and are inherent within the structures of the nation-state. That SOS, wedded as it is to the universalist republican thinking which underlies the modern French nation-state, rejects this way of thinking is perhaps no surprise. An argument exists, however, that this worldview is representative of a form of denial: that the abstract rights of republicanism lead parties, movements and the wider population to ignore the fact that race is a major factor in influencing life chances. As Ahmed Boubeker puts it for example, 'La France refuse de regarder en face la dimension ethnique des inégalités sociales' (2010: 272). The

'refusal' identified by Boubeker can undoubtedly be seen in the positions of SOS, and is illustrated particularly strongly in the movement's discourse on discrimination: as we will see later on in this section, this discourse rejects any form of ethnic monitoring, even that which aims simply to gauge the effectiveness of measures taken to fight the problem.

Before moving on to discuss SOS's rejection of race in practice however, I would like to consider further the reasons for the organisation's rejection of the idea in principle. On the evidence of press releases and official publications released by the movement over my chosen period, its objection to the idea of distinguishing between different 'races' – or ethnicities – can be divided into three categories. The first of these categories relates to SOS's view of what French anti-racism is, or should be. The second relates to the movement's interpretation of what France itself is, or again, what it should be, concerning its identity and self-perception. The third, finally, relates to practical objections to the idea of basing a society around ethnic classifications.

As Lentin notes in the quotation above, mainstream anti-racist movements in France, almost without exception, draw strongly on universalist republicanism as a basis for their ideology. Their relationships with the question of 'race', therefore, have a tendency to take the 'colour-blind' view proclaimed by a succession of republican constitutions. SOS, for its part, deviates little from this worldview, a worldview which as may be expected has a major influence on SOS's

conception of what the role of an anti-racist movement should be. To take an example, Dominique Sopo, SOS's President throughout the timeframe examined in the thesis, argues in *Manifeste pour l'égalité* that the organisation's aim is to 'faire en sorte que chacun, quelles que soient ses origines, ait les mêmes opportunités que n'importe qui dans la société' (2007: 45). Elsewhere, such as in its 2007 'mission statement', SOS sets out a very similar vision for the wider anti-racist movement: 'L'antiracisme, pour nous, a toujours été la volonté de voir chacun vivre à égale dignité dans la société, quelles que soient ses origines, sa confession ou ses pratiques culturelles' ('Nos missions', 2007). It is not difficult to see the similarities between SOS's view of the role of anti-racism, on one hand, and the constitutional promise that '[La République] assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion', on the other. In both cases, the idea of distinguishing between France's inhabitants on the basis of ethnicity is seen as inherently incompatible with republican ideals.

As we have seen, the form mainstream anti-racism takes in a given society relates to the prevailing concept of the nation-state. Therefore, as France does not officially recognise or monitor ethnic groups, movements generally emphasise inclusiveness and egalitarianism. Although there is much to be said for prioritising social equality over racial equality (MIR, as we will see in the second part of this chapter, arguably goes too far in the other direction), it is also possible to see this close attachment to

republican 'colour-blindness' as a weakness in the approach of movements like SOS. As Koopmans et al. point out:

“[T]he French approach has difficulty in dealing with the fact that cultural group differences, which are denied as legitimate policy categories, do form the basis of discrimination and racism from the side of the majority population. [...] Insisting on the equal treatment of all and loathing group-specific approaches, France to some extent ties its own hands when it comes to combating forms of social exclusion that are rooted in ethnic and cultural differences.” (2006: 14)

In other words, how is it possible to fight, for example, discrimination which is based on race and ethnicity, using the tools provided by a political ideology which refuses to take race and ethnicity into account? Although SOS did attempt to find ways around this problem, for example by focusing anti-discrimination action on disadvantaged territories rather than disadvantaged communities, the second part of this section will show that the organisation never entirely found a satisfactory answer to this question over my chosen timeframe.

Regardless of the potential difficulties and contradictions within the idea of republican colour-blindness, SOS sees the idea not only as an ideological basis for the French anti-racist movement, but as an ideological basis for France itself. The organisation's discourse presents any ethnic classifications of the population as contrary to the desire, expressed in a succession of republican constitutions, not to distinguish between France's inhabitants on the grounds of 'origin, race or religion'.

Additionally however, SOS presents such classifications as contrary to the less tangible and inevitably more subjective idea of France's 'identity'. As may be recalled from chapter 4, SOS's conception of national identity rejects the conservative and exclusionary vision of Sarkozy, in favour of a 'République métissée' in which immigrant populations are seen not as a threat, but as welcome contributors to French culture and society. The movement brings a similar perspective to its arguments against classifying France's population by ethnicity. As Sopo argues in the interview reproduced in *Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme*, France is 'une terre de métissage' (2006: 96). And if France is inherently, as SOS contends, a 'terre de métissage', then taking into account ethnic difference is automatically contrary to the underlying ideological 'essence' of French society. As Sopo's argument continues, classifying populations in this way:

"[P]ourrait les populations à se référer à des catégories particulières et non plus à la catégorie de la citoyenneté. Or, une des grandes richesses de la France, qui explique d'ailleurs la force du métissage, réside justement dans le fait que, dans notre pays, les barrières ethniques, culturelles et religieuses sont très poreuses." (ibid)

For SOS therefore, there must be no deviation from what could be called the 'universal citizen' proclaimed theoretically by the French constitution. That is to say, race, ethnicity and religion should all be subordinate to the greater ideal of French citizenship, and no forms of community organisation based on these categories should intervene between the

citizen and the 'universalist' state. It is this line of thought, of course, which leads to SOS's hostility to the notion of *communautarisme*. Indeed, many of the arguments against a society based around ethnic difference and classifications elsewhere in SOS's published material warn against the dangers of 'communities'. In his introduction to *Manifeste pour l'égalité*, for example, Sopo argues that:

“[I]nviter les gens à se vivre comme appartenant à telle ou telle “catégorie ethnique” ou “communauté” (qu'on aura d'ailleurs en réalité définies à leur place!), c'est évidemment prendre le risque de créer des barrières et donc, sous couvert de lutte contre les discriminations, de basculer dans une société communautarisée qui ne correspond en rien à notre idéal de vie.” (2007: 43)

It is the view of the movement, then, that ethnic classifications lead to individuals from 'visible minorities' being seen not as true citizens, but as undifferentiated members of such communities. For SOS, this leads to a situation in which, as the organisation put it in a response to a proposal by Patrick Lozès, President of the *Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires*, to introduce ethnic statistics in the fight against discrimination, 'Je représente une communauté qui pèse tant de pour cent de la population et donc, reconnaître pleinement cette communauté, c'est me reconnaître moi.' (Discriminations: évitons les faux débats, 2009). A society which divides its population on an ethnic basis, SOS argues consequently, brings with it substantial dangers at the level of identity. Just as Sarkozy's conception of national identity is arguably racialised – in the

sense of what Étienne Balibar calls an ‘ethnicité fictive’ (1988: 70), an imaginary unity defined in opposition to internal or external groups who are ‘not us’ – it is SOS’s argument that taking into account ethnic classifications leads populations to racialise their *own* identities, making them inflexible and unchangeable. Both these forms of racialised identity, despite coming about in very different ways, are seen by SOS as contrary to the more fluid conceptions of identity embedded within the organisation’s ideal of *métissage* and its manifestation in its proposals for a *République métissée*.

There is certainly some merit in SOS’s arguments on this theme. I would argue that the movement is justified, for example, to warn of the potential issues resulting from a social system which divides the population into ethnically (or religiously)-based communities. Equally, however, aspects of these arguments can be called into question: SOS arguably ignores the reasons why ‘ethnic minority’ populations may want to divide *themselves* into such communities (for example to support each other in an apparently hostile society), and also arguably ignores the possibility that the agents of ‘ethnicisation’ are not state institutions but ordinary people, possibly influenced subconsciously (as MIR would argue) by stereotypes of colonial and post-colonial populations. SOS’s premise that France is inherently a ‘terre de métissage’ is also questionable: it may be in theory, and in SOS’s ideals, but is it in reality? A potential issue relating to political actors who draw upon republicanism as a basis for their action, as Fysh and Wolfreys (2003: 207) point out, is that they see

the Republic as it should be, rather than as it is. Over the years examined in this thesis, SOS has at times perhaps been guilty of falling into this trap.

The final rationale for SOS's rejection in principle of the idea of taking into account race and ethnicity in French society relates to practical objections: how would a society which did take into account these issues function should state policy move in this direction? This issue is addressed by Sopo in *Manifeste pour l'égalité*. Objections expressed to the idea include the difficulty of coming up with workable groupings – 'il serait très compliqué, en France, pays très métissée, de définir des catégories ethniques "pertinentes"' (2007: 43) – as well as the question of who gets to decide and why: 'Qui définit les catégories ethniques?' (ibid) Both of these objections potentially raise highly complex issues on the nature of race and ethnicity: for example, is ethnicity objective or subjective? Is it something you can define yourself (as is assumed, for example, by the UK census)? Or is it something which can only be imposed by other people?¹⁹ The centre of SOS's objection to a racially-defined society, however, is that an emphasis on ethnic difference serves to 'évacuer la question sociale' (2007: 44). For Sopo and SOS, the 'social question' – emphasising the centrality of inequality as the major issue in society – must be the priority, and therefore action must be taken in favour of equality of opportunity. It is the position of the movement that the work of anti-racism, and government action against discrimination, should focus

¹⁹ See for example the discourse of MIR's key thinkers on 'social races', which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter

on issues which improve the lives and prospects of poor and disfavoured populations regardless of ethnicity. This position can be seen clearly with regard to an example which illustrates SOS's rejection of the idea of race and ethnicity in practice: that of the movement's own action against discrimination and social inequality.

The place of race and ethnicity in the fight against discrimination and social inequality has been the subject of intense debate in the study of contemporary French social policy. As is so often the case, the differing viewpoints on the subject are reflective of the underlying debate on republican ideology. The fundamentalist republican position is to reject unequivocally the idea of bringing ethnicity into the fight against discrimination, whether in a high-profile, proactive way – positive discrimination, quota systems – or in a more passive and low-key way, such as ethnic monitoring designed to gauge the effectiveness of anti-discrimination policies. Such a position can be seen, to take one example, in the writing of Elisabeth Badinter, who argues:

“Les moyens d'accroître les connaissances sur les discriminations et d'agir pour les réduire ne manquent pas. Beaucoup sont à portée de main, mais il manque une volonté gouvernementale pour les saisir et les développer. Au contraire, en facilitant la formation de communautés ethniques, culturelles, raciales, religieuses, en encourageant la prise en compte de ces appartenances, le gouvernement ne fait pas simplement diversion pour masquer les inégalités sociales croissantes: il concourt à la division de la France.” (2009: 25)

Analysts taking this position have a tendency – like SOS, as we have seen earlier in this section – to take at face value republican claims of 'colour-blindness', and to see as inherently dangerous and anti-republican any action which deviates from this worldview. These potential 'dangers' include the inadvertent promotion of *communautarisme* ('la formation de communautés ethniques, culturelles, raciales, religieuses...'), and what Badinter (2009: 11) calls the 'institutionalisation' of difference: that is to say, a situation in which France's 'ethnic minority' inhabitants cease to be seen as individuals, and as either current or potential French citizens benefiting from equal rights, and begin to be seen solely as faceless representatives of their allotted 'communities'. Because of this rejection of any recourse to ethnic monitoring, those who take this view must by necessity conceive of action against discrimination, and in favour of equality of opportunity, in purely socio-economic terms.

The second school of thought in relation to the role of race in the fight against discrimination, on the other hand, sees some degree of ethnic monitoring as necessary if this fight is to be led effectively. This is the position adopted by Patrick Simon (in Guénif-Souilamas (ed.) 2006), who argues that far from benefiting 'ethnic minority' populations, the official invisibility of such minorities within universalist republican ideology may actually serve to harm these populations and work against their interests:

“[L]a stratégie d’invisibilisation des minorités sur laquelle est fondée l’équation politique universaliste conduit non pas à leur assurer protection et accès à l’égalité, comme elle en a fait la promesse, mais au

contraire à les désarmer face aux effets d'une hiérarchisation ethnique et raciale abritée derrière l'égalité formelle." (2006: 162)

According to this viewpoint therefore, those who argue for a purely 'colour-blind' republican response to racial discrimination are to some extent in denial of reality: just because ethnic categorisation and hierarchisation *should* not exist, this does not mean that they *do* not exist. And this denial means that France's mainstream anti-racist movements are ill-equipped to combat such hierarchisation and its social effects. As we will see in the second part of this chapter, MIR is one of the very few French anti-racist movements which would fully accept Simon's analysis of the continuing importance of ethnicity, seeing the racial hierarchies and stereotyping inherited from the colonial period as pivotal in determining the life-chances of an individual in contemporary society.

But what of SOS? As may be expected given the movement's strongly republican-based ideology, it belongs to the first of the schools of thought set out above: one which states, as Éric Ferrand puts it, that 'La République exclut [...] toute forme de régression du sentiment national à l'identité ethnique, culturelle ou religieuse' (2007: 10). Accordingly, over the period examined in this thesis SOS has shown itself, consistently and repeatedly, to be opposed to the idea of keeping ethnic statistics as a means of organising the fight against discrimination and measuring the effectiveness of any measures taken. But what, more specifically, are the grounds for SOS's hostility towards such measures? One answer can be found in the response (touched upon earlier in this section) by the

organisation's President Dominique Sopo to his counterpart in the French 'Black' association CRAN, Patrick Lozès, following the latter's comments in favour of ethnic statistics in 2009. According to Sopo:

“[D]emander de façon exhaustive et répétée aux personnes de se déterminer sur un spectre ethno-racial, c'est – alors que cela n'a aucune utilité en matière de lutte contre les discriminations – pousser la population à racialisier son identité et à la figer alors qu'une des grandes forces de la France, c'est précisément que les identités y sont fluides et qu'elles sont avant tout fondées sur une référence à une citoyenneté politique.” ('Discriminations: évitons les faux débats', 7.4.2009)

Although the argument that keeping ethnic statistics is of 'aucune utilité' can be and has been questioned (as we shall see later on in this section), Sopo's statement is entirely consistent with the movement's ideology as discussed in the thesis up to this point. His critique of the potential 'racialisation' of identities is, as may be recalled from chapter 5, of a piece with his denunciation of any discourse which serves to paint France's 'ethnic minorities' not as individuals but as representatives of a 'community'. The quotation is also representative of SOS's rejection of 'frozen' and unchanging identities in a wider sense. Indeed, the statement can be seen as an implicit restating of the movement's ideal of a *République métissée*, discussed in chapter 4, an ideal which rejects both multiculturalism (in the sense of separate 'closed' communities with their own cultural traditions) and the inflexible and backwards-looking vision of national identity favoured by Sarkozy (a vision which itself is

arguably 'racialised'), in favour of an identity which is diverse and constantly evolving ('une des grandes forces de la France, c'est précisément que les identités y sont fluides...'), but is still conceived of within the political and social structures of the Republic ('...et qu'elles sont avant tout fondées sur une référence à une citoyenneté politique.')

Similar objections can be found in SOS's reaction to a report by the Franco-Algerian businessman Yazid Sabeg, the '*commissaire à l'égalité des chances*' in the Fillon government, who like Lozès proposed the idea of keeping ethnic statistics as a means of measuring the effectiveness of action taken against discrimination. For SOS, the idea is a threat to 'cohésion nationale'; is representative of a 'dynamique communautariste'; and threatens to cause '[la] fragmentation de la société' and 'le remplacement de la recherche de l'égalité entre les individus par la recherche d'un équilibre entre les communautés.' ('Yazid Sabeg et la "mesure de la diversité": des déclarations inquiétantes', 2009). And the movement was similarly voluble in its opposition to a proposed change in immigration legislation in 2007, which was to authorise the collection of ethnic statistics: in an SOS petition against the move, signatories (including François Hollande, then General Secretary of the PS) were asked to assent to statements such as the following:

“Je refuse que quiconque me demande ma couleur de peau, mon origine et ma religion. Je refuse que l'on puisse faire de même avec mon conjoint, mes enfants, mes parents. Je refuse que mon identité soit

réduite à des critères d'un autre temps, celui de la France coloniale, ou de Vichy." ('Campagne contre la statistique ethnique', 2007)

The movement's position, then, is clear. Distinguishing between members of the French population on ethnic grounds is unacceptable under any circumstances, without exception. It is seen as being contrary to, and a threat to, the founding principles of the Republic.

This being the case, how does this uncompromising positioning translate into concrete policy proposals? The association's anti-discrimination initiatives over my chosen period can be illustrated by two appeals, the first relating to housing and the second employment, launched circa 2006. To take the first of these examples, in an appeal entitled 'Faire reculer la discrimination dans les HLM', the movement noted that 'les émeutes de novembre dernier nous ont rappelé le caractère insupportable de la discrimination raciale qui engendre la ségrégation raciale et nourrit la révolte sociale'. This line of argument echoes that taken by SOS during the 2005 riots themselves: the organisation, rather than focusing specifically on the pronouncements of Sarkozy and his allies, took the opportunity to remind the government that *ghettoisation*, exacerbated by the long-term failures of official policy, was a contributory factor in the violence, and that the solution was to ensure republican *égalité* was a reality for every citizen, including those in the poorer suburbs. The appeal on social housing aims to take action to these ends, noting that 'la loi promet à chacun un droit égal au logement'. And, in keeping with the ideology discussed in this chapter, the movement is highly critical of the

unspoken practice amongst local housing boards of discriminating between candidates on ethnic grounds: 'Il est totalement interdit de limiter le droit d'un individu en raison d'un seuil ou d'un quota'. As is often the case, SOS bases its argument here on its interpretation of republican values, and amongst republican values, the movement places the greatest emphasis on equality: the appeal states that 'l'égalité entre tous, quelle que soit notre origine et notre nationalité doit être notre ambition commune'. The organisation proposes to implement this equality via 'l'anonymisation des candidatures'. As noted in *Manifeste pour l'égalité*,

"Les offices HLM n'ont pas besoin de savoir le nom des demandeurs de logements ou leur lieu de naissance. Les seules informations nécessaires au traitement d'une demande de HLM sont les revenus, la composition familiale ainsi que l'ancienneté de la demande." (2007: 140)

This 'anonymisation', it is hoped by the movement, will promote a 'brassage de populations' (2007: 141), referred to in the appeal as 'la mixité sociale'. In turn, the 'mixing' of different populations brought about by the theoretical impossibility of racial discrimination, allied to a proposed increase in the stock of social housing (2007: 135), is seen as a means of fighting against *ghettoisation*.

A similar logic applies to the movement's appeal against discrimination in employment, entitled 'Pour une égalité d'accès à l'entretien d'embauche: Le CV anonyme'. That is, the logic that anonymity of candidates is an effective way of fighting prejudice:

“Pourquoi s’intéresser aux prénoms et noms, au sexe, à l’adresse ou à l’âge d’une personne quand on cherche un commercial ou un ingénieur? Objectivement, cela ne sert à rien!”

As with much of SOS's action over my chosen period, the underlying basis is that of equality of opportunity, an idea seen by the movement as central to a fair and 'anti-racist' society. The logic of the initiative is that because CVs under this proposal would contain no name, address or photograph, potential candidates could not be stereotyped by employers and thus rejected without an interview. The candidate, therefore, would have the opportunity to promote their cause in an interview when, according to SOS, they would previously have been rejected out of hand:

“Grâce au CV anonyme les candidats auront les mêmes chances d’accéder à un entretien d’embauche. Le recruteur n’aura pas d’autre choix que de se concentrer sur les compétences des individus plutôt que sur leur état civil.”

Whilst aspects of this idea can be questioned – for example, could employers not reject a candidate on racial grounds having interviewed them? And could employers not feel that they had 'done their bit' by simply interviewing 'minority' candidates, thus relieving any potential guilt at not giving them the job? – it is illustrative of SOS's thinking on social justice and its links with republican ideology, and at the time of writing is still a major part of the organisation's plans for promoting such social justice in French society²⁰.

²⁰ See for example the official website of SOS's campaign for anonymous CVs (<http://www.justsignit.fr/>), set up in 2013

On the evidence of the examples studied in this section then, much of SOS's anti-discrimination action over my chosen timeframe focused on making ethnic origin invisible to gatekeepers of social opportunity. This positioning was accompanied by a refusal to take into account ethnic statistics. It can perhaps be seen, therefore, as a literal enforcement of the Republic's proclaimed 'colour-blindness'. How can these proposals be evaluated? Certain analysts argue on very similar lines to SOS: Gérard Noiriel, for instance, is highly sceptical of ethnic statistics ('L'histoire montre que lorsqu'un pouvoir administratif impose de nouvelles catégories statistiques, celles-ci sont utilisées ensuite par les acteurs du champ politique qui les transforment en personnages pour alimenter leurs récits sur "eux" et "nous".' (2007b: 77)), and argues that ethnically-based anti-racism can end up hiding other more important issues, such as the fight for equality in socio-economic terms.

Others, however, argue that this approach must be called into question: De Rudder et al, for example, argue that the republican notion of the 'individu-citoyen universel' (2000: 7) and the consequent rejection of the entire notion of 'minorities' leads to serious difficulty in taking action against racial, ethnic or religious discrimination; while Alana Lentin takes a similar argument a stage further, seeing an inherent contradiction in mainstream 'republican' anti-racism in France, in that it is 'constantly required to reconcile its opposition to discrimination on the grounds of difference with the republican principle that advocated a colour-blind approach' (2004: 117). Because of its rejection of ethnicity as a dividing

line between French inhabitants, SOS conceives of the fight against discrimination (as Noiriél counsels) in socio-economic terms, thus implicitly asserting the primacy of class over race as the central cleavage in French society. This is a persuasive argument: it could certainly be held that a poor white person surely has more in common with a poor black person, than a poor white person does with a rich white person (as Tissot and Tévanian put it in their argument against 2009's 'identity debate', for example, '[L]e "travailleur français" dont se réclame Sarkozy a davantage en commun avec son collègue de travail ou son voisin de palier étranger et/ou africain et/ou musulman et/ou sans papiers qu'avec Éric Besson [...] ou n'importe quel patron ou actionnaire franco-français' (2010: 236)). One potential issue however – one which supports Lentin's idea of a contradiction between republican colour-blindness and the fight against discrimination based on difference – is with how to measure the effectiveness of measures taken against discrimination. Without some form of ethnically-based statistics, how can the success of initiatives such as those discussed above in relation to employment and housing be judged? Due to its outright rejection of ethnic monitoring, this is not a question answered by the movement over my chosen period – a potential weakness in SOS's discourse. Presumably it is hoped that action in favour of socio-economic equality will create racial equality as a by-product, but leaving such an important issue to chance, while understandable purely at the level of the movement's proclaimed ideology, can be seen as a major omission in its anti-discrimination action.

In the first section of this chapter, I have considered the positions of SOS Racisme on the question of 'race'. The association, in keeping with the Republic's proclaimed 'colour-blindness', rejects entirely the idea that race and ethnicity have any part to play in French society, thus representing the dominant view within the mainstream French anti-racist movement²¹. In the first part of the section, I considered the question of why the organisation rejects this idea in principle. In the second meanwhile, I considered the question of what this rejection means in practice, by looking at its discourse on discrimination. While many analysts see potential difficulties in attempting to use universalist republicanism as a means of fighting discrimination, SOS bases its anti-discrimination strategy entirely on these grounds, calling for anonymisation of candidates for jobs and housing and conceiving of equality in socio-economic rather than racial terms. In the second section of the chapter, I will consider the viewpoints of MIR, which sees the question of race in French society in a very different way.

MIR: 'republican racism' and the primacy of the 'racial question'

The majority of mainstream French political actors – SOS Racisme, as we have seen, very much included – see republican principles as the

²¹ See for example the view of MRAP that 'il n'y a qu'une race, la race humaine' (<http://www.mrap.fr/contre-le-racisme-sous-toutes-ses-formes/suppression-du-mot-abracebb-une-premiere-mesure-qui-en-appelle-dautres/>), that 'C'est au nom de la prétendue existence de « races » que les crimes les plus monstrueux ont été commis dans l'histoire de l'humanité' (ibid), and that 'nous sommes tous des égaux, partageant les mêmes Droits de l'Homme garantis par la Constitution française' (<http://www.mrap.fr/tout-savoir-sur-le-mrap/histoire/combats-du-siecle-et-daujourd'hui>)

antidote to racism and discrimination. Where differences of opinion occur, they relate to the interpretation of these principles, how they can be applied in society, which ones should be prioritised, and so on. Despite these differences (as can be seen for example in the differences between the 'republicanism' of SOS Racisme and the 'republicanism' of Sarkozy) there is little thought given to the idea that the principles themselves should be called into question. The major difference, then, between MIR and the majority of mainstream French political thought on this subject is the following: far from seeing republicanism as the solution to the question of racism, the *Indigènes* see racism as existing *within* republican ideology, an argument of a piece with the movement's insistence that the problem is systemic, rather than relating to a problem between individuals or groups. In this argument, MIR, as in a number of cases, appears to draw on the theories of Étienne Balibar, who as noted in chapter 1, writes in *Les frontières de la démocratie* that:

“[L]a thèse principale que je défends est celle de la structure *institutionnelle* du racisme. Tout racisme n'est pas un racisme d'État, officialisé, mais tout racisme est ancré [...] dans la structure des institutions et dans le rapport conscient ou inconscient des individus et des masses à ces institutions.” (1992: 11)

The assumption underlying much of the mainstream discourse mentioned above is that republicanism is, by definition, universal: there should be no differentiation between France's inhabitants based on ethnicity or origin. If this type of differentiation is found to have taken place, the solution (a

recurrent theme in the ideology of SOS Racisme) is to work harder at implementing republican ideology throughout society, in other words to work harder at becoming genuinely 'universal'. MIR, on the other hand, reverses these widespread assumptions by referring in its discourse to 'white universalism' (an oxymoronic concept for any believer in republicanism), and indeed to the 'white Republic'. Take, for example, this extract from a 2011 conference speech by the movement's *de facto* leader Houria Bouteldja:

“En France, les indigènes ont pris l’arme de la race pour combattre une rhétorique redoutable: l’universalisme. Un universalisme blanc qui masque et nie les hiérarchies structurelles qui constituent la république française.” (Houria Bouteldja, ‘Le “racisme anti-blanc” des Indigènes de la République’, 2.6.2011)

In other words, for MIR the 'universalist' principles which were inherited from the Enlightenment, and went on to form the basis of republican ideology, were only ever truly applicable to white populations of European origin. As may be recalled from the earlier section on MIR and colonialism, this contradiction manifested itself historically in the *mission civilisatrice* rationale for France's colonial enterprise: if the values favoured by France were genuinely universal, why was it supposedly necessary to impose them forcibly upon the native populations of the colonies? What is more, Bouteldja argues, the widespread belief in the universalist nature of republican values has served to cover up the systemic nature of racism and discrimination in French society.

For MIR, then, the Republic is not a safeguard against racial inequalities, it is fundamentally *based on* racial inequalities, an idea spelled out explicitly in the manifesto of the PIR:

“La République est un système politique, idéologique et social basé sur les inégalités raciales au sein de l’Hexagone, à l’encontre de l’immigration coloniale et de ses enfants et plus spécifiquement des Noirs, des Arabes et des musulmans.” (Parti des Indigènes de la République, ‘Principes politiques généraux du Parti des Indigènes de la République’, 2010)

It is the movement’s position that the prevalence of race as a determining factor in French society can be attributed to the formation of the French nation-state. As Florence Bernault (in Tshimanga, Gondola and Bloom, eds., 2009) puts it:

“For the Indigènes, race is not prior to, or distinct from, the project of modern nation-building, but has historically emerged as a state-sponsored tool of distancing and othering, while the French republican order, under the pretense of imposing universal civil rights over cultural and racial loyalties, has essentialised racial and cultural differences.” (2009: 129)

Institutional racism, therefore, is seen by MIR as an intrinsic part of the modern nation-state, and more specifically of the French Republic. But how does the movement itself use the concept of ‘race’? It is this question I now intend to consider. In the conference speech cited earlier in this section, Bouteldja states that ‘Pour le PIR, la race existe, les races

sociales existent.’ (‘Le “racisme anti-blanc” des Indigènes de la République’, 2011) This idea is at the centre of the movement’s discourse on race: that of ‘social races’. It is expanded upon by MIR member Pierre Tévanian in his 2008 book *La mécanique raciste*. He writes that:

“Ce qui est faux est de nier toute existence à “la race”, car si les races n’existent pas en tant que réalités biologiques, elles existent bel et bien en tant que croyance collective, et cette croyance se répercute dans la réalité sous la forme de paroles et d’actes – injures, discriminations – qui font qu’être Blanc et être Noir sont deux expériences très différentes.” (2008: 79)

In other words, as he goes on to put it, ‘il est vrai que nous ne sommes des Noirs, des Arabes ou des Blancs [...] que *dans le regard de l’autre*’, but the problem is that ‘toute l’existence humaine est une existence *avec les autres*’ (ibid). Of course, MIR is in accordance with the great majority of mainstream thought in their view that race is not a biological reality but a social construction. Where the movement differs from many political actors, however – particularly those working in the tradition of French republicanism – is the conclusion drawn from this realisation. For MIR, in order to fight against racism, it is necessary not to affirm that there is no such thing as ‘race’, but to recognise that, in practice, there is²². This can of course be contrasted with the position of SOS Racisme: SOS, as we

²² MIR does not deny the existence of hierarchies and discrimination based on social class, but sees them as subordinate to those based on race. In a 2012 piece arguing that recognition of white privilege is a prerequisite for the creation of an effective anti-racist movement, for instance, MIR member Atman Zerkaoui argues that ‘oppression économique, certes réelle [...] n’explique pas l’écrasement des non-blancs’ (‘Il nous faut un antiracisme politique’, 19.8.2012)

have seen, refuse to differentiate between races, however they are conceived, preferring to concentrate on promoting a 'universal', 'colour-blind' conception of equality.

For MIR, the ingrained existence of social races in French society has led to equally ingrained racial hierarchies. As Sadri Khiari asks, for instance:

“Qu’est–ce qui spécifie la relation sociale qui produit et oppose, dans le même temps, des groupes sociaux hiérarchisés qui se pensent et s’opposent comme races, délimitées par des différences imaginées et réifiées?” (2009: 21)

It can be seen across much of MIR’s discourse that the movement’s proclaimed aim is to end such hierarchies. As is stated in the manifesto of the PIR:

“Le PIR est un parti politique qui agit pour défaire le caractère impérial, colonial et racial de l’Etat français ainsi que tous les mécanismes qui contribuent au sein de la société à reproduire les hiérarchies raciales.” (Parti des Indigènes de la République, ‘Principes politiques généraux du Parti des Indigènes de la République’, 2010)

There is a fundamental difference, then, in the role of anti-racism as seen by MIR, and the role of anti-racism as seen by republican-based movements like SOS Racisme. In the view of MIR, as we have seen above, the predominant role of anti-racist movements should be to fight the racial hierarchies which continue to exert an influence on French society. This is perhaps easier said than done, as such hierarchies are rarely, if ever, explicitly stated: rather, they are made up of generations of

stereotypes embedded in the subconscious mind of the population, and / or disguised as something else, such as a discussion of the incompatibility of various 'immigrant' cultures with that of France (as seen frequently in Sarkozy's 2007 campaign speeches). It is possibly the case that MIR sees increasing awareness of these hierarchies as the first step to doing something about them. Nevertheless, leaving aside this issue, it is clear that the *Indigènes* see movements like SOS, which refuse – on the grounds of fidelity to republican values and fear of endorsing *communautarisme* – to differentiate between races as fundamentally in denial of social reality. A similar argument has been made frequently in academic circles, although without impacting significantly on France's entrenched political culture. As Achille Mbembe puts it for example,

“[H]ow can we not be astonished that a country of such education, filled with so many brilliant minds, displays such an inability to understand that the abstract concept of radical equality can paradoxically serve as a veil to conceal state racism?” (2009: 58)

It follows, therefore, that for MIR the most important cleavage in French society is not based on class, or wealth, or opportunities for social advancement, but race. This is an absolutely central difference between MIR's positioning and that of SOS. Whilst SOS is (of course) an anti-racist movement, its underlying focus is on the 'social question': of fighting inequality and discrimination in French society on socio-economic grounds, with racial issues addressed only as a by-product. For MIR on the other hand, the 'racial question' is paramount, with class, wealth and social opportunity seen as subsets of this central issue. The primacy of

race as a determining factor is confirmed by Houria Bouteldja in the 2011 interview cited throughout the discussion of MIR in this thesis:

“Il faut comprendre le système de domination, et les clivages. Nous, on est inscrit sur un clivage racial, et colonial. C’est à dire que le clivage de classe – gauche/droite, riche/pauvre – pour nous, ce n’est pas suffisamment pertinent pour qu’on comprenne la situation des indigènes en France. Donc, pour nous le clivage le plus important, c’est le clivage racial. Et nous disons que, si on veut lutter contre les discriminations, et pour plus de justice entre les blancs et les non-blancs, il faut comprendre le clivage racial; la fracture de race. Que la race, comme phénomène socio-historique, existe.” (Interview 9.8.2011)

Again, in this quotation it is possible to find major differences between MIR’s positions and those of SOS. Firstly, there is the question of ‘systems of domination’: broadly speaking, for SOS racism is something that takes place between an individual and an individual, or an individual and an institution (employers, housing associations, schools, etc.), and can be fought against through legal action, and state action in favour of equality. For MIR on the other hand, racism is systemic, or even, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, intrinsic to the formation of the modern nation-state. Secondly, there is the idea of ‘justice entre les blancs et les non-blancs’. As has been noted throughout this section so far, this separation is something that SOS would simply not countenance: as Loïc Rigaud of the organisation’s anti-discrimination department puts it in a 2011 interview, ‘En France, on considère que tous les citoyens sont

égaux, et qu'on ne peut pas différencier les gens en raison de leurs origines' (Interview 29.3.2011). For MIR however (as noted above) this attitude is a result of wilful blindness towards social realities: in the view of the movement's key thinkers and analysts, race forms the essential dividing line between populations in France. And within this, as we shall see shortly, the central cleavage is between white and non-white populations.

This focus by MIR on the continuing existence of racial divisions, contradicting the official republican viewpoint, has led to accusations of 'anti-white racism'. These accusations are summed up by Bouteldja, in the 2011 speech quoted throughout this chapter, as follows: 'Vous, les Indigènes, vous essentialisez les Blancs. Vous les réduisez à leur couleur de peau. Finalement, vous ne valez pas mieux que le Front National. Vous faites du racisme anti-blanc.' ('Le "racisme anti-blanc" des Indigènes de la République', 2011) The movement's key thinkers have addressed these accusations in a number of ways. Firstly, there is the counter-accusation that, in effect, the movement's critics have been blinded by republican dogma: that because their chosen ideology officially refuses to distinguish between races, discrimination based on race logically cannot exist. This leads these critics, MIR's counter-argument continues, to ignore the evidence that race is a determining factor in French society, instead choosing to shoot the messenger, by blaming racially-related issues on groups like MIR which point them out.

Bouteldja, in the same piece, responds to these accusations by pointing out what she sees as their (perhaps deliberate) lack of logic:

“Dans la tête de nos détracteurs, parler de la race et en faire un enjeu politique a un pouvoir performatif en soi. En d’autres termes, on crée la race en même temps qu’on en parle. Constater, expliciter, analyser un phénomène équivaut à créer le phénomène.” (‘Le “racisme anti-blanc” des Indigènes de la République’, 2011)

The central point in MIR’s reaction to these allegations of ‘anti-white racism’, however, relates to another recurring aspect of the movement’s discourse: that of the systemic nature of racism, or as Saïd Bouamama puts it, ‘Le racisme en tant que processus de hiérarchisation sociale, économique et politique c’est-à-dire en tant qu’outil des systèmes de domination’ (2009: 109). More specifically, it is the argument of MIR’s leading analysts in this case that anti-white racism cannot be said truly to exist in contemporary western societies. The reason for this is that in their view, racism is not simply something that happens between individuals, but (as Bouamama notes) a system of domination: an act of the powerful against the powerless. Khiari (2006) argues in this vein that racism should not be seen as an abstract notion, but within the context of the systems which form the framework of society:

“S’il s’agit [referring to racism] de relations sociales et politiques [...] si l’on veut combattre la détestation de l’Autre qui en procède, on se doit de définir précisément ces relations sociales et politiques.” (2006: 92)

Racism therefore, for Khiari and MIR, cannot be isolated from society: rather, it must be seen as inextricably linked. As we shall see shortly, one of the ‘social and political relations’ noted above relates to the racial hierarchies touched upon earlier in this section. Uncomfortable as it may be to talk about for those schooled in republican colour-blindness, it is a clear fact for MIR that, in French society as it currently stands, white people are ‘dominant’ and hold the vast majority of power in every field, while non-whites, particularly ‘post-colonised’ Blacks and Arabs, are ‘dominated’, holding very little power. We return, therefore, to the idea of racism as an act of the powerful against the powerless: Khiari argues that different types of ‘racism’ must be distinguished, depending on who is speaking, who is being targeted, and their relative positions of power in society:

“[O]n ne peut évidemment identifier dans une même catégorie la haine raciale du dominant à l’encontre du dominé et la haine raciale du dominé à l’encontre du dominant. Toutes deux sont produites par le même système raciste mais l’une est un agent actif tandis que l’autre constitue une réaction voire une forme de résistance au système raciste. L’une est armée, l’autre est désarmée.” (ibid)

In addition to a reiteration of MIR’s positions on the centrality of the racial cleavage in French society and the systemic nature of racism, this argument could also be seen as a more or less overt attack on the ‘universalist’, or ‘consensual’ conception of anti-racism, as represented by movements such as SOS Racisme. For MIR, this form of anti-racism chooses deliberately to decontextualise the acts of discrimination it

targets, by focusing on the acts themselves rather than the racial power relations which underpin them. A colour-blind form of anti-racism, in their view, is clearly insufficient when firstly, society is not in reality 'colour-blind', and when secondly, not all forms of racism are equal.

Linked to this idea of the dominant / dominated relationship within racism, and the connected question of racial power relations in French society, is the idea that all white people, regardless of social class, benefit from social privileges due to their race. Tévanian (2008: 74) argues that like 'Black' or 'Arab', 'Blanc n'est en effet pas une catégorie raciale, mais une catégorie sociale' – but unlike the privileges that arise from being part of the visible majority, non-white populations suffer from disadvantages in society based on their skin colour. This idea recurs a number of times in MIR's discourse over my chosen timeframe. To take one example, it is discussed by Khiari in *Pour une politique de la racaille*, where it is linked to another of the movement's preferred themes, that of the legacy of colonialism in contemporary French society. As he puts it, 'on ne peut pas de toute façon considérer que tous les Français blancs soient racistes, quand bien même – admettons-le aussi – ils bénéficieraient indirectement et involontairement du régime postcolonial' (2006: 90). In this type of argument, Khiari and MIR seem to move the argument about racism completely away from anything related to individual agency, and posit it instead as something entirely systemic: white populations benefit from the 'postcolonial régime' whether they like it or not, and conversely, non-white populations suffer from it. This critique reinforces the argument

touched upon in the previous paragraph: if MIR's argument is correct, movements like SOS are missing the point by seeing racism as something that can be isolated and legislated against.

Whilst MIR is justified, to at least some extent, in claiming that racism is systemic – for example, in the sense that stereotypes and negative representations of colonial populations have been perpetuated (consciously or unconsciously) throughout French history since the colonial period, and have come to apply to their descendants in contemporary society (see Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire (eds.), 2005) – this worldview has serious repercussions for MIR's ability to come up with a solution to the problems it describes. The position comes across almost as an admission of defeat: if racism is systemic, and nothing but systemic, and always has been and always will be, effectively nothing can be done about it, short of a complete re-ordering of French society, a re-ordering whose outlines are themselves left somewhat hazy in MIR's discourse. It must be acknowledged, of course, that MIR's positioning is intentionally polemical and provocative, but in taking this all-or-nothing view the organisation seemingly cuts itself off from a whole field of practical action (such as that proposed by SOS against discrimination and in favour of equality of opportunity) which, while not solving the problem of systemic racism, has the potential, if properly applied, to make a genuine difference to the lives of France's disfavoured populations.

The legacy of colonialism, Khiari's argument continues, is founded on ethnic and cultural discrimination. And this discrimination, he argues, forms stronger barriers than social class:

“De ce point de vue, les personnes qui ne sont pas issues de la colonisation font partie de la société dominante même si elles y sont intégrées dans une position subalterne. Elles appartiennent au monde des dominants même si elles ont fait le choix de nier subjectivement leur propre situation.” (2006: 91)

Social relations, thus, are ‘ethnicised’, an insight far from unique to MIR (as Silverman writes for example, ‘When the frontiers of national identity are racialised, neither legal immigrant status nor French nationality necessarily confer *legitimacy*.’ (1992: 136)). There is a ‘dominant’ population specified as ‘white’, and a ‘dominated’ population specified as ‘non-white’, even if the reference to skin colour is often masked by references to culture (as in Sarkozy’s 2007 election campaign, for instance). Furthermore, as (perceived) ethnicity is, in MIR’s view, a stronger social determiner than social class, it would seem to be impossible for a white person, however poor, to ever entirely become part of the ‘dominated’ population. Conversely, for MIR a Black or Arab who succeeds in moving up in society will never entirely leave behind their status as part of the ‘dominated’ population: they will still be stopped by the police, still be the subject of racial discrimination, still be suspected of not being truly ‘French’. MIR’s positions on the primacy of race within social relations would be highly discomfiting for anyone raised to believe that the French Republic is (firstly) ‘colour-blind’, and (secondly) a

meritocracy – perhaps one of the reasons why the movement’s discourse has often faced a hostile reception from mainstream commentators. For MIR, however, an acknowledgement of this situation is a prerequisite for a movement towards a truly anti-racist – or post-racist? – society.

It is clear, however, that no such official acknowledgement was evident during the period examined in this thesis, a situation which has changed little since. Many major aspects of society relating to the question of race, aspects which in MIR’s view required systemic change, have therefore been left unaddressed. As was noted in chapter 4 for instance, there is the question of French identity being perceived as white, Christian and European. Most importantly, however, there is the question of race in relation to the French political system. As Stefan Kipfer (2011: 1162) points out, a further recurring point in MIR’s discourse is that the political system itself is ‘racialised’. It is, to use Khiari’s phrase, a ‘champ politique blanc’, or ‘white political arena’. All mainstream political parties are included within this ‘arena’, the PS just as much as the UMP. In Khiari’s view these parties can be defined as ‘white’ because they contribute to the reproduction of ethnic hierarchies in postcolonial society (2006: 57). That is, they do nothing to change the status quo of white domination, as discussed above. He argues that they cannot claim to represent the whole population while this is the case:

“Ces partis politiques qui agissent en fonction des enjeux d’un champ politique dont sont exclus les non-Blancs; ces partis, dirigés par des Blancs, occupés par des adhérents presque exclusivement blancs,

sont donc des partis blancs. C'est mentir que de les prétendre "universels". (ibid)

Note that this argument is of a piece with that discussed at the start of this section: for MIR, 'universalism', in practice, is not 'universal' but 'white'. Khiari specifies that the 'champ politique blanc' can include non-whites, but they are engaged to fight for interests that are not their own. Note also that, for Khiari, SOS Racisme is unambiguously part of the 'champ politique blanc': it is, he writes, 'une entreprise d'exclusion/inclusion' (2006: 60). That is to say, like the mainstream political parties mentioned above, it 'includes' a few non-white members, but 'excludes' discussion of the major issues which concern them.

France's political system, then, is characterised by MIR as a 'champ politique blanc', run almost entirely by the 'dominant' white population, in their own interests. This system, furthermore, exists within a 'white imperial Europe', to quote the 2010 manifesto of the PIR. Although he did not invent it, Sarkozy is seen as representative of this system and its faults. As Minister of the Interior, firstly, Khiari argues that Sarkozy based his strategy around aggravating divisions between the different 'social races'. Symbolic security for France's white populations was his priority: to make these populations 'secure', it was considered necessary to 'terrorise' non-whites (2009: 170) – hence his 'militarised' approach to the *banlieues*, particularly during the riots of 2005. Secondly, there is his election as President in 2007. Sarkozy's win, despite the contradictions in his campaign and his apparent indifference to what should (particularly

in economic terms) be the concerns of the majority of his voters, can be explained by the racial cleavage discussed throughout this section. He represents, in Khiari's view, '*la défense de la suprématie blanche à l'échelle mondiale et dans l'espace hexagonal. Sarkozy a gagné grâce à un vote de race*' (2009: 206). Once again, the primacy of race as a determining and dividing factor in French society is emphasised: it has surpassed, for MIR, both social class and the traditional political division between left and right. The subtext is the same one that has been seen a number of times during this section: mainstream politics must admit the continuing influence of race on society, in order to begin 'deracialising' and 'decolonising'. Hidebound by republican ideology, however, it is collectively unwilling or unable to do so.

MIR's positions, then, would seem to be in contradiction with what Gemie (2010: 148) accurately calls 'the forceful attempts by the French state to deny the validity of identities based on ethnic criteria'. Having said this, in the view of its activists MIR is not an ethnically-based movement.

According to the 2005 document 'Qui sommes nous', an early attempt to outline the movement's thinking, 'Le 'Nous' des Indigènes de la République n'est ni ethnique, ni religieux, ni culturel, ni à base d'origine.'

MIR is, however, opposed to those who deny the importance of discrimination based on (racial) origin:

"Nous nous construisons en opposition à celles et ceux qui nient l'existence des discriminations en raison de l'origine, à celles et ceux qui les reconnaissent mais les considèrent comme secondaires, à celles et

ceux qui les reconnaissent mais adoptent une posture de l'impuissance." (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, 'Qui sommes nous?', 2005)

Achieving the movement's goal of a 'décolonial' society, Bouteldja argues in the 2011 interview cited throughout the present work's analysis of MIR, means understanding that 'les blancs ne sont pas le centre du monde. Les références des blancs, les priorités des blancs, ne sont pas les priorités du monde, et ne sont pas les priorités des indigènes.' (Interview 9.8.2011) Again, therefore, it is implied that France's political system has failed to do this: its proclaimed 'universalism' only truly applies to the majority white population. Achieving this goal, Khiari (2009) argues, also involves moving away from the 'anonymous' systemic racism which draws a line (implicitly) between the 'dominant' race, considered as white, Christian, civilised, Western and 'universal'; and the 'dominated' race, considered as 'savage', Black, Muslim, terrorist, immigrant (and so on). But how can this be done? Is it possible to create a 'champ politique non-blanc'? This question is considered by Khiari in his 2006 book, but he argues that it is not possible to give a simple answer. Paradoxically, he points out, 'sa finalité n'est pas d'exister mais de disparaître avec la disparition du champ politique blanc en tant que blanc.' (2006: 58). Until such time as the French political system gives equal respect to its inhabitants, regardless of racial origin, cultural practices and citizenship status, however, MIR's role would seem to be to continue as a politically and intellectually autonomous movement, and to continue posing the awkward questions that 'postcolonial' Western societies have yet to resolve.

In this chapter, I have considered the positions of my two chosen movements in regard to the question of 'race', or more specifically, whether it continues to exert an influence on contemporary French society, and whether the acknowledgement of ethnic difference has any part to play in the anti-racist movement. The answers given to these questions are strongly illustrative when it comes to considering their differing positions in respect to their relationships with France's mainstream republican political culture. I began by looking at SOS which, as was illustrated with examples from press releases, official publications and anti-discrimination initiatives, takes entirely at face value the French constitution's statement that: 'La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion.' SOS's position can be contrasted with that of MIR, which sees racial hierarchies and discrimination as ingrained within France's republican political structures, and which therefore chooses to give the 'racial question' primacy over the 'social question'.

Aspects of both these approaches can potentially be questioned. SOS is to some extent representative of the contradiction in mainstream French anti-racism identified by Alana Lentin, in that it is 'constantly required to reconcile its opposition to discrimination on the grounds of difference with the republican principle that advocated a colour-blind approach' (2004: 117). That is, because of its rejection of any form of ethnic monitoring,

SOS cannot take targeted action against discrimination and cannot accurately judge the effectiveness of the measures it does take. Instead, it must rely on what De Rudder et al call 'bricolages' (2000: 15): actions which target problems with a significant ethnic or racial dimension, but which can only be conceived of on 'socio-territorial' grounds. In relation to MIR, meanwhile, a significant objection is raised by Laurent Lévy, a member of the organisation, only to be immediately discounted.

Discussing objections to MIR from its potential allies in the radical Left, Lévy notes that a frequent issue raised was that the movement was forgetting 'la "question sociale", entendue comme "question économique"', in favour of 'une "question ethnique"', 'dont certains acceptaient et d'autres refusait d'admettre l'existence, mais dont tous s'accordaient à dire qu'elle ne pouvait en aucun cas être mise au premier plan.' (2010: 79)²³.

SOS, as has frequently been the case over these comparative chapters, has – in its emphasis on practical action against discrimination and in favour of social equality – a plan which, if properly supported by those in political power, would potentially have numerous social benefits. It would arguably be beneficial, however, if the movement could show more

²³ MIR has had a somewhat ambiguous relationship with the radical Left since its foundation. As Gemie notes for example, following the appearance of MIR's founding Appel in 2005 the Trotskyist group *Lutte Ouvrière* 'published a stern critique rebuking the *indigènes* for ignoring the importance of class, and for trying to fight racism with *communautarisme*' (2010: 145). At the same time however, as may be recalled from chapter 3, the movement has made common cause with the Communist Party in its memorial claims-making over the events of October 1961 in Paris, and has collaborated a number of times with the *Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste* (Interview with Houria Bouteldja 9.8.2011), a party which has frequently addressed issues around immigration and Islamophobia, and whose selection of a veil-wearing female Muslim candidate in the regional elections caused substantial controversy in France ('Le NPA présente une candidate voilée', *Le Figaro* 2.2.2010)

flexibility in cases such as those identified by Lentin and De Rudder above, and it could perhaps give more thought to the question of how to reconcile initiatives against discrimination based on race and ethnicity with a political ideology which refuses to take race and ethnicity into account. As for MIR, I would be in agreement with the critics addressed (and dismissed) by Lévy: it is far too quick to dismiss the class dimension of social inequalities. What is more, as noted earlier in the chapter, the movement's presentation of racism as *purely* systemic implicitly argues that nothing, short of a complete rethinking of French society, can be done about it: not a particularly useful or realistic position for any organisation hoping to effect genuine change in a society. It must be noted, however, that the two movements have very different aims and purposes: SOS, for the most part, is a practical and pragmatic movement which aims to create its ideal society incrementally, by lobbying those in political power to take practical action in favour of republican equality. MIR, on the other hand, is more interested in polemics and provocation than it is in the practicalities of reform and compromise, but nevertheless still has a potential role to play in the French political landscape: the role of keeping unwelcome but important issues such as race and colonialism in the public eye, when due to the awkward questions they raise, those in charge all too often want to forget them. The movements are fundamentally very different, but despite their mutual antipathy and the apparent incompatibility of their worldviews, there is no reason why they should not co-exist within the field of French anti-racism.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined two contrasting anti-racist organisations – SOS Racisme and the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République – within a unique but under-researched political context for the anti-racist movement. The period from 2005 to 2009, I have argued, represents the height of the pervasiveness of the conservative and exclusive conception of national identity associated with Nicolas Sarkozy, and contains numerous key events which placed this discourse in the spotlight: the widespread urban disturbances of autumn 2005, during which Sarkozy as Interior Minister came to national prominence; the 2007 presidential election campaign, within which Sarkozy placed unprecedented emphasis on national identity, defined in a way which implicitly served to stigmatise immigrants and France’s Muslim population; the announcement in the same year of a new ‘Ministry of Immigration and National Identity’, which rested on the assumption that these two issues were in opposition to one another; and the ‘great debate’ on national identity launched in late 2009, a debate which its critics saw as legitimising racist viewpoints²⁴.

This period also saw an apparent consensus on the language of republicanism from political actors on almost every part of the ideological spectrum – ‘de Jean-Luc Mélenchon à Marine Le Pen’, as Philippe Petit

²⁴ As the *Libération* / SOS Racisme petition against the debate argues, for example, ‘les débats sur l’identité nationale sont apparus comme des espèces de libération d’une parole raciste, prompte à remettre en cause de façon insidieuse ou explicite, la légitimité de la présence sur le sol national de catégories entières de la population.’ (‘Arrêtez ce débat, monsieur le Président!’, 20.12.2009)

and Alexis Lacroix put it in *Marianne* in 2011 ('République-démocratie: reprenons le débat!', 22.1.2011) – but no equivalent consensus on its underlying meaning. This meant that the inherently flexible idea of republicanism could be evoked in support of practically any political position (Sieffert 2006, Waters 2012). Thus, at the same time as Sarkozy was indirectly using the Republic as a means of stigmatising minority populations, via a discourse which presented it as under threat from *communautarisme*, seen as being to all intents and purposes synonymous with Islam (Noiriel 2007a), SOS's position was that racism could only be fought by taking action designed to make the principles of the Republic work in reality, via initiatives against discrimination and in favour of equality of opportunity.

It should also be noted, finally, that the period saw substantial controversy around the legacies of colonialism, a controversy typified by the debates sparked by the proposed law of 23rd February 2005, which was to evoke 'le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord' (LOI n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005, accessed at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr>). These debates on the legacies of colonialism could be seen in Sarkozy's discourse on 'anti-repentance', a discourse which rejected any critical examination of controversial or shameful periods of French history, and placed suspicion on those who questioned his patriotic *roman national* vision of the country's past, such as left-wing critical historians, or post-colonial immigrants and their descendants.

This combination of defining factors – a conservative discourse on national identity within which immigration is presented as a threat; a consensus on the language of republicanism but not its underlying meaning; and a rejection as ‘repentance’ of critical analysis of France’s colonial past – meant that my chosen period presented particular ideological and discursive challenges for both the movements examined in this thesis, despite the substantial differences in their respective ideologies. The moderate republican movement SOS, as noted above, saw its chosen republican discourse being used as rhetorical cover for the stigmatisation of parts of the French population. The radical anti-colonial movement MIR, meanwhile, found itself entirely at odds with the prevailing political climate, with its emphasis on colonial memory seen as ‘repentance’, and its support for immigrant populations’ cultural autonomy seen as *communautarisme*.

Over the course of my research, it became clear that the *fil conducteur* running through each chapter in the thesis was the relationship between anti-racism and republicanism in the French context. As noted above, republicanism is a central issue in the political context examined in the thesis, due to the way in which, because of the existence of a consensus on the theme, coupled with its inherent flexibility, it could be used as rhetorical cover for almost any political position – a situation which led to substantial difficulties for movements like SOS which themselves lay claim to ‘republican values’ as an ideological basis for anti-racism.

More than this, however, it is my argument that contemporary anti-racism in France is defined by its relationship with republicanism, and that my chosen organisations are illustrative of two opposing conceptions of this relationship. SOS, in keeping with the traditions of mainstream French anti-racism, constructs itself with reference to republicanism, drawing on the universalist Enlightenment ideals which form the basis of the concept (Lentin 2004, Koopmans et al 2005). MIR, on the other hand, is highly critical of the Republic, arguing that despite its rhetoric of universal human rights, it has in reality engaged in 'la colonisation et la répression, l'exclusion et le racisme' (Héricord, Lévy and Khiari, 'Indigènes de la République, réponses à quelques objections...', 2005).

Although SOS can be defined as being favourable towards the Republic and MIR can be defined as being against it, there are however certain ambiguities within these relationships. SOS is frequently critical of political actors' use of the language of republicanism, arguing that using such language (for example) to scapegoat immigration and Islam as being responsible for a supposed 'crisis of identity' only weakens the Republic's perceived legitimacy; and frequently warns against letting republican values be reduced to an unthinking recitation, which ignores the requirement to take action aimed at making them a reality (Sopo 2005: 41). MIR, meanwhile, despite its critical view of the Republic, has itself at times laid claim to republican language, seemingly as a means of demanding a genuine universalising of its proclaimed principles: in its

founding *Appel*, for example, the movement proclaims the need for ‘une démocratie sociale véritablement égalitaire et universelle’ (Mouvement des Indigènes de la République, ‘L’appel des indigènes de la république’, 2005). Whilst contemporary anti-racism in France is defined by its relationship with republicanism, therefore, this relationship works in complex and contradictory ways.

The respective relationships with republicanism of the movements examined in this thesis have both strengthened and impeded their ability to act effectively against racism and discrimination. To begin with SOS – as we have seen, a consistent supporter of republican ideology as an ideological basis for French anti-racism – we can say that a benefit of its positioning is that in emphasising a discourse based around republicanism, it is arguing the case for an ideology that the great majority of the French population already support. Because of this, the task of building a consensus around this conception of anti-racism is easier than building one around a discourse which calls into question the ideologies and structures of republican society, even if the task of movements like SOS is complicated by the discriminatory, exclusionary conception of republicanism used by figures such as Sarkozy and Marine Le Pen. Similarly, SOS also presents, in its discourse on the *République métissée*, a potentially consensual alternative conception of national identity, one compatible with the ‘republican consensus’ and the republican centre-left represented by much of the socialist government elected in 2012, but one which at the same time rejects Sarkozy’s

discourse, in favour of an open vision of French culture combined with a literal 'mixing' of populations (*Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme* 2006, Gibb 1998, 2003a)

SOS's emphasis on republicanism also provides ideological grounding for numerous practical policy suggestions, many of which have the potential to prove highly beneficial to the parts of the French population suffering most from the effects of racism and discrimination. As the self-perceived role of SOS is to make the Republic live up to its promises on equality, the movement places a substantial amount of emphasis on the importance of providing opportunities for social advancement. Therefore, it has frequently called for the government to invest in infrastructure in the *banlieues*, and has frequently proposed action in areas such as employment, education and housing, calling for anonymous CVs as a means of fighting discrimination, and for significantly increased construction of social housing, among other ideas collected in 2007's *Manifeste pour l'égalité*. Of similar potential benefit is the organisation's emphasis on the 'social question' over the 'racial question', another republican-inspired position, and one which leads the movement to prioritise concrete action favouring socio-economic equality over identity politics (Sopo 2007: 44).

At the same time however, this positioning on republicanism on the part of SOS has created ideological difficulties and contradictions for the movement. For example, as has been noted throughout the thesis, over

my chosen period the language of republicanism was used by political actors on every part of the ideological spectrum, meaning that such language was frequently used for purposes contrary to those of SOS, as can be seen for example in Sarkozy's 2007 presidential election campaign. This narrow consensus on acceptable political language frequently led to SOS finding it difficult to differentiate its discourse from that of supposed political adversaries like Sarkozy. This can be seen, to take one example, by considering the term *communautarisme*, referring to the idea of communities organising themselves on an ethnic or religious basis, and feeling that their primary loyalty is to these ethnic or religious groups, rather than to the Republic. The practice is seen by both SOS and Sarkozy as inherently anti-republican, but while SOS sees *communautarisme* as a self-protecting mechanism which essentially can only be fought by challenging discrimination and poverty, for Sarkozy the term functions as a code-word, tapping into a semantic field of 'threats to society' from radical Islam, social disorder and illegal immigration (Rigaud 2011).

On similar lines, as SOS sees France's mainstream political culture as intrinsically both just, and supportive of anti-racist aims, the movement has frequently found it difficult to create a new and memorable alternative discourse to challenge that of Sarkozy, the significant differences which undoubtedly exist being reduced to arguments over the meaning and definition of republicanism. The contradictions of SOS's republican positioning can also be seen in its action against racial discrimination.

While the organisation is justified in conceiving of equality in socio-economic terms rather than those of ethnic identity, a substantial issue it fails to address is how to measure the effectiveness of anti-discrimination action without some form of ethnically-based statistics: that is to say, how is it possible to fight discrimination based on race and ethnicity using a political ideology which refuses to take these factors into account (Simon 2006, De Rudder et al 2000)? Finally, as SOS sees universalist republicanism as inherently anti-racist, it is unwilling to call the fundamental concept into question; questioning only the way it is put into practice (or otherwise) by political representatives. It is also unwilling, therefore, to pay too much attention to the use of such universalist ideology as a historical justification for colonialism, perhaps explaining the movement's scepticism over the concept of post-colonialism (Sopo 2005). Whilst SOS is justified in prioritising racism and discrimination happening in the present, and practical measures aimed at ameliorating the problem, over historical claims-making, I would argue that it is perhaps too willing to play down the continuing influence of colonialism and colonial thinking in contemporary French society, and similarly perhaps too willing to see the past and the present as two separate issues. This rejection of post-colonialism on the part of SOS does not fully take into account the possibility (correctly noted by MIR) that racial hierarchies and stereotyping, inherited from colonialism, can potentially be hidden behind formal republican equality (Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire (eds.) 2005, Bancel et al (eds.) 2010, Khiari 2006, 2009, Silverman 1992, Balibar 1992).

In the case of MIR meanwhile, the movement's critical positioning on republicanism allows it to carve out a unique position within French anti-racism. Due to its lack of respect for consensus and its radical, subversive and conflictual disposition, the organisation is able to make valid critiques of society that are out of bounds to more mainstream, consensus-seeking movements. For example, as an autonomous, anti-system movement MIR feels free to question France's political structures, and the idea of the nation-state more widely, in a way a movement like SOS would not. It is able to look back into the historical roots of political structures and point out how they relate to the creation of stereotypes and racial hierarchies whose effects continue to be felt in contemporary society. It is able furthermore to analyse, again taking a historical perspective, the links between the supposed universalism of the Enlightenment and the ideological justification for the extreme inequality represented by colonialism. Whilst there is nothing to prevent more mainstream groups from making similar critiques, such groups are in practice prevented from doing so by the viewpoint that the ideology underpinning society is essentially just, regardless of the uses it may have been put to in the past: if a movement bases its appeal on republican values it is unlikely to call into question the structures of a state which theoretically embodies such values²⁵.

²⁵ As may be recalled from chapter 3, this position that the proclaimed political culture of a given state is fundamentally just is seen in Alana Lentin's useful 'continuum' as a position of 'proximity' to 'the public political culture of the nation-state', while the position of MIR, which emphasises the links of mainstream political culture with colonialism, racism and exclusion, is seen as one of 'distance' (2004: 1-3)

MIR's ideological autonomy allows it, in addition, to call into question the concepts of nationality and citizenship and their relationship to rights, a debate which has not been prominent in mainstream political discussion since the peak of the *Beur* movement in the early-mid 1980s (Balibar 1992, Bouamama 1994) but one which has yet to be resolved. What is more, the movement's wide-ranging, internationalist anti-colonial ideology, presenting the situation of France's post-colonial populations, colonial history and the 'neo-colonialism' associated with unequal relationships between the global North and South in the modern geo-political arena as part of the same continuum is both intellectually ambitious and unique within the French anti-racist movement. That is to say, it could perhaps be argued that MIR is a fully 'postcolonial' movement – in the sense that it is working in 'un champ où sont pensées les articulations colonisation / postcolonie dans les pays ex-colonisés tout autant que dans les ex-métropoles' (Bancel, Blanchard and Lemaire 2005: 14) – in a country which has frequently shown evidence of discomfort with the notion of postcolonialism (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2009: 85, Bancel et al 2010: 28).

Whilst the question of how this translates into reality is up for debate, it is quite possible to see how MIR's discourse, in particular its questioning of republicanism, may appeal to disenfranchised immigrant-origin populations who feel that the Republic has not lived up to its promises of equality, social opportunity and 'colour-blindness'. Moreover, and importantly, it analyses problems which undoubtedly do exist, but are frequently glossed over in mainstream political debate, for example the

discrimination and inequality of treatment faced by post-colonial populations in their dealings with the police and the justice system. In the same way, the movement aims to keep awkward questions around colonial memory in the public eye, during a period in which political representatives have repeatedly encouraged the population to forget them, as can be seen in Sarkozy's discourse on 'repentance'. Keeping such awkward questions in the political spotlight is potentially a valuable role in French society, and one which MIR, rather than campaigning for a complete 'décolonial' reordering of French society whose outlines are left somewhat fuzzy (as can be seen in chapter 5), may be well advised to focus on.

MIR's questioning and broad rejection of republicanism, however, does raise a number of issues which the movement is yet to fully resolve. For instance, it could be argued that this rejection is responsible for the lack of a coherent and achievable long-term aim in MIR's discourse. Whilst SOS's aims are simple and comprehensible – demand practical action to make the Republic's proclaimed principles of *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité* into a genuine reality – MIR's discourse, almost without exception, works at an abstract and theoretical level, rarely suggesting any concrete solutions for the problems its key thinkers (often perceptively) analyse (Gemie 2010). On the occasions where an eventual aim for the movement is proposed, it is frequently so vague as to have little meaning, or so large-scale as to have little chance of happening.

Both of these issues can be seen when thinking about how MIR's presentation of racism as wholly systemic translates into reality: if the movement is correct and racism is indeed purely systemic, effectively nothing can be done about it, short of a complete reordering of French society, whose potential outlines are not addressed to any significant effect by the organisation. In taking this all-or-nothing view, MIR seemingly cuts itself off from the possibility of taking practical action – legal action, anti-discrimination action, action in favour of equality of opportunity – which whilst inevitably imperfect and compromised, has the potential to make a genuine difference.

On similar lines, MIR's rejection of the Republic's claims to colour-blindness and its emphasis on the role of republican ideology in the justification of colonialism means that the movement seemingly places all the blame for social inequalities on race and the legacies of colonialism. Although raising questions on these issues is, as noted above, a potentially useful role for MIR, this focus leads the organisation to be far too willing to dismiss the class-based and economically-based dimensions of social inequalities; dimensions which by necessity are focused upon by 'colour-blind', republican movements like SOS. I argue therefore that MIR has failed to address satisfactorily the question of the inter-sectionality of race and class. That said, with its refusal to take into account race, and its view of racism as being not systemic but made up of individual acts of discrimination or violence, it could perhaps be argued that the same critique could be made of SOS.

Finally, although these issues are only partially relevant to an anti-system organisation such as MIR, it must be noted that the movement's calling into question of republicanism immediately denies it the possibility of large-scale support; and that its emphasis on colonial memory and multiculturalism are entirely at odds with the political climate examined in the thesis. While MIR did not during the period of my research show any sign of, or inclination towards, becoming a mass movement, it almost goes without saying that by choosing to take positions entirely contrary to those of the political mainstream, it restricts itself to the status of a small-scale pressure group, a status which provides gains in autonomy but losses in visibility and influence.

Although the ideologies of SOS and MIR are substantially different – finding themselves almost at opposite ends of what Alana Lentin calls the 'continuum of proximity-to-distance from the public political culture of the nation-state (2004: 1) – it is my argument that both are defined at least in part by their relationship with republicanism²⁶. In the case of SOS this relationship is relatively easily definable: the organisation largely exists to support universalist republican values; to fight against their misuse; and to lobby for action aimed at making them exist in reality as much as in theory. For MIR meanwhile, this relationship works in a very different

²⁶ In this way the movements are representative of a long tradition: as Jim House argues, 'The history of anti-racism in France, a history of a broad range of movements, mobilisations, ideas and ideals, affords many perspectives on the question of occidental modernity. Nowhere in Western Europe did a political culture incarnate and embrace the modern project with such apparent fervour as republican France.' (in Anthias and Lloyd (eds.) 2002: 111) And within this context, 'various strands of anti-racism have [...] both appealed to and challenged the ideologies of the republican nation-state' (ibid)

(and somewhat paradoxical) way: its campaigning discourse relies to a considerable extent on the existence of republican rhetoric as something to define itself against, but at the same time, it does not necessarily disagree with the central tenets of republicanism *per se*, only with the uses they have been put to throughout French history and the likelihood of them becoming reality. Therefore, the movement has to fight (for example) for equality in a 'non-republican' way, whilst strongly and publicly rejecting an ideological system – republicanism – which proclaims equality as a central component.

The cases of SOS and MIR can perhaps be seen as evidence that French anti-racism forms an example of what Maclean and Szarka call 'path dependency' (2008: 3): that is to say, it is shaped by national political culture, ideological values and traditions. This has implications for the ability of these movements to transcend the national framework and participate in transnational political movements. Given that republicanism – despite its claims to universalism – is anchored in French political culture and traditions, it is less able to provide an ideological framework for addressing racism outside of France's borders. That is to say, whether positive (SOS) or negative (MIR) towards the concept, movements defined by their relationship with republicanism are likely to find that these debates do not fully translate to other contexts, as such debates have their roots in French history: as Catherine Lloyd argues, 'French anti-racists claim to trace their antecedents back to the Enlightenment and the Revolution of 1789', these historical movements

being seen as the backbone of republican ideology (in Anthias and Lloyd (eds.) 2002: 67).

What is more, amongst the most republican-based movements there is a degree of suspicion of associations and institutions which see anti-racism in a different way: as former SOS President Malek Boutih wrote of his experience of anti-racist action within the EU, to take an example:

“[N]ous sommes en total décalage avec le discours dominant à Bruxelles qui est celui du droit à la différence, du droit des communautés et de la protection des minorités. [...] Nous ne sommes pas pour l’émancipation des communautés, nous sommes pour l’émancipation des individus.” (2001: 76)

That said, despite their ‘path dependency’ related to their links with republicanism, elements of the discourses of both the movements examined in the thesis are potentially translatable to other contexts: in the case of SOS its support for universalist human rights, a cause which has been taken up at European and international levels (the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights bearing more than a passing resemblance to the *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme* of 1789); and in the case of MIR, anti-colonialism and the link between colonial history and the post-colonial present, a link arguably theorised to a greater extent in US and UK academia than in French (Bancel et al 2010: 29). Whilst the importance of forming transnational networks to address issues of racism or immigration is only likely to increase, debates around racism and anti-

racism remain to some extent nationally defined. Nevertheless, common ground is undoubtedly possible to find.

Before ending this conclusion, I would like to consider two further questions: firstly, whether SOS and MIR have had any concrete impact on the political climate under discussion in the thesis; and secondly, which areas related to the present work offer potential directions for future research. Let us begin with the question of whether the movements have had any success in imposing their agendas within mainstream political debate over my chosen period.

SOS has had a measure of success in influencing political debate during the years examined in the thesis, as can be seen from the following examples. Firstly, the movement succeeded in getting its policy of anonymous CVs discussed in the Senate (*Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme* 2006: 109). Although the proposed law on the issue was not in the event applied, the fact that SOS was able to have the issue debated at all can be seen as evidence that the organisation has at times been able to get its voice heard at the highest levels, even in an apparently unsympathetic national political climate. Secondly, SOS arguably played a role in the political failure of the 'identity debate' of late 2009, following which the UMP was comprehensively defeated in the January 2010 regional elections, with the publication of a petition in conjunction with *Libération* which received tens of thousands of signatures, including those of well-known political figures such as François Hollande, Lionel Jospin, Martine

Aubry, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Laurent Fabius, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Cécile Duflot, Jack Lang and Manuel Valls, alongside numerous celebrities and academics (<http://www.liberation.fr/societe/0101609703-arretez-ce-debat-monsieur-le-president>, 20.12.2009). And thirdly, SOS claims to have led opposition to Sarkozy's 2007 plans for DNA testing of immigrants, claimed to be necessary to verify birth and marriage certificates, setting up a website, a petition, and a large-scale meeting at the Zénith in Paris, organised in association with *Libération* and *Charlie Hebdo* ('Affiche éclectique contre les tests ADN au Zénith à Paris', *Le Monde*, 15.10.2007). Again, SOS's ability to make its voice heard is clear. Even if its public profile is lower than it was in the mid 1980s, as a group with a well known name, consensual, republican-based demands and an extensive list of influential contacts, it is able to rally politicians, celebrities and sympathetic newspapers to its cause to an extent matched by few other social movements.

In contrast, the success or otherwise of MIR is very difficult to judge. Whereas SOS, as can be seen above, frequently makes specific demands (bring in anonymous CVs as an anti-discrimination measure, end the identity debate, fight DNA testing of immigrants), what MIR claims to want is, almost without exception, vague and intangible. Certainly, the group has succeeded in making itself known, in the sense that its positions have caused controversy and led to virulent rebuttals from the 'republican' media (Gemie 2010: 134). What is more, it has arguably succeeded in keeping awkward questions of colonial memory in

the spotlight, via its annual marches on the anniversary of the Sétif massacre and its participation in a further march commemorating the killing of Algerian demonstrators in Paris in October 1961. It may well be the case that MIR's aims are ultimately unmeasurable. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily to say that they are without value. As Sharif Gemie argues,

“[T]o date, very, very few French voices have dared to question the basic conceptual framework created by republic, *anti-communautarisme* and *laïcité*. [...] The political importance of the Mouvement des Indigènes de la République is that, cautiously and gradually, they have begun the process of breaking this political consensus.” (2010: 141)

That is to say, even if the complete anti-colonial reordering of French society proclaimed as the movement's eventual goal is highly unlikely to take place in the foreseeable future, MIR has been able to introduce into public debate the controversial and (to mainstream republican thought) counter-intuitive idea of the 'République coloniale'; questioning, as Gemie notes, the 'republican consensus' and the narrowness of permissible positions in mainstream French politics, and challenging the complacent recital of abstract principles in favour of a critical examination of the history of republican ideas and a demand for genuinely universal equality.

This thesis has examined the reactions of two contrasting anti-racist organisations to what I argue is a unique context for the movement in France, using where possible their own words, from press releases, interviews, petitions, appeals, manifestos and official publications.

Inevitably however, this focus has left certain relevant questions unanswered, questions which could usefully form the basis of future research.

Firstly, it must be noted that there are other organisations which I have not had the time and space to analyse, but which could also be profitably examined in relation to their positions on republicanism and their reactions to the timeframe examined in the thesis. SOS and MIR were chosen because they represent opposing conceptions of French anti-racism, the former republican-based, consensus-seeking and working broadly within the political system; and the other anti-republican, radical and autonomous. They do not, however, represent the entire spectrum of French anti-racist opinion. A study of the contemporary positions of MRAP (Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples) – a long-established and relatively mainstream movement, but one with origins in the radical rather than the parliamentary Left, and one which embraces anti-colonialism and the fight against Islamophobia – would for instance provide a useful alternative perspective²⁷.

Secondly, a study of the demographics of anti-racist groups in contemporary France would provide valuable context for future analysis of the field. While this was not the main focus of the current work, the

²⁷ Certainly, academic studies have been made of MRAP (see Lloyd 1998, for example), but these do not cover what I have argued is the unique context examined in this thesis, a context made up, as we have seen, of a combination of factors: the prevalence in political and media discourse of a conservative and arguably exclusionary discourse on national identity, the explicit rejection of post-colonialism and critical history, and a consensus on the language (but not necessarily the meaning) of republicanism across the political spectrum

impression gained from my research was that although many different ethnicities are represented in SOS's leadership and membership, its constituency is quite a narrow one, representing the middle-class, liberal, republican centre-left, rather than France's poorest and most disfavoured populations. Similarly, it appears that as with SOS, MIR's activists are not representative of the poor, immigrant-origin youth most threatened by racism and discrimination. Rather, they tend to be drawn from the middle-class, intellectual section of the French post-colonial population. As Sharif Gemie puts it,

“[I]n a ghostly echo of the colonial experience, in which national liberation movements were largely led by frustrated sub-elites who were never allowed access to the structures of metropolitan power, so the MIR also seems to be based on a type of educated *banlieues* petty-bourgeoisie, similarly denied access to jobs and positions.” (2010: 148)

These, however, are only impressions. A full quantitative examination of this question would provide important insights into the issues of who different groups can legitimately claim to represent, and the credibility of such groups amongst those in whose name they claim to act. Aspects of this question have been answered in existing works. Robert Gibb's 2001 PhD thesis, for instance, provides a comprehensive analysis of the structures of SOS, as well as first-hand accounts of local committee meetings:

“For the most part, committee activists were in their late 20s or early 30s (although a few were older), professionals or white-collar workers (teachers, clerical assistants, employees in state-owned or

partially privatised industries), and white, French nationals (although one member was from North Africa and another from sub-Saharan Africa.”

(2001: 56)

This, however, does not answer the wider questions: how many members do different groups have, for example? Who are they, where are they from, and what does their activism involve?

Finally, it is perhaps a valid question to ask whether the anti-racist movement is in fact best placed to fight issues such as racism and discrimination. That is to say, would this fight be best served by action (almost certainly on the part of the State, due to the scale of the task and the co-ordination which would be required) against the socio-economic conditions which encourage racism – unemployment, insecure employment, poverty, lack of opportunities for social advancement, segregation of minority populations, and so on – rather than against racism *per se*? And is action against racism therefore treating symptoms rather than causes? Whilst it is certainly possible, as we saw in chapter 1, to criticise Pierre André Taguieff’s frequent use of abstract theories and lack of illustrative examples of how anti-racist groups work in reality, I would argue that he is correct to argue that ‘La lutte contre le racisme apparaît dès lors comme inséparable de la réduction des mécanismes producteurs de ségrégation des populations pauvres d’origine étrangère’ (in Wieviorka (ed.), 1993: 389), and that ‘la ségrégation sur des bases à la fois socio-économiques et ethniques: voilà précisément le processus complexe qu’un antiracisme repensé doit se proposer à la fois d’analyser

et de stopper' (ibid). Although it would inevitably contain elements of subjectivity and speculation, any work which could bring together in the French context unemployment, insecurity and social/spatial segregation, the link between these factors and racism, and what could be done to ameliorate these problems would be at least intriguing and at most exceptionally valuable.

Whilst it may indeed turn out to be the case that a large-scale, State-led programme favouring job creation and social mixing is the best way of fighting racism, in the absence of such a programme the anti-racist movement continues to play an important role. A mainstream movement like SOS, operating within the system, is able to lobby political representatives to take action aimed at making the principles of universalist republicanism a reality; while an anti-colonial, anti-system movement like MIR potentially has the role of holding representatives to account for France's colonial history, a history which needs to be acknowledged and remembered if the country is to move on from it. Although the ideologies and worldviews of my chosen movements are very different, and in many ways seemingly incompatible, both fundamentally claim to demand equality: as even MIR notes, 'L'expression 'Indigène de la République' [...] a vocation à disparaître lorsque l'égalité deviendra réalité dans notre pays' ('Qui sommes nous', 2005). The process of attempting to gain equality can only ever be long, arduous, difficult, frustrating and eternally incomplete. This does not mean, however, that the work of anti-racism is without value. After all, as

Edmund Burke famously (if perhaps apocryphally) said, 'nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little'.

Bibliography

Abdallah, M. *J'y suis, j'y reste! Les luttes de l'immigration en France depuis les années soixante* (Reflex, 2000)

AFP 'Affiche éclectique contre les tests ADN au Zénith à Paris (*Le Monde*, 15.10.2007)

AFP 'A Grenoble, Sarkozy dégage tous azimuts' (*Libération*, 30.7.2010, accessed at <http://www.liberation.fr/societe/0101649756-sarkozy-veut-evaluer-les-droits-et-prestations-des-sans-papiers>)

AFP 'L'Assemblée nationale supprime le mot "race" de la législation' (*Le Monde.fr* 16.5.2013, accessed at http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2013/05/16/l-assemblee-nationale-supprime-le-mot-race-de-la-legislation_3272514_823448.html)

AFP 'Clichy: 11 défèrements devant la justice, Sarkozy en Seine-Saint-Denis lundi' (30.10.2005)

AFP Le CV anonyme "pénalise" les personnes issues de l'immigration (*lemonde.fr*, 4.4.2011, accessed at http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2011/04/04/le-cv-anonyme-penalise-les-personnes-issues-de-l-immigration_1503004_3224.html)

AFP Le débat sur l'identité nationale ouvert sur le Net et dans les préfectures (*lemonde.fr* 2.11.2009, accessed at http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2009/11/02/le-debat-sur-l-identite-nationale-ouvert-sur-le-net-et-dans-les-prefectures_1261445_823448.html)

AFP 'Nicolas Sarkozy juge qu'Alain Finkielkraut "fait honneur à l'intelligence française"' (*lemonde.fr*, 4.12.2005, accessed at http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2005/12/04/nicolas-sarkozy-juge-qu-alain-finkielkraut-fait-honneur-a-l-intelligence-francaise_717361_3224.html)

AFP 'Sarkozy et les immigrés: SOS Racisme exprime sa "totale désapprobation"' (9.3.2007)

AFP SOS Racisme déplore les "amalgames" entre immigration et identité nationale (7.3.2007)

Anthias, F. and Lloyd, C. (eds.) *Rethinking Anti-racisms: From theory to practice* (Routledge, 2002)

Badinter, E. et al *Le retour de la race: contre les "statistiques ethniques"* (Éditions de l'Aube, 2009)

Badiou, A. *De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom?* (Nouvelles Éditions Lignes, 2007)

Balibar, E. *Les frontières de la démocratie* (La Découverte, 1992)

Balibar, E. *Nous, citoyens d'Europe?* (La Découverte, 2001)

Balibar, E. *La proposition de l'égaliberté* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2010)

Balibar, E. and Wallerstein, I. *Race, nation, classe: les identités ambiguës* (La Découverte, 1997)

Bancel, N., Bernault, F., Blanchard, P., Boubeker, A., Mbembe, A. and Vergès, F. (eds.) *Ruptures postcoloniales* (La Découverte, 2010)

Begag, A. *Un mouton dans la baignoire* (Fayard, 2007)

Berezin, M. *Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times: Culture, Security and Populism in the New Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Berstein, S. 'Les caractéristiques de la culture républicaine', *Cahiers français* 336, janvier-février 2007

- Birnbaum, P. *Le peuple et les gros: Histoire d'un mythe* (Hachette Littérature, 1995)
- Bitterlin, L. (ed.) *L'antiracisme dans tous ses débats* (Panoramiques-Corlet, 1996)
- Blanchard, P., Bancel, N. and Lemaire, S. (eds.) *La fracture coloniale: La société française au prisme de l'héritage coloniale* (La Découverte, 2005)
- Blatt, D. 'Towards a multi-cultural political model in France? The limits of immigrant collective action, 1968-94', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 1: 2, 156-177, 1995
- Blecher, L. 'Sarkozy veut un ministère de l'immigration et de l'identité nationale' (*Liberation.fr*, 9.3.2007, accessed at <http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/010122647-sarkozy-veut-un-ministere-de-l-immigration-et-de-l-identite-nationale>)
- Bonnett, A. *Anti-racism* (Routledge, 2000)
- Bouamama, S. *Dix ans de marche des Beurs: Chronique d'un mouvement avorté* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1994)
- Bouamama, S. *Les classes et quartiers populaires: Paupérisation, ethnicisation et discrimination* (Éditions du Cygne, 2009)

Bouniot, S. and Poy, C. 'Une marche contre la haine' (*L'Humanité*, 27.2.2006)

Bouteldja, H. and Khiari, S. 'À quoi sert l'antiracisme universel?' (16.6.2011, accessed at http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=1359)

Bouteldja, H. and Khiari, S. *Nous sommes les Indigènes de la République* (Éditions Amsterdam, 2012)

Bouteldja, H. 'Le "racisme anti-blanc" des Indigènes de la République' (2011, accessed at http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=1345)

Boutih, M. *La France aux Français? Chiche!* (Mille et une nuits, 2001)

Bruno, G. *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* (ebook, accessed at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27782/27782-h/27782-h.htm> - this edition originally published 1884)

Cazeneuve, B. 'Comment Nicolas Sarkozy a bradé la laïcité' (*Le Nouvel Observateur* 2.4.2012, accessed at <http://leplus.nouvelobs.com/contribution/516770-comment-nicolas-sarkozy-a-brade-la-laicite.html>)

Cette France-là *Xénophobie d'en haut: le choix d'une droite éhontée* (La Découverte, 2012)

Charles, B. 'Houria Bouteldja, la passionaria du PIR' (*Marianne*, 14.3.2009, accessed at http://www.marianne.net/Houria-Bouteldja-la-passionaria-du-PIR_a177123.html)

Cheriffa, M. 'Un entretien avec Houria Bouteldja' (2009, accessed at http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/posthouria?id_article=570)

Chirac, J. 'Allocution de M. Jacques CHIRAC, Président de la République, prononcée lors des cérémonies commémorant la grande rafle des 16 et 17 juillet 1942' (16.7.1995, accessed at http://elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais/interventions/discours_et_declarations/1995/juillet/allocution_de_m_jacques_chirac_president_de_la_republique_prononcee_lors_des_ceremonies_commemorant_la_grande_rafle_des_16_et_17_juillet_1942-paris.2503.html)

Chombeau, C. "'La France, aimez-la ou quittez-la", bataille pour un slogan' (*Le Monde*, 24.5.2006)

Claude, P. 'Malek Boutih: le désillusionniste' (*Le Monde*, 13.6.2002)

Code du travail, article L1221-6 (accessed at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT00006072050&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006900845&dateTexte=20110807>)

Code du travail, article L1221-7 (accessed at http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do;jsessionid=E8335FCE7B5B9A15C7C2F08D7554F114.tpdjo08v_3?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006072050&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006900846&dateTexte=20110807&categorieLien=cid#LEGIARTI000006900846)

Combats pour les droits de l'homme 'La réapparition de la version non caviardée de la circulaire relative au "grand débat sur l'identité nationale' (19.12.2009, accessed at <http://combatsdroitshomme.blog.lemonde.fr/2009/12/19/la-reapparition-de-la-version-non-caviardee-de-la-circulaire-relative-au-grand-debat-sur-lidentite-nationale/>)

Constitution du 24 juin 1793 (accessed at <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/les-constitutions-de-la-france/constitution-du-24-juin-1793.5084.html>)

Constitution du 4 octobre 1958 (accessed at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/html/constitution/constitution.htm>)

Coquery-Vidrovitch, C. *Enjeux politiques de l'histoire coloniale* (Agone, 2009)

CVUH (coordonné par Sylvie Aprile) 'L'histoire par Nicolas Sarkozy: le rêve passéiste d'un futur national-libéral' (2007, accessed at <http://cvuh.free.fr/spip.php?article82>)

Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (1789, accessed at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/Droit-francais/Constitution/Declaration-des-Droits-de-l-Homme-et-du-Citoyen-de-1789>)

De Cock, L., Madeline, F., Offenstadt, N. and Wahnich, S. *Comment Nicolas Sarkozy écrit l'histoire de la France* (Agone, 2008)

De Ravinel, S. 'Le NPA présente une candidate voilée' (*Le Figaro* 2.2.2010, accessed at <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2010/02/02/01002-20100202ARTFIG00688-le-npa-presente-une-candidate-voilee-.php>)

De Royer, S. 'Malek Boutih a l'oreille du gouvernement' (*La Croix*, 21.11.2002)

De Rudder, V. et al *L'inégalité raciste: L'universalisme républicaine à l'épreuve* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2000)

Desbois, M. 'Mme Voynet et M. Bayrou ont débattu avec des habitants de La Courneuve' (*Le Monde*, 17.4.2007)

Désir, H. *S.O.S. Désirs* (Calmann-Lévy, 1987)

Dhume, F. 'L'émergence d'une figure obsessionnelle: comment le "communautarisme" a envahi les discours médiatico-politiques français', *REVUE Asylon(s)*, No. 8, juillet 2010, accessed at <http://www.reseau-terra.eu/article945.html>

Diani, M. and Eyerman, R. *Studying Collective Action* (Sage Publications, 1992)

Dray, J. *SOS génération* (Éditions Ramsey, 1987)

Duhamel, O. "Il faut arrêter la dégradation du discours politique" (*Le Monde*, 25.9.2010)

Dulucq, S., Klein, J-F and Stora, B. (eds.) *Les mots de la Colonisation* (Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2008)

Durpaire, F. *Nous sommes tous la France! Essai sur la nouvelle identité française* (Philippe Rey, 2012)

Elysee.fr 'Diversité, égalité des chances, lutte contre les discriminations'
(accessed at <http://www.elysee.fr/president/les-dossiers/diversite/egalite-des-chances/diversite-egalite-des-chances-lutte-contre-les.8447.html>)

Favell, A. *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the idea of citizenship in France and Britain* (Macmillan, 1998)

Ferrand, E. (ed.) *Quelle République pour le 21e siècle* (l'Harmattan, 2007)

Fysh, P. and Wolfreys, J. *The Politics of Racism in France* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)

Gaubet, P. and Sopo, D. 'Lettre au Premier Ministre Dominique De Villepin' (2006, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/?Lettre-au-Premier-Ministre>)

Gavand, A. et al 'Rapport sur le CV anonyme: Contribution d'A Compétence Egale' (2009, accessed at <http://www.acompetenceegale.com/upload/rapport%20cv%20anonyme%20A%20Comp%C3%A9tence%20Egale%2010%20juin%202009%20d%C3%A9f.pdf>)

Gemie, S. *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (University of Wales Press, 2010)

Gibb R. 'Anti-racism, Citizenship and Integration in Contemporary France' (in Herrmann, P. (ed.) *Between Politics and Sociology: Mapping applied social studies* (Nova Science Publishers, 2003a))

Gibb, R. 'Constructions et mutations de l'antiracisme en France', *Journal des anthropologues* no. 94-95, 2003b

Gibb, R. 'Multiculturalism, Integration and National Identity: SOS-Racisme', *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 1 (3) 157-166, 1998

Gibb, R. *The Politics of a Republican Anti-Racism in Contemporary France: An Ethnographic Study of the Anti-Racist Association SOS-Racisme* (University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2001)

Gildea, R. *France Since 1945* (Oxford University Press, 2002)

Gouvernement.fr 'Grand débat sur l'identité nationale: 25 000 contributions reçues dès la première semaine' (2009, accessed at <http://www.gouvernement.fr/gouvernement/grand-debat-sur-l-identite-nationale-25-000-contributions-recues-des-la-premiere-semain>)

Hazareesingh, S. *Political Traditions in Modern France* (Oxford University Press, 1994)

Héricord, A., Lévy, L. and Khiari, S. 'Indigènes de la République, réponses à quelques objections...' (2005, accessed at http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/posthouria?id_article=79)

Hewlett, N. *Badiou, Balibar, Ranciere: Re-thinking Emancipation* (Continuum, 2007)

Hewlett, N. 'Nicolas Sarkozy and the Legacy of Bonapartism. The French Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of 2007', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 15:4, 405-422, 2007

House, J. 'October 1961: On the Past and its Presence', *Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, 3.2 (Autumn 2012)

House, J. and MacMaster, N. *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror and Memory* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Jahan, S. and Ruscio, A. (eds.) *Histoire de la colonisation: Réhabilitations, falsifications et instrumentalisations* (Les Indes savantes, 2007)

Kedward, R. *La Vie en Bleu: France and the French since 1900* (Penguin, 2005)

Khiari, S. *La contre-révolution coloniale en France: De de Gaulle à Sarkozy* (La Fabrique éditions, 2009)

Khiari, S. *Pour une politique de la racaille* (Textuel, 2006)

Khiari, S. 'Un Parti des indigènes , pour quoi faire? Trois questions, trois réponses' (2008, accessed at www.indigenes-republique.org/spip.php?article1635)

Kipfer, S. 'Decolonization in the Heart of Empire: Some Fanonian Echoes in France Today', *Antipode* Vol. 43 No.4 2011, pp. 1155-1180

Koopmans, R. et al *Contested Citizenship: Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005)

Le Balc'h, B. 'Le CV anonyme prend ses marques' (*L'Express*, 18.2.2010, accessed at http://www.lexpress.fr/emploi-carriere/le-cv-anonyme-prend-ses-marques_849911.html)

Lebovics, H. *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Duke University Press, 2004)

Lefevre, D. *Pour en finir avec la repentance coloniale* (Flammarion, 2006)

Legrand, T. 'Legrand: "Le sarkozysme n'est ni rupture ni dictature"'
(*rue89.com* 20.1.2010, accessed at
<http://www.rue89.com/2010/01/20/legrand-le-sarkozysme-nest-ni-rupture-ni-dictature-134644>)

LDH Toulon 'Nicolas Sarkozy à Toulon: c'est aux rapatriés et aux enfants des harkis "que la France doit des excuses"' (2007, accessed at
<http://www.ldh-toulon.net/spip.php?article1838>)

LDH Toulon 'Un organe de l'ONU dénonce l'absence de "volonté politique" pour lutter contre la discrimination raciale' (2010, accessed at
<http://www.ldh-toulon.net/spip.php?article4018>)

Lemoine, H. "'La Maison de l'Histoire de France" – Pour la création d'un centre de recherche et de collections permanentes dédié à l'histoire civile et militaire de la France' (2008, accessed at
www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/094000029/index.shtml)

Lentin, A. *Racism & Anti-racism in Europe* (Pluto Press, 2004)

Lévy, L. *"La gauche", les Noirs et les Arabes* (La Fabrique éditions, 2010)

Lévy, L. *Le spectre du communautarisme* (Éditions Amsterdam, 2005)

LICRA 'Histoire de la LICRA' (unknown date, accessed at www.licra.org/histoire-licra)

Lloyd, C. *Discourses of Antiracism in France* (Ashgate Publishing, 1998)

LOI n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés (accessed at <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000444898&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>)

Maclean, M. and Szarka, J. (eds.) *France on the World Stage: Nation State Strategies in the Global Era* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Maillot, A. *Identité nationale et immigration: la liaison dangereuse* (Les Carnets de l'Info, 2008)

Manceron, G. 'Massacres du 8 mai 1945 : "Faire un procès à l'État français n'aurait pas de sens"' (www.france24.com 8.5.2013, accessed at <http://www.france24.com/fr/20130508-8-mai-1945-algerie-massacres-setif-kherrata-guelma-france>)

Marlière, P. 'Sarkozysm as an Ideological Theme Park. Nicolas Sarkozy and Right-Wing Political Thought', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 17:4, 375-390, 2007

Martigny, V. 'Le débat autour de l'identité nationale dans la campagne présidentielle 2007: quelle rupture?', *French Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Spring 2009

Mediapart 'L'Appel de Mediapart: Nous ne débattons pas' (2.12.2009, accessed at <http://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/021209/lappel-de-mediapart-nous-ne-debattons-pas>)

Meyran, R. *Le mythe de l'identité nationale* (Berg International Éditeurs, 2009)

Ministère de l'Immigration 'Éric BESSON lance un grand débat sur l'identité nationale' (2009, accessed at http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/spip.php?page=actus&id_rubrique=254&id_article=1894)

Mouffe, C. (ed.) *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (Verso, 1992)

Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples 'Combats du siècle et d'aujourd'hui' (2005, accessed at <http://www.mrap.fr/tout-savoir-sur-le-mrap/histoire/combats-du-siecle-et-daujourd'hui>)

Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples 'Histoire, mémoire, anticolonialisme en France' (2012, accessed at <http://www.mrap.fr/histoire-et-memoire>)

Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples
'Suppression du mot "race": une première mesure qui en appelle d'autres'
(2013, accessed at <http://www.mrap.fr/contre-le-racisme-sous-toutes-ses-formes/suppression-du-mot-abracebb-une-premiere-mesure-qui-en-appelle-dautres/>)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République 'A la mémoire de nos martyrs tombés à Gaza' (2009, accessed at http://indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=820)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République '17 octobre 1961-17 octobre 2006: Vérité et Justice' (2006, accessed at <http://www.indigenes-republique.org/spip.php?article491>)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République 'L'appel des indigènes de la république' (2005, accessed at <http://www.indigenes-republique.org/spip.php?article835>)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République 'Communiqué du presse du MIR: "Ministère de l'Immigration et de l'identité nationale" ou "Ministère

des Affaires Indigènes”?’ (2007, accessed at <http://www.indigenes-republique.org/spip.php?article754>)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République “Couscous, Boubous, Youyous: Halte à la pollution identitaire, et vive le ministère de l’identité nationale, de l’immigration, de l’intégration, et du co-développement” (2007, accessed at <http://www.indigenes-republique.org/spip.php?article911>)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République ‘Il faut une véritable alternative à la politique raciste de l’”identité nationale”’ (2009, accessed at http://indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=755)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République ‘Non au couvre-feu colonial! La révolte n’est pas un crime! Les véritables incendiaires sont au pouvoir!’ (2005, accessed at http://www.indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=1406)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République ‘Qui sommes nous?’ (2005, accessed at <http://www.indigenes-republiques.org/spip.php?article834>)

Mouvement des Indigènes de la République ‘Tous-tes à la marche des Indigènes de la République, le 8 mai prochain’ (2006, accessed at <http://www.indigenes-republique.org/spip.php?article173>)

Mucchielli, L. and Le Goaziou, V. (eds.) *Quand les banlieues brûlent...*
(La Découverte, 2007)

Ndiaye, P. 'L'identité se décline au pluriel' (*Le Monde Magazine*,
5.2.2011)

Noiriel, G. *À quoi sert "l'identité nationale"* (Agone, 2007a)

Noiriel, G. *Racisme: la responsabilité des élites* (Textuel, 2007b)

Nora, P. 'Les recompositions de l'identité française', *Cahiers français* 342,
janvier-février 2008

Parti des Indigènes de la République 'Le Congrès constitutif du « Parti
des Indigènes de la République » (P.I.R.) a eu lieu' (10.3.2010, accessed
at [http://indigenes-republique.fr/le-congres-constitutif-du-parti-des-
indigenes-de-la-republique-p-i-r-a-eu-lieu/](http://indigenes-republique.fr/le-congres-constitutif-du-parti-des-indigenes-de-la-republique-p-i-r-a-eu-lieu/))

Parti des Indigènes de la République 'Principes politiques généraux du
Parti des Indigènes de la République' (2010, accessed at
http://indigenes-republique.fr/article.php3?id_article=738)

Parti Socialiste 'La déclaration de principes' (Unknown date, accessed at
<http://www.parti-socialiste.fr/le-ps/la-declaration-de-principes>)

Petit, P. and Lacroix, A. 'République-démocratie: reprenons le débat!; États Généraux' (*Marianne*, 22.1.2011)

Proposition de loi relative à la reconnaissance de l'esclavage comme crime contre l'humanité (20.12.2000, accessed at http://www.senat.fr/rap/l00-165/l00-165_mono.html)

Quatremer, J. 'Entre SOS et le pouvoir, la brouille est consommée' (*Libération*, 2.5.1990)

Raizon, D. 'Chirac revient sur "le rôle positif" de la colonisation' (*rfi.fr*, 26.1.2006, accessed at http://www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/073/article_41417.asp)

Raulin, N. 'Crise d'identité à SOS Racisme' (*Libération*, 28.6.2003)

Robine, J. *Les ghettos de la nation: Ségrégation, délinquance, identités, islam* (Vendémiaire, 2011)

Robine, J. 'Les "Indigènes de la République": nation et question postcoloniale' (2006, accessed at <http://www.herodote.org/spip.php?article211>)

Sabeg, Y. 'Programme d'action et recommandations pour la diversité et l'égalité des chances' (2009, accessed at <http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/094000202/0000.pdf>)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à l'Assemblée nationale, 15.11.2005' (accessed at http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/le_ministre/interventions/archives-sarkozy-2005-2007/15-11-2005-assemblee-nationale/view)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à Caen, 9.3.2007' (accessed at sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2007-03-09)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à La Chapelle-en-Vercors, 12.11.2009' (accessed at www.elysee.fr/president/les-actualites/discours/2009/discours-de-m-le-president-de-la-republique.1678.html)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à Dakar, 26.7.2007' (accessed at http://www.geophile.net/IMG/pdf/discours_de_dakar-2.pdf)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à Metz, 17.4.2007' (accessed at sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2007-04-17)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à Montpellier, 3.5.2007' (accessed at sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2007-05-03)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à Périgueux, 12.10.2006' (accessed at sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2006-10-12)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à la Réunion des nouveaux adhérents à l'UMP, 30.9.2006' (accessed at sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2006-9-30)

Sarkozy, N. 'Discours à Toulon, 7.2.2007' (accessed at sites.univ-provence.fr/veronis/Discours2007/transcript.php?n=Sarkozy&p=2007-02-07)

Schofield, H. 'Colonial abuses haunt France' (*BBC Online* 16.5.2005, accessed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4552473.htm>)

Sieffert, D. *Comment peut-on être (vraiment) républicain?* (La Découverte, 2006)

Silverman, M. *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, racism and citizenship in modern France* (Routledge, 1992)

Silverman, M. *Facing Postmodernity* (Routledge, 1999)

Silverman, M. 'History on the Side of the Powerless', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 18:1, 115-118, 2010

Simon, P. 'L'arbre du racisme et la forêt des discriminations' (from Guénif-Souilamas, N. (ed.) *La République mise à nu par son immigration* (La Fabrique, 2006))

Sopo, D. *Combat laïque* (Le Cherche Midi, 2008)

Sopo, D. 'Identité nationale: "un débat à rebours"' (2009, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/Identite-nationale-un-debat-a.html>)

Sopo, D. *Manifeste pour l'égalité: 60 propositions pour que ça change* (Éditions First, 2007)

Sopo, D. *S.O.S. antiracisme* (Denoël, 2005)

Sopo, D. 'Tribune de Dominique Sopo sur la loi sur le voile intégral' (2010, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/tribune-de-dominique-sopo-sur-la-loi-sur-le-voile-integral>)

SOS Racisme 'Adoption de la loi Besson: La honte de la République!' (2011, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/adoption-du-projet-de-loi-besson-l%E2%80%99assemblee-nationale-la-honte-de-la-republique-0>)

SOS Racisme 'Arrêtez ce débat, monsieur le Président!' (2009, accessed at <http://sos-racisme.org/content/arretez-ce-debat-monsieur-le-president-de-la-republique>)

SOS Racisme 'Campagne contre la statistique ethnique' (2007, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/campagne-contre-la-statistique-ethnique>)

SOS Racisme 'Le CV anonyme: Just sign it' (2013, accessed at <http://www.justsignit.fr/>)

SOS Racisme 'Des déclarations qui enflamment' (2005, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/des-declarations-qui-enflamment>)

SOS Racisme 'Discriminations: évitons les faux débats' (2009, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/discriminations-evitons-les-faux-debats>)

SOS Racisme 'Élections régionales: une abstention significative et des résultats inquiétants' (unknown date, accessed at <http://www.sos->

racisme.org/content/elections-regionales-une-abstention-significative-et-des-resultats-inquietants)

SOS Racisme 'Faire reculer la discrimination dans les HLM' (2006)

SOS Racisme 'Gouvernance zéro: Les violences urbaines se poursuivent, les petites phrases aussi...' (2005, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/gouvernance-zero-les-violences-urbaines-se-poursuivent-les-petites-phrases-aussi>)

SOS Racisme 'La nouvelle campagne de SOS Racisme: Vote mon pote' (2007, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/la-nouvelle-campagne-de-sos-racisme-vote-mon-pote>)

SOS Racisme 'Les mots et les actes' (2005, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/?Les-mots-et-les-actes>)

SOS Racisme 'Le temps de l'action' (2005, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/le-temps-de-l%E2%80%99action>)

SOS Racisme 'Manifeste "30.000 expulsions, c'est la honte"' (2009, accessed at <http://www.sosracisme35.com/campagne%2030000%20expulsions%20c'est%20la%20honte.html>)

SOS Racisme 'Nos Missions' (2007, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/Nouvel-article,30.html>)

SOS Racisme 'Mobilisation samedi 26 novembre à 14h Place de la République' (15.11.2005, accessed at <http://web.archive.org/web/201011111105714/http://www.sos-racisme.org/?Mobilisation-samedi-26-novembre-a>)

SOS Racisme 'Plan "Espoir-Banlieues"' (unknown date, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/plan-%C2%AB-espoir-banlieues-%C2%BB>)

SOS Racisme 'Pour une égalité d'accès à l'entretien d'embauche: le CV anonyme' (2006)

SOS Racisme *Qu'est-ce que SOS Racisme* (l'Archipel, collection "L'information citoyenne", 2006)

SOS Racisme 'Score du Front National au second tour des élections régionales: il faut supprimer le Ministère de l'Identité nationale' (unknown date, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/score-du-front-national-au-second-tour-des-elections-regionales-il-faut-supprimer-le-ministe>)

SOS Racisme 'SOS Racisme a déposé un référé liberté contre la décision de Nicolas Sarkozy' (2005, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/sos-racisme-depose-un-refere-liberte-contre-la-decision-de-nicolas-sarkozy>)

SOS Racisme 'SOS Racisme a organisé les "États Généraux pour l'Égalité" les 27, 28 et 29 octobre à l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris' (2006, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/?SOS-Racisme-a-organise-les-Etats>)

SOS Racisme 'Une neuvième nuit d'émeutes' (2005, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/?Une-neuvieme-nuit-d-emeutes>)

SOS Racisme 'Une nouvelle nuit du testing pour SOS Racisme' (2007, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/?Une-nouvelle-nuit-du-testing-pour>)

SOS Racisme 'Yazid Sabeg et la "mesure de la diversité": des déclarations inquiétantes' (unknown date, accessed at <http://www.sos-racisme.org/content/yazid-sabeg-et-la-%C2%AB%C2%A0mesure-de-la-diversite%C2%A0%C2%BB%C2%A0-des-declarations-inquietantes>)

Soubrouillard, R. 'Badiou ou le revival du gauchisme' (*Marianne 2'* *(online)* 18.12.2007, accessed at http://www.marianne2.fr/Badiou-ou-le-revival-du-gauchisme_a82232.html)

Taguieff, P-A. *La force du préjugé: essai sur le racisme et ses doubles* (La Découverte, 1987)

Taguieff, P-A. *L'illusion populiste* (Flammarion, 2007)

Taguieff, P-A. *La nouvelle judéophobie* (Fayard – Mille et Une Nuits, 2002)

Taguieff, P-A. 'Repenser l'antiracisme' (2000, accessed at http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/article_imprim.php3?id_article=24333)

Taguieff, P-A. *La République menacée* (Textuel, 1996)

Tévanian, P. *La mécanique raciste* (Éditions Dilecta, 2008)

Tévanian, P. *La République du mépris: les métamorphoses du racisme dans la France des années Sarkozy* (La Découverte, 2007)

Thuram, L., Durpaire, F., Diallo, R., Cheb Sun, M. and Blanchard, P. 'Appel pour une République multiculturelle et postraciale' (2010, accessed at www.respectmag.com)

Tincq, H. 'Nicolas Sarkozy veut remettre la religion au cœur de la vie de la cité' (*Le Monde* 21.12.07, accessed at

http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2007/12/21/nicolas-sarkozy-veut-remettre-la-religion-au-c-ur-de-la-vie-de-la-cite_992142_823448.html

Tissot, S. and Tévanian, P. *Les Mots sont importants* (Éditions Libertalia, 2010)

Todorov, T. *In Defence of the Enlightenment* (Atlantic Books, 2009)

Tshimanga, C., Gondola, D. and Bloom, P. J. (eds.) *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France* (Indiana University Press, 2009)

Unknown author 'Harlem Désir: Vive la nation!' (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 13.6.1990)

Unknown author 'Immigration: Brice Hortefeux s'explique' (*Le Figaro*, 1.6.2007)

Unknown author 'La Maison de l'histoire de France est un projet dangereux' (*Le Monde*, 21.10.2010)

Unknown author 'Que veut Malek Boutih?' (*National Hebdo*, 19.9.2002)

Unknown author 'Sortir le PS de la politique de l'eau tiède' (*Le Monde*, 27.6.2003)

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (accessed at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>)

Van Eeckhout, L. 'Relance du CV anonyme, outil de lutte contre la discrimination à l'embauche' (*Le Monde*, 3.11.09, accessed at http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2009/11/03/relance-du-cv-anonyme-outil-de-lutte-contre-la-discrimination-a-l-embauche_1261942_3224.html)

Viot, P. "Le rôle du responsable politique n'est pas d'attiser les peurs" (*Libération*, 21.12.2009)

Waters, S. *Between Republic and Market: Globalization and Identity in Contemporary France* (Continuum, 2012)

Weill, N. 'Entre Malek Boutih et la philosophe Chantal Delsol, un accord presque parfait sur l'intégration' (*Le Monde*, 15.11.2002)

Wieviorka, M. (ed.) *Racisme et modernité* (La Découverte, 1993)

Zappi, S. 'SOS Racisme placée sous contrôle financier de l'Etat' (*Le Monde*, 7.1.2003)

Zerkaoui, A. 'Il nous faut un antiracisme politique' (19.8.2012, accessed at <http://indigenes-republique.fr/il-nous-faut-un-antiracisme-politique/>)

Interviews

Interview with Houria Bouteldja (Parti des Indigènes de la République, porte-parole), Paris, 9.8.2011

Interview with Loïc Rigaud (SOS Racisme, pôle anti-discrimination, responsable prévention), Paris, 29.3.2011