

Transitioning from Patriotism to Cultural Loyalty Investigating Algerians' Group Dichotomy on Facebook

الانتقال من الوطنية إلى الولاء الثقافي دراسة انقسام المجموعات الجزائرية على فيسبوك

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DOI: 10.46315/1714-013-001-43		

Received: 25 /06/ 2024 Accepted: 06/ 01/ 2024 Published : 16/ 01/ 2024

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Abstract (English):

This article explores how Algerians shifted their sense of patriotism from the state to their Culture to assert their cultural identity. It examines the psychological and sociological patterns of group division that breed animosity between citizens, drawing on theories from Anderson and Bader. To conduct this research, we analyzed comments made by young adults on Facebook posts about the inauguration of Shashonq 1st's statue in Tizi-Ouzou in January 2021 and Chaouali's comments on Algerians' Arabness in the Arab Cup in Qatar 2021. This analysis highlighted the number of self-identified cultural groups and the reasons for the cultural dichotomy in Algeria

Keywords: Patriotism; Cultural identities; Facebook; Groups' dichotomy; Linguistic identities.

ملخص:

تناقش هذه المقالة تحول الجماعات الثقافية من الولاء والحسن الوطني تجاه الدولة إلى الولاء للثقافة كأسلوب للفخر والتأكيد على الهوية الثقافية. كما تركز هذه المقالة على الأنماط النفسية والاجتماعية لتقسيم المجموعات والتي تخلق العداء بين المواطنين المختلفين ثقافياً حسب نظريات أندرسون وبايدر. أخذ هذا العمل عينة من تعليقات الشباب على منشورات فيسبوك حول تنصيب تمثال شاشونق الأول في تيزي وزو في يناير 2021؛ وعينات من منشورات حول تعليقات الشوالي في كأس العرب في قطر 2021. أسفر التحليل عن معرفة عدد المجموعات الثقافية ذاتية التحديد وساعدت في تفسير الأسباب التي أدت إلى الانقسام الثقافي والصراعات في الجزائر.

كلمات مفتاحية: الحسن الوطني؛ الهويات الثقافية؛ فإيسبوك؛ انقسام الجماعات؛ الهويات اللغوية.

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1- Introduction

The problem of national language and nationalism in Algeria has been the topic of several studies. Cultural identity dilemma is a common issue in postcolonial states; therefore, speaking Arabic or Tamazight, writing in French or Arabic, and being part of the Arab world or the Amazigh world are issues that Algerians have faced since independence. In the digital age, these questions were embodied in the quarrels between Algerians from different cultural backgrounds and regions in the comment section of several publications, whether about sports, politics, culture, social events, or history. This paper investigates Algerian cultural fanaticism in the digital age and how Algerians use language to manifest patriotism to defend their identity and consciously or unconsciously form conflicting groups. On social media platforms and apps, cyberbullying may start when an Algerian uses a specific language or aligns with a linguistic and national group rather than the other.

This work starts by observing Algerian males, mainly young adults, interacting in the comments sections about two events. First, the inauguration of the statue of Shashonq 1st in Tizi-Ouzou on January 12th, 2021, caused controversy among Algerians who were divided into groups clashing in the comments section of almost all the publications related to that topic. Second, during the 2021 Arab Cup, a problem started when Chaoueli commented about the historical role of Egyptians in teaching Algerians Arabic and Islam, while some Asian Arabs questioned the Arabness of North African countries and their illegal participation in the Arab Cup in Qatar. Again, in the comment section, Algerians were divided into Arab nation defenders and Amazigh nation defenders who exchanged insults.

Nowadays, social media plays a significant role in instigating intrastate clashes by providing podiums for people to display their political opinions and cultural fanaticism. Hence, the cultural conflict between Algerians is heightened on social media, proving a cultural belonging problem. Stating group loyalty over defending National unity is a switch that must be studied. This paper tends to answer the following research questions: How does cultural identity regroup Algerians nowadays? To what extent do Algerians link language to patriotism? What role do governmental policies and group psychology play in separating people during the globalization era?

2- Methods

Cherishing one's group leads to feeling the urge to protect all that is linked to that group to the point that they can die for their culture, geographical area, and people. This phenomenon attracted several researchers in the sociopolitical field as they elaborated several theories. Smith (1998) and Gellner (1997) saw that patriotism is a constitutional fabric and that ethnicity and ethnocentrism are more potent than any bond between people. Le Bon (1889) explained that creating bonds between a crowd's members necessitated a plan forged by the elite. A few researchers studied the topic of the switch from patriotism to cultural loyalty as the majority discussed the creation of Patriotism. For instance,

Coleman, Harris, Bryant, and Reif-Stice (2018) wrote a paper on cultural identity and patriotism within the African-American community using a cultural approach. They investigated the relationship between cultural appropriation as a group and the connection with the nation. The current paper focuses on the case of Algerian cultural group dichotomy and loyalty in the age of globalization from a social and psychological perspective.

First, to explain the creation of communities, this article uses Anderson's (2006) theory of creating imagined communities by governments using fabricated historical events to establish particular communities with cultural, social, and political boundaries. The second theory to be tested is Bader's Psychology of Patriotism (2006). He asserted that the borders between groups are conscious and unconscious, and those who lie outside the circle are considered enemies or friends who would turn into enemies at any time.

This research uses a qualitative method to analyze newspaper articles, archives, and social media content. We used mediatic discourse analysis to investigate how the Shashonq's and Chaoueli's controversial events were reported and how people reacted to them on Facebook. This research focused on Algerian male young adults' comments and interactions on Facebook publications about both events. By noticing verbal violence and conflicts in comments, we used behavioral psychology to clarify the notion of patriotism and cultural loyalty while using cultural historiography to shed light on the role of language policies in defining Algerian cultural identity.

We define relevant theories and concepts to provide a short theoretical and conceptual framework. Initially, the term "patriotism," which means love of one's country, is derived from the Latin word "Patris" fatherland (Online Etymology Dictionary). Encyclopedia Britannica defines patriotism as an unwavering passion and connection to one's country, encompassing its flag, anthem, language, and people (Encyclopedia Britannica). Historically, patriotism preceded nationalism by approximately 2000 years since it was used by the Romans, referring to their deep attachment to the land and the Republic. Nationalism, on the other hand, started with the creation of modern Nations and Nation-states in the 19th century, and it stands, as mentioned earlier, for the feeling of loyalty to the nation's symbols and pillars.

Both Patriotism and Nationalism regenerate the sentiment of belonging and community obligations, yet psychologists prove the former to be more vital and more profound. According to Nazarenko (2019), patriotism can be defined as "positive nationalism" or "a general sentiment related to the love of motherland – and in most cases – warfare, either information war or military affairs. It seems clear that the notions of patriotism are often bound to historical situations and schools of social or political thought" (356). Accordingly, patriotism stands for the historical, social, political, and cultural elements a person or a group shares and considers fundamental and sacred. Therefore, all the aspects linked to the motherland are defendable, according to the patriots. Nevertheless, this readiness to defend is perceived by certain governments as reins that can be used to control the masses.

3- Results

Hardt and Negri (2009) assert that the Internet is an archetype of the "rhizome: a nonhierarchical, non-centered network—a democratic network with an indeterminate and potentially unlimited number of

interconnected nodes that communicate with no central point of control"(299). Social media platforms and apps have become the primary sources of information, news, and criticism in the last decade. They became a political podium for widening the electoral campaigns or spreading different ideologies as they are used for exchanging friendly conversations between people from other parts of the globe. Undoubtedly, social media platforms gained more popularity in the pandemic era since late 2019 as companies and educational establishments started using them more professionally.

In a more specific setting, social media provided easy and free access to North African people. Consequently, it played a significant role during the Arab Spring by spreading revolutionary thoughts throughout the MENA region. Henceforth, people who used to exchange their opinions in cafeterias and street meetings started using Facebook and other applications to express their minds without censorship. Political issues turn out to be debated by both experts and ignorant people similarly, causing fanaticism that triggered opposing groups to use social media to start electronic wars against each other. It begins with changing the profile picture to show their support for an idea or manifesting their love for the homeland, football team, or political leader. With conviction, several people took advantage of these fanatics to reach hidden goals, mainly to instigate state unrest and identity issues by claiming to defend the secret history of those groups.

Moreover, people use social media platforms to manifest their vision of patriotism as they feel obligated to defend the ingroup, nation, and all symbols related to one's identity. In the digital age, people enjoy more freedom to express themselves under pseudonyms, an act prohibited by authorities in different countries in the MENA region. Hence, a football game or a beauty pageant can cause a long fight on social media pages where each group displays pride in its origins and launches digital wars against others.

Bader (2006) claimed that patriotism has two main functions: defensive and offensive. He argued that: "patriotism can be a force for good or evil. American patriotism helped vanquish fascism; German patriotism helped create and sustain it" (582). He continued with an exciting idea that wars of independence resulted from patriotic fervor that convinced people to die for the motherland and their fellow brothers (582). In Bader's theory, the feeling of being part of a more significant entity provides safety and power. However, it causes a sense of vulnerability that would make people easier to control. He explained that citizens perceive the nation as a family and the leaders as parents. People expect protection and support from the government and generally neglect their mischiefs. Extremist patriots glorify the leaders and nation's symbols because the creation of patriotism, according to Bader, happens both on the conscious and unconscious levels (582).

Psychologically, people long for safety and connection with a higher power that can provide parenting. Nevertheless, there are several types of parenting; in this sense, the linguist George Lakoff (1995) assumed that political parties are mimicking these parenting schemas. He explains that the Liberals are playing the role of "nurturant parent," showing empathy and responsibility towards citizens, while Conservatives embed the "strict parent image" (64-65). Both forms of parenting have their supporters and believers, and both fulfill a specific need people desire. Consequently, both use these parenting techniques to manipulate and control people. Algerian Cultural groups have different parenting figures that they consider sacred, and any attempt to mention any one of them can lead to a horrific conflict. For the Kabilyans, Maatoub Loueness is regarded as

a symbol of courage and pride, and they use his songs as anthems and his words as mottos. On the other hand, Arabs and Arab nationalists consider the late President Houari Boumediene an unprecedented image of glory and resilience, as the majority consider him the father of modern Algeria.

Therefore, the dichotomy between groups starts by being the progenies of different "Patrias" and different fathering figures. The groups draw circles to define the ingroup and necessitate a sense of hostility towards the other group. Bader accentuated that "Membership in a group is enhanced if there are people who are excluded. If these people on the outside are "bad" or "dangerous," then it enables those of us on the inside to feel good, righteous, and safe" (584). Unquestionably, patriotism is universal as it accentuates the difference between groups; therefore, it is deliberately used for governmental agendas.

4- Discussion

Before the Digital Age, patriotism was mainly concretized during war and crisis. In addition to physical engagement in wars and battlefield participation, citizens used artistic forms to display their pride and feelings towards their land. Many songs, plays, movies, and stories were loaded with strong emotions that resonated throughout time and fed the next generation's patriotic sentiment. Patriotism, therefore, can be seen as a process of accumulating emotions and behavior that are part of the legacy passed from one generation to another. According to Anderson (2006), nations are built on "imaginary ties" between a person and his co-citizens and between people and the government, causing a sense of patriotism (8). Similarly, Bader (2006) argued that ideas about patriotism and violently fighting the other in case of national danger were implanted in schools (585). Hence, creating a national identity prepares people to feel the sacredness of their link with their land, a sentiment that governments use to manipulate citizens.

Anderson (2006) accentuated that mainstream media and schools are the primary tools governments use to condition citizens and implant the new ideologies they want them to believe. Along similar lines, Chomsky, in his book *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (2002), points out that media is a brainwashing tool that substantially impacts people's minds (23). In Algeria, during the War of Independence, the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) was pictured as the only trustworthy savior of the nation, and all their decisions were glorified and unquestionable. The image of Ben Badis as the father of Arab Islamic Algeria was also propagated throughout radio stations and newspapers. In recent years, military symbols were glorified on mainstream and social media platforms. In each period, governments use the available mediatic tool to affect the people; from emotional radio broadcasts and newspapers to television coverage and movies, the citizen cannot escape loads of information surrounding him, and he becomes programmed in one way or another.

Le Bon (1895) explained the urge for affiliation that a person always felt within communities and pointed out that a person may shrink and give up on several qualities just to be included and accepted within a particular group. Even the ones who do not take specific policies and stand against the group find themselves forming a group of their own, generally named an opposition. In between, the ones who claim to be neutral cannot stand alone and must be affiliated with the non-aligned group. Being within an assemblage is proven to be a biological, sociological, and psychological human nature.

As mentioned earlier, this article took as a sample of study two Facebook publications about two events in the same year, 2021. In a Facebook publication made by Bérbére Television on January 13th, 2021, they reported the inauguration of the statue of Sheshonq 1st (in Tamazight Chachnaq 1er) in the wilaya of Tizi-Ouzou in Algeria for the Yennayer celebration. This article shall not discuss the history of the statue or the origins of the king; it is limited to studying how Algerians were divided in terms of cultural identity and belonging and how they used language to assert this difference in a patriotic way. Patriotism here is the unconscious defense of one's vision of the motherland with its cultural symbols. It is worth mentioning that a previous statue of Queen Dihya, also known as Al Kahina, was also established in the Wilaya of Khanchla. Yet, according to the press, it was burnt by an unknown group. This incident triggered the Amazigh/ Berber group, who questioned the reason behind accepting El Amir Abdelkader's statue while making so much drama about Amazigh symbols. The cultural event became a quarrel on the national and international levels.

The second status was published on Youcef Badaoui's and DZNews's Facebook pages after the infamous statement made by Chaouali, the Tunisian sports reporter, during the match between Algeria and Egypt for the 2021 Arab Cup semifinals. On December 20th, Chaouali declared during the game that the Egyptians were the ones who taught the Algerian people the Arabic language alongside the truthful Islamic religion. This statement caused rage among Algerians, who started attacking Chaouali in the comments section. The thing that attracted one's attention is the fact that there were Arab Asian journalists, Khalidji ones, who questioned the Arabness of the whole Maghreb countries, claiming that they should not take part in the Arab Cup using as argument the French language that most Algerian players use and the ongoing calls for Tamazight language to be nationalized. This reaction was not what triggered our intention to dig deeper; it was the reaction of Algerians that tolled a bell. Some Algerians took the stand to glorify Algeria's long history as a Muslim state before the French colonization and how deeply the Arabic language is rooted in Algerian society. On the other hand, a group of Amazigh Algerians showed off their pride in their non-Arab identity, yet they played better than the Asian Arabs. A third group took advantage of this problem. It exhibited hatred towards their fellow Algerians by asserting that those claiming Arab identity and origins are ignorant of their past and try to be affiliated with a culture that rejects them.

While going through the comments section, we noticed that Algerians are mainly divided into four groups:

1- First group: the proud Arabs who assert the Arab identity of Algeria and do not accept the idea of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the country. They perceive the Arabic identity as superior to other cultures, and most of them use as a slogan Ben Badis's poem, "Algerian people are Muslims, and they are affiliated with Arabness." Their patriotic fervor manifests in attacking the users of other languages, especially French, and defending the notion of Arabness and the state's symbols and national figures. They show explicit hatred towards Francophone Algerians, accusing them of being "sons of France," "enemies of Islam," and "enemies of the nation." Based on Anderson's and Bader's theories, this group glorifies the past and the history taught in schools without question. This group considers Tamazight a dialect and their flag as a secessionist plan; therefore, they advocate the role of Arabic as a unifying factor.

2- The second group: the Amazigh Francophones, who do not tolerate Arabic and have been against the Arabization process in the country since independence. They are called "sons of France" and are accused of

being against Algerian independence. Nevertheless, as a rebuttal to this point, the majority of intellectuals and Armed forces highly ranked staff were educated in French, which was the fruit of what is known as the Kabylia project. The colonists designed the latter plan and several French policies against using Arabic in certain areas of the Algerian territory to isolate the Amazigh people from Arabs. This group's patriotism is displayed using Tamazight or French languages and the Tamazight flag as profile pictures. They exhibit pride in Tamazight symbols and hatred of pro-Arabism Algerian figures, especially El Amir Abdelkader and the late President Boumediene. In the comment section, they tend to criticize the government overtly and insult the Asian Arabs, especially the Khalidji people, whom they consider as "camel people," and other insults that are not suitable to be written in academic work.

3- The third group: the ones who believe in the unity of both groups and try to defend unity rather than identity. This group is affected by the dark decade of the early 1990s and believes Algeria has suffered enough trouble. Consequently, group exclusion would lead to clashes and threaten the nation. As observed, this group consists of both Amazigh and Arab Algerians who switched their loyalty from the smaller group to the larger one, i.e., Algeria with its multicultural, multilingual identity. The Algerian Daridja (Colloquial Algerian Arabic) or English were the languages used by this group to show no cultural identity accentuation.

4- The fourth group: Being absent from the comments section yet present with a reaction (like, adore, angry), this group's disinclination to share their point of view has different interpretations. One of the reasons is believed to be claiming neutrality and believing that Algerian identity is more profound than what a reporter says or what a neighboring country may declare. They think that experts in the field should treat such issues. Others want to avoid taking part in these unnecessary quarrels.

5- Conclusion

Applying Anderson's and Bader's theories mentioned in the article and observing Algerian social media users' patriotic reactions to different events, we deduced that patriotism is a composition of implanted ideas and an innate sentiment of affiliation. Group affiliation necessitates acceptance of the collective imagination and the shrinking of the individual self. Therefore, digital group creation follows the same plan humans had developed in creating societies from time immemorial. On the same level, the patriotic groups exhibit the same characteristics that Le Bon enumerated in 1895 while the tools changed; their members act impulsively when their national identity and cultural symbols are attacked.

The elites of Algerian cultural groups create standing-out identities and widen gaps between the people. As a reaction, the Algerian government used education and media to switch their loyalty from the cultural group to the Nation. After studying the interactions on social media, it is evident that people defend their cultural identity over national belonging and patriotism.

This article provided evidence for three key points. Firstly, it demonstrated that in 2021, people continue to adhere to the same psychological and behavioral patterns observed among the masses centuries ago. Secondly, as Benedict Anderson suggested, it affirmed that communities are formed by instilling an imagined identity for which individuals are willing to defend and sacrifice. Thirdly, it sheds light on how Algerians utilized specific languages on social media to express their patriotism and cultural identity. In this context,

language selection was crucial in drawing linguistic and cultural borders between groups. The digital age provided freely accessible social media platforms to discuss cultural issues, making them more explicit.

To conclude, in peaceful times, patriotism is manifested with a flag, a song, a dress, an emblem, and several other possessions. Hitherto, whenever the motherland engages in a positive or an adverse event in the digital age, it causes conflicts with the opposing groups. Psychologists proved this sentiment to take place both on the unconscious and subconscious levels, which explains the powerful emotions a person experiences in such times. Instead of getting into physical wars, people manifested patriotism on social media, using advanced tools and innovative language.

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