

# COLONIALISM

A Theoretical Overview

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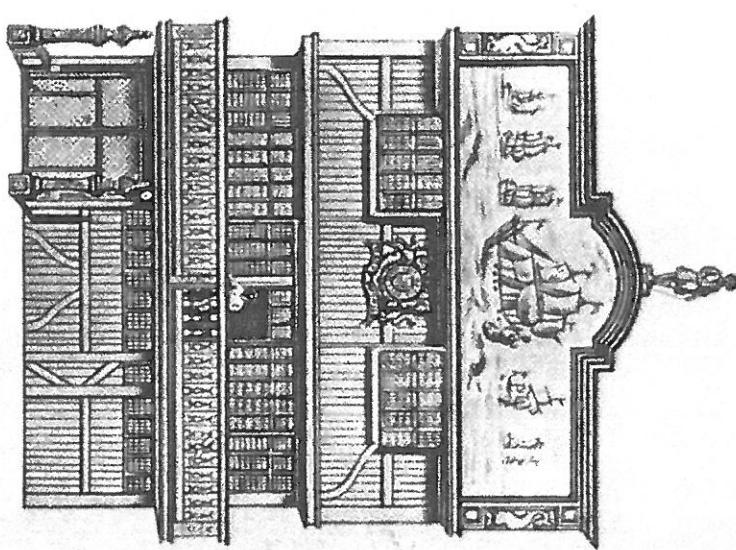
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## “Colonization” and “Colonies”,



*East India Company House, Calcutta, 1648-1726*



These days, cultural critics and political polemicists often refer to a “colonization” of human life by bureaucracy and technology or a “colonization” of society by political parties. They typically associate this term with manipulation, usurpation, and illegitimate appropriation, terms that betray a negative assessment of everything related to “colonialism.” It is the task of this book to construct a theoretical and historical overview of colonialism with a minimum of value judgments. In doing so, it will probe questions that have rarely been addressed in scholarly studies. These questions include the following: What characteristics of “colonialism” distinguish it from the many other types of dominance and processes of expansion evident throughout history? How can the concept be situated in relation to “colonization” and “colony,” and to “imperialism” and “European expansion”? How can we grasp the particular nature of colonization and colony formation in the modern era?

In contrast to the ample research on “imperialism,” there are few studies of the various notions of “colonialism” as they were understood in their time and today. No entry for this term is found in the seven-volume encyclopedia “Basic Historical Concepts.”<sup>1</sup> There is nothing comparable to the “theories of imperialism” canonized in textbooks. The most insightful attempt at establishing a conceptual framework for colonialism comes not from a scholar of European overseas expansion, as one would expect, but from Sir Moses Finley, the historian of antiquity.<sup>2</sup> This expert on the foundation of ancient cities and empire building calls for a precise conceptual determination of colonialism specifically of the *modern* era. He considers it problematic to apply the concept to antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup>

Historians have shied away from attempts at terminological precision of the term “colonialism” because of its myriad facets. At one point or another between the years 1500 and 1920, most of the world’s places and

peoples came under at least nominal control of Europeans: all of America, all of Africa, nearly all of Oceania, and, if we include the Russian colonization of Siberia, the better part of the Asian continent. Colonial reality was multifaceted and often failed to conform to arrogant imperial strategies. It was shaped by particular local features overseas, by the intentions and opportunities of the individual colonial powers, and by broader tendencies in the international system. Colonialism must be seen from all of these angles, with a central focus on both perpetrators and victims. Even if we simplify the matter by following the conventional equation of colonialism and (European) colonial politics (one typical reference work calls colonialism "the politics of a state aimed at the acquisition and expansion of [overseas] possessions"<sup>4</sup>), the multiformity of colonial situations continues to confound efforts to define colonialism. Not only was the most comprehensive of all modern world empires, the British Empire, a patchwork quilt of ad hoc adaptations to particular circumstances. Even the French empire, which claimed to be organized according to principles of Cartesian rationality, was, in the words of Henri Brunschwig, the eminent historian of French colonialism, "in reality a colonial system [that] existed only on paper."<sup>5</sup> Colonialism is thus a phenomenon of colossal vagueness.

### Forms of Expansion in History

"Colonization" designates a process of territorial acquisition, "colony," a particular type of sociopolitical organization, and "colonialism" a system of domination. The basis of all three concepts is the notion of expansion of a society beyond its original habitat. These processes of expansion are a fundamental phenomenon of world history. They occur in six major forms.

- 1) *Total migration of entire populations and societies.* Large human collectives that have settled in one place and typically do not lead a mobile life as hunters or nomadic shepherds give up their original settlements without leaving parent societies behind. Expansion of this type generally entails military conquest, subjugation, and often suppression of peoples in the target regions. It can have several causes: overpopulation, ecological bottlenecks, pressures from expanding neighbors, ethnic or

religious persecution, enticement by rich centers of civilization, etc. This expansion type of the *exodus* occurred on every continent. It often led to new and precarious power structures in a world as yet unshaped by nation-building. This situation does not produce colonies, since no controlling center of expansion remains behind. Total migrations are rare in the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Deportations such as the forced resettlements of whole peoples under Stalinism in the early 1940s can be considered special cases. A relatively late example of a voluntary collective migration is the departure of the Cape Boers to the interior of South Africa on the Great Trek of the years 1836-1854, with the subsequent establishment of the two Boer communities of Orange Free State and Transvaal. This is of course not a *pure* case, since the majority of the Boers remained behind at the Cape without functioning as a controlling center for the Trek Boers.

- 2) *Mass individual migration,* the classic "emigration" in the broadest sense. Individuals, families, and small groups leave their home territories, motivated primarily by economic factors. They do not intend to return. In contrast to total migration, the societies from which they depart remain structurally intact. Individual migration generally takes place as a second-stage expansion process within established political and world economic structures. The emigrants do not create new colonies, but are integrated into existent multi-ethnic societies. Often they assemble in "colonies" in the figurative sense; the most highly developed form of these identity-affirming sociocultural enclaves is the American Chinatown. The degree to which these migrations are voluntary or forced is a variable within this type. Belonging to this category are not only the transatlantic emigration of Europeans to the New World and the other settlement colonies of the British Empire during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also the forced migration of Africans to America resulting from slave trade, as well as the "coolie trade" with Chinese workers in the Pacific area and the settling of Indians in East and South Africa.
- 3) *Border colonization.* This term means extensive opening up of land for human use, pushing a "frontier" into the "wilderness" for agricultural purposes or to attain natural resources. This colonization requires settlement. Economically, it combines the mobile production factors of work and capital with natural resources tied to a specific place.<sup>6</sup> Only rarely is

the founding of colonies as separate political entities coupled with this type of colonization, since it usually takes place at the perimeter of existing settlement areas. One example is the gradual expansion of the Han Chinese agricultural zone at the cost of the pastoral economy of Inner Asia, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, this type of colonization can also proceed *secondarily* from new settlement cores overseas. The best known example is the development of the North American continent outward from its eastern coast. Industrial technology greatly increased the range of colonization as well as its ecologically destructive effects. Railroads in particular strengthened the role of the state (mainly in Eurasia) in a process usually organized by private groups. The most comprehensive railroad colonization under government sponsorship was the development of Asian Russia beginning in the late nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

4) *Overseas settlement colonization.* This special type of border colonization first appeared in the colonization movements of the Phoenicians and of Greek antiquity. It entailed the development of "settlement offshoots" across the sea in areas where relatively slight display of military power was required. Under early modern as well as ancient conditions, logistics made the decisive difference between this and true continental border colonization. The classic case was the initial phase of English settlement of North America. The founding groups of settlement colonies—"plantations" in the term of that epoch<sup>8</sup>—tried to build self-maintaining bridgeheads that were not vitally dependent on supplies from the mother country or on trade with the natives. The land was considered "rulerless," lacking legitimate political authority. The indigenous population was not subjugated and integrated into the colony in a subservient status, as in Spanish America, but instead was forcefully repulsed in the face of often violent resistance. The spheres of settlers and natives were separated both territorially and socially. In North America and later in Australia and elsewhere, the Europeans did not find efficient agricultural systems whose taxable surpluses could have supported a militarily based colonial apparatus—as did the Romans in Egypt, the British in India, and the Iberian powers in Central and South America. It was therefore not possible to divert an existing tribute flow from the coffers of the *ancien régime* to those of the new rulers. Moreover, the Native American population was

hardly suitable for forced labor in a European type of farming.

From these circumstances the first "*New England*" type of settlement colonies developed. This type entailed growth of an agrarian settlement populace that provided workers from its own ranks and by recruiting European "indentured servants." The intruders ruthlessly ousted the demographically weak indigenous population, considering it economically superfluous. In this manner, by 1750, socially and ethnically homogeneous regions of European settlement had been carved out in North America as cores of neo-European nation-building. Until that time, this situation had not existed anywhere else in the non-European world. Soon thereafter in Australia, the British followed this model of colonization under the peculiar conditions of an initial forced migration of prisoners. The British then proceeded to apply this model in New Zealand, in the face of violent resistance by the indigenous Maori.

A second type of overseas settlement colonization occurs when a politically dominant settler minority—usually with the help of the colonial state—expels an indigenous peasant population from the best land, but remains dependent on the labor of that same population and finds itself in sustained competition with it for parts of the remaining land. The settlers of this second type, which we can call "*African*" in light of its most significant modern examples (Algeria, Rhodesia, Kenya, and South Africa), differ from those of the "*New England*" type in their economic dependence on the indigenous population.<sup>9</sup> This fact also explains the instability of this kind of settlement. The European colonizations of North America, Australia, and New Zealand became irreversible, but in the African settlement colonies fierce struggles for decolonization erupted. A third type of settlement colonization solves the problem of recruiting workers after the expulsion or destruction of the indigenous population by forced import of slaves and their employment in a plantation economy. We will refer to it as the "*Caribbean*" type, since this is where it most clearly occurred. There were less predominant instances in British North America as well. An important variable is the demographic proportion between the various social and ethnic groups. In the British Caribbean, blacks made up roughly 90% of the total population by 1770. During that same period of time, in the northern colonies of what was later the United States, blacks made up only 22% of the total population,

and even in the later "southern states" no more than 40%.<sup>10</sup>

5) *Empire-building wars of conquest*, the classic or "Roman" form of establishing the rule of one people over another. An imperial center continues as the ultimate source of power and legitimacy, even if military expansion is fueled primarily by resources that are mobilized on the spot in the course of pushing forward. However, a centralized unified empire does not invariably continue to exist. The Arabic-Muslim expansion of the eighth century quickly led to a polycentricism of independent powers. The Mongolian world empire of Genghis Khan split into several successor states after two generations. Even the British Empire at its height consisted of three loosely connected spheres: the "white dominions," the "dependencies," and the "empire" of India, whose government could pursue its own subimperialist interests. As a rule, military empire building has come about not by annexation of territory in "empty" areas, but by subjugating existing state and societal institutions. These institutions were adapted to the needs of the conquerors but not altogether destroyed in the process. A sudden and complete devastation of the previous system of rule, as was the case with the Spanish invasion of Mexico, was more the exception than the rule. In the modern history of expansion, conquest was often a protracted process that followed from initial contacts in which the Europeans were equal or even subordinate partners. Military conquerors behaved parasitically toward the dominated economy; besides securing order and facilitating foreign trade, the major function of the administration was to skim off tribute. Reorganization of tax levies regularly belonged to the first activities of a colonial power. Only in unusual cases, such as in parts of the Roman Empire, in Ireland, and in Algeria, did military conquest entail the establishment of settlers and large-scale land appropriations as well as the direct takeover of agricultural production by foreigners. The classic modern product of a military imperialism—British India—was never a settlement area. This type of expansion results in *colonial rule without colonization*, which we will classify as an exploitation colony. A very important variant is found in Spanish America. Despite a substantial influx of Europeans, the situation there differed greatly from that of colonies of the Indian type owing to the development of a creole population segment, which reproduced itself demographically. In contrast to North America, settlement colonization was not the main

purpose of colony building. Most of the immigrants settled in cities and never made up a majority of the population. By 1790, toward the end of the colonial period, first-generation immigrants and creoles of Spanish ancestry amounted to roughly one quarter of the population of Latin America.<sup>11</sup>

Expansion by wars of conquest led to varied forms of integration of subjugated territories into their respective empires, depending on the political traditions of the conquering power. Characteristic of pre-modern empires was the annexation of newly-won regions to the existing territorial government of the empire as provinces. Modern empires generally had separate colonial authorities in the metropolis to supervise administration on the periphery. It is important to note that this separation did not only apply to the European empires; the Manchurian Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) also had newly annexed territories in Inner Asia (Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkestan/Xinjiang) ruled by a special "barbarian office" (Lifanyuan). The American diplomat Paul Reinsch considers these special governing bodies the crucial characteristic of a "colony." According to Reinsch, a colony is "an outlying possession of a national state, the administration of which is carried on under a system distinct from, but subordinate to, the government of the national territory."<sup>12</sup>

6) *Construction of naval networks*. This form of *maritime expansion* involves the systematic construction of militarily protected trading factories. Expansion of this type did not normally lead to either inland colonization or to significant large-scale military annexation of territory. The extension of British power in India from Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras was atypical, at least before 1820. The chief purpose was to secure a trade hegemony, first in the case of the loosely linked maritime empire of the Republic of Genoa in the Mediterranean, then with the systematically designed and more tightly organized merchant empires of the Portuguese (Mozambique, Goa, Malacca, and Macao) and the Dutch (Batavia, Ceylon, and Nagasaki) in Asia. When the age of world politics began in the eighteenth century, the installation of naval bases gained a global strategic significance for Great Britain, the leading maritime power of the time, beyond the protection of trade interests. Naval bases (notably, Bermuda, Malta, Cyprus, Alexandria/Suez, Aden, Cape Town, and Gibraltar) and militarily significant "harbor colonies"<sup>13</sup> (Singapore, Hong Kong) were

among the longest-lived and most stubbornly defended components of the British Empire. The military base was the only colony type that was adaptable to modern circumstances on a long-term basis. It was able to advance from the era of the gunboat to the era of the tactical air force.

### Colonies: A Typology

The terms "colonization" and "colony" should not be too closely identified with one another, as we have seen in this attempt at typological structuring. Colonization can take place without colony building, which is the predominant form of frontier colonization. However, there is also colony building that does not follow colonization, but originates in military conquest. This type of colony building is based on the sword rather than the plow. Between both "true to type" pure cases is the "African" type of settlement colonization, in which conquest created the condition for large-scale settlement. The fact that settlers were also armed cannot be overlooked, but at least in the early phases of colonization, the force they used was not always authorized by a state.

A definition of "colony" that is valid for the modern era and takes these issues into consideration must be narrow enough to exclude situations such as temporary military occupation and the annexation of border areas to modern national states. The rather juridical circuitousness of the following definition is the price of terminological precision.

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A *colony* is a new political organization created by invasion (conquest and/or settlement colonization) but built on pre-colonial conditions. Its alien rulers are in sustained dependence on a geographically remote "mother country" or imperial center, which claims exclusive rights of "possession" of the colony.

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The following major types of colonies have arisen in recent centuries as a result of the expansion of European nations, the United States, and Japan:

1) *Exploitation Colonies*

- usually the result of military conquest, often after extended phases of contact without land claims
- purposes: economic exploitation (by means of trade monopolies, use of natural resources, and levying tribute rather than farming); strategic securing of imperial policies; national rise in prestige
- relatively insignificant numerical colonial presence, primarily in the form of civil bureaucrats, soldiers, and businessmen (not settlers) who return to their mother country after completing their assignments
- autocratic government by the mother country (governor system), sometimes with paternalistic solicitude for the native population
- Examples: British India, Indochina (French), Egypt (British), Togo (German), Philippines (American), Taiwan (Japanese)
- Variant: Spanish America, in which European immigration led to an urban mixed society with a dominating creole minority

#### 2) *Maritime enclaves*

- result of fleet actions
- purposes: indirect commercial penetration of a hinterland and/or contribution to the logistics of a maritime deployment of force and informal control over formally autonomous states ("gunboat diplomacy")
- Examples: Malacca (Portuguese), Batavia (Dutch), Hong Kong, Singapore, Aden (all British), Shanghai (international)

#### 3) *Settlement colonies*

- result of militarily supported colonization processes
  - purposes: utilization of cheap land and labor, cultivation of forms of social, religious, and cultural life that are under pressure in the mother country
  - colonial presence, primarily in the form of permanently resident farmers and planters
  - early onset of self-government of the "white" colonists, disregarding the rights and interests of the indigenous population
- Variants:
- a) "New England" type: displacement and even annihilation of

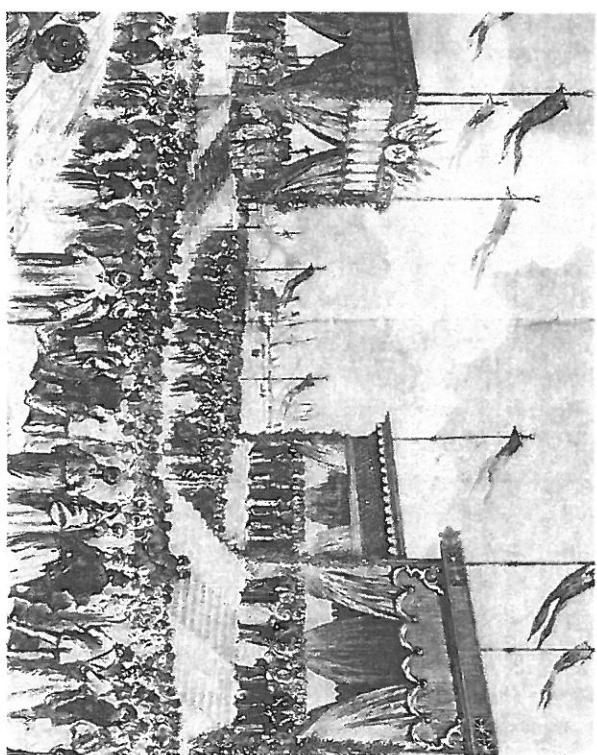
the economically dispensable indigenous population; examples: the British New England colonies, Canada (French/British), and Australia

b) "African" type: economic dependence on an indigenous labor force; examples: Algeria (French), Southern Rhodesia (British), and South Africa

c) "Caribbean" type: import of slaves; examples: Barbados (English), Jamaica (English), Saint Domingue (French), Virginia (English), Cuba (Spanish), Brazil (Portuguese).

## II

### "Colonialism" and "Colonial Empires"

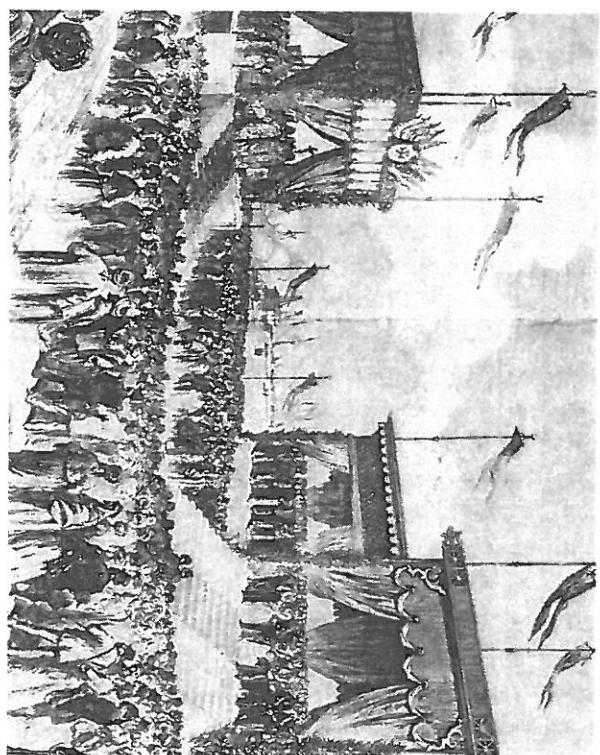


*Religious ceremony at Port Said at the opening of the Suez Canal*

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## II

### "Colonialism" and "Colonial Empires"



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### Colonialism: A Definition

How can "colonialism" be defined independently from "the colony"? The historian Philip Curtin speaks quite generally of "domination of people of another culture."<sup>14</sup> Although this formulation contains two decisive elements, namely *domination* and *cultural dissimilarity*, it needs to be made more precise. Not every domination by foreigners has been perceived by its subjects as *illegitimate* foreign domination. Between 1517 and 1798, Egypt, as a province of the Ottoman Empire, stood under the intrusive rule of the Turks, but this did not preclude general acceptance of the system by the indigenous Arabic-speaking populace.<sup>15</sup> The difference in language was compensated by a common belief in Islam and in the binding character of the Islamic notion of legitimate government.

To present in clear outline the particular historical nature of colonialism in recent centuries—perhaps we should say *modern* colonialism by this point—Curtin's basic formula must be supplemented by three additional components. First, colonialism is not just any relationship between masters and servants, but one in which an entire society is robbed of its historical line of development, *externally manipulated* and transformed according to the needs and interests of the colonial rulers. In practice, colonial governments scarcely attained such an ambitious goal, lacking the means to realize it, but this fact is of minor significance in the theoretical context of definition. Modern colonialism is based on the will to make "peripheral" societies subservient to the "metropolises."

Second, the kind of dissimilarity between colonizers and colonized is of crucial importance. Characteristic of modern colonialism, although not of world history as a whole, is the unwillingness of the new rulers to make cultural concessions to subjugated societies. European expansion has nowhere produced a "Hellenistic" cultural synthesis. Extensive accultur-



ation to the values and customs of Europe was expected of the colonized. However, aside from certain exceptions mainly in the Portuguese empire, there was no significant counter-acculturation in which the colonizers borrowed on a large scale from the dominated civilizations. In the nineteenth century, the impossibility of such rapprochements was justified by the existence of allegedly insurmountable "racial" hierarchies. Any definition of colonialism must take into account this lack of willingness to assimilate on the part of the colonial rulers.

The third and final point is closely connected to the second. Modern colonialism is not only a relationship that can be described in structural terms, but also a particular *interpretation* of this relationship. The claim has even been made that it is principally an "ideological formation."<sup>16</sup> Ever since the Iberian and English colonial theorists of the sixteenth century, European expansion has been stylized grandiosely as the fulfillment of a universal mission: as a contribution to a divine plan for the salvation of the pagans, as a secular mandate to "civilize" the "barbarians" or "savages," as a "white man's burden" that he is privileged to carry, etc. These attitudes were always premised on a belief in European cultural superiority. American and Japanese colonialism also made full use of this kind of missionary rhetoric. Traditional cultures, such as the Chinese, proceeded on the assumption of the exemplary status and supremacy of their own civilization as if this were self-evident, without, however, imposing it on neighboring civilizations. Only in modern colonialism did this kind of ethnocentric arrogance take an aggressive expansionist turn, only here were the many bent by the few under a "spiritual yoke."<sup>17</sup> The colonialist structures of dependence can be characterized only incompletely without reference to the "spirit of colonialism" that animated them. This spirit has outlived the reality of the colonial era.

We have thus arrived at a definition:

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*Colonialism* is a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by

the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule.

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Now that we have defined "colonialism" independently of the term "colony," we must determine where these concepts converge. Colonies and colonialism normally go hand in hand. There are, however, borderline cases of non-congruence. *Colonies without colonialism* occurred in colonial societies without indigenous population majorities. Societies of this sort were homogeneously "white." They seemed to be replicas of European societies in "empty" land. This is especially true of the settlement colonies of the "New England" type. These colonies actively pursued frontier colonization, i.e., agrarian development of inland "wilderness," which destroyed the environments of native hunters and herdsmen. Because "native" subjects were lacking, however, they could not construct a system of domination, which is a basic component of colonialism. These societies were therefore not "decolonized" by stripping the power of the colonists and driving them out, as was the case in Algeria. They won their autonomy as national states as a result of abrupt revolutionary secession (as happened with the thirteen colonies, which then constituted the United States) or by gradual dissociation on basically good terms (Canada, Australia) from the European center of the empire. At the opposite end of the spectrum we must consider the possibility of *colonialism without colonies*, situations in which dependencies of the "colonialist" type appear, nor between a "mother country" and a geographically remote colony, but between dominant "centers" and dependent "peripheries" within national states or regionally integrated land empires. The theoretical construction "internal colonialism" was developed to categorize such cases, particularly the relationship between England and the "Celtic fringe" of the British Isles (Wales, Scotland, Ireland). It can be argued that "informal colonialism" metaphorically strains the concept of colonialism.<sup>18</sup> Less problematic is the notion of *subcolonial* relations within hierarchically ordered colonial empires. The primary colonialist relationship in subcolonial situations is not between a colony

and the metropolis, but between one colony and another colony of the empire. Examples include Angola, which at times was considered a colony of Brazil, and the Philippine Islands, which in some respects were a dependency of Mexico. India was surrounded by a whole ring of satellites. The fact that there was no seizure of power by white settlers in the 1920s in the settlement colony of Kenya as there was in Southern Rhodesia is in no small measure due to the fact that the government of British India offered a protective hand to the Indian emigrant population in East Africa.

### Colonial Empires and "Informal Empire"

Most colonies of recent centuries have been parts of colonial empires. The idea of empire assumes that several "peripheries" are subordinated to the empire's center in a star-shaped configuration. Generally they also have relations with one another, which are weaker than each of their ties to the center. In some cases the number of colonial possessions remains below the threshold that would justify our speaking of a colonial *empire*. Belgium controlled only two colonies: the Belgian Congo (Zaire) in the years 1885-1960 and Rwanda-Burundi in East Central Africa from 1916 to 1962. The only territorial colonies of the United States were the Philippines (1898-1946) and Puerto Rico (1898-1952). The Spanish empire, which once spanned the globe, was reduced to a handful of miniature sessions in North Africa as the result first of the independence of the Latin American states, then of defeats in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Consequently, we can no longer speak of a Spanish "empire" in the twentieth century. In all of these cases we are dealing with *colonial possessions without a colonial empire*. Perhaps this is even true of the Dutch "empire," which, aside from Surinam, was limited to the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) after the loss of Ceylon (1796) and the Cape of Good Hope (1794-1806). Of course, the Dutch East Indies, which had a large population, was of great economic importance for the mother country.

The overseas empires of the early modern era were by their very nature almost exclusively *colonial empires*. This situation shifted after the late eighteenth century with the increasing gap in economic productivity between the growth economies of Europe and the overseas world, the

consolidation of world economic relations, the improvement of internationally available means of military intervention and the rise of political thinking on a global strategic scale. Great Britain, the leading economic and naval power between 1815 and 1880, could now pursue its economic and strategic interests with an array of options that reached beyond the acquisition of colonies. It was often sufficient to arrange for politically independent overseas states to open their markets to the products of British industry and to guarantee foreign property by law and in practice (as in the Latin American states, China, Japan, Thailand, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, etc.). This purpose was achieved by diplomatic pressure, military threats, and selective naval interventions, such as the "Opium War," which "opened" the Chinese empire in 1842. Colonial rule would have been too costly and would have involved unwanted political responsibility in all of these cases. Governing was left to more or less Anglophilic indigenous rulers, who, however, were rarely enthusiastic "collaborators."

Differentiations between "formal" and "informal" securing of interests vis-à-vis militarily weaker and economically "backward" countries (in the parlance of the day), between "formal empire" and "informal empire"<sup>19</sup> apply not only to the British Empire, but also to the United States and Japan. Cuba, for example, a Spanish colony until 1898, was officially an independent republic between 1902 and Fidel Castro's takeover of power in 1959, yet almost its entire economy was in American hands, and the United States government intervened repeatedly in Cuban domestic policy. Cuba was thus a semi-sovereign region of exploitation for the United States, a classic case of "informal empire." The Japanese, on the other hand, supplemented their "formal empire," which consisted primarily of the immensely profitable colonies of Taiwan (1895-1945), Korea (1910-1945), and the puppet state of "Manchukuo" (the three northeastern provinces of China, 1931-1945, ruled de facto as a colony), by gradually widening their sphere of influence in China after 1905.<sup>20</sup> Before 1914, the Germans also built up an "informal empire" in China, Latin America, and the Ottoman Empire.

Let us recapitulate the three stages in securing interests used by "Big Brothers" toward "little brothers" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as follows:

1) *Colonial rule (formal empire)*: Indigenous rulers are replaced by foreign rulers (e.g., an Indian prince by a British governor). The pre-colonial political order ceases to exist or at least stops functioning freely. Representatives of the colonial power perform the central sovereign functions such as levying taxes, administering justice, and controlling police and military forces. All diplomatic relations of the colonized are taken over by the colonial power. In all other matters, the definitions of "colony" and "colonialism" we proposed earlier apply.

2) *Quasi-colonial control (informal empire)*: The weaker state remains intact as an independent polity with its own political system. It can conduct its own foreign policy and regulate routine domestic affairs. There is no colonial administration, but occasionally—especially in the area of finance—a mixture of foreign and indigenous administration (such as the Imperial Maritime Customs office in the Chinese empire). Nonetheless, the weaker state is only sovereign to a limited extent. "Big Brother" guarantees privileges for himself in "unequal treaties" as the result of selectively applied pressure ("gunboat diplomacy"). These privileges usually extend to the protection of foreign citizens from the enforcement of indigenous laws by means of consular jurisdiction and extraterritoriality, a well-defined free trade regime (low import duties when there is no customs sovereignty), and the right to station foreign troops on territorial waters and at prearranged points on land. "Big Brother" is represented by consuls, diplomats or "residents," all of whom intervene in domestic policy in an "advisory" capacity, particularly in conflicts over succession, and underscore their "advice" with the threat of military intervention where it appears warranted. In an extreme case, the indigenous office holders are powerless marionettes, but normally they possess considerable freedom of action. The ideal "collaborative elite," on which informal empires are invariably based, must have sufficient legitimacy and domestic authority to function effectively in the interests of "Big Brother."

Informal empires are rarely motivated by strategy or prestige. Mostly they are a means to the end of securing significant economic interests (trade, direct investments, loans, etc.) that often came about *without* political support. Informal empire, unlike colonialism (formal empire), presupposes a distinct economic superiority of Big Brother. There must be a potential to "penetrate" an overseas economy. Again, unlike formal

empire, where colonial rule over one and the same territory is indivisible and exclusive, there can be several "Big Brothers" that concur on the principle of the "Open Door," that is, equal opportunity for all, or on the demarcation of national "spheres of influence."

3) *Non-colonial "determinant" influence*: There is neither a colonial system of domination between "Big Brother" and "little brother" nor are any special rights codified in "unequal treaties." Instead, the economic superiority of the stronger national partner or of its private enterprise (e.g., of multinational concerns) and/or its military protective function confers upon it opportunities to influence the politics of the weaker partner that its "normal" neighbors do not possess. This is a typical pattern of relations of international asymmetry in the post-colonial world.

### Imperialism

The political and economic sphere of influence of the British and other empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries far exceeded their colonial core. In some parts of the world these empires exercised colonial rule, in others they made do with informal opportunities to control and secure their interests. At times they sought only to be a strong neighbor. The same results could usually be achieved in differing ways. From an economic point of view, it usually made little difference whether the foreign presence in an overseas land was a colony or a quasi-colonial, only nominally sovereign state that had to allow virtually unrestricted scope for foreign economic interests and itself had no say in vital domestic or foreign economic decisions.

"Imperialism" is the concept that comprises all forces and activities contributing to the construction and the maintenance of *transcolonial empires*. Imperialism presupposes the will and the ability of an imperial center to *define* as imperial its own national interests and enforce them worldwide in the anarchy of the international system. Imperialism thus implies not only *colonial* politics, but *international* politics for which colonies are not just ends in themselves, but also pawns in global power games. Typical "imperialist" ideas feature the use of colonies in compensatory deals between the Great Powers, which involve exchange, recognition of geopolitical claims on the part of third powers, and demands that

an alleged disequilibrium in the European balance of power be redressed. A "colonialist" attitude, by contrast, emphasizes the virtues of rightful acquisition, permanence, and responsibility and considers colonial subjects as "entrusted" to the care of the colonizers. Imperialism is planned colonialism by special colonial authorities and "men on the spot." The games of world politics in the age of empire must, however, always be seen against the backdrop of the development of a great power system and in the framework of slowly evolving structures of inequality in economic transactions across the globe.

"Imperialism" and "colonialism" are therefore not one and the same. "Colonialism" might appear to be one special manifestation of "imperialism," especially in the British Empire after 1780. However, because "imperialism" allows for a *worldwide* protection of interests and for capitalist penetration of large economic areas, one ought to be careful when employing the term to early modern colonial empires, which were not in a position to achieve these objectives. Only Great Britain and the United States have been imperialist powers in the full sense of the term, although the United States is a case of *imperialism without a major colonial empire*. France, Germany, Russia (or the Soviet Union) and Japan functioned as imperialists at various times in a more limited sense: either they did not attain a worldwide scale on a long-term basis or, like the Soviet Union at the height of its military strength, they were economically too weak to penetrate remote economies. *Colonial empires without imperialism* were the rule during the early modern phase of European expansion; only the seventeenth-century Netherlands could conceivably be excepted. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, the Netherlands became the prime example of colonial empires without imperialism. Between the World Wars, Holland was the third largest European colonial power after Great Britain and France. At the same time, it was scarcely an imperialist power, lacking as it did both international political ambitions and military might, and also lacking the economic option of being "informal" to any significant degree beyond its own colony Indonesia.<sup>21</sup>

### Colonial Epochs<sup>22</sup>

#### III



*Amsterdam receiving the tribute of four continents  
(Frontispiece of Historische Beschryvinghe  
van Amsterdam, 1663 by O. Dapper)*

## Notes

- 1 See Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972-92). However, vol. III (1982) contains an article on "Imperialism" by Jörg Fisch, Dieter Groh, and Rudolf Walther (pp. 171-236).
- 2 Moses I. Finley, "Colonies: An Attempt at a Typology," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 26 (1976), pp. 167-188.
- 3 See, for example, William Y. Adams, "The First Colonial Empire: Egypt in Nubia, 3200-1200 B.C.," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26 (1984), pp. 36-71; Joshua Prawer, *The Crusaders' Kingdom: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (New York: Praeger, 1972).
- 4 *Duden. Fremdwörterverbuch*. 3rd ed. (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1974), p. 381.
- 5 Henri Brunschwig, *Noirs et blancs dans l'Afrique noire française* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), p. 209. Emphasis added.
- 6 See the theoretical definition in John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 21.
- 7 See Steven G. Marks, *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 196 ff.
- 8 See Francis Bacon, "Of Plantations" [1625], in *The Essays*, ed. John Pitcher (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 162-164.
- 9 See Paul Mosley, *The Settler Economies: Studies in the Economic History of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 5-8, 237 (fn. 1).
- 10 Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 1989), pp. 30 f.
- 11 Mark A. Burkholder and Lynn L. Johnson, *Colonial Latin America* (New York & Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), p. 106.
- 12 Paul S. Reinsch, *Colonial Government: An Introduction to the Study of Colonial Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), p. 16.
- 13 On the particular type of harbor colony, it is still useful to refer to Ernst Grünfeld, *Hafenkolonien und kolonialethnische Verhältnisse in China, Japan und Korea* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1913).
- 14 Philip D. Curtin, "The Black Experience of Colonialism and Imperialism," in Sidney W. Mintz, ed., *Slavery, Colonialism, and Racism* (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 23.

- 15 I follow Michael Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule 1517-1798* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 30.
- 16 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), p. 9.
- 17 Philip Mason, *Patterns of Dominance* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 274.
- 18 For an overview with critical commentary, see Robert J. Hind, "The Internal Colonial Concept," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26 (1984), pp. 543-568. It probably makes more sense to speak of "internal periphery"; see Hans-Joachim Nolte, ed. *Internal Peripheries in European History* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1991).
- 19 The English historians Ronald E. Robinson and John A. Gallagher set the basis for these distinctions. See especially Wm. Roger Louis, ed., *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976); R. E. Robinson, "The Excentric Idea of Empire—with or without Imperialism," in Wolfgang J. Mommsen & Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London & Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), pp. 267-289. See also the important contribution of this line of thought in Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca & London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 19-47.
- 20 See the following complementary volumes: Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Colonial Empire 1895-1945* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984) and Peter Duus et al., eds., *The Japanese Imperial Empire in China, 1895-1937* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1989). William G. Beasley provides an exemplary overview in *Japanese Imperialism 1894-1945* (Oxford & New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987).
- 21 See J. van Goor, "Imperialisme in de marge?" in J. van Goor, ed., *Imperialisme in de marge: De afonding van Nederlands-Indië* (Utrecht: HES Uitgevers, 1986), p. 9. But for an earlier period, see Maarten Kuitenhout, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Imperialism: Colonies and Foreign Policies, 1870-1902* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1991).
- 22 Most of the developments discussed here are thoroughly described and analyzed in a work by Wolfgang Reinhard, which remains unsurpassed in any language: *Geschichte der europäischen Expansion*, 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Konkhammer, 1983-1990). A fine introduction to imperialism as a theoretical issue is Andrew Porter, *European Imperialism, 1860-1914* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan, 1994).
- 23 Arthur Giraut, *Principes de colonisation et de législation coloniale*, I, 4th ed. (Paris: Larose, 1921), p. 17.
- 24 David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 29.
- 25 J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1948), p. 5.
- 26 See the classic essay by Georges Balandier, "La situation coloniale: Approche théorétique," in *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 10/11 (1951), pp. 44-79.
- 27 See Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1988), p. xvi.
- 28 J. F. A. Ajayi, "Colonialism: An Episode in African History," in Lewis H. Gann & Peter Duignan, eds., *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*. I (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969), p. 505.
- 29 Clifford Geertz uses this example in *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 62-65.
- 30 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), II, 564.
- 31 J. H. Elliott, *Spain and its World 1500-1700: Selected Essays* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), p. 13.
- 32 Elliott, p. 15.
- 33 Immanuel Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the 16th Century*, Vol. I of *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), p. 336.
- 34 The definitive study is by J. H. Galloway: *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989). More relevant as cultural than as economic history is Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985).
- 35 These statistics are from Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 268 (table 77).
- 36 See John E. McClellan, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992), p. 2.
- 37 See John Brewer, *The Structure of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Lawrence Stone, ed., *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994); P. J. Cain & A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London & New York: Longman, 1993), I, 71-84.
- 38 Quoted in Percival Spear, *Master of Bengal: Clive and his India* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 146. On early British expansion in India, see P. J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead. Eastern India 1740-1828* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987).
- 39 Gordon K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), p. 63.
- 40 For an exhaustive treatment of this topic using the example of China, see