

## ON THE GEOGRAPHY OF COLONIALISM A Third World Perspective

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**ABSTRACT:** Although today fewer than one percent of world population lives in nonselfgoverning territories, colonialism continues to be a phenomenon of great contemporary relevance because of the legacy it has left behind. This paper discusses the nature of modern West European colonialism in Afro-Asia, and explains how, in this context, the British Empire in India differed in essentials from its Muslim predecessors. The distinctions between primary and secondary, and contiguous and remote colonialism are explained and comments are offered on the concept of "administrative distance" which was partly a function of time and partly of social and environmental distance between the rulers and the ruled. A brief historical overview of Western colonialism highlights the changing perspectives and motivations of the imperial powers and their distinctive administrative styles. Factors and processes of decolonization are analyzed and different viewpoints regarding its goods and bads reviewed. Politicogeographical consequences of the distinctive administrative styles of the different colonial powers have been analyzed. The post-1945 phenomenon of neocolonialism—including the geography and politics of foreign aid—has been explained, and attention has been drawn to the process through which, after the Second World War, the separate (and partly closed) colonial systems have tended to merge into a kind of worldwide system. The paper ends with suggestions for future research on the geography of colonialism.

Today fewer than one percent of the total population of the world live in territories that are not self-governing, and the process of decolonization is so rapid that a few years from now hardly any colonial vestige may be visible on the world map. But despite this fast disappearance of colonialism as a form of political organization, the importance of the phenomenon itself has not decreased. Importance of colonialism today lies neither in the area covered by it nor in the number of people subjected to it. Its importance lies in its legacy. It has been well observed that like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, colonialism has largely disappeared but its

grin remains. "We are concerned with the cruel grin of colonialism; the plural societies that it created, the education of the modern world which it failed to accomplish, the administrators which it did not train, the resources which it exploited entirely for its own profit" (Pounds, 1972., pp. 361-362).

Most of the leaders of the so-called "third world countries", that received independence from foreign rule in the post-Second World War period, were born, brought up and schooled under the dependent colonial system; and their political and economic outlook continues to be guided by the unhappy experiences of the colonial days. At the international level, this attitude is visible

in the so-called Afro-Asian "bloc" (although the existence of any such bloc in reality is doubtful). The group reaction of these countries at international conferences is, in general, a reaction to the long periods of colonial rule in Africa and Asia by the capitalist countries of Europe. It is this psychological attitude that has largely been responsible for a somewhat more sympathetic attitude that many of these countries show to the Soviet Union which had not been involved in the old imperialistic venture in this region. Besides, on the home front, the long range impact of the exploitative colonial rule is a continuing concern for planners, administrators, and nation-builders of these countries.

### The Nature of Colonialism

To define colonialism is difficult. Its chief characteristics are nevertheless obvious. A colony is a politically dependent area; it does not possess sovereignty, and its policies are determined and its administration controlled from a centre of decision-making lying outside its territory in the capital of the colonizing power. It represents the establishment and maintenance of rule over a people that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power. Colonialism represented "domination of an alien minority, asserting racial and cultural superiority, over a materially inferior native majority; contact between a machine-oriented civilization with Christian origins, a powerful economy, and a rapid rhythm of life and non-Christian civilization that lacks machines and is marked by a backward economy and a slow rhythm of life; and the imposition of first civilization upon the second" (paraphrased from Balandier, 1951, p. 75 in Emerson, 1968). Colonialism may be viewed as a "process by which peoples or nations conquer, subdue and then permanently dominate...other peoples or nations" (Strachey, 1960).

In this context it is interesting to see how the British rule over India differed from

those of its predecessors (the Sultans and the Mughals) in its essential features. Whereas the decision-making centre for British India was located in London, Mughal India had all along been ruled from Delhi. Thus the Mughals (as well as the Sultans) may be described as Indian rulers of foreign origin since, even though they came from outside, they had made India their home. In contrast, the British rule remained out and out an alien rule. It had developed no roots in the Indian soil—it did not feel compelled to do so. Until the British rule was established, it had always been the case of the "conquerors being conquered by the conquered in India". But with the British the situation changed completely. What distinguished the British from their predecessors was their capacity to elude the process of Indianization. The modern technology in transport and communication available to the new rulers enabled them to maintain direct contact with the homeland. Thus the reins of power could now be firmly held from the far off imperial capital. Under the British, therefore, India for the first time in her long history failed to tame and conquer the conquerors.

One of the basic characteristics of modern colonialism was the presumption on the part of the colonizing powers that the local inhabitants were not capable of handling their own affairs except at the purely local level. For this reason there was little or no representation of the native population on the governing bodies which made major decisions regarding the colonies and dependencies. This was most glaringly projected by the example of British Central Africa where "The natives had formed only two percent of the Southern Rhodesian roll; there were only eleven African voters in Northern Rhodesia and not at all in Nyasaland in 1951" (Dikshit, 1971). Secondly, citizens of the colonizing country were accorded special privileges not available to the local citizens—a factor

that accentuated the differences between the rulers and the ruled, and fanned thereby the revolutionary fervour for political independence and self-rule. Thirdly, under the colonial pattern, the economy of the colony was generally geared for the benefit of the colonial power. For example, the economic pattern of the British Empire was guided by the mercantilist system codified through the Acts of Trade and Navigation first passed by the English Parliament in 1651. The Acts restricted all trade between the colonies and England to English ships, enumerated commodities that could be sent nowhere but to England, made it necessary for all imports to the colonies to be routed through English ports where taxes were collected. Later, industrial manufactures in the colonies were generally restricted and limits were placed on intercolonial trade (see Dikshit, 1975, pp. 42-43 and 72-73).

A most thoughtful and incisive analysis of imperialism was presented by Lenin in 1916 wherein he sought to interpret the first World War as a clash of imperial interests. He drew attention to the colonial economic pattern under which the colonies were used as highly profitable outlets for capital investment, as captive markets for the finished goods produced by the imperial country, and as monopolized sources of cheap raw materials. He predicted that the struggle for colonial expansion was bound to accelerate great power rivalry which, he thought, would destroy the stability of the capitalistic countries. Lenin also drew attention to the huge profits derived from the colonial economic pattern that permitted the payment of higher wages to workers in the imperial countries. This, he noted, reduced the revolutionary fervour of the working class, while at the same time the exploitation of native labour in the colonies was creating a new revolutionary class. This, in his opinion, created an international class struggle between the haves and have-nots (Lenin, 1916; Kemp, 1967; and Folke, 1973).

### Types of Colonialism

The terms colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably. It would appear, however, that the nature and problem of territorial extension in areas contiguous to the colonizing country are quite different from territorial expansion and colonization in far off lands. Furthermore, the process of colonization in empty or sparsely settled areas of rudimentary cultural development differs in a marked degree from that in areas of long settled cultures. Trying to distinguish between the two terms, Cohen wrote: "Colonialism, as a process, involves the settlement from a mother country, generally into empty lands and bringing into these lands the previous culture and organization of the parent society. Imperialism, as distinct from colonialism, refers to rule over indigenous people, transforming their ideas, institutions and goods" (Cohen, 1963, p. 204). Almost fifteen years earlier, in an attempt to clarify the concept of colonization, Frankel (1949) had pleaded for the recognition of two different types of the colonizing process: **primary colonization**, by which term he meant the occupation of settled areas and domination of the native peoples; and secondly, **secondary colonization**, which implies acquisition by and occupation by colonial power of new and virtually empty areas. Thus, the British colonization in Asia was a case of primary colonization as contrasted to the secondary colonization involved in the settlement of the Thirteen Colonies of North America, and of Australia and New Zealand. Since the two terms - colonialism and imperialism - are so commonly used as synonyms, Frankel's terminology avoids confusion of usage even though Cohen's would appear to be more logical.

It is clear that territorial expansion in and occupation of areas contiguous to the colonizing state is, other things being equal, generally more permanent since the geographically contiguous territory is relatively

easily integrated into the state area whereas the remote colonies—primary or secondary at the best remain only some kind of appendage. For this reason, sooner or later, the distant colonies become disenchanted with the imperial relationship and break off the imperial connection. This has been the general tendency irrespective of the fact whether the colony was settled by Europeans or the indigeneous people. In general, it is “more likely that two non-contiguous portions of a polity will drift apart than that a pair of communities with territorial continuity will do so, even though actual distances involved may be the same” (Merritt, 1969). As Hartshorne (1968, p.28) wrote :

There seems little doubt that a basic reason for the political separation of the United States from Great Britain was the great stretch of ocean essentially empty of any connecting links. In contrast, the settlements from southern Maine to northern Georgia, though established largely by separate movements from across the Atlantic had grown together so that peripheral settlers in each unit were contiguous with these in the next. In contrast, the settlements in Nova Scotia, and in Quebec were separated from the “American” settlements, and from each other, by great stretches of forested wilderness.

### **The Concept of Administrative Distance**

In respect of the colonies settled by Europeans, the primary reason for the ‘disaffection of the colonists with the’ motherland was the time lag that was usually involved between administrative decisions reached in the parent country and their implementation in the colonies, owing to the great distances intervening between the two at a stage of technological development when the movement of men and materials was all too slow. The functional aspect of the distance between a mother country and its colonies has been aptly named as “administrative distance” (Tiwari, 1972).

Although administrative distance was mainly a function of time, there were two further aspects of it—first, the differences between socio-cultural milieu of the colony and the colonial power, and secondly, the differences obtaining between the two with regard to the total geographical environment of the parent country (where decisions were made) and the colony (where these decisions were to be implemented). The former may be termed “social distance” and the latter “environmental distance”. There was a general lack of appreciation with regard to both between the rulers and the ruled. Generally speaking, however, social distance posed a much bigger problem in the primary colonization areas where the great bulk of the population was of native origin, as contrasted to the areas of secondary colonization in North America, Australia, and New Zealand, which were settled by the peoples of European origin.

### **Modern Colonialism : A Historical Overview**

Territorial expansion has been a tendency common to powerful states in all periods of history in almost every part of the “civilized” world, but colonialism in its modern form started in the mid-fifteenth century when the maritime states of Western Europe began to sail to far off regions of the globe, and the new territories explored in this process began to be claimed by navigators and traders in the name of their respective mother country. The first leaders in the field were Spain and Portugal—the two leading maritime states of the time. So intense was the competition for colonization between the two states that before the fifteenth century ended, the areas of Spanish and Portuguese colonization were clearly defined by the Treaty of Tordesillas. The so-called Pope’s Line divided the then unexplored world into the Spanish and Portuguese realms—the dividing line ran along the meridian line running 370 leagues west of Cape Verde Island. In terms



of the Treaty, the lands to the west of this line had to go to Spain, and those to the east of it to Portugal. This is how Brazil became a Portuguese possession while the rest of South America went to Spain's share. But soon other competitors entered the fray; and for these have-nots of the time the Pope's Line had no sanctity. Thus, in course of time, North America largely became an arena of conflict between the French and British.

The first to challenge the Spanish-Portuguese monopolization of maritime colonialism were the Dutch, who were closely followed by the French and British. Other states joined the race much later.

The competition for overseas colonization had been so intense that by the end of the nineteenth century virtually the entire land surface of the earth was parcelled out among the colonial competitors. Except for Ethiopia and Liberia, the whole of the continent of Africa was under colonial possession of the rival European powers. In Australia and the South Pacific, the Dutch had been pushed out and Britain was the supreme power except for the name sake presence of France in some relatively insignificant islands. By that time, apart from Antarctica, only certain remote oceanic islands had remained unclaimed. At the close of the nineteenth century the major colonial powers were Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and Germany. The United States had acquired territories from Spain, and so had Japan from China. Italy was also gradually expanding its hold over north-eastern Africa and the Mediterranean.

The first half of the present century witnessed great many changes in the colonial patterns of the major powers, even though the total area under colonialism had hardly changed, except that the six largely self-governing Dominions of Britain—either settled by the peoples of British/European origin (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, and New

Foundland) or dominated by White settlers (South Africa)—were granted complete independence and sovereign status in 1931. A major reshuffling of colonial possessions had taken place after the First World War when the colonial footholds of Germany and Turkey were shared between the victorious alliance in the form of League of Nations mandates.

In the mid-1930's Italy and Japan had rapidly expanded their colonial possessions, but following the defeat of the Axis powers in the Second World War, they were deprived of these ill-earned territorial possessions. The names of Germany, Japan, and Italy were out from the list of colonial powers after 1945, while the United States became an important member of the club.

In the years immediately following the Second World War, a spate of decolonization swept over the Afro-Asian world. This trend was spear-headed by India whose lead was soon to be followed by other countries of the British Commonwealth in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Freedom from the imperial yoke was also obtained by the major colonies of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The least affected were the overseas possessions of Portugal and Spain owing partly to the lack of political education in the majority of local populations, and partly to the adamant rule of their rulers, and the repressive dictatorial rule in the home states. Within a span of thirty years—1932 to 1962—the political map of the world had completely changed (Fig. 1). The continent of Africa south of the equator remained the only major area under the imperial system. In the history of colonialism, the changing political map of the continent of Africa from 1914 to the present, is particularly instructive: in 1914 the two self-governing areas on the continent were Libya and Ethiopia, but by 1971 all but the Portuguese possessions in Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea; Spanish Sahara, and the tiny Moroccan possessions (totalling 82 square miles); the French

territory of Afars and Isas (formerly French Somaliland), and S. W. Africa were completely self-governing. By 1975 the Portuguese possessions also became free.

The colonial scene in North and South America had experienced the wind of change a little less than two hundred years earlier when the Thirteen Colonies of British North America won a glorious freedom from the imperial rule in 1776. The Spanish American Colonies became independent by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese Brazil towards the turn of the century. Freedom in the Caribbean came with the formation (in 1958) of the ill-fated federation of the West Indies. With the dissolution of the Federation in 1962, the constituents became independent units.

A notable feature of the post-1945 period was the territorial expansion of the Soviet influence (*de facto* as well as *de jure*) in Europe and Asia, and the expansion of the Chinese hold in countries along its periphery. Whatever their consequences, the Soviet and the Chinese examples of expansion in adjacent territories do not represent cases of "mother country-colony" variety of Western imperialism; as such these do not concern us in this discussion.

### Factors in Decolonization

Colonial imperialism was primarily a profit motivated enterprise. Colonial territories could serve as sites for bases or as spring-boards for further territorial expansion. They provided sources of raw materials and markets for finance capital investment as well as for the products of the mother country's manufacturing industries. The subject population in the colonies provided cheap labour for farms and factories, and soldiers for the battle field. It is true, however, that not all the colonies were equally profitable, and certain territories on the whole proved more of liability than asset. The reason was obvious. Most territories were occupied even before

a reasonable geographical knowledge about them was available; as such, some of them did not subsequently prove rich enough sources for raw materials etc. as originally expected. Furthermore, the assets and liabilities of the overseas possessions to the mother country changed over time because mineral reserves of a given territory proved short-lived or because cheaper sources of raw materials were found elsewhere. Or, as in the case of the Dutch East Indies and the French possessions in Indo-China, the territories that were once of great economic value, became economic liabilities owing to the high costs involved in combating local struggles for freedom. Wherever an overseas territory ceased to be a profitable proposition (economically or militarily) the mother country's interest in it declined, and it was only too happy to wash its hands of the colonial possession concerned. While Great Britain had fiercely resisted independence to the Thirteen Colonies (which had continued to be a profitable proposition, at least they appeared to the rulers to be so), freedom from colonial rule was virtually thrust on Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the West Indies which (each for different reasons) had ceased to be profitable propositions at the time independence was granted (for brief discussions of each see Dikshit, 1975, chapters 4, 5, and 8). Freedom from imperial rule in the Latin American countries had been achieved through violent revolutions as in the case of the United States at a time when Spain (and later Portugal) had become too weak to contain them.

By the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, public concern for the welfare of the colonial peoples had begun to influence the administrative policies of the imperial powers. In many cases "the burdens of empire began to outweigh the advantages", and as Pounds noted, there must have been many in Great Britain, France, and some other imperial countries who would have

echoed the words of Rudyard Kipling :

Take up the White Man's burden--

And reap his old reward :

The blame of those who better,

The hate of those we guard . . .

This was, however, not true for every colony. Colonial possessions continued to be of considerable economic, strategic and political value, as is evidenced by the German, Italian, and Japanese expansion in the 1930's. But the situation drastically changed after the Second World War, as a result of which not only the axis powers had been devastated, but also nearly all the colonial powers of Western Europe were greatly crippled and were no longer in a position to contain the rising tide of the increasingly militant forces of nationalism clamouring for freedom from foreign rule. Besides, in the climate of enlightened opinion at the mid-twentieth century, the old repressive policies of imperialism could hardly be pursued. The end of the old colonial system was, therefore, imperative. The more enlightened among the colonial powers, like Britain, read the writing on the wall in time, and began preparing for withdrawal soon after the War. The change-over in most British colonies was, therefore, peaceful and with some grace. Elsewhere, the phase of post-1945 decolonization was marked with strife in various degrees—the most ignoble example being set by the Portuguese who had to be thrown out of their possessions in Goa in 1961; and continued to pursue a colonial policy reminiscent of the nineteenth century until well into the nineteen seventies.

There is no denying the fact that Western colonialism was the vehicle upon which the ideas and skills of modern Europe were carried to many parts of the world. It is, however, difficult to draw a balance sheet showing the credits and debits of the colonial association between a European power and its dependencies.

In the process of economic exploitation of the colonies some developmental plans

had of necessity to be taken up to facilitate government, and these, after independence, have stood of advantage to the former dependencies. But this would hardly sustain the claim that it is "unwise to generalize colonialism as an exploitative system wholly in favor of the colonial power" (De Blij, 1973, p. 391). Howsoever great the differences in the policies pursued by the particular colonial powers, and despite a somewhat apparently benevolent attitude adopted in some cases in the inter-war years, largely as a response to an enlightened public opinion, the history of colonialism would prove beyond doubt that it was inherently an exploitative imperial system designed wholly in favour of the colonial power. Any benefits to the erstwhile dependencies – and these in some cases were quite substantial – were by nature incidental. Exploitation was the very basis of modern colonialism. All colonial powers were exploiters even though some were most blatantly exploitative and some less so. If modern colonialism has not always been wholly oppressive or exploitative, it was **only** because such methods would, in the long run, have defeated their own ends. No doubt, in some cases the obligations incurred were considerable, but "it would be gross exaggeration to say that these were deliberately incurred for the sake of suffering humanity" (Pounds, 1972, p.362). Thus, De Blij's foregoing claim, and the laments and non-approving statements by many other writers (including Pounds) regarding the charge that the nature of modern colonialism was "essentially evil", would appear to be an undeserved apology for human greed of the worst kind.

### Patterns of Colonial Rule

There were almost as many styles of colonial administration as the number of colonial powers. Great variations also obtained in the actual application of administrative policies in the particular colonies of the same imperial power.

However, broadly speaking, the administrative styles of the various imperial powers may be grouped under two broad types: the policies of Indirect Rule and of Direct Rule. The former was most characteristic of the British colonial empire and the latter of France (and generally also of Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, and Spain). The former has generally been regarded as an enlightened system as compared to the latter.

### Indirect Rule

Describing the British system of Indirect Rule in Africa, Whittlesey wrote that it was a "government which leaves the African political structure untouched, except for supervision by British political officers, organized not to supersede the indigenous government, but to parallel and supplement it". This was contrasted with the system of Direct Rule practised by France in her overseas possessions where administration was carried "through a governor and his subordinates... All responsible officials directly engaged in administering government are Europeans, except the men immediately in control of the smallest units... in order to integrate the colonies with the home country to the fullest degree" (Whittlesey, 1939, 0.379).

The British policy of Indirect colonial rule was most clearly pronounced by Lord Lugard, the Governor-General of Nigeria, in 1900. It was a system devised to preserve the existing African societies, and was aimed at assisting them "to adapt themselves to the functions of local government" (Lord Hailey, 1938, p. 413). As Sir George Goldie had put it, the rationale of the policy was that "Even an imperfect and tyrannical native African administration... would be, in the early stages, productive of far less discomfort to its subjects than well-intentioned but ill-directed efforts of European magistrates, often young and headstrong, not invariably gifted with sympathy and retrospective powers" (quoted in Hailey,

op. cit., p. 417). While this policy was applied, with some variations, to most African colonies of Britain, the policy was not applied to South Africa, the Rhodesias, and to the highlands of Kenya, since in these areas economic/financial interests of the White settlers were deeply entrenched. Indeed, the Black African could deserve human considerations only so long as his land did not possess attractions for the ruling "race".

A comparative view of the Settler dominated and other British African possessions would show that, in ultimate analysis, the lot of the native population was better in the group of countries ruled "indirectly". It should be noted here, however, that it would be wrong to believe either that the policy of Indirect Rule was motivated by purely altruistic considerations or that the end result had always been to the benefit of the native population. By letting the native African population remain divided into primitive tribal societies with their narrow space concepts - to use Ratzel's (1896) phrase - the Indirect Rule served its colonial masters well. Each tribe remained confined to itself. This greatly reduced the chances of intertribal - and therefore interregional - unity. This blocked the emergence of any genuine feeling of all-colony nationalism, since the tribals' concept of state remained by and large limited to his tribe rather than embracing the whole colony - a legacy for which the successor states have to pay heavily in view of the severe strain that the tribal disharmony has created in the process of national integration. There is a genuine suspicion that all this was by design rather than accident. It was part of the general colonial policy of divide and rule.

It was as a result of this general policy of indirect rule that the Indian princes continued to rule over large parts of the interior until the end of the British rule. The princely states had continued as anachronistic pockets of feudalism; and the princes kept

their subject populations insulated against revolution by keeping their windows closed against modern education, democracy, and the Congress. It is partly for this reason that the areas that remained under the princely rule represent relatively less developed regions of the country.

### Direct Rule

France was the most representative country of this administrative style. Like all colonial policies this was dictated by the special needs of the mother country. After the French defeat at the hands of Prussia in 1870-1871, the balance of power in Europe was tipped heavily against France, particularly since the German states were now united under the leadership of Prussia which was itself by now a rising industrial and military power. France needed the material as well human resources of its overseas possessions in order to even the scale and repair the unfavourable balance. And this objective could more easily be achieved if a tight control over the colonies was maintained through the officers of the mother country. It must, however, be said to the credit of France that "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" which had been the slogan of the French Revolution, continued to permeate the French policy and institutions all through the nineteenth century. As such, "There was no segregation in any part of the French Empire. Race and color were never made a criterion for the possession of voting rights or for the attainment of political office or administrative position" (Pounds, 1972, p. 378). This contrasted sharply with the situation obtaining in the British colonial possessions, particularly in Africa.

In the Central and West Africa as well as in the West Indian colonies of France this policy of assimilation and direct rule worked quite well, since the French policy of creating islands of French culture and civilization received little opposition in these regions of relatively less developed indige-

nous cultures. Elsewhere—the Muslim culture areas of French North Africa, and the Buddhist culture areas of Cambodia, Laos, and Cochin China in southeast Asia—the French colonies had well developed indigenous cultures and religions of their own, of which they were immensely proud and to which they were so closely attached, that the policy of assimilation proved almost a complete failure.

The Portuguese colonial policy represented another example of the Direct Rule variety. Portugal had always treated her overseas possessions as "provinces" of the mother country, and the citizens of these provinces could (in theory) aspire to Portuguese citizenship and representation in the Portuguese government. But in practice the colonial administration of Portugal had all along been rather high handed and extremely exploitative. Much of the major changes to the five centuries old overseas Portugal came only during the past few years of this century when to counter the rising tide of African aspiration in Angola and Mozambique, Portugal inaugurated a policy of assimilation whereby a small portion of the indigenous population in the colonies was to be educated to Portuguese citizenship.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century when, under pressure of world public opinion, the Dutch government began to pay attention to the welfare of its colonial subjects in the East Indies and to support native institutions, the Dutch colonial policy had been one of unrestricted exploitation. Under the so-called "culture system" the native population in the East Indies was forced to cultivate certain areas exclusively for the use of the Dutch. In practice, the twentieth century Dutch administration in the East Indies was a mix between the direct and indirect systems of colonial rule. While at the purely local level indigenous institutions were fostered, at the higher levels administration was carried under the direct control of the

mother country. Lying somewhere between the "autonomy" of the British colonial rule and the "assimilation" of the French, the Dutch colonial rule combined some of the negative features of both.

In view of the burning problem of Zaire (former Belgian Congo) a few words about the Belgian Colonial policy would appear necessary. The Belgian colonial policy was essentially paternal. Belgium did not view its colonies as overseas provinces nor did it attempt to assimilate the colonial population. Decisions regarding the colonies were centrally made in Brussels. So highly centralized was the Belgian colonial administration that no body in the Congo—including the Belgian officers, the White settlers or any other group—possessed any political rights or voice in the policy formulations about the colony. The indigenous population was provided with no opportunity for political education. This had left the local population particularly unprepared to steer through as an independent democratic nation state.

### **The Post-1945 Developments and Neocolonialism**

The Second World War produced certain fundamental changes in the colonial areas. It led, on the one hand, to better organized and more intensified struggles for independence, on the other, it resulted in a complete reversal of the expansionist trends of the past. The Japanese occupation of several colonial areas in Asia, and the movement of resistance to this occupation by the local people, helped to shake the very roots of colonialism in this region. While the Chinese had waged a major warfare against the Japanese advance, popular armed resistance had also taken place in Indo China, Indonesia, Burma and the Philippines. Furthermore, even in areas where there was no Japanese occupation, the weakening hold over the colonies by the respective imperial powers that were engaged in life-and-death struggle against the Axis

powers, raised the colonial peoples' will to resist imperialism. By the time the War ended, "India was clearly on the verge of revolt against an enfeebled Britain, which was no longer able to exercise as much control over its empire as it had in the past, its naval power having been seriously depleted. With an equally depleted treasury Britain could not undertake the creation of the modern air force, aircraft carriers, air bases needed to defend its globe-straddling empire. Nor, in the light of the ferment in the colonies, could Britain any longer use colonial troops to maintain law and order" (Magdoff, 1974, p. 903). In tropical Africa also mass-movement political parties—better organized, more radical, and more militant than in the past—were emerging, a fact that was reflected in the demand of the Fifth Pan-African Congress (1945) to end all forms of economic and political imperialism and its advocacy for the use of force to attain independence if all other methods failed. The War had created a cadre of Black African soldiers with field experience and knowledge of complex weapons, on which the revolutionaries could now call.

Although the end of the Second World War, in a way, also rang the death bell of the old style colonialism, imperialism has continued as a dynamic force in world politics; only its outward form has changed with the changing international situation. This new form is generally termed as **neocolonialism**. Although it is difficult to give a precise definition to the term (and the concept), "What is usually meant by neocolonialism is the existence of considerable foreign direction over a nominally [?] independent nation. In its narrowest sense, this means a high degree of influence over a country's economic affairs and economic policy by an outside nation or by foreign business interests, usually entailing influence over political and military policy as well. In addition, the term is used to suggest the predominance of the culture and values of the former colonial powers" (Magdoff, 1974).

Since it was through the colonial system that the dependent members of the Afro-Asian world received and imbibed Western ideas and technology, it was quite natural that these post-colonial countries should continue to retain the overall politico-administrative system inherited from their colonial past. It is, therefore, imperative that the cultural and ideological traditions—as reflected in the pattern of education, civil-service system, and judiciary—of the colonial power should dominate even after independence was achieved. Apart from this however, the very technique of decolonization—wherever it had been a peaceful transfer of power—seems to have provided the framework for neocolonialism in economic matters. The continued membership of the former colonies—especially the British and French—in the currency zone of respective mother country facilitated perpetuation of the trade relations established during the colonial period. Preferential tariff arrangements and the quota system for export of raw materials from the former colonial areas helped perpetuation of the colonial economic pattern. In a large number of cases, most of the large scale private industries and financial institutions were dominated by foreign capital from the respective imperial country. Only in countries where decolonization had been achieved through military or “socialistic” revolutions as in Vietnam or Indonesia the pattern was different.

Perpetuation of the old imperial pattern of economic and ideological relationships was fostered also by the contemporary economic necessities of the United States. After the crippling depression of the 1930's, the Second World War, with its huge demand for military hardware and other goods, had proved as a God-sent relief to that country. With the greatly increased industrial and farm production, the country had now entered a new era of prosperity. The end of the War, while welcome otherwise, posed serious economic problems before the country which needed urgent but long-range

solution. As the U. S. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull (1943) said :

... When the present fighting stops ... almost every metalmaking plant in the United States, and many other factories and mines, and farms, will be placed with termination of war orders, and will be looking urgently for markets for their peace-time products. Foreign markets will be very important for us then and will continue to be essential as far as anyone can see ahead. It will be well to have ... a tested and tried instrument for obtaining the reduction of foreign trade barriers and the elimination of discrimination against our products. ... And the surest way of achieving this was to control money supply through some mighty international monetary organization under the auspices of the United States. It was with this objective that the International Monetary Fund was created in 1944, which, over the years, has grown into “the most powerful supernational government in the world today. The resources it controls and its powers to interfere in international affairs of borrowing nations give it authority of which United Nations advocates can only dream. Only the U. S. military establishment with its client armies can rival the IMF as the key institution of imperialism in the world today, and their functions are complementary [?]. The discipline imposed by the IMF has often eliminated the need for direct military intervention in order to preserve a climate friendly toward foreign investment” ( Payer, 1974, p. 62 ).

The post-1945 polarization of power in the world into the Communist and the Capitalist blocs, respectively under the leadership of USSR and USA, has been an indirect (but most potent) cause of neocolonialism in the Afro-Asian region. After the War, the United States, as the leader of the anti-Communist Western World, set to itself the task of organizing and managing the decolonized fiefs of the former colonial powers with a view to keep them safe from Communist influence and domination.

And this seemed possible only if an effective check could be put on the tendency toward socialistic revolutions which were bound to demand nationalization of factories and financial institutions having overseas capital, and which must inevitably clamour for limiting the scope for foreign capital investment.

One of the techniques adopted was the extensive use of grants and loans for economic and military assistance. While the donor nations insist that their foreign aid programmes are part of a humanitarian gesture through which the rich share some of their wealth with the poor, a close scrutiny would show it to be otherwise. It has been generally noted that the types of countries that the United States has tended to favour are "reactionary or military regimes whose principal virtues have been either militant anti-Communism or a location next to the

Communist bloc. In 1966-67, 25 per cent. of ...[ American ] aid went to South Vietnam" (Weaver, 1969, P. 68). Although published figures tend to cover up the fact that most of the aid is in the form of military assistance by classifying it under various heads, Weaver noted that between 1953 and 1965, 65 per cent. of the US aid to Taiwan and 39 per cent. of that to South Korea were of a military nature. Hence, contrary to the general expectation, the apparently massive aid has not improved the economic condition in the recipient countries. Nearly half of all the foreign aid is immediately paid back to the donor countries toward repayment of loans. Writing in the *Washington Post* Timothy Lovain recently noted: "many countries including India ... are sending us more in repayment than we are providing them in new assistance. Latin America as a whole will send us 85 cents for every new

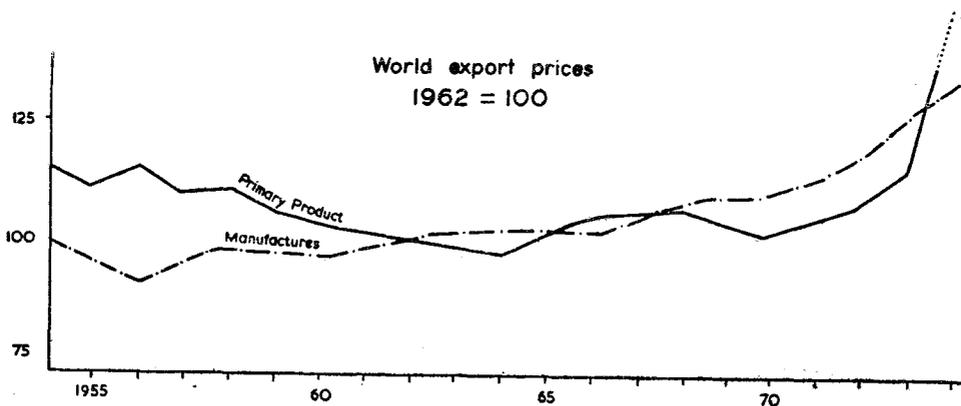


Fig. 2. [After Westlake, 1973]

dollar of bi-lateral aid we provide them" (Indian Express May 17, 1979).

It is significant to note that while the total amount of aid at current prices has marginally increased over the years, the net aid as percentage of the gross national product (GNP) of the leading donor countries (USA, UK, and France) has appreciably gone down. Most spectacular has been the case of the United States where foreign aid amounted to 2.79 per cent. of the country's GNP in 1948, 0.5 per cent. in 1960, and a

mere 0.3 per cent. in 1970. Furthermore, although in terms of the total amount, the aid from U.S.A., France, and U. K. has marginally increased, in terms of actual value, however, the aid is of much lower order than previously, since over the years prices have appreciably increased (Westlake, 1973).

Another notable feature of the post-1945 neocolonialism has been the gradual erosion of trading advantages that the colonized areas had been enjoying in their trade rela-

tionship with the respective mother countries before 1945. The general tendency has been for increased trade between the former colonial powers and a consequent reduction in trade between them and their former colonial dependencies through the imposition of various tariff and quota barriers on imports from these areas. The growing strength and cohesion of the European Economic Community has greatly accelerated this process. For example, British imports from its Commonwealth partners had dropped from 38 per cent. in 1960 to 24 per cent in 1970, and this downward trend has continued. Generally speaking, the pattern of trade has been so structured by the "developed" Countries as to keep the decolonized Afro-Asian world as producers and suppliers of raw materials. Owing to the highly fluctuating price trends of primary products in the world market, this has meant economic instability in these underdeveloped countries. In general, since 1960's, while the world export prices of primary products have been decreasing, that of manufactures have been increasing. (Fig.2). This has led to increasing adverse trade balance in the primary producer Afro-Asian countries. A way out of this vicious circle could be increased trade among the underdeveloped countries themselves. But two factors work against such a development. First, most of these countries are primary producers, hence their import and export requirements are often-times similar. Secondly, the affluent Western world works against this possibility by buying its customers in the underdeveloped world through various kinds of bilateral and multilateral developmental aids.

### Suggestions for Research

The problem of colonization is a subject of most direct and vital concern to the third world countries. Surprisingly, however, it has so far received scant attention from indigenous scholars. From an insider's perspective of the third world, there are

several aspects that demand detailed analysis and the results are bound to be academically quite rewarding.

1. First in order of importance, perhaps, is the study and analysis of the phenomenon of neocolonialism. There are various aspects that require national and cross-national analysis. The best way to begin with would be to study the nature of foreign aid in its diverse (visible and invisible) forms received by a particular country, the timing of aid (in relation to military strategy and developmental take-off), itemwise break-up, and their impact on the recipient nation's economy (pertaining in particular to the drive toward self-sufficiency), social structure (including its impact on class/caste disparities), political stability, and international outlook. Tall claims about the noble intentions behind the aid programmes and their benefits to the recipients, and equally forceful counter-claims about its Trojan Horse nature and its evil influences have been made out by opposing camps. Only through a detailed study of the economics, politics, and sociology—each of which has distinct spatial manifestations—of foreign aid in particular countries, can the fact be fully understood and appreciated. Certain important questions in this regard arise out of revelations made by Patrik Moynihan in his *A Dangerous Place* (1979). In the light of the issues raised, the political geography of foreign aid for development made to India should provide a valuable research theme.

2. The impact of colonialism on the democratising process and political systems offers yet another important research theme. Only small beginnings in this direction have been made, e.g., Dikshit's (1975) comparative analysis of the impact of the Latin American and the British North American colonial systems on the nature and durability of the federal fabric in the two groups of successor states. This type of study (in greater detail) can be made with reference to the successor states in the

former British, French, and Dutch and other colonies in Afro-Asia.

3. The impact of colonial policies on national integration in the former colonies is another very useful theme for future research. Colonial governments, through their diverse administrative policies, often tended to strengthen old cleavages and created new ones. While developmental activities in respect of transport and communications helped to bind the entire colony together into a tight areal unit, cultural and social policies of the colonial administrators often tended to accentuate cleavages, as in respect of the tribal communities in Africa, and the Hindus and Muslims in India, through the application of the principle of indirect rule, and the creation of separate electorates etc.

4. Spatial impact of the economic policies of the respective colonial powers on their dependent areas through the creation of a new form of urbanism that brought about almost a complete change in the traditional pattern of nodes and peripheries—a process that was further accelerated with the extension of inland transport and communication facilities and the opening of the railways oriented towards seaports—is another very important theme for research. Such a research is also likely to throw light on the nature of the changing societal structure under the impact of naval colonialism.

Many more themes can be identified. The ones noted above are, perhaps the more important ones requiring the geographer's attention.

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